SPORTS AND CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:

SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED EXPERIENCES OF VOLUNTEERS

Courtesy of Special Olympics

Maureen Ellen Hakala

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DISSERTATION

to obtain
the degree of doctor at the University of Twente,
on the authority of the rector magnificus,
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by

Maureen Ellen Hakala

born on the 18th of November 1959
in Panama City, Florida, USA

This PhD dissertation has been approved by

Prof. dr. C. P. M. Wilderom (Supervisor)
Prof. dr. J. Winslade (Supervisor)

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DEDICATION

In memory of my dear parents, Oliver Harold and Ruth (Coomey) Hakala, who supported and encouraged me through a lifetime of curiosity and learning. Your interest and questions about how I was doing in my "course" were very motivating for me. I wish you could have seen this completed project, but I know you are looking on and cheering me with a great deal of enthusiasm. Thank you for inspiring me to always keep reaching and for continually expressing how proud you were of me. Your life-long love and support have meant the world to me. I love you and I am very grateful to both of you for everything you've done. And, in memory of my sister Karen, who is also looking on and was a constant source of encouragement. Thank you, Sis.

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who try so hard, I am proud of you and your efforts! May we remember to view you as people who are participating in structured sports with abilities! Thank you!

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ABSTRACT

In this research, I studied how the volunteers who work with children in structured sports events made meaning of their experience in a relational context, as viewed through the lens of social constructionism. In the literature review, several themes emerged that were the foundation for the conceptual framework and informed the research question: "*How are the experiences of adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events constructed?"*

This study was qualitative in nature and used the Dynamic Narrative Approach research method. This method applies narratives and includes aspects of social constructionism. Ten participants that met the criteria were selected for this study. Two rounds of interviews were conducted through the use of technology including computer assisted video conferencing. I coded the responses and a number of themes emerged.

Since I was looking at the volunteer experience through the lens of social constructionism, I explored how participants spoke about relations with others and the language they used to describe their interactions. The key focus areas emerged as the participants described: a process for getting and staying involved; motivation for getting and staying involved; meaningful volunteer experience; and suggestions and ideas about encouraging future volunteer recruitment. Themes that corresponded with these focus areas were also discussed. Discourse is generated in relation with others, so I also examined the various discourses that impacted the volunteers' experiences, which included: the discourse of disability, the discourse of altruism/service, and the discourse of sports.

The results displayed that the participants' language evolved from describing the children as "a kids with disabilities" to "athletes," a demonstration of the social construction of a shift in the identity ascribed to the children. The participants told stories that described their own evolution as one of developing confidence and growth. The participants also offered ideas to encourage recruitment of volunteers. The results of this study contribute to the literature in volunteering, children with special needs, and structured sports events. In addition, information was provided that is useful for practitioners, volunteers, and others involved in serving children with special needs.

PROLOGUE

A Day at the Beach

As the time approached for the children to arrive at the beach, the volunteers eagerly awaited for the day to begin. The sun was shining and the water was lapping at the shoreline at the Seaside Lagoon. Several buses pulled up to the parking lot, effectively announcing the arrival of the children. As the teachers approached, they told us that this was the first trip to the beach for some of the children, and that the children were both excited and nervous about this trip. Many of the children, especially Craig, showed signs of excitement and some trepidation. I was also nervous because it was my first volunteer experience for children with special needs at the beach.

Craig was a child with multiple disabilities, including autism and physical disabilities. He had never been to the beach, was unable to swim, and was fearful of new situations. But, Craig was excited and said "I want to ride in a red kayak." Like Craig, I was excited, but also anxious about ensuring that the day would be meaningful for the children.

Craig slowly walked to the edge of the beach, tentatively removed his shoes, and touched the sand. It took all his concentration but he quickly became distracted as he played with his friends. A game of bucket relay ensued with Craig slowly putting his feet in the water at the shoreline. The children were then introduced to the proper use of a lifejacket. I assisted Craig with his. He alternated between excitement and fear ("I'm scared of deep water."), as he reluctantly put on his lifejacket.

The children rotated through different activities e.g., kayaking, surfing, and sailing. Craig kept looking at and talking about the red kayak, "I want that one". When it was his turn to ride the kayak, Craig hesitated, and began to change his mind, fluctuating between wanting to ride it, and then being fearful about riding it. I recognized Craig's fear as my own, and knew he needed some encouragement. I held out my hand, "Here I'll help you," and as he placed his small hand in mine, he smiled. The smile grew bigger as we boarded the kayak together, still clutching my hand. Once our kayak was in the water, I nudged the oar towards Craig and nodded with encouragement. Craig gingerly took the oar, rowing with one hand, still clutching my hand with the other. By the time we were headed back to shore, Craig was rowing with both hands. Craig was grinning from ear to ear and saying "this is FUN!" After returning to shore, Craig repeated every detail of riding in the kayak to anyone who would listen.

Craig experienced something new with excitement and trepidation. He did not know what a trip to the beach would mean for him. But he was willing to try new things like, putting his feet in the sand, wading in the water, and riding in a red kayak. Craig approached these new adventures with courage, and he learned that "I can do it!"

Like Craig, I approached this volunteer experience with excitement and some trepidation. I wanted to be helpful - to create a meaningful sports experience for children with special needs. Ultimately, I found that in striving to make this day at the beach meaningful for children like Craig, I was forever changed in that I experienced the joy of volunteering for structured sports events for children with special needs. These lessons were instrumental in choosing my career as a teacher for children with special needs. As an Adapted Physical Education Teacher, I work with children with special needs to provide them with an educational curriculum to develop gross motor skills, social skills, and opportunities to practice those skills in games and activities. My interest in this area began many years ago. As a child, I spent a great deal of time with my uncle who had Intellectual Disabilities (ID), formerly called Mental Retardation (MR). Uncle Jack was a special person who had some wonderfully social qualities and was an integral part of our family. So, my interest in this area continues, and provides the impetus for my studying this topic from the perspective of the adult volunteers, especially how the adult volunteers socially construct, and make meaning of, their experiences through working with the children with special needs in structured sports events. This study seeks to add to the research about the adult volunteer's experience, and to bring theory to practice. In addition, I hope to hear the stories from the participants' of this study. I am particularly interested in learning how their volunteer experience of working with children with special needs in structured sports events has impacted their lives, and how they made-meaning of their experiences.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Sammy stepped up to the plate and took a swing of the bat. Although he missed the ball, he turned and jogged back to the dugout with a huge smile on his face. Sammy is ten years old and, until a couple years ago, there was no place for someone with cerebral palsy to have the opportunity to strike out, let alone hit the ball. In addition, there were few opportunities for volunteers to participate in working with children with special needs in a structured sports event, as well. This volunteer experience of working with children with special needs in structured sports events will be explored further in chapter 2 – the literature review of this study

The research shows that sports related activities are good for the soul, health, and body (Murphy, Carbone, & the Council on Children With Disabilities, 2008). This idea dates back to Hippocrates 460 B.C. who believed that physical activity promoted benefits to well-being, including physical, mental, psychological, and social benefits (Lakowski & Long, 2011; Murphy, Carbone, & the Council on Children With Disabilities, 2008; Wanderi, Mwisukha & Bukhala, 2009). This is true for the general population and it includes children with special needs (Mactavish & Schleien, 2000; USA GYM, 2008). Wanderi, Mwisukha, and Bukhala (2009) note, "Individuals with disabilities who participate in sports activities are less depressed, perform better academically, are more stable in behavior as well as in their overall social interactions" (p. 3).

While there are many studies that indicate the general advantages of involvement in sports, (Briere & Siegle, 2008; Moran & Block 2010; Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson, 2010), only in the past couple of decades have researchers addressed the benefits of sports for children with special needs (Briere & Siegle, 2008; Little League, 2012; Moran & Block 2010; Murphy, Carbone, & the Council on Children With Disabilities, 2008; Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson, 2010). Most of these studies focus on the child while a minimal number of studies concern themselves with volunteers who work with children with special needs, and how they perceive their experience(s). Volunteers are critical to the success of structured sports events (Bouchet & Lehe, 2010; Pauline, 2011). This research applied the concepts of social constructionism to explore and report on how volunteers made sense of their experiences working with children who have special needs in structured sports events.

Chapter Structure

This research focused on the topic of socially constructed experiences of adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events. The chapter begins with an introduction, followed by a general discussion of the background and problem. The purpose statement and research questions are identified and an overview of the design of this study is addressed. A brief summation of the conceptual framework used in this study is presented. The importance of the study is described

including significance, relevance, and originality. This is followed by a discussion of assumptions and operational definitions. Finally, a summary concludes the chapter.

Background

Noah was a child with special needs. When his parents were looking for some sports and recreation activities for their son, they found very few available opportunities. Like many parents of children with disabilities, Noah's parents advocated for their son by creating awareness in their community of the needs of children with special needs, and through creating and documenting Noah's experiences in numerous sports events on their website, Noah's Endeavor (Voelker & Voelker, 2013). Appealing to multiple audiences, including parents, coaches, and volunteers, Noah's parents illustrated through their story the importance of structured sports events for children with special needs.

The literature pertaining to structured sports events for children with special needs reveals how crucial it is for children with special needs to have an opportunity to participate in organized sports activities. For the purposes of this study, structured sports events are organized activities that provide benefits to children for motor skills development, promotion of physical activity, building of self-confidence and self-esteem, and creation of social interaction with peers (Briere & Siegle, 2008; Moran & Block 2010; Spencer-Cavaliere, & Watkinson, 2010). The literature about structured sports events identifies three primary avenues for children with special needs to participate - community-based recreation, sports camps, and Special Olympics games.

Community-based recreation programs provide sports opportunities for children and their families within the local community. A particular strength of community-based recreation is the ability to create programs to fit the needs of the local community members. As the community members' needs evolve, the community-based recreation programs may change to accommodate the needs of the local community members, including requests to provide sports events for children with special needs. Some of the community-based recreation activities illustrated in the literature include the creation of the Challenger Leagues in 1989, the E-Soccer League in 2000, and the Boston Adaptive Ballet in 2002 (Boston Ballet, 2013; E-Soccer, 2012; Little League, 2012).

In addition to community-based recreation programs, sports camps have played a central role in offering programs for children with special needs, beginning as early as the 1970s. For example, the United Cerebral Palsy organization, in concert with their local offices, has organized sports camp experiences for children with special needs. Several other organizations have also operated sports camps for children with specific special needs: camps for children with visual impairments, deaf/hard of hearing, autism, wheelchair-bound, and intellectual disabilities, to name a few. As the value of the sports camp experience has grown, so too has the variety of camp offerings for children with special needs.

In the 1960s, Eunice Kennedy Shriver was at the forefront of organizing structured sports events for children with special needs when she created Camp Shriver

for children with Down Syndrome. Initially, Camp Shriver was held at the Shriver residence and quickly grew into an international organization of over 4 million athletes, now known as Special Olympics (Special Olympics, 2012d). The athletes train and participate in local sports events prior to qualifying for regional, national, and international games.

The growth of structured sports events for children with special needs has been tremendous, and is ongoing. The success of structured sports events for children with special needs has been due largely to the commitment of a host of volunteers to organize, train, coach, and support the athletes and sports events (Bouchet & Lehe, 2010; Pauline, 2011). Literature on adult volunteers dates back to the 1960s. Nonprofit organizations rely on volunteer help for the success of their operations. Volunteering has also experienced a growth spurt with a focus on serving one's community. The current literature focuses on the motivations and benefits of volunteering, for the nonprofit organizations, as well as for the volunteers (Bang & Ross, 2009; Bouchet & Lehe, 2010; Pauline, 2011). However, little has been written about how the volunteers make sense of their experience. The literature that does exist indicates that volunteers want to feel that they make a difference (Bang & Ross, 2009). There is also a call for more research in this area (Bang & Ross, 2009; Bouchet & Lehe, 2010; Giannoulakis, Wang, & Gray, 2008). Therefore, I sought to understand how adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events socially constructed their experiences.

Problem Statement

As several studies have indicated, there are numerous benefits for children with special needs from participating in structured sports events (Briere & Siegle, 2008; Little League, 2012; Moran & Block 2010; Murphy, Carbone, & the Council on Children With Disabilities, 2008; Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson, 2010), and volunteers are critical to structured sports events for children with special needs (Bang & Ross, 2009; Bouchet & Lehe, 2010; Giannoulakis, Wang, & Gray, 2008; Pauline, 2011; Special Olympics, 2012g). However, there is sparse literature that gives voice to volunteers who work with children with special needs, and even less written about volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events. In addition, little research exists applying social constructionism, as a framework to elucidate volunteers' experiences.

Purpose Statement and Research Question

The purpose of this study was to examine the socially constructed experiences of adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events. The primary research question was, *How are the experiences of adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events constructed?*

Study Design and Conceptual Framework

Qualitative research is often used when the topic has not been widely researched (Creswell, 2005). The focus of this study, socially constructed experiences of adult

volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events, has received little attention in the literature. Therefore, the design selected for this study was qualitative and utilizes the Dynamic Narrative Approach (DNA) (Hyatt, 2011) as the primary research method. This method employs participants' stories and/or narratives as the key data collection component.

After a review of the extant literature, including journal articles, academic books, and websites, the following themes emerged from each of the integral literature segments of social constructionism, structured sports events, and adult volunteers: (1) Each of these primary literature streams focused on positive and socially valuable experiences (Bouchet & Lehe, 2010; Cooperrider, Barrett, & Srivastva, 1995; Khoo & Englehorn, 2011; Whitney & Gibbs, 2006). (2) In addition, there were elements of participatory and cooperative components to all of the primary literature streams of social constructionism, structured sports events, and adult volunteers (Bang & Ross, 2009; Gergen, 2013; Misener, Doherty, & Hamm-Kerwin, 2010; Moran & Block, 2010). (3) Each of these literature segments also had a focus on promoting learning (Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009; Gergen, 2009; Hosking, 2011; Penney McGee, Anderson, & Wilkins, 2012). These recurring themes form the conceptual framework for this study and were used to guide the development of the research question.

Significance, Relevance, and Originality

While there is literature on structured sports events for children with special needs, adult volunteers, and on social constructionism, little has been written on how the experiences of adult volunteers who work with children with special needs are socially constructed. This study aimed to explore this gap, and significantly add to the literature. Results of this study may be used by researchers, nonprofit organizations, leaders, and those who work with children with special needs, in structured sports events, who may find these results relevant to their research and practice. Learning about how adult volunteers' experiences in working with children with special needs in structured sports events are socially constructed, can assist leaders and those working in nonprofit organizations to understand and utilize the results from this study to further their organizational goals, and their volunteer efforts.

In this study, originality can be found in the topic, the sources of data, and the research method. The topic is original because little has been written on how adult volunteers construct, and make meaning, of their experiences working with children with special needs in structured sports events. The sources of data, the participants' stories and narratives, are original to the extent that all participants' stories are based on their perspectives and on the discourses through which they make meaning of their experiences, individually and together, as well as how they choose to share those experiences. The research method, the Dynamic Narrative Approach (DNA), is a 21st century qualitative method that encourages each participant to contribute their stories or narratives, ultimately constructing collective meaning. The DNA combines the traditions of storytelling with technology as a contemporary collection method (Hyatt, 2011).

As a teacher with a special education credential, I have a certain amount of knowledge and expertise in this field of practice. I am an Adapted Physical Education Specialist. I teach physical education to children with special needs. I work with children to develop their skills, and social involvement in games and activities, through adaptations, accommodations, and modifications to activities, equipment, and situations. I am able to deliver physical education subject content to children with special needs in a modified curriculum. Many of my students participate in school organized games, and some also participate in structured sports events outside of school, in their local communities.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were included as part of this study. I made every attempt to minimize any research bias by using snowballing, network sampling, to identify participants, creating open-ended, semi-structured interview questions to allow the participants to share their stories, and consulted my advisor throughout the process. In addition, I followed up with participants to clarify the responses that seemed unclear, rather than making an assumption based on my knowledge and experience of working with children with special needs in structured sports events. The participants' answers to the interview questions were treated as indicative of what they experienced and believed. In writing their responses, they needed to really think about their response more than just presenting a quick reply off the top of their head. Through sharing their experiences in writing, the participants were able to express their thoughts and feelings about their volunteer experience, in order to answer the research question.

Criteria

The following criteria were included as part of this study: In order for the participants to qualify for this study, they needed to have experience as adult volunteers working with children in structured sports events. In addition, the participants needed to be able to use their computers to answer and share their experiences through email exchange, since the use of technology was the vehicle for this socially constructed phenomenon.

Descriptions and Definition of Terms

The following descriptions and definition of terms were presented here as a brief overview of the keys terms used in this study. This section is meant to be a snapshot of the key terms and their meaning, rather than a comprehensive coverage. I have covered each of these terms in greater detail in chapter 2 – the literature review.

- **Adult volunteers:** Adult volunteers are people who donate their time without getting monetary compensation to support people or causes that have meaning for them (Sharififar, Ganjouie, Tondnevis, & Zarei, 2011). In terms of this study, I am exploring how adult volunteers make meaning out of their

volunteer experiences of working with children with special needs in structured sports events.

- **Children with disabilities:** This is a term that has and continues to be used to describe children with special needs, whether these be physical, cognitive, psychological, or a combinations of needs who require additional accommodations to access services, including educational, sports, and recreational activities.
- **Children with special needs:** Children who have been identified as having physical, psychological, or cognitive needs, and therefore require additional services to access educational, sports and recreational activities (Right To Play International, 2008).
- **Community-based recreation:** Kraus (1966) defines community recreation as an activity unrelated to work, that brings great enjoyment to the participant, and "is designed to meet constructive and socially worthwhile goals of the individual participant, the group and the society at large" (p. 7). Many community-based recreation programs are operated through local, city, county, state, and national recreation departments, specialty organizations, for example, United Cerebral Palsy, United Way, UNICEF, to name a few (Veal, 1992).
- **Disability: "**is the product of social, political, economic, and cultural practice" (Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, 2011, p. 270). The social model of disability sees disability "as a constructed category, not one bred to the bone," according to Davis (2013, p. 264). The social model of disability (also referred to as the British model) "sees a distinction between impairment and disability. Impairment is the physical aspect of lacking an arm or a leg. Disability is the social process that turns an impairment into a negative by creating barriers to access" (Davis, 2013, p. 265).
- **Disability Studies:** programs and research related to the study of disability which have ties/origins to activism with concerns for social justice issues (Grue, 2011). Connor and Gabel (2013) state that "the origin of disability studies lies in social activism began by people with dis/abilities" (p. 503). He expands this concept further, "the dis/ability rights movement is fueled by recognition that people with dis/abilities experience similar circumstances" to other disenfranchised/minority groups, such as people of color, women, and the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer (LGBTQ movement) (Connor & Gabel, 2013, p. 503).
- **Discourse:** Burr (2003) defines discourse as a "term used primarily in two senses: (1) to refer to a systematic, coherent set of images, metaphors and so on that construct an object in a particular way, and (2) to refer to the actual spoken interchanges between people" (p. 202). Further, Monk, Winslade, and Sinclair (2008) state that "in a general sense, discourse is both the process of talk and interaction between people and the products of that interaction" (p. 2).
- **Discourse of Disability:** the ongoing discussions, conversations, and dialog surrounding the definition, and perspectives on, "What is disability?" based on the prevailing models of disability. Grue (2011) suggests that "a discourse analysis perspective is needed in disability studies," and that, "a greater

awareness of discourse analysis will aid disability studies, both in terms of theoretical development and in furthering its goals of social change" (p. 532).

- **Inclusion:** refers to the method of providing all children access to programs and services with the general population (for example, 'mainstreaming'), with the necessary supports in place. Inclusion can also describe others involved in the activity (for example, coaches, parents, and volunteers). In addition, inclusion requires program planning and implementation, with the requisite training and resources necessary for delivery of these programs and services (L. Anderson, 2012; Dattilo, 2002; Stroud, Miller, Schleien, & Stone, 2011).
- **Impairment:** refers to "variations that exist in human behavior, appearance, functioning, sensory acuity, and cognitive processing" (Linton, 1988, p. 2 as cited in Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, 2011, p. 270). "Impairment was interpreted as impairment of an individual's mind or body, while disability is considered a social construction" (Modern Language Association as in Wikipedia, 2015).
- **Participatory and cooperative:** A successful community-based recreation program is created through the participation and cooperation of the children and all of the community members—families, volunteers, and community supporters (Bullock & Mahon, 1997). Many local recreation programs have offered opportunities for children to participate with their able-bodied peers in sports and make accommodations, as needed for them to participate. Other groups, such as the Little League, have created a parallel division, the Challenger League, for children with special needs to participate in a baseball game with their special needs peers. Many children, parents, adults, and others volunteer to work with the children with special needs to make this a memorable experience.
- **Positive and socially valuable:** Creating a positive and socially valuable experience in community-based recreation was key to a successful program. Research has shown that it is important for organizers to understand and address the needs of every child, and to make it a meaningful experience for each of them (Rynders, Schleien, Meyer, Vandercook, Mustonen, Colond, & Olson, 1993). A true test of whether an activity is positive and socially valuable can be seen year after year when the same children with special needs return for another season of sports and bring their friends to participate in the sport with them, for example, the Challenger Little League and e-Soccer League are prime examples of an ongoing positive and socially valuable experience.
- **Promotes learning:** Community-based recreation programs provide opportunities for learning through sports and activities including skills acquisition development, improved competencies and advancement of skills, development of positive attitudes, and the building of effective work habits (Penney McGee, Anderson, & Wilkins, 2012). Programs that are participatory and cooperative, as well as positive and socially valuable, that are able to promote learning too, are considered invaluable assets to our children with special needs, their families, and their communities. It is truly a trifecta of worthwhile benefits with immeasurable returns.

- **Social constructionism:** Social constructionism "locates the source of meaning, value and action in the relational connection among people. It is through relational processes that we create the world in which we most want to live and work" (Taos Institute Website, Theoretical Background and Mission Statement, 2013, para.1). "We live in worlds of meaning. We understand and value the world and ourselves in ways that emerge from our personal history and shared culture" (Gergen, Taos Institute Website, Social Construction: Orienting Principles, 2013). In this study, I am looking at the experiences of the adult volunteers of working with children with special needs in sports events through the lens of social constructionism. The participants in this study will share their stories/experiences with me and I will share all the stories with the other participants, who may then add more to their stories, in a socially constructed manner. I will intentionally seek out the relational context of the production of their stories and experiences, as I will with the meanings they make of them.
- **Special Olympics (SO):** Special Olympics is a global organization that offers sport training and competition in the form of games to people with special needs (Harada & Siperstein, 2009). Special Olympics works with children with special needs in local communities and within schools throughout the year. State and National competitions occur at various times during the year, culminating in the World Games every four years. I was a sport volunteer for the World Games 2015 in Los Angeles and carried a country 'sign' into the Coliseum for the closing ceremonies.
- **Sports:** Sports are organized physical activities that provide an avenue for physical exercise and expression with physical, psychological, and social benefits (Right To Play International, 2008). Sports are available through community-based recreation programs, sports camps, and school programs for children and adults. Sports programs exist through these same organizations and new ones are being created for children with special needs.
- **Sports camps:** Sports camps are structured sports activities that focus in-depth on a specific sport for a set amount of time, such as a baseball day camp meeting daily for one week in July (Goodwin, Lieberman, Johnston, & Leo, 2011). The opportunities for sports camps for children with special needs have been increasing as parents and communities members create, develop, and are vocal about providing available experiences for their children. Some of these sports camps provide an inclusive situation, where children with special needs and able-bodied children experience the sports camp together. In addition, there are sports camps for children with special needs that operate specifically for children with special needs (for example, sports camps for children with cerebral palsy, visually impairments, or deafness).
- **Structured [framework]:** Community-based recreation programs are organized and structured, and often receive governmental funding. These programs have systems and structures set up to meet the needs of children with special needs, through strategic program planning, administration of assessments, implementation, training of staff, and ongoing evaluation of the programs (Miller, Schleien, & Lausier, 2009).

- **Structured sports events:** Sports events that are organized and structured to provide benefits to children for motor skills development, promotion of physical activity, building of self-confidence and self-esteem, and creation of social interaction with peers (Briere & Siegle, 2008; Moran & Block, 2010; Spencer-Cavaliere, & Watkinson, 2010). I coined the term 'structured sports events' to describe a variety of sports events that have structures and organizations in place to provide a rewarding sport experience for all children, but especially children with special needs. In fact, all sports structure participation in some way. That is why sports have rules, referees/umpires and video replays. Moreover, it is not uncommon for sports to be structured in a way that benefits younger participants (for example lowered hoops for children learning basketball). The only difference here is that the structuring is organized to ameliorate participation for children with special needs.

Summary

This chapter contained an introduction to the study, a discussion of the background problem, a purpose statement, the research questions, and an overview of the design. It also included a brief summation of the conceptual framework of the study, the importance of the study including significance, relevance, and originality, a discussion of assumptions and criteria, and a list of operational definitions.

The purpose of the study was to examine the socially constructed experiences of adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events. This study is qualitative in nature and this approach was selected because it provided the best method to answer the research question. It was also a useful method when there were few studies available. Creswell (2005) indicated that qualitative research has often been used when the topic has not been widely researched.

The participants consisted of adult volunteers who had experience working with children with special needs in structured sports events. The participants had access to technology and were willing to share their experiences in a socially constructed process.

The conceptual framework was culled from the literature review. The following three themes emerged from the literature review to form the conceptual framework: structured sports events are considered positive and socially valuable (Bouchet & Lehe, 2010; Cooperrider, Barrett, & Srivastva, 1995; Khoo & Englehorn, 2011; Whitney & Gibbs, 2006), structured sports events are participatory and cooperative (Bang & Ross, 2009; Gergen, 2013; Misener, Doherty, & Hamm-Kerwin, 2010; Moran & Block, 2010) and structured sports events promote learning (Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009; Gergen, 2009; Hosking, 2011; Penney McGee, Anderson, & Wilkins, 2012).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past fifty years, there has been an increase in structured sports events for children with special needs. It is documented in the research literature that participation in sports and physical activities helps to promote health and well-being for children with special needs (Wanderi, Mwisukha, & Bukhala, 2009). The success of these events is largely attributed to the involvement of many, including coaches, families, volunteers, and organizational support. Volunteers play an important role in supporting children with special needs in sports events and yet, there are few studies focused on the volunteers themselves. New understandings of the lived experiences of adult volunteers can be gained through this research. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the way that experiences of adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events are socially constructed.

Chapter Structure

This chapter contains literature that addresses the purpose and framework of thinking of the study. The following key concepts will be presented: discourse of disability, social constructionism, structured sports events for children with special needs, and adults who volunteer for these events. At the end of each of these sections, a mini-summary of the emerging themes will be discussed. Finally, this chapter concludes with an overall summary of the argument that the literature informs.

Discourse of Disability

Discourse is a way to engage in conversation that "allows us to capture more of the complexity of the situations in which people live" (Monk, Winslade, & Sinclair, 2008, p. 1). Burr (2003) defines discourse as a "term used primarily in two senses: (1) to refer to a systematic, coherent set of images, metaphors and so on that construct an object in a particular way, and (2) to refer to the actual spoken interchanges between people" (p. 202). Bakhtin (1935) emphasizes the ways in which discourse is produced in dialogue: "the dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is, of course, a property of any discourse" (cited in Holquist & Emerson, 1981, p. 279). Discourse is, therefore, a result of people participating in dialogue, and thus creating "the (relatively) protracted and socially meaningful (collective) saturation of language with specific (and consequently limiting) intentions and accents" (Bakhtin, 1935, cited in Holquist & Emerson, 1981, p. 292). Further, Bakhtin (1935) states "form and content are one" and thus, "discourse is a social phenomenon – social throughout its entire range" (cited in Holquist & Emerson, 1981, p. 482). As such, discourse will be a vehicle for participants to share their experiences and make meaning of their volunteer experiences in this study.

Just as discourse is a social phenomenon, the meaning of the term disability is also socially constructed from the meaning attached to the different experiences of people involved, whether they identify with a disability, know someone with a disability, or have never encountered someone with a disability (Corker, 1999; Oliver, 1996; Shakespeare,

1994). Gergen (1994) explains the concept of deficit discourse as a means to identify someone who is unable to do something, access somewhere, perform something, or understand concepts. The term deficit discourse occurs when the individual is identified as the source of their deficits and inadequacies (Gergen, 1994). As such, the concept of disability is suffused with social and political influence and the evolution of the terms used and the rights of people with disabilities have been tied to social justice movements similar to those for minorities, and other disenfranchised groups of people (Corker, 1999; Grue, 2011; Oliver, 1996; Shakespeare, 1994). The terms disability and impairment have been used somewhat interchangeably in the literature. More recently, however, researchers have made a concerted effort to make a clear distinction between these terms (Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, 2010). Linton (1998) defines impairment as "variations that exist in human behavior, appearance, functioning, sensory acuity, and cognitive processing" (p. 2). Other disability studies researchers suggest that disability is a social phenomenon and connected to social, political, and cultural issues of the times (Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, 2010; Berger, 2013). Many other words have been used in the past to denote a similar meaning as disability, but have faded out as the dialogue continues and the definition has evolved. Bakhtin (1935) illustrates this in his philosophy of language, in which he refers to "utterances" (cited in Holquist & Emerson, 1981). Bakhtin (1935) refers to an utterance as words or a phrase spoken in social relational context (cited in Holquist & Emerson, 1981). Thus, the terms have changed over time in response to social and political trends in the formation of utterances. Following is a discussion of the evolution of disability and disability studies.

Much has been written in scholarly literature about the definitions of disability and disability studies (Berger, 2013; Connor & Gabel, 2013; Corker and French, 1999; Davis, 2013; Grue, 2011; Linton, 1998; Oliver, 1990; Shakespeare, 1994). The disabilities studies literature in the United States refers to the person before the disability, for example "people with disabilities" rather than "disabled people" in order "to emphasize the person rather than the disability" (Berger, 2013, p. 5). In the United Kingdom and other countries, it is common to use other terms, such as "disabled person" in a more respectful manner. Disability studies, as "an interdisciplinary field of inquiry that includes representation from the social sciences, the humanities, and the medical, rehabilitation, and education professions – is vital to an understanding of humankind" (Berger, 2013, p. 3). These definitions have changed and evolved over time, as social and political movements in the UK and the USA, as well as in other countries have demanded policies and laws to address the needs and rights of people with disabilities. Results of these movements include the writings of I. K. Zola (1989) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA of 1990) in the United States, as well as, the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS of 1976) and The Disability Discrimination Act in the United Kingdom of 1995 (Corker, 1999). These policies represent landmark legislation for people with disabilities. Davis (2015) states "The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is the widest-ranging and most comprehensive piece of civil rights legislation ever passed in the United States, and it has become the model for disability-based laws around the world" (Davis, 2015, as cited on front book cover flap). While these policies were attempts to structure the looser world of utterances, they inherently had flaws and additional amendments have been enacted due

to the ongoing development of discourses to improve the policies and to ensure proper rights to people with disabilities (Corker, 1999). Disability studies researchers have provided much needed research in disabilities and helped to give a voice to people with disabilities. As an emerging field of study, disability studies will continue to mature through ongoing discourse and analysis (Grue, 2011).

Grue (2011) adds that "disability studies aim to make explicit the discourses that reproduce disability as an oppressive category" (p. 535). Through these discourses of disability, various theoretical models of disability have emerged, including the medical model, the social model, the minority model, and the gap model (Grue, 2011). The medical model has often been seen as the established way to define disability, or physical impairment. It narrows disability and impairment to medical issues requiring treatment to fix or correct something that is wrong. "It is described as an ideological framework that reduces every aspect of disability to bodily impairment, prescribes only medical treatment and normalization as appropriate interventions, and denies agency to disabled people while preserving power for medical professionals" (Grue, 2011, p. 540). For these reasons, the medical model has often been criticized and dismissed. Interestingly though, the medical model continues to be considered in conjunction with the other models, especially in government programs and policy decisions (Grue, 2011).

The social model of disability had its origins in Britain, where it focused "attention on the systemic factors that shape the meaning of disability, particularly those that have to do with the political economy" (Grue, 2011, p. 538). As a supporter of the social model, Oliver (1990, 1996) wrote extensively about the social and political oppression of people with physical disabilities. Oliver, who is a person in a wheelchair, experienced the social and political oppression that he wrote about from a deeply personal perspective, and was instrumental in advocating for people with disabilities through social and political change. Shakespeare also identifies as a person with disabilities. In contrast to Oliver, Shakespeare (2006) who originally supported it, now criticizes the social model, citing its limitations. "A social approach to disability is indispensable. But, the social model is only one of the available options for theorizing disability. More sophisticated and complex approaches are needed" (p. 220). As such, researchers continue to explore the interpretations and meanings of the social model in the social context that they occupy, at times expanding the definition (Oliver, 1990, 1996), and other times contradicting their previous work (Shakespeare, 2006). There are clearly competing discourses concerning the social model and a number of issues are not settled.

Just as disability research and legislative actions surrounded the social model of disability in Britain, disability studies research in the USA was being driven by the political climate of the times, activism and the civil rights movement. Out of this cultural climate, the minority model of disability research emerged (Grue, 2011). The minority model of disability movement identified with the discrimination felt by other minority groups. Through ongoing activism and fighting for social justice, the minority model of disability (also referred to as cultural) helped to bring awareness to the needs and rights

of people with disabilities and was key to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 being put into legislation (Grue, 2011).

The gap model of disabilities "acknowledges that a proportion of the population will at any given time have either impairments or illnesses that place certain restraints on their functional capacities" (Grue, 2011, p. 540). It is aligned with the policies and research done in the Scandinavian countries. While the gap model is not widely used, "it is the model that seems the most aware of the importance of state bureaucracies in the social construction of disability," and has a loose tie to the medical model (Grue, 2011, p. 540).

None of these four theoretical models are able to fully cover the definition of disability, but aspects of each of them can broaden the scope of disability. Each model was influenced by the social climate of a particular time and place in history. The social model originated in the UK (Corker, 1999; Grue, 2011; Oliver, 1990, 1996; Shakespeare, 2006); the minority model in the USA (Davis, 2015; Grue, 2011); the gap model in Scandinavia (Grue, 2011); and the medical model has been generally used worldwide (Davis, 2015; Grue, 2011; Oliver, 1990, 1996; Shakespeare, 2006). More recently, researchers and activists have stressed the importance of understanding the social meaning of disability – the social, cultural, and political perspective (Berger, 2013; Davis, 2015; Grue, 2011). The field of disability studies has been instrumental in driving this socio-political agenda (Grue, 2016). Disability studies aims "to understand disability as a social phenomenon, an experience that cannot be reduced to the nature of the physiological impairment" (Berger, 2013, p. 9). This is the perspective as seen from a social constructionist lens, "which understands disability as constructed by or residing in the social environment" (Berger, 2013, p. 9). This study supports the social understanding of disability both from the perspective of the children with disabilities as well as the social experience of the adult volunteers.

Discourse of disability and discourse analysis are useful for understanding and clarifying the gaps inherent in each of these models (Grue, 2011). Through discourse, a more comprehensive means of viewing disability and causation within society can be accomplished. Discourse allows us to reframe a situation so as not to cast blame on a person or situation, but rather to find ways to make access equitable to all as the norm. Language is an inherent aspect of discourse. Discourse, at its core, is about engaging in conversations about a topic and discussing, at times even arguing, different perspectives, in an effort to socially define, redefine, and essentially analyze the intricacies of a topic (Grue, 2011; Monk, Winslade, & Sinclair, 2008). In terms of discourse of disability, the prevailing definitions, now called theories, have come about through ongoing discourse exchange. Interdisciplinary researchers have compared notes and each other's research to expand and fine-tune the definition of disability. Unfortunately, at this point in time, the lines of opposition have been drawn between the researchers advocating these models with little impetus to really listen to one another. While disability studies has been instrumental in furthering the field of study, more work is needed to bring researchers together for discourse analysis of disability. Grue (2011) stresses that "a greater awareness of discourse analysis will aid disability studies, both in terms of theoretical

development and in furthering its goals of social change" (p. 532). The many discourses that the volunteers participate in while they are volunteering at the sports events will help to shape their overall experience of working with children with disabilities. Sharing their stories and experience with other volunteers will further enrich the discourse and add to their collective stories.

Social Constructionism

As has been illustrated above, the ongoing discourses in disability studies recognize that disability is a social phenomenon, a social construct. These discourses are created through the social, cultural, economic, and political climate of our times – including social interactions, research/writings, the cost of supporting people and programs, the activism and lobbying being done on behalf of people with disabilities (and their civil rights), as well as the legislation that gets passed to allow people with disabilities the rights to participate in society equitably. These discourses help us to create situations where we socially construct the meaning of 'disability.' Social constructionism will be the lens through which this study will be grounded.

In this study, I will be exploring how the adult volunteers will socially construct their experiences of working with children with special needs (I prefer to use this term in place of disabilities). A brief discussion of social constructionism follows here. The additional components of structured sports events for children with special needs, and adult volunteers will be covered in later sections.

Social constructionism developed from various disciplines, mainly philosophy, psychology, sociology, education, and secondarily from others in the social sciences. Social construction is most often described as "shared versions of knowledge" (Burr, 2003, p. 4). The available literature represents social constructionism as interdisciplinary and it is not clearly limited by time or dates but rather spans many centuries. To provide context, this section will discuss social constructionism within the postmodern era, beginning with the three aspects of origins of social constructionism as suggested by Gergen (2009): objectivity, language, and constructionism and science.

Objectivity

Gergen (2009) discusses objectivity in terms of "the crisis of value neutrality" (p. 14) positing that all ideas and accounts are value-laden, even though they appear to be "neutral claims to truth" (p. 15). McNamee (2004) concurs with Gergen, suggesting that each community constructs its own values and truths based on the experiences of its members. Anderson (2012) supports this idea, suggesting that beliefs, norms, and truths are created in communities through social discourse.

Further evidence of this is presented by Srivastva and Barrett (1988) who propose that groups establish their truths through sense making in a participatory social process by the members constructing their experiences. In speaking about appreciative inquiry (AI), Whitney and Gibbs (2006) offer that it provides an opportunity for groups of people

to come together and share their ideas for change through a series of positive conversations and activities. In exploring organizational studies, Hosking (2011) adds to this dialogue asserting a constructionist perspective, "that knowledge can never be fully objective" (p. 8). Winslade and Monk (2000) support Hosking's viewpoint in their book about mediation, contending that it is impossible to be purely objective in narratives about accounts of reality as true or false. In her book, Burr (2003) aligns herself with these ideas, adding that knowledge is created by looking through the different lenses of the persons involved. An example of these concepts can be found in Martinez, Zeelenberg, and Rijsman's (2010) study, examining the effect of emotions in social decision-making. The authors found that emotions elicit different responses especially related to interdependent decisions. In *The Social Construction of Organizations,* Hosking and McNamee (2006) agree and suggest that "a central premise of social construction is that social realities are social achievements produced by people coordinating their activities" (p. 25). In this study, the adult volunteers will socially construct, make meaning of the discourse that govern their volunteer experiences by sharing their responses.

Language

A social constructionist lens makes central the role of language in knowledge. "Making sense is a matter of following the rules of language" (Gergen, 2009, p. 17). Knowledge, language, and dialogue are intertwined in learning and social development, and are crucial to ongoing relational interactions (H. Anderson, 2012). This includes the experience of disability. The language of our conversations influences the way we engage and relate to others. Srivastva and Barrett (1988) provide further support discussing language as a method that groups can use to describe their experiences. Group members participate through language, transforming their views and actions. In his conference presentation *The Language of Evaluation,* Witkin (2002) adds to the conversation, stating that the role of language is "to comprehend, understand, analyze, and communicate our activities" (p. 1). One implication is that participants in my study must construct their perceptions of structured sports events and of their own volunteering to participate in them also in language and, therefore, must deploy some discourse to do so.

Moving from small groups to larger organizations, Cooperrider, Barrett, and Srivastva (1995) assert that knowledge of our professional environment is directly related to language. In her article about organizational studies, Hosking (2011) affirms this concept, suggesting that by considering a variety of social perspectives, relational constructionism provides a venue to explore avenues of reflection through dialog. Echoing some of these thoughts are Bushe and Marshak (2009), who emphasize the importance of language and dialogic used in Organizational Development (OD) and social constructionism. Cunliffe (2004) adds that the language we use, both written and oral, and the means by which we communicate, help us to construct our realities, including for my purposes here, the particular reality that is a structured sports event. Weick (2006), famous for his writings on organizational sense-making, posits that "organizing is the act of trying to hold things together by such means as text and

conversation, justification, faith, mutual effort (heedful interrelating), transactive memory, resilience, vocabulary, and by seeing what we say in order to assign it to familiar categories" (p. 1731). This will be demonstrated as the volunteers share their stories and experiences of working with the children with disabilities in a structured sports event, often very different events, and certainly similar yet different experiences. In addition to organizational studies and teams, other disciplines weigh in on social constructionism. In her writings related to gender studies, Mary Gergen (2001) contends that because "the nature of language is not to reflect the world, but to construct it, we are encouraged to imagine alternative ways to theorize things" (p. 13). In this study, the adult volunteers will share their experiences of working with children with special needs through language and the sharing of dialogue with each other.

Constructionism and Science

Constructionism, through its critique of language and objectivity, has challenged the scientific way of conducting research. "The constructionist challenge to scientific truth has been the most powerful in its consequences" (Gergen, 2009, p. 21). In a 2012 article, Shotter reinforces Gergen's statement, noting that some issues do not lend themselves to solutions of deductive reasoning using scientific methods. In speaking of organizational studies, Cooperrider, Barrett, and Srivastva (1995) concur with Gergen and take a postmodernist view suggesting scientific research is also socially constructed. Further support for this notion is offered by Hosking (2011), who posits that science is closely linked to social research activities and thus, by default, social construction. Lock & Strong (2010) share these ideas and discuss how the focus in empirical science on facts and figures runs counter to how people define their social realities. For this study, I will be using the lens of social constructionism to examine how the volunteers will use discourse to share their experiences of working with children with disabilities in structured sports events.

In the area of gender studies, Mary Gergen (2001) states:

> The social constructionist position does not presume that the ways that things are construed in any situation are final. This condition applies across the spectrum of discourses, without exemption, to physics and economics, as well as to other parts of social life. (p. 13)

The literature about social constructionism spans many fields of study. While the areas of research are diverse, the grounding of social construction theory and practice prevails, with the three aspects of social constructionism: critique of objectivity, a specific understanding of the role of language, and how these contribute to the construction of science (Gergen, 2009). Therefore, this study will use these aspects of social constructionism to learn about the volunteers' experiences in working with the children with disabilities in structured sports events.

In a review of the social constructionist literature, several themes from the literature emerged: (1) the experiences were positive and socially valuable (Gergen,

2013; Whitney & Gibbs, 2006), (2) the experiences were participatory and cooperative (Cooperrider, Barrett, & Srivastva, 1995; Hosking & McNamee, 2006; Martinez, Zeelenberg, & Rijsman, 2010; McNamee, 2004; Srivastva & Barrett, 1988; Weick, 2006); and (3) the experiences promoted learning (H. Anderson, 2012; M. Gergen, 2009; Hosking, 2011). Several authors identify social constructionism as positive and socially valuable in the literature. In Appreciative Inquiry (AI), Whitney and Gibbs (2006) reiterate that at its core, AI focuses on the positive social experiences of the people in the change process. Gergen (2013) maintains that meaning is socially constructed through social interaction and discourse. In addition, social constructionism is described by some authors as participatory and cooperative. In regards to using language to cooperate, Srivastva and Barrett (1988) talk about metaphors in relation to group development. Hosking (2011) writes about learning as a collaborative effort in which meaning is constructed by all involved. In this study, the volunteers will share their experiences of working with children with disabilities in structured sports events. It will be interesting to see the themes that surface through their shared stories and experiences.

Structured Sports Events for Children with Special Needs

Our language and the terms we use are an important component of our discourse. Through the exploration of the literature for this study, I have created a term that summarized for me (and hopefully for others) the sports activities that had various elements of organization and structure to them. The term I came up with that seemed to epitomize what I was finding in the literature and on the internet is 'structured sports events'. I realize that this is my perspective of an organized sports activity or event, but I am offering it to the reader as key concept for my study. In keeping with this concept, I will delve into the literature to share my findings with you.

Structured sports events for children with special needs offer benefits for developing motor skills, promoting physical activity, building self-confidence and self-esteem, and creating social interaction with peers (Briere & Siegle, 2008; Moran & Block 2010; Murphy, Carbone, & the Council on Children With Disabilities, 2008; Spencer-Cavaliere, & Watkinson, 2010). While children with special needs may require modifications or adaptations of activities to participate in sports events, structured sports events are equally as valuable to them as to children without disabilities. Some of the modifications and adaptations that can be made include equipment (for example, a batting tee, a larger softer ball, fatter bats, shorter distances to the bases), more time to complete tasks, alternative game rules to be more user friendly, buddy players to assist with tasks, and options for the children to choose from when playing in a sports event.

Much literature discusses the inherent value of structured sports events for children with special needs, and some recent literature documents the added benefits of providing structured sports events in an inclusive setting, meaning that children with special needs participate with children without disabilities in sports events (Briere & Siegle, 2008; Little League, 2012; Moran & Block 2010; Murphy, Carbone, & the Council on Children With Disabilities, 2008; Spencer-Cavaliere, & Watkinson, 2010).

Some examples of structured sports events for children with special needs that are situated locally and nationally include recreation programs, the Special Olympics, the Little League Challenger Division, E-Soccer Inclusive Soccer Program, the physical education setting, the United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Middle Tennessee Sports and Recreation Program, Ability First Camp, as well as other sports camps (Briere & Siegle, 2008; Little League, 2012; The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, 2006; United Cerebral Palsy of Middle Tennessee Sports and Recreation Program, 2013). Key authors in the literature divide Structured Sports Events for Children with Special Needs into three sections: Community-Based Recreation, Sports Camps, and Special Olympics. All of these structured sports events share some common elements of social constructionism - positive, social, and participatory experiences that create meaningful stories.

Community-Based Recreation

Many governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGO) such as the United Nations (2007) have conducted extensive research and published guidelines about sport and persons with disabilities that address the need for governments to enact legislation to provide equal access to sport and recreation for persons with special needs. Specifically related to children with disabilities, Article 30 of the United Nations (UN) *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2007) establishes "that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation and leisure and sporting activities" (p. Section 5.d). This is an example of legislation that supports the social model of disability for children with disabilities to have equal access to sports activities. Right to Play International's (2008) publication *Harnessing the Power for Development and Peace: Recommendations to Governments*, states, "The community impact and individual impact of sport help reduce the isolation of persons with disabilities and integrate them more fully into community life" (p. 173). As such, this may be seen as an example of both the social and minority models of disability.

One might ask about the general construction of sports activities in the community. What sort of life do they construct for people? In addition to providing a venue for physical activities, it has been suggested that sports create opportunities for all persons, with and without disabilities, to learn new skills, foster new friendships, develop social skills, and take responsibility (Right to Play International, 2008). Sports activities are useful for bridging connections between all people while focusing on the activity rather than the disability. In other words they facilitate the construction of citizenship. "Through sport, persons with disabilities learn vital social interaction skills, develop independence, and become empowered to lead and make change happen" (Right to Play International, 2008, p. 172).

Cowart, Saylor, Dingle, and Mainor (2004) examine how recreational activities provide a catalyst for youth with and without disabilities to develop social skills. "One of the ways children with disabilities learn social skills is through recreation" (p. 29). The authors illustrate that the social aspects of recreation activities, therefore, have far-reaching implications for children with special needs, including improved social skills, increased physical activity, and promoting more family involvement in recreation

activities. Cowart, Saylor, Dingle, and Mainor (2004) cite other research that "supported the position that participation in structured recreation improves the social competence of participants" (p. 29).

Austin, Lee, and Getz (2008) stress the importance of community-based recreation for all persons with and without disabilities, as well as providing a variety of strategies to create effective community-based recreation services for children with disabilities. Several other authors weigh in on the value of community-based recreation, including Dattilo (2002), who argues that everyone in a community has the inherent right to be included in all activities. Such rights have not always been recognized, however, until recently. That they are now recognized speaks to a discourse created that allows for such an idea to be expressed as a right. Bullock and Mahon (1997) believe that everyone has the right to be included in the activities they choose to participate in, with the modifications, accommodations, and supports necessary for full participation in the activities. In other words, any activity can be constructed to allow persons with disabilities to enjoy participation in them. Right to Play International (2008) illustrates that "sport creates extensive horizontal webs of relationships at the community level (p. 5)." The authors continue, "These community sport networks, when inclusive, are an important source of social networking, helping to combat exclusion and fostering community capacity to work collectively to realize opportunities and address challenges" (p. 5).

Defining community-based recreation for children with special needs, Kraus (1966) defines community recreation as an activity unrelated to work, that brings great enjoyment to the participant, and "is designed to meet constructive and socially worthwhile goals of the individual participant, the group and the society at large" (p. 7). Torkildsen (1986) agrees with Kraus and adds:

> Recreation can be viewed as personal experience (what it does to a person), as activities (the forms it takes) or as an institution (the structure in which it is made available to the community). Taken yet another way recreation can be viewed as a process (what happens to an individual) and as a structure [the framework in which recreation is practiced]. (p. 164)

One might add that both processes and structures are constructed through discourse. Stroud, Miller, Schleien, and Stone (2011) suggest that inclusive recreation service, at its core, is about the discourse of social inclusion; everyone is involved in recreation activities, and the focus of the experience is participating together in sports for individuals with and without disabilities. Miller (2009) notes that recreation programs should align their service delivery systems and processes with the needs of their community. Further, the author emphasizes the significance of providing recreation programs and inclusive services individualized to their community members. Nolan (2005) concurs with Miller and stresses how inclusive recreation services extend well beyond the activity and the discourse of inclusion must be valued by all entities in the community who learn through additional training to embrace the value of inclusion.

Like many authors, Shank, Coyle, Boyd, and Kinney (1996) discuss how community recreation activities help to improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities, physically, mentally, and socially. Schleien, Green, and Stone (1999) stress the importance of community recreation in fostering social inclusion for persons with disabilities, especially in providing opportunities for meeting and developing friendships. Rynders, Schleien, Meyer, Vandercook, Mustonen, Colond, and Olson (1993) present a body of research chronicling the value of community structured recreation programs for children with and without disabilities. Participation, cooperation, and positive social interaction are areas of particular discursive focus for the authors of journal articles and academic texts cited in this literature review.

A review and synthesis of the literature reveals common descriptors that the authors use to define community-based recreation. For the purposes of this study, community-based recreation for children with special needs is described as encompassing the following characteristics: (1) the experiences occurred in a structured [framework] environment, (2) the experiences were positive and socially valuable, (3) the experiences were participatory and cooperative, (4) the experiences were inclusive [open to everyone], and (5) the experiences promoted learning.

Community-based recreation is structured [framework]. Many traditional community-based recreation programs are organized and funded through local city and government agencies. Community recreation programs use strategies to address the needs of children with special needs by administering assessments, planning appropriate community activities, implementing activities in the community setting, and ultimately evaluating the outcome of the programs (Miller, Schleien, & Lausier, 2009). A number of community-based recreation programs exist locally, nationally, and globally. Many of these programs are structured to serve children with special needs, such as The Challenger Division of Little League, E-Soccer Inclusive Soccer Program, and the Boston Ballet Adaptive Dance Program. They cohere together because and to the extent that, they are based in a similar or consistent discourse.

The Challenger Division was, for example, organized in 1989 as a separate division of the Little League to provide a venue for children with special needs to play baseball and or softball. The children are placed on teams based on their ability level (rather than by age), and are given choices about how to bat (for example, off the tee, pitched by coach, pitched by other team), field the ball, run the bases, and whether to perform these activities alone or with their Challenger Buddy, a child without disabilities. In the Challenger games, everyone takes a turn at bat before switching sides with the other team on the field. The Challenger practices and games are scheduled events every week, at specific playing sites. With over 900 Challenger Divisions across the country, the USA, this is a complex system which requires a great deal of planning and organization (Little League, 2012).

Much like the Challenger Division, the E-Soccer Inclusive Soccer Program was formed in 2000 to create a community recreation program in which children with special needs could learn to play and enjoy soccer in a structured team environment (E-Soccer,

2011). The program is designed to provide inclusive soccer for children with and without special needs (E-Soccer, 2011). The E-Soccer Program schedules games for children, collaborates with the U.S. Coaching organization for coaches training and clinics, and receives assistance from college soccer players and college coaches to assist the E-Soccer volunteer coaches. Moreover, the E-Soccer Program shares stories on their website, profiling young E-Soccer players (E-Soccer, 2011).

Another structured community-based program is the Boston Ballet Adaptive Dance program which, for the past eleven years, has actively taught children with special needs to dance and express themselves creatively (Boston Ballet, 2013). The Adaptive Dance Program collaborates with the physical therapy program at Children's Hospital in Boston to offer Fall and Spring courses for children with special needs at multiple locations each term. The dance teachers have been trained to work with children with special needs and use accommodations, modifications, and supports to enhance learning and ensure the safety of each child (Boston Ballet, 2013).

Community-based recreation is positive and socially valuable. An important aspect of community-based recreation is to create an overall positive and socially valuable experience for the children, families, volunteers, and community (Schleien, Fahnestock, Green, & Rynders, 1990). It is important for community-based recreation sports and activities to meet the needs of all participants including children with special needs. Key components for creating a positive and socially valuable setting in community-based recreation is to understand each child's needs and interests as well as ways to make the experience meaningful for them through the use of appropriate accommodations, modifications, and supports (in other words to intentionally shape the social construction of the sports activity in particular ways). Rynders, Schleien, Meyer, Vandercook, Mustonen, Colond, and Olson (1993) concluded that positive and socially valuable experiences do not just happen, they must be planned for and coordinated in a structured way to ensure that both children with and without special needs learn how to interact together, thus creating a positive and socially valuable community-based recreation experience.

Hall (2005) states that living well (itself a socially constructed concept) for children with special needs requires that they be active and participate in community-based recreation sports and activities for physical, psychological, and social well-being, defined as quality of life. Quality of life is, of course, not just a "natural" state, however. It can only be understood within a discourse that expresses specific values for how people should live. An example of a program deemed positive and socially valuable is the United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Middle Tennessee Sports and Recreation Program whose motto is "living without limits for people with disabilities" (United Cerebral Palsy of Middle Tennessee, 2013). UCP of Middle Tennessee Sports and Recreation Program offers ongoing sports and activities for children with special needs and their families once a week and on occasional weekends, in which they can learn new skills, practice these skills, and participate in positive and socially valuable experiences (United Cerebral Palsy of Middle Tennessee, 2013). Cowart, Saylor, Dingle, and Mainor (2004) stress that active engagement in community-based recreation sports and activities supports positive

social skills and interaction for all children, most particularly for children with special needs. Community-based recreation programs can be deemed successful when those engaged in the activities report on the positive and socially valuable experience (Stroud, Miller, Schleien, & Stone, 2011).

Community-based recreation is participatory and cooperative. Community-based recreation activities that are successful involve many people in the process of planning, implementing, and execution of the sports and activities. One of the ways to measure the success of a community-based recreation program is by the number of participants – children, families, volunteers, and community members involved in the activities (Bullock & Mahon, 1997). The growth in community-based recreation attests to the positive value experienced by children with and without special needs (Schleien, Fahnestock, Green, & Rynders, 1990). This is evidenced by a rise in participation by families, volunteers, and community members (Moran & Block, 2010; Stroud, Miller, Schleien, & Stone, 2011).

An example of a community-based program that continues to show an increase in participation is the E-Soccer Program (2011). An important key outcome of the E-Soccer Program is the cooperative involvement of many individuals such as children with and without special needs, families, volunteers, and community members. While cooperative goal setting is a method for teaching children with and without special needs to work and play together, the ultimate goal in community-based recreation is to create a setting where all children can come together to participate in sports and activities. The authors refer to this structured process as cooperative goal setting (Rynders, Schleien, Meyer, Vandercook, Mustonen, Colond, & Olson, 1993). It amounts to another construct that is being proposed to fit into the discourse that structures people's experience of E-soccer.

Participation and cooperation are important to children with special needs. Dreams for Kids (2013), a children's charity, has been successful with community-based recreation programs because of the continued participation and cooperation of children with special needs, families, volunteers, and community members. They believe that cooperation plays a key role in the participatory experience of children with special needs (Dreams for Kids, 2013).

Community-based recreation is inclusive. As a community member, every person, with or without disabilities, is welcome to participate in the community-based recreation sports and activities. The City of Bloomington (Indiana) Parks and Recreation Department states on their website that it "is committed to an inclusive approach to recreation. Inclusion is individuals with and without disabilities participating in recreation activities together" (The City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department, 2013).

While some community-based recreation programs welcome children with or without disabilities to participate in inclusive recreation sports and activities, other programs segregate the children with or without disabilities into separate sports and activities, or provide little support and accommodations for the children with disabilities

to participate more fully in the sports and activities (Miller, Schleien, & Lausier, 2009). In order to gain a better understanding of the best practices in inclusive recreation, Miller, Schleien, and Lausier's (2009) conducted a case study to explore these best practices. The authors suggest designing inclusive community recreation programs by using discursive strategies to address the needs of the participants with disabilities, including administering assessments, planning appropriate community activities, implementing these activities in the community setting, and ultimately evaluating how the strategies worked (Miller, Schleien, & Lausier, 2009).

Further research highlights the importance of collaboration between families and professionals for a successful inclusive community-based recreation program and experience for the children with special needs (Heyne & Schleien, 1997). Heyne and Schleien (1997) believe that, "When parents and professionals work together, both children with and without disabilities benefit from inclusion" (p. 78). Nolan's (2005) article, *Best Practices of Inclusive Services: The Value of Inclusion,* concurs with these authors and offers that "in order for inclusive services to be successful, inclusion must be a value that is shared by all parties involved including: agencies, staff, families, participants, and the greater community" (p. 1, para.1).

Community-based recreation promotes learning. Community-based recreation programs provide sports and activities that are also platforms for promoting learning. Learning through these sports and activities includes the acquisition of skills and skills development, improving competencies and advancing skills, developing appropriate attitudes and outlooks, and building effective work habits (Penney McGee, Anderson, & Wilkins, 2012).

Skill acquisition and development represent key components for learning. The World Health Organization addresses the role of sports as a vehicle for learning as "the gradual acquisition of skills and accomplishments builds the self-confidence needed to take on other life challenges" (Right to Play International, 2008, p. 172). Community-based recreation programs offer children with and without special needs the structured activities to learn the skills as well as to provide opportunities for them to improve their competencies and advance their skills through practices and games. Penney McGee, Anderson, and Wilkins (2012) describe how community-based recreation provides many benefits for children with special needs relative to physical activity, including "increasing physical skills needed for recreation activities" (p. 3).

While skills acquisition and development, and improving competencies and advancing skills are more apparent and obvious keys to learning for children with and without special needs, equally important keys to learning for children with and without special needs include developing appropriate attitudes and outlooks, and building effective work habits. These are even more obviously products of socially constructed discourses. "The development of recreation skills, learned in conjunction with functional social skill instruction, must become a prime objective" for those working with children with special needs (Schleien, Fahnestock, Green, & Rynders, 1990, p. 42).

Community-based recreation sports and activities provide many opportunities for children with and without special needs, and have been instrumental in helping children with special needs to learn how to develop appropriate attitudes and outlooks through life experiences. For example, through sports and activities, children with special needs learn how to behave in certain situations, how to share and take turns, how to help others, how to cooperate with team members, how to be honest and build character, and how to display a positive attitude— all very important social skills to learn. Schleien (1993) advocates for the lessons learned through community-based recreation: "Participants can also experience personal growth and increased social sensitivity, including improved capacity for compassion, kindness and respect for others" and "developing skills and attitudes needed to live harmoniously in neighborhoods" (p. 2).

The importance of building effective work habits is discussed in the document addressing sports and recreation activities produced by Right To Play International (2008). They suggest that sports and recreation activities build competencies, and teach sportsmanship (Right To Play International, 2008).

Sports Camps

Similar to community-based recreation, sports camps provide an opportunity for children with special needs to participate in sports and activities. Bedini (1995) describes sports camps as "a safe environment in which children can learn about themselves and experience the world around them" (p. 21). Sports camps can be found in every state in the US, run by public and private organizations, operating within cities and outside cities, focusing on general sports or specific sports, held daily or overnight or residential, inclusive or segregated, and free of charge or fee-based (AbilityFirst, 2016; Disabled World, 2013; Easter Seals Colorado, 2013; Northeast Passage, 2013; Quest, Inc., 2013; Streett, 2010). In short, a plethora of sports camps exist to meet the needs of children with special needs.

While there are an abundance of sports camps, a smaller percentage of sports camps are designed to accommodate children with special needs (Family Village, 2013). Research shows that there are three types of sports camps: inclusive, segregated, and specific (Goodwin & Staples, 2005). The inclusive sports camps are those where children with and without special needs attend camp and participate in sports together (Bedini, 1990). Conversely, the segregated sports camps are those where only children with special needs attend and participate in the sports as a group (Thurber & Malinowski, 1999). In addition, there are specific sports camps (for example, Rocky Mountain Village in Colorado) that cater to the specific medical, physical, and emotional needs of the children with special needs who are unable to participate in any of the other sports camps due to medical reasons (Easter Seals Colorado, 2013). For example, a child with autism, cancer, cerebral palsy, and other medical and special needs, may attend a specific sports camp that is equipped to handle their medical and social needs with appropriate supports built into the sports camp experience (Klee, Greenleaf, & Watkins, 1997; Martiniuk, 2003; Powars & Brown, 1990; Punnett & Thurber, 1993).

Although the term sports camps describe a type of camp, every sports camp displays some unique offerings and experiences (AbilityFirst, 2016; Camp Abilities Alaska, 2013; Camp Aldersgate, 2013; Easter Seals Colorado, 2013; Quest, Inc., 2013). However, the goals for most sports camps are similar. The research suggests three primary goals for sports camps for children with special needs: providing an enjoyable sports experience for the children with special needs with other children (Thurber & Malinowski, 1999); developing sports skills, self-reliance, self-esteem, and social interaction with other children (Kiernan & MacLachlan, 2002); confronting the fact they are not alone in their feelings about the first time camp experience and the feelings associated with their special needs, possibly including: loneliness, fears, guilt, and anger (Maher, 1995; Mulderij, 1996, 1997). As a result, Goodwin and Staples (2005) suggest that sports camps "provide a landscape within which youth with disabilities have the opportunity to explore identity alternatives" (p. 162). Identity construction has been a key focus of social constructionism. "Identity alternatives" suggests the reliance on an alternative discourse to the dominant one.

A synthesis of the literature related to sports camps for children with special needs yields the following descriptors: it is structured [framework], positive and socially valuable, participatory and cooperative, inclusive, and promotes learning. The following section reviews each of these descriptors.

Sports camps are structured [framework]. Although sports camps are similar in many ways, they each have a unique organization and structure. Research points to the importance of "developing camp programming that responds to the needs of people with disabilities" (Bedini, Bialeschki, & Henderson, 1992). While programming and planning are important administrative duties, Bedini (1995) stresses the importance of evaluating and modifying these processes continuously. In addition to programming and planning, other aspects of the administrative side of running a sports camp are also important, as well as designing the sports activities schedule for the children with special needs (Goodwin, Lieberman, Johnston, & Leo, 2011). Quest, Incorporated's (2013) Camp Thunderbird believes that age-appropriate scheduling "ensures that all the unique recreational and developmental needs of the participants are met" (para. 3).

The elements of hiring and training staff are an important structural aspect of sports Camps (Camp Abilities, 2013; Goodwin, Lieberman, Johnston, & Leo, 2011). "With appropriate training and education on inclusion and disabilities, managers can ensure that their employees are able to provide services that embrace the value of inclusion" (Nolan, 2005, para. 1). Some sports camps are run by paid staff and supported by volunteers, while other sports camps rely more on volunteers to help with the logistics of the day-to-day operations of the sports camp (United Cerebral Palsy Delaware, 2013). In other words, it is important for those involved in staffing sports camps to get up to speed with the discourses that govern these activities. Importantly for my study, this includes volunteers.

While some sports camps operate on a strict schedule every day, others provide a set schedule in the morning with opportunities for choices in sports activities during the

afternoon (Goodwin, Lieberman, Johnston, & Leo, 2011). Further, there are sports camps that offer daily sports for a set duration (for example, one-week sports camp), while still others provide an overnight/residential sports camp experience for a set duration of time, such as one-to-two-week sports camp (AbilityFirst, 2013; Camp Abilities, 2013; Quest, Inc., 2013). The common theme found in sports camps is that each one has some discursive structure or organization with sports offered for set periods, over a pre-determined time, and each sports camp has a specific focus, purpose, or theme (Goodwin, Lieberman, Johnston, & Leo, 2011; Northeast Passage, 2013).

Sports camps are positive and socially valuable. Much has been written about the value of sports for children with special needs. The sports camp experience has been shown to provide a positive and socially valuable experience for children with special needs. The authors stress that sports are a powerful vehicle for social interaction, awareness, and acceptance, especially for children with special needs (Right To Play International, 2008).

Research shows that a primary goal of sports camps is for children with special needs to have an enjoyable sports experience with other children (Thurber & Malinowski, 1999). Through sports camps, children with special needs have the opportunity to play sports, collaborate on a task, talk about their experiences, and share their stories with other children. Sports provide an interactive environment for socializing and working with other children in an appropriate social setting (Schleien, 1993; United Cerebral Palsy of Middle Tennessee, 2013). It is also a venue for teaching and modeling positive behavior and social interaction. By introducing social skills to children with and without special needs, participation in sports camps provides opportunities for role playing in different social situations (Bedini, 1995).

In a statement that recognized the role that discourse plays in constructing people's assumptions, the United Nations (2011) declared that, "Through sport, persons with disabilities can interact with persons without disabilities in a positive context and thus allow them to reshape assumptions about what persons with disabilities can and cannot do" (United Nations, 2011, p. 1). Assumptions are of course products of discourse and hence it can be claimed that sports camps are intentionally setting out to influence the discourse of identity for children with special needs. Through sports camps, children with special needs are able to develop positive social relationships with other children while focusing on their abilities rather than disabilities (AbilityFirst, 2016; Easter Seals Colorado, 2013; Heo, Lee, Lundberg, McCormick, & Chun, 2008; Shapiro & Martin, 2010). The positive social benefits of sports camps for children with special needs can be seen in a parent's sentiments about her child's experience in sports camp: "I want her to be involved in sports, to be around other kids, to know she's not the only one in a wheelchair" (Jones, 2011, para. 15). Sports are an ideal setting for developing friendships and enriching relationships. "Sport's universal popularity makes it ideal for fostering social interaction" (Right To Play International, 2008, p. 179).

Sports camps are participatory and cooperative. Sports camps are designed to engage everyone in participating in sports activities, in a cooperative manner. In sports

camps, each child is encouraged to work together and cooperate with the other children to practice skills, play the game, and accomplish tasks. Cowart, Saylor, Dingle, and Mainor (2004) discuss how participation in sports activities involving cooperation between children enhances the sports experience for all of the children. Additional authors believe that sports camps are beneficial to help children with special needs to participate together and work collaboratively (Rynders, Schleien, Meyer, Vandercook, Mustonen, Colond, & Olson, 1993, p. 386).

In sports camps, the children with special needs have the opportunity to focus on sports for extended periods of time while at camp, and work closely with instructors, coaches, and other children (Easter Seals Camp ASCCA, 2013). During this concentrated time, the children with special needs spend more time developing their skills, practicing skills, and enjoying the social interactions and exchanges they are experiencing. Through sports camps, the children are able to have extended time to participate and cooperate together in a discursively meaningful sports program, while enhancing their social skills (AbilityFirst, 2016; Bedini, 1995; Quest, Inc., 2013).

Sports camps are inclusive. Recent literature reveals that there are some choices for children with special needs to participate in inclusive sports camps (Stroud, Miller, Schleien, & Stone, 2011). There are a wide variety of sports camps available including sports-specific camps, multi-sport camps, day camps, and overnight camps. Within this variety, however, the discourse of inclusion remains consistent, albeit expressed in different forms. One of the main purposes for sports camps for children with special needs is to provide an enriching sports experience for everyone, both the children with and without special needs (Thurber & Malinowski, 1999). To do this, sports camps must be able to provide an inclusive setting where all children attend and participate in the sports together. Anderson (2012) stresses that "Collaboration is one of the key strategies to fostering inclusion" (p. 7).

Inclusive sports camps encourage and promote collaboration among all participants, children with and without special needs, adult coaches, volunteers, and community members. Study authors identified "increasing numbers of inclusive camps that serve both children with and without disabilities" as an important trend for their profession (Austin, Lee, & Getz, 2008, p. 171). Active and inclusive engagement in the sports camp combines the physical aspect of sports, social interactions, break times, meal times, and the entire sports camp program. This requires the sports camp staff to intentionally design an inclusive program that meets the needs of all children (Mecke & Huthinson, 2005).

Sports camps promote learning. Just as sports are vehicles for learning, so too are sports camps. Children with special needs learn about themselves, about each other, improve their self-confidence and self-esteem, learn new skills and games, challenge themselves in new ways, gain independence, and experience success in participating in their sports camp adventure. Each of these learning tasks is accomplished in a discursive context. Sports provide a venue for children with special needs, "to take risks and learn how to manage failure and success in a safe and supportive environment" (Right To Play

International, 2008, p. 179). Bedini (1995) states that "camps are the perfect arena for education and change" (p. 21).

Through interaction with children with special needs, sports camps promote learning for children without special needs, coaches, staff, parents, and volunteers. The sports camp discursive experience transcends the camp and extends into the community. Everyone who is touched by the sports camp experience, whether directly or indirectly, carries the sports camp discourse with them. The sports camp experience has a powerful impact on all participants and the depth of learning that occurs is extremely meaningful (Goodwin, Lieberman, Johnston, & Leo, 2011).

Special Olympics

Special Olympics was started by Eunice Kennedy Shriver to provide a venue for children with intellectual disabilities to participate in sports activities. "The goal was to learn what these children could do in sports and other activities—and not dwell on what they could not do" (Special Olympics, 2012d). Originally called Camp Shriver, Shriver held summer camps in her backyard for children with special needs for many years. Initially, Shriver wanted to find out what the children were capable of doing both in sports and other types of activities. She did not want to focus on what they could not do but rather what they could do. In addition to Camp Shriver activities, Shriver served on President John F. Kennedy's White House Panel on people with Intellectual Disabilities and was a director for the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation. Eunice Kennedy Shriver was relentless in her vision for justice and opportunities for people with Intellectual Disabilities. Out of all her dedication and hard work grew the Special Olympics movement. In 1968, Chicago hosted the first International Special Olympics Summer Games in which children with special needs from 26 US States and Canada participated in track and field and swimming events. Colorado hosted the first International Winter Games in 1977, in which children with special needs from many countries participated in skiing and skating events (Special Olympics, 2012a, d). Broadhead (2009) discusses how the central theme of these first games "was that 'every child is a winner,' which was and remains more than a slogan, but an invitation for mass participation regardless of performance level" (p. 304).

In the 1980s, several key events that were pivotal in the Special Olympics growth occurred: fundraising awareness for Special Olympics, the United Nations declared the International Year of the Special Olympics with the theme "Special Olympics – Uniting the World", a holiday music album was released worldwide, and "the International Olympic Committee (IOC) signed a historic agreement with Sargent and Eunice Kennedy Shriver officially endorsing and recognizing Special Olympics" (Special Olympics, 2012d). During the 1990s, Special Olympics introduced some new programs for sports delivery, held the first International Winter Games outside the USA in Austria, and introduced the Healthy Athletes health-care services to all Special Olympics athletes around the world. In the year 2000, Special Olympics initiated the "Campaign for Special Olympics," a worldwide effort to increase the number of athletes by a million and to accumulate over $120 million through fundraising efforts in the next five years. This

campaign had a tremendous impact on the Special Olympics movement (Special Olympics, 2012a, d). During the early 2000s, Special Olympics experienced rapid growth and participation, especially in China and South Africa, as well as the introduction of materials to schools and teachers to teach all students about children with special needs "while empowering them to 'be the difference;' the lessons highlight values of inclusion, acceptance and respect" (Special Olympics, 2012a, b). Another hallmark of this time period witnessed Ireland hosting the Special Olympics World Summer Games, the first time these games were held outside the USA.

By 2008, Special Olympics counted over three million athletes from around the world in 170 countries, as they recognized their 40th anniversary (Special Olympics, 2012a, d). Sadly, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, the founder of Special Olympics, passed away in 2009, and her husband and partner, Sargent Shriver, former President and Chairman of Special Olympics, passed away in 2011 (Special Olympics, 2012c, d). However, the Shriver family continues to provide leadership and participation from several family members including the current Chairman, Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer, Timothy P. Shriver.

While much focus has been on the World Games for Special Olympics, many local and national events occur regularly in communities around the world. Local chapters of Special Olympics host sports for athletes year round, and athletes are encouraged to continue participating at the regional and national events. In addition to local events, Special Olympics works closely with schools to introduce sports to children of all ages with and without special needs for skills development, social engagement, inclusion, and games (Special Olympics, 2012a, b, d).

The Special Olympics organization describes itself as "the world's largest sports organization for people with intellectual disabilities: with nearly four million athletes in more than 170 countries—and millions more volunteers and supporters" (Special Olympics, 2012a, b, d). In addition, Special Olympics identifies itself as a "global social movement", supported by an alternative discourse, in which children with special needs participate in sports, and families, as well as communities come together to participate in supporting the athletes endeavors (Special Olympics, 2012a, b, d). As part of the social movement, Special Olympics strives to bring communities of people together and build awareness of children with special needs, and stress what they can accomplish both on and off the sports fields. With the support of governments and corporations, Special Olympics seeks to influence policies for people with special needs in the areas of health, education, employment, and worldwide awareness (Special Olympics, 2012a, e). As part of the growth campaign, Special Olympics collaborated with several researchers and research centers to conduct research about children with special needs, their interests, needs, motivations, and peoples' perceptions.

Like the sub-sections of Community-based Recreation and Sports Camps, Special Olympics literature also highlights important qualities. Similarly, these qualities are that it is structured [framework], positive and socially valuable, participatory and cooperative, inclusive, and promotes learning.

Special Olympics are structured [framework]. Since the 1960s, Special Olympics has been offering sports training programs for children with special needs at the local, national, and international levels (Siperstein, Harada, Parker, Hardman, & McGuire, n.d.; Special Olympics, 2012a, b). Special Olympics is a private not for profit company with a volunteer Board of Directors, representing business and sports, professional athletes, educators, and experts globally. In addition, they also have employees, coaches, athletes, volunteers, and many supporters. The mission of Special Olympics is "through the power of sport, Special Olympics strives to create a better world by fostering the acceptance and inclusion of all people" (Special Olympics, 2012a, d). The official mission statement follows:

> The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participation in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympic athletes and the community (Special Olympics Mission Statement, 2012a, para. 1).

Due to the growth and the global reach of the Special Olympics, both the organization and games require formal structures and processes allowing for the complex nature of the organization. Athletes have an opportunity to participate in their local events while progressing to the state, regional, national, and international games. Each level of games is supported through teams of employees and volunteers.

Special Olympics are positive and socially valuable. Special Olympics programs are designed to contribute to a positive and socially valuable experience for athletes with special needs focusing on what the athletes can do (Special Olympics, 2012a, d, f). Families, volunteers, and supporters are encouraged to participate with Special Olympics providing the training and resources necessary (Special Olympics, 2012a ,b). The Special Olympic sports experience is meant to provide skills, including social skills, for participation in life. As Shriver (1997) states, "The extent to which Special Olympics programs contribute to improving the social acceptance of children with mental retardation has significant implications beyond the Games themselves" (p. 4). This statement is an explicit expression of the intention of Special Olympics to counter some of the exclusionary and isolating discourses that shape the lives of people with disabilities.

Several authors describe how the Special Olympics sports experience is positive, resulting in a number of benefits for athletes with intellectual disabilities (Gibbons & Bushakra, 1989; Harada & Siperstein, 2009). Gibbons and Bushakra (1989) discuss how parents have reported that their athletes demonstrated an improvement in fitness, competence, self-confidence, and self-esteem. Additional authors concur and indicate that the athletes with special needs also experience an increase in health, and social relations (Harada & Siperstein, 2009). Through surveys and interviews, parents have "reported an increase in their children's independence, community awareness,

adaptability to new situations, and social capabilities" (Goodwin, Fitzpatrick, Thurmeier, & Hall, 2006, p. 164).

Special Olympics are participatory and cooperative. The Special Olympics organization requires the efforts of everyone to make it a successful program. To ensure success, Special Olympics has created a network of people and resources to support the complex organization beginning at the local level. Recruitment of athletes with special needs occurs locally, as well as the involvement of the families as the #1 Fans (Special Olympics, 2012a, b, e). As a not for profit organization, Special Olympics relies on the generosity and support of families and volunteers. Many volunteers come from the local community and local corporations. Harnessing a voluntary workforce is made possible due to the participatory and cooperative culture of the Special Olympics (in other words, through the discourse that underpins it). Through various campaigns, Special Olympics has recruited athletes, families, volunteers and other supporters to help make the Special Olympics sports experience meaningful to the athletes with special needs (Special Olympics, 2012a, b, e).

Siperstein, Harada, Parker, Hardman, and McGuire (n.d.) describe how Special Olympics, through organized fundraising efforts and campaigns, has increased athlete participation numbers and financial donations. Through this process, Special Olympics has grown as an organization by collaborating with researchers in the fields of sports and disabilities to understand their athletes, families, volunteers, perceptions of the athletes, and ways to create awareness in the community about persons with special needs (Siperstein, Harada, Parker, Hardman, & McGuire, n.d.; Special Olympics, 2012a, b, e). The Special Olympics has focused its efforts on continually evaluating the processes and procedures for running the various Special Olympic sports and activities through research. Research tools, survey instruments and interviewing questions are used to understand all aspects of the Special Olympic experience (Special Olympics, 2012a, e).

Special Olympics are inclusive. Special Olympics are often described as a (discursive) community (Special Olympics, 2012b). It is comprised of athletes with special needs, families, volunteers, corporate supporters, local organizers, and the backing of a global organization (Special Olympics, 2012a, b). Special Olympics focuses on creating "communities of support everywhere it goes," through key programs such as Athlete Leadership Programs, Family Engagement, Healthy Athletes, Project UNIFY, and the Young Athletes Program (Special Olympics, 2012a, b).

Through the "spirit of generosity, inclusion and volunteerism helps to connect the community as a whole" (Special Olympics, 2012g). Volunteers play a crucial role in the success of the Special Olympics programs. Khoo and Engelhorn (2011) researched the motivations of volunteers at a national Special Olympics event. The authors note that it is important to know what motivates people to volunteer for Special Olympics programs in order to direct recruiting efforts, as well as retention of these volunteers (Khoo & Engelhorn, 2011). Their research identified the key motivators to volunteering for a Special Olympics event as helping out in the community and ensuring the success of the event (Khoo & Engelhorn, 2011).

Special Olympics promote learning. Harada and Siperstein (2009) surveyed athletes and their families to understand what it meant for the athletes with special needs to participate in the Special Olympics games. Results indicated that the Special Olympics sport experience for athletes with special needs was very important and similar to athletes without special needs (Harada & Siperstein, 2009). Riggen and Ulrich (1993) concur and stress that the optimum sports program for athletes with special needs are those that encourage improvement in skills, self-concept, and social inclusion. It is worth noting here the extent to which the optimum program is tied to discourse. Skills are linked to meaning-making and in the end social effects. The design of Special Olympics as an ongoing program of sports and activities encourages active participation.

In addition to skills development, parents report that their athletes have shown improvement in fitness levels, participation, self-confidence, and building social relationships (Harada & Siperstein, 2009). Goodwin, Fitzpatrick, Thurmeier, and Hall (2006) reiterate this and add that the athletes with special needs also develop improved self-esteem and competence.

Adult Volunteers

Adult volunteers are people who donate their time to support people or causes that have meaning for them without getting monetary compensation (Sharififar, Ganjouie, Tondnevis, & Zarei, 2011). Volunteers play an important role in providing their time, services, and money to support organizations such as nonprofit companies, underserved populations locally and nationally, religious programs, schools, sports activities, and programs for people with special needs children and adults. A key focus of this study lies in the experience of volunteering. How is it constructed? How do people construct their own identity around their voluntary activities? What sorts of relationships are set up for those with disabilities who participate in structured sports events? I shall start investigating these questions by looking at the existing literature.

A variety of aspects pertaining to volunteers have been explored in the literature dating back to the 1960s and the creation of the Peace Corps (Maugh, 2007; Smith, 1985; Tsatsoulis-Bonnekessen, 1994). During that time period, officials with the Peace Corps focused on recruitment efforts of volunteers (Maugh, 2007; Smith, 1985).

Developing and Managing Volunteers

While the recruitment of volunteers is important, companies have realized the importance of developing volunteers (Berkhan, 2007; Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009). Several descriptors emerged in the category of developing volunteers: volunteer motivation (Bouchet & Lehe, 2010; Giannoulakis, Wang, & Gray, 2008; Khoo & Englehorn, 2011; Sharififar, Ganjouie, Tondnevis, & Zarei, 2011); recruitment and retention (Berkhan, 2007; Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009; Tsatsoulis-Bonnekessen, 1994); strategic planning (Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009);

training (Berkhan, 2007; Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009) and investing in volunteers (Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009).

Volunteer motivation. Numerous authors discuss the motivations for volunteers to give their time and service to an organization (Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009; Khoo & Englehorn, 2011; Sharififar, Ganjouie, Tondnevis, & Zarei, 2011), and examine the continuing evolution of motivating factors of people who volunteer in sports events (Bouchet & Lehe, 2010). Bouchet and Lehe's (2010) research findings divided motivation into two categories: (a) to help others, and (b) for oneself. The authors offer the following as motivations: "[develop] skills, social or meeting new people, and career or expanding their network of colleagues" (p. 21). Bang and Ross's (2009) work supports the motivation of helping others, referring to it as altruism and selflessness. In addition, the authors emphasize other motivators as values, career, and love of sport. In their study of special sports events, (for example, Olympic Games) Giannoulakis, Wang, and Gray (2008) add to the literature. Their quantitative study utilizing surveys highlighted key motivational factors of "experience, social interaction, interpersonal relationships, and networking" (Giannoulakis, Wang, & Gray, 2008, p. 198).

The majority of key authors in sports volunteer and motivation literature focus on motivations of helping self and helping others. These are two different discursive forces that might be called upon. Noting that, the type of venue and diversity of the volunteer population play a significant role in volunteer motivation (Bouchet & Lehe, 2010; Giannoulakis, Wang, & Gray, 2008).

Volunteer recruitment and retention. Several authors address the importance of recruitment and retention for organizations relative to developing and managing volunteers (Advancing Health in America, 2003: Berkhan, 2007; Shields, 2009). Advancing Health in America (2003) states the following are significant factors when thinking about recruitment and retention: "designing diverse opportunities for volunteers; developing creative, comprehensive, value-added assignments, e.g., volunteers training other volunteers, position sharing, and cross training; and being aware of community demographics and volunteer trends" (p. 4). Berkhan (2007) agrees with this, and stresses that it is also imperative to clearly identify what role each volunteer will occupy based on the unique skill sets that each volunteer brings to the organization.

Shields (2009) echoes these thoughts and mentions that careful consideration should be given to the unique combinations of talent and personality that might contribute to the organization. The author also adds to the discussion by talking about the importance of making a connection between the discourses that govern personal meaning for the volunteer and those that govern the organization's focus (Shields, 2009). Misener, Doherty, and Hamm-Kerwin (2010) concur and offer that it is crucial that the volunteers personally identify with the organization and volunteer activity.

Strategic planning. Shields (2009) contends that nonprofit organizations have both a shortage of human and financial capital. She goes on to state that nonprofits have to rely on volunteers in order to serve their stakeholders, stating that "20 billion volunteer

hours and $200 billion in private charitable gifts annually" have been necessary in recent years for the nonprofits to function effectively (Shields, 2009, p. 139). In order to compete for these available resources, nonprofits can devise strategic plans for both their organizational goals and to appeal to their target groups (Shields, 2009).

In the Stanford Social Innovation Review, Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, and Washburn (2009) agree that companies be more deliberate regarding strategic planning in order to better develop and manage volunteers. Pauline (2011) adds to the discussion about the significant role that volunteers play in sporting events emphasizing, "Within this realm, volunteers serve a critical role in the successful management of many major sporting events" (Pauline, 2011, p. 10). Further, she suggests that one critical strategy that nonprofits ought to be particularly concerned about is "the level of communication between the organization and volunteers" (Pauline, 2011, p. 1).

Training and investing in volunteers. "Volunteers need training to understand the organizations with which they are working, and employees need to be trained to work with volunteers" (Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009, p. 35). Berkhan (2007) agrees and offers that all volunteers receive both an induction to understand the organizational structure and culture, and training or preparation to learn the skills required for volunteering with the organization. Nagy (2013) concurs and outlines why training programs are beneficial for both the volunteer and organization, including acquisition of skills, learning the discourse, building a social network, developing proficiencies, and welcoming the volunteers into the organization as valuable contributors.

Bouchet and Lehe (2010) suggested that training of volunteers should include forwarding skills/increasing skills-sets, providing intensive training in specific skills areas, and offering ongoing courses to refresh skills. Agreeing with Bouchet and Lehe (2010), Hedstrom and Gould (2004) note three items recommended for inclusion in training volunteer sports coaches: first, develop increased skills and practices, in addition to training for communication with others (e.g., parents); secondly, create recurring training opportunities for coaches to expand their knowledge and understand how to work with the sport and organization; thirdly, provide an environment for coaches to learn and collaborate with mentors and peers (Hedstrom & Gould, 2004). I would add that there is value in alerting volunteers to the discourses of disability as well, because these discourses are aspects of practices, they are the context in which knowledge develops, and they are implicated in the linguistic aspects of the coaching and mentoring environments.

Benefits and Challenges of Volunteering

"I've discovered that when I give of myself to others, I always receive much more" (McCarver, 2011, p. 18). The literature identifies the benefits of volunteering for volunteers themselves (Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009; Miller, Schleien, & Bedini, 2003; Miller, Schleien, Rider, Hall, Roche, & Worsley, 2002; Sharififar, Ganjouie, Tondnevis, & Zarei, 2011; Wallpe, 2012; World Volunteer Web, 2013).

Examples of benefits discussed in the literature include how volunteering may improve one's mental health (Miller, Schleien, & Bedini, 2003; Miller, Schleien, Rider, Hall, Roche, & Worsley, 2002; Wallpe, 2012); and well-being (Miller, Schleien, & Bedini, 2003; Miller, Schleien, Rider, Hall, Roche, & Worsley, 2002; Sharififar, Ganjouie, Tondnevis, & Zarei, 2011; Wallpe, 2012). Along with benefits often come challenges, barriers, or obstacles. Challenges have also been discussed in the volunteer literature (see below; Miller, Schleien, & Bedini, 2003).

Benefits for volunteers. Grimm, Spring, and Dietz (2007) identified that volunteering provides a sense of purpose and offers social as well as physical benefits. The authors' research findings delineate that, "Volunteers who devote a considerable amount of time to volunteer activities (about 100 hours per year) are most likely to exhibit positive health outcomes" (p. 1). Wickens (2013) supports that research has documented the health benefits of volunteering, as well as the social benefits. However, the author stresses that the benefits of volunteering extend much deeper than social benefits for the volunteers. Wickens (2013) states that the benefits of volunteering can best be described as the "production of social capital" (p. 1). Other authors continue with a focus on the social aspects of volunteering. Rook and Sorkin (2003) believe that volunteering creates significant social connections that are key to the health of adult volunteers. Cheung and Kwan (2006) reinforce this idea noting that adults who volunteer report feeling better because of volunteering and that continued volunteering assists in maintaining wellness. In addition, other authors speak directly to the opportunities for persons with disabilities to take part in and benefit from volunteering (Miller, Schleien, Rider, Hall, Roche, & Worsley, 2002). All of these analyses of the social benefits of volunteering can benefit from a social constructionist light being shone upon the process involved.

Challenges for volunteers. Some of the literature addresses the challenges and barriers associated with volunteering (BCCVolunteering, 2009; Fowler, 2012; Miller, Schleien, & Bedini, 2003). It is important for volunteers to have realistic expectations. While volunteering has numerous benefits for the volunteer, volunteering that is mandatory can result in unrealistic demands on one's health and time (BCCVolunteering, 2009; Investopedia, 2012). Roland (2013) concurs and elaborates that volunteers may also experience emotional involvement, and frustration. Additional authors agree and add that volunteering can result in physical injury and illness to the volunteer (Fowler, 2012; Hartocollis, 2013), as evidenced in accounts from Ground Zero volunteers (Hartocollis, 2013) and Peace Corps volunteers (Fowler, 2012). In expanding on the challenges of volunteering, Fowler (2012) states that Peace Corps volunteers have frequently faced psychological trauma, and abandonment by the organization upon returning home from their volunteer assignment.

Volunteering and Public Service

Volunteering and public service, including service learning, also known as civic engagement, are widely represented in the literature (Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009; University of La Verne, 2013; University of Texas, 2013).

Volunteering in one's community creates opportunities for social involvement and civic engagement (Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009). BCCVolunteering (2009) supports the goal of volunteers providing service to their communities. The authors further state that students benefit from community service activities by learning to take responsibility and by being good citizens (BCCVolunteering, 2009). Also stressed is the educator's primary goal to develop students as contributors in their community.

Hyatt (1997) concurs and discusses higher education's role in creating a sense of commitment to serve in one's community. An integral part of developing good citizens who are active in their communities is to provide the volunteers with the resources to access service learning opportunities. Service learning is built into most universities' student experience. The University of Texas at Austin's (2013) Longhorn Center for Civic Engagement offers a valuable resource for all civic engagement opportunities available to students. The University of La Verne (2013) recognizes the significance of public service as one of its four core tenets in the mission statement. This is also demonstrated in the mission statement of the Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership Program at the University of La Verne (2013): "To develop scholarly practitioners as leaders and architects of change who make significant contributions to the organizations and communities they serve" (p. 4).

New Avenues for Volunteers

While volunteering mainly involves activities that require the volunteer to be on-site, new avenues for volunteers continue to emerge. An example of a contemporary opportunity is the use of the internet for volunteering (Cravens, 2011; Morgan Johnson, 2006). Many organizations are effectively using the internet as a tool for reaching potential volunteers, and training and supporting virtual volunteers (Morgan Johnson, 2006). The virtual volunteers are able to provide a variety of volunteer services including recruiting, fundraising, scheduling, training, and web support/design (Morgan Johnson, 2006).

Cravens (2011) has a website dedicated to sharing information about many aspects of online volunteering/virtual volunteering. Online or virtual volunteering refers to how volunteers use the internet to identify volunteer opportunities and provide the services (Cravens, 2011). Online volunteering also describes how organizations use the internet to connect with, recruit, train, and support their volunteers (Cravens, 2011). Although online or virtual volunteering may occur across the world, research has shown that volunteers support their local organizations (Browne, Jochum & Paylor, 2013).

A relatively new option for volunteering is micro-volunteering. In defining micro-volunteering, Browne, Jochum and Paylor (2013) state, "Micro-volunteering is bite-size volunteering with no commitment to repeat and with minimum formality, involving short and specific actions that are quick to start and complete" (p. 17). Although micro-volunteering is believed to be an online means of volunteering, it may be possible to do it face-to-face (Browne, Jochum & Paylor, 2013). The key is that micro-

volunteering is different from the more traditional forms of volunteering (Browne, Jochum & Paylor, 2013).

The literature about adult volunteers highlights several areas. One area involves individuals and groups of individuals who seek to volunteer their time and services to causes they deem worthy and/or interesting. Deeming a cause worthy or interesting is, of course, influenced by the discourses that people are exposed to. Another focus area in the literature discussed organizations, especially non- profits, which seek individuals, groups, and corporate volunteers to support their endeavors with time and/or money. Additionally, new types of organizations have emerged that link volunteers with non-profits based on needs and activities.

For purposes of this study, the volunteerism literature is examined from the perspective of adults who volunteer in sports events for children with special needs. A review of this literature produced the following distinct discursive patterns and themes: structured strategically (Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009; Shields, 2009), socially valuable (Giannoulakis, Wang, & Gray, 2008; Wickens, 2013), participatory (Misener, Doherty, & Hamm-Kerwin, 2010), and encourages learning (Bouchet, & Lehe, 2010; Hedstrom & Gould, 2004; Nagy 2013). Finally, the vast majority of authors agree that volunteers play a critical role, and without them, nonprofit organizations would be challenged to perform effectively.

Summary

The aim of this chapter is to review the literature that addresses the purpose of the study which includes the following main sections: discourse of disability, social constructionism, structured sports events for children with special needs, and adults who volunteer for the events. In reviewing the literature, several themes emerged and were discussed in their respective sections. The following three themes were prominent in all sections: positive and socially valuable, participatory and cooperative, and promotes learning. The literature reviewed mainly consisted of peer reviewed articles, and academic books. A small percentage of application-based content for example, websites was included to illustrate the movement from theory to practice in a social context.

The three themes: positive and socially valuable, participatory and cooperative, and promotes learning, are key to this study. As such, they serve as the basis for the research questions and provide the conceptual framework for this study. The following offer explicit information that connects the key themes to the main sections of this literature review; Social Constructionism, Structured Sports Events for Children with Special Needs, and Adult Volunteers.

The positive and socially valuable theme appears often and is described in structured sports events as those that are organized to provide positive and socially valuable experiences for both children with and without special needs (Cowart, Saylor, Dingle, & Mainor, 2004; Stroud, Miller, Schleien, & Stone, 2011). This theme of positive and socially valuable is also illustrated in the adult volunteer literature especially

in the benefits to volunteers and volunteer motivation (Bouchet & Lehe, 2010; Giannoulakis, Wang, & Gray, 2008; Khoo & Englehorn, 2011; Misener, Doherty, & Hamm-Kerwin, 2010). Social constructionists discuss positive and socially valuable experiences inherent to positive social constructionism (Cooperrider, Barrett, & Srivastva, 1995; Gergen, 2013; Hosking, 2011; McNamee, 2004; Whitney & Gibbs, 2006).

The second theme, participatory and cooperative, was also evident in the literature and was defined in structured sports events as programs that involve a variety of participants – athletes, parents, and volunteers, cooperating together to ensure a meaningful experience for all of the children (Bullock & Mahon, 1997; Moran & Block, 2010; Siperstein, Harada, Parker, Hardman, & McGuire, n.d; Special Olympics, 2012). This theme is present in the adult volunteer literature specifically when referring to the importance of volunteers participating in opportunities where they can collaborate to support people in specific organizations (Bang & Ross, 2009; Misener, Doherty, & Hamm-Kerwin, 2010). Social constructionists maintain that participation and cooperation is fundamental to socially constructing meaning by the participants involved, and that the conversations or discourse, including the use of metaphors between the collaborating participants is central to the process of social constructionism (Gergen, 2013; Hosking, 2011; Hosking & McNamee, 2006; Srivastva & Barrett, 1988).

The third theme, promotes learning, is a major element in structured sports events where a central focus of the programs is to promote skills acquisition and development, improving competencies, through participation in games and activities (Bedini, 1995; Penney McGee, Anderson, & Wilkins, 2012; Riggen & Ulrich, 1993; Right To Play International, 2008). The adult volunteer literature reveals the theme of promoting learning through the development, retention, training, and investing in volunteers (Berkhan, 2007; Bouchet, & Lehe, 2010; Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009; Hedstrom & Gould, 2004; Nagy 2013). The theme, promotes learning, appears throughout the social constructionist literature, in that learning is a collaborative effort in which meaning is constructed by all participants (Gergen, 2013; M. Gergen, 2009; Hosking, 2011; Cooperrider, Barrett, & Srivastva, 1995; Whitney & Gibbs, 2006).

While it can be seen throughout this literature review that adult volunteers play a significant role in structured sports events for children with special needs, there is a paucity of research that addresses this. It is the intent of this researcher to give voice to these volunteers through their socially constructed narratives.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This is a brief overview of the literature shared in this introduction to provide context to this methodology chapter. See Chapter 2, Literature Review for more detailed information. Several studies reviewed in the literature revealed that volunteers were important to society as a whole (Bang & Ross, 2009; Bouchet & Lehe, 2010). In a global volunteer studies project to celebrate the ten year anniversary of the 2001 United Nations Year of the volunteer, several volunteer organizations along with researchers at The Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies (2011) conducted research on global volunteerism (cited in The Global Volunteer Management Project, 2013). The researchers reported the following data from these studies—140 million people volunteered worldwide, for an estimated value of $400 billion annually. Of the 140 million people, 64.5 million volunteers, representing almost half of all volunteers in the study, were U.S. volunteers (The Global Volunteer Management Project, 2013). Most nonprofit and many for-profit organizations could not afford to operate without a dedicated volunteer workforce. According to the National Conference on Citizenship (2013), which disseminates information on U.S. volunteerism, over 17% of volunteers identified their duties as mentoring youth, including sports, and ranks this among the top five activities.

Noted in many studies, sports are important for youth including children with special needs, and volunteers are important to sports (Bouchet & Lehe, 2010; Lakowski & Long, 2011; Murphy Carbone, & the Council on Children With Disabilities, 2008; Pauline, 2011; Wanderi, Mwisukha & Bukhala, 2009). Studies conducted in recent decades have focused on the benefits of sports for children with special needs (Briere & Siegle, 2008; Little League, 2012; Moran & Block 2010; Murphy, Carbone, & the Council on Children With Disabilities, 2008; Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson, 2010). The majority of these studies have been concerned with children with special needs in structured sports events (Little League, 2012; Moran & Block 2010; Murphy, Carbone, & the Council on Children With Disabilities, 2008). Other studies have looked at the motivations of the volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events (Special Olympics, 2012e). Several researchers have studied how important volunteers are to the success of structured sports events (Bouchet & Lehe, 2010; Pauline, 2011). However, there was little literature exploring how volunteers socially construct their experiences working with children with special needs.

Therefore, this research used the concepts of social constructionism to explore how volunteers make sense of their experiences working with children who have special needs in structured sports events. For the purposes of this study, structured sports events were defined as sports events that are organized and structured to provide benefits to children for motor skills development, promotion of physical activity, building of self-confidence and self-esteem, and creation of social interaction with peers (Briere & Siegle, 2008; Moran & Block 2010; Spencer-Cavaliere, & Watkinson, 2010). Children with special needs were defined as children who have been identified as having physical,

psychological, or cognitive needs, and therefore require additional services to access educational, sports and recreational activities (Right To Play International, 2008). Adult volunteers were defined as people who donate their time without getting monetary compensation to support people or causes that have meaning for them (Sharififar, Ganjouie, Tondnevis, & Zarei, 2011). This qualitative study, then, explored how adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events socially construct their experiences.

Chapter Structure

This chapter focused on the research methodology used to conduct this study. It includes an introduction, followed by the purpose statement, and the research question. Then, the nature of the study, including the research approach and design, was addressed. The population and sample, along with protection of human subjects were presented. The processes for data collection, data analysis, and data display were provided. Finally, the limitations for this study were stated and a summary concluded the methodology chapter.

Purpose Statement and Research Question

The purpose of this study was to examine the socially constructed experiences of adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events. The primary research question is, *How are the experiences of adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events constructed?* The design of this study called for two rounds of interviews. The first round interview questions included:

1) How did you become a volunteer working with children with special needs in a structured sports event?
2) What attracted you to doing this?
3) Describe your personal experiences as an adult volunteer working with children with special needs in a structured sports event.
4) Did these experiences match or differ from what you expected? How?
5) Is there anything else you would like to share about this experience?

The second round interview questions consisted of:

1) Have you continued to be involved as a volunteer at structured sports events? Why? Or Why not?
2) What has been the impact on your life or your experience from becoming a volunteer?
3) What ideas/concerns have you noticed having an impact on volunteers for structured sports events since the last survey?
4) A concern has been voiced that sometimes people/athletes in structured sports events have too many changes in the volunteers they have to deal with. What is your experience?

5) What thoughts do you have about the most important things to emphasize in the recruitment of volunteers in the future?

Nature and Design of the Study

This study focused on the human experience and aligned with social constructionism. Research associated with the human experience lends itself to qualitative research (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005; Gay, 1996; Krathwohl, 2004). Krathwohl (2004) notes "qualitative research is especially helpful when it provides us with someone's perceptions of a situation that permits us to *understand* his or her behavior" (p. 230). In addition, research that pertains to topics not previously studied can benefit from qualitative inquiry (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005; Gay, 1996; Krathwohl, 2004). As Creswell (2005) stated "qualitative research is used to study research problems requiring: an exploration in which little is known about the problem, and a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon" (p. 45). Therefore, qualitative research methods provided the opportunity for open-ended questions, open dialogue, and responses, as well as opportunities for participants to share their stories in narrative form without the numeric restrictions that may be found in quantitative research. Based on this, a qualitative design was chosen to best address the problem and main research question in this study. Further, the Dynamic Narrative Approach (DNA) was selected as the method, as it contains properties of social constructionism (Hyatt, 2011).

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research evolved as an alternative to quantitative research in the late 1800s to early 1900s in anthropology, sociology, and social science studies (Creswell, 2005). The use of qualitative research in the field of education studies was relatively new, beginning in the 1970s. Creswell (2005) discussed how three themes emerged to influence how qualitative research was used in education studies: philosophical ideas, also called naturalistic inquiry or constructivism; procedural developments, including research designs; and participatory and advocacy practices, giving voice to participants. In addition, several authors including Guba and Lincoln (1988, 2008) and Creswell (1998, 2005), offer philosophical assumptions in qualitative research. The researcher addresses her study with a set of beliefs and assumptions from her perspective and/or experience that help to guide her inquiries. As Creswell (1998) states, "these assumptions are related to the nature of reality (the ontology issue). The relationship of the researcher to that being researched (the epistemological issue), the role of values in a study (the axiological issue), and the process of research (the methodological issue)" (p. 74).

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) defined the focus of qualitative research as, "the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry" (p. 14). Many authors identify the following characteristics integral to qualitative research including: data is usually one or more of—text, visual, auditory, and verbal; the outcome as part of the

process with the process being as important as the product; the focus is on the participant's perspective and meaning; the use of expressive/narrative to produce rich, thick descriptions; and the researcher is important in the research study (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Gay, 1996; Krathwohl, 2004). Since its inception, there continue to be numerous books, articles, and authors, writing about qualitative research. In addition, the number and types of methods within qualitative research design continues to expand.

The Dynamic Narrative Approach (DNA)

The Dynamic Narrative Approach (DNA) is a contemporary qualitative research method that uses elements of narrative and/or storytelling. The DNA method also has roots in the ancient Japanese form of storytelling, called Renga. Technology is used to collect and share stories of events and experiences. Some key aspects of the DNA method are that the participants are creating the collaborative story by sharing their experiences, and building on the shared experiences of each participant. The final collaborated story is socially constructed through this process which involves complexity, emergence, and constructionism, as components of the DNA research method (Hyatt, 2011).

The characteristics of qualitative research are also evident in the Dynamic Narrative Approach. For instance, the researcher is important in the study. Additionally, the data collected using technology is textual, visual, and/or audible. The Dynamic Narrative Approach honors the importance of the processes of storytelling and making meaning of participants' experiences. Similar to other qualitative research methods, the DNA aims to provide rich detailed descriptions (Creswell, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Hyatt, 2011; Krathwohl, 2004).

Complexity theory is at the core of understanding how systems self-organize. Senge (1990) discusses complexity as an important element of systems thinking. He elaborates that complexity supports looking at both the relationships and interrelationships to understand the issue, as well as what can be learned from the situation. Levy (2000) agrees with Senge and stresses that these relationships continue to develop and change. He adds that simple ideas when grouped together are complex. This translates similarly to the DNA research method, in that these individual responses, when combined, form a holistic view of a complex system (Hyatt, 2011).

Weaver (1948) is credited with the development of emergence theory that discussed science specific to human problems (as cited in Irlbeck, Kays, Jones, & Sims, 2006). Emergence is described in various ways in the literature. One of its distinct properties is the existence of patterns. However, most scientific and social science authors agree with the following definition presented by the New England Complex Systems Institute: "Emergence refers to the existence or formation of collective behaviors—what parts of a system do together that they would not do alone" (Bar-Yam, 2014, p. 1). Similarly, qualitative researchers seek themes and patterns (Creswell, 2005). Miles and Huberman (1988) echo Creswell's concepts about themes and patterns stating,

"When one is working with text, or less well-organized displays, one will often note recurring patterns, themes, or Gestalts, which pull together a lot of separate pieces of data" (p. 216). This can be seen in the Dynamic Narrative Approach research method as participants contribute their individual stories from which a socially constructed story emerges (Hyatt, 2011).

Noted social constructionist, Ken Gergen (2013), suggests that people create meaning through their interactions and conversations. He describes social constructionism as a process of inquiry that focuses on how people understand, and explain their life experiences, in collaboration with each other (Gergen, 1985). Hyatt (2011), author of the Dynamic Narrative Approach, supports Gergen's perspective and offers that our individual narratives serve as the connective tissue of our collective story. Qualitative research, often referred to as naturalistic inquiry, seeks to understand and study people, situations, settings, beliefs, and/or behaviors from the vantage point of the participants (Creswell, 2005; Gay, 1996). In addition to discovering who, what, when, and where, qualitative research aims to understand the issues in a deeper way by also learning about how and why (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006). The naturalistic inquiry is central to the meaning of social constructionism. The primary characteristics of social constructionism in qualitative research include understanding how people make meaning out of their social interactions, conversations, experiences, and beliefs (Gergen, 2013). Qualitative researchers collect text, the spoken word, and visual images through various means, including written, auditory, and visual (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005). Similarly, the Dynamic Narrative Approach utilizes technology to drive data collection.

Technology has been used for quantitative research for decades (Creswell, 2005; Krathwohl, 2004). However, the use of technology is a considered a more recent entry regarding qualitative data collection and analysis, with more readily accessible software available to researchers. Mostly, computers are currently used for data analysis in quantitative studies. Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen (2006) describe how qualitative researchers have only recently recognized the usefulness of computers for analyzing large amounts of data. Seale (2008) concurs and offers that the availability of the personal computer has allowed for access to data collection, and analysis tools. Creswell (2005) noted that technology can be a useful tool for data collection in qualitative research. Although the Dynamic Narrative Approach was developed more recently, a number of researchers from notable institutions have employed this research method in their studies (for example, Cowley, 2013; Figueroa, 2012; Paden, 2011). Technology affords access to participants who are dispersed globally, allows for collaboration, and provides a way for people to share ideas in real-time (Creswell, 2005; Hyatt, 2011).

Narratives, Storytelling, and Research

The concepts of narratives and storytelling have been documented from as far back as Aristotle in 350 BC (Hyatt, 2011). Narratives in qualitative research methods are designed to use stories and storytelling to understand the experiences of individuals, or to

chronicle important events (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005). Sandelowski (1991) claimed that narratives/narrative inquiry helped to bridge the connections between the sciences and other fields of study. Narrative inquiry was used by researchers in a variety of fields such as social science, sociology, history, psychology, anthropology, and in education (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005).

Narratives, as storytelling, have been an integral part of many cultures, helping to connect people across families as well as in organizations (Cunliffe, Luhman, & Boje, 2000). Storytelling has been a powerful means of communication, be it day-to-day contact through personal conversations and/or as written word via letters, cards, and emails. A key component of storytelling is the documenting of the detailed experiences and events of the individuals involved (Creswell, 2005). Gay (1992) states that stories provide a vehicle to understand and explain a person's experience or situation. In organizations, the stories people share provide the blueprint of the organizations' beginnings to their more recent accomplishments, mission, vision, culture, and present identity (Cunliffe, Luhman, & Boje, 2000).

The sharing and collecting of stories are central methods in qualitative research. Researchers use a variety of terms to describe the storytelling and/or narrative method, including narrative design (Creswell, 2005), narrative data (Gay, 1996), narrative studies (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006), narrative inquiry (Hyvarinen, 2007), and narratives, narrative techniques, and narrative research (Sandelowski, 1991). Creswell (2005) described the types of narrative design as biography or autobiography, life history, and a personal experience story, collected through text. Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen (2006) concurred and list life stories, and oral histories as types of narrative studies that use interviews and text for documentation. Hyvarinen (2007) agreed and suggested that narrative inquiry has three stages: factual resources, texts, and narratives and storytelling that evolve through these stages. Sandelowski (1991) stated that narratives are stories that are presented in a type of chronological or sequential pattern, and are used in order to make sense of the person's experience. Gay (1996) echoed that narrative data must be collected in the natural setting to allow the researcher to develop a deep understanding of the study, as well as understanding how the participants feel and make meaning of their experiences. For purposes of this study, the terms stories and narratives were used interchangeably.

The purpose of qualitative research is to delve deeper to understand the details of a particular situation or experience in a naturalistic setting, to uncover how the participants feel about the situation, and how they make meaning of their personal and social experiences within the context of their situation (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005; Gay, 1996). Storytelling may provide significant information to explain and understand these experiences or situations in a richer, more detailed description (Gay, 1992). Stories may be collected orally, textually, pictorially, through interviews, or through the use of technology (Creswell, 2005; Sandelowski, 1991). As the person shares their stories, they construct meaning or make meaning of their situation (Gergen, 2013).

Several researchers address how people make meaning of their experiences through stories. In discussing sense-making, Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) stated, "it is the primary site where meanings materialize that informs and constrains identity and action" (p. 409). The authors reiterate that the story is a piece of the process, which continues with the interpretations attached to the story, as well as the reflections about the ongoing story. Cunliffe, Luhman, and Boje (2000) and Hyatt (2011) support this and offer that sensemaking for the narrator occurs through the interpretation of stories, and that the researcher uncovers meaning by delving into the stories. Gergen (2013) offers that people through social construction, essentially make meaning of their experiences in conversation and through stories.

Renga and Storytelling

The act of storytelling can take many forms, including poems. Renga is an ancient form of storytelling that originated in Japan more than 1000 years ago (Finlay, 2013). Renga is a poem that is dynamically created and constructed by two or more people, and often referred to as collaborative poetry (Finlay, 2013; France, 2006; Lucas, 2013). France (2006) shares the following definition, "Renga is a collective writing experience where the process is as important as the poem" (p. 1).

The primary focus of Renga is generally on nature such as the seasons and often illustrates the relationships between living things. While the linked poem is co-created, Renga adheres to guidelines for composing the stanzas from one writer to another. With each successive stanza, a story emerges that is socially constructed by the participating writers. The DNA research method loosely uses Renga processes as a metaphor thereby providing a vehicle for people to create meaning and make sense of their experiences through collaborative storytelling.

Population and Sample

Qualitative research design consists of collecting emerging data from people in their natural environment. This requires the researcher to identify the population and sample, the research setting, and get permission to be present and gather information during the process of the study (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005). Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen (2006) define population as a large group of people, places, things, and sample as a small subset of that group. Qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to study a small sample of the population in greater depth not only to understand what is occurring, but also to learn how people make meaning out of their experience (Gay, 1996).

Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen (2006) stress the importance of purposeful sampling in qualitative research. Purposeful sampling occurs when researchers deliberately choose participants who may be able to provide a deeper understanding of the topic of study (Creswell, 2005). Generally, in qualitative research the sample size consists of a small number of participants who have an in-depth knowledge of the

situation (Gay, 1996). For purposes of this study, the population was adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events. Ten participants made up the sample size for this qualitative study. The criteria for this study included: adult volunteers who worked with children with special needs in structured sports events. They were able to use technology to communicate their responses and voluntarily agreed to relay stories about their experience.

Snowballing was used to access the qualified participants. This is also known as network sampling, and is a form of purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2005). It occurs when the researcher asks a participant to recommend another potential participant for the study, and each successive participant continues to recommend new participants until the sample size for the study has been reached (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006).

Protection of Human Subjects

In 1979 the American Psychological Association (APA) published an ethical guide for researchers titled, *Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research with Human Participants* (Gay, 1996). The American Educational Research Association (AERA), in 1992, also adopted ethical standards for conducting educational research (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006). As illustrated in these two documents, researchers have a responsibility to follow strict ethical and legal guidelines throughout the research process, both for their participants and their profession (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Gay, 1996). In order to ensure that I followed strict ethical and legal guidelines, I completed Human Subjects training and have included a copy of the certificate of completion in the Appendices (see Appendix A). I also completed an ethics application and received approval from my advisor and another faculty member.

An important component of respecting human rights is to ensure understanding and voluntary consent from the participants in the study. Informed consent means that the participants have been informed by the researcher, verbally and in writing, of the purpose of the study. In addition, the participants were informed in a consent letter of any risks involved in participating in the study (see Appendix B), and that care was taken to protect their confidentiality through the use of an alpha-numeric identifier and securely archived data (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005; Gay, 1996).

A brief summary including the purpose of the research was provided, along with information regarding participants' rights. The design of the study allowed for the researcher to speak with the participants to answer any of their questions or concerns. If a potential participant had any lingering concerns or they were uncomfortable with participating in the study, they could let me know. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary and participants were presented with this information, both verbally and in the consent letter. They were told that they had the opportunity to discontinue at any time during the data collection without reprisal. The study was designed for a sample of ten participants that met the criteria. Upon reaching ten participants who voluntarily consented and completed the study, the sample size threshold was reached, and the researcher would not pursue any other participants.

Data Collection

Researchers collect data to understand and answer the key questions in their studies (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005; Gay, 1996). Creswell (2005) stated "collecting data means identifying and selecting individuals for a study, obtaining their permission to study them, and gathering information by asking people questions" (p. 10). Instruments are developed to collect data and may include interviews or surveys or questionnaires (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005; Gay, 1996). In this study, I created open-ended, semi-structured interviews questions in order to inform the research question.

Interviews may be conducted in person, over the phone, or virtually (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Hyatt, 2011). The interviews in this study were designed to be conducted using technology such as email exchange and online video conferencing. Qualitative interviews can involve semi-structured or unstructured questions. Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen (2006) stated that there are advantages of interviewing participants including the organizing of the questions, the flexibility of the interview, and the ability to ask follow up questions. Some disadvantages to using interviews to collect data may include bias by the researcher (for example, thoughts, beliefs, or opinions) or the participant (for example, by answering the questions in a way to please the researcher) (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Gay, 1996). The study design called for the researcher to provide a master response list to all the participants for their review. The participants were told that they would be able to review their responses, make any edits or changes, read the other participants responses, and make any comments about anything on the master list, and return any comments to me via email (see Appendix D). The advantages to using email exchange for answering the interview questions included: the participants were able to answer the interview questions at a time and place that was convenient for them, the email responses allowed for a built-in transcript from the participants, the researcher did not need to clean-up the data for coding to exclude repetitive sentences from the responses, the participant was able to answer the questions without reacting to the researcher's body language and facial expressions, and the participants were able to review their responses for accuracy, and they were able to see a master list of all participants responses. In addition, any visual bias was removed in the first round of interviews. A disadvantage of using email exchange for the interview questions include: the researcher was not able to see the participants' expressions as they answered the interview questions. In the second round, the interviews were conducted by online video conferencing where both the researcher and the participant could view each other in real-time. One of the benefits of this process was that the researcher could view facial cues and the affect of the participant, as well as voice inflection. Some disadvantages would be a chance for visual bias by one or both parties involved, the potential for the participant to feel inhibited by the lack of anonymity, and feeling as though they needed to answer all the questions at that time rather than taking more time and coming back to it.

For purposes of this study, data was collected through open-ended, semi-structured questions using technology for example, email exchange and online video conferencing (Hyatt, 2011). Each participant responded to the semi-structured questions and their responses were shared with the other participants. In order to protect confidentiality, all participant information was de-identified and each participant was assigned an alpha-numeric code. The study design allowed for the researcher to compile the data for analysis and for the results to be shared at the completion of the study by email or verbal request from the participants.

Interview Questions, Credibility, and Dependability

The interview questions used to collect data were those that best fitted the research methods to inform the study (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006). For purposes of this study, open-ended, semi-structured interview questions were designed to align with the research question in an effort to inform the study (see Appendix C). Lincoln and Guba (1985) offered that trustworthiness is an important part of qualitative research. Two concepts that contribute to trustworthiness are credibility and dependability. These concepts will be described in the next section, and were identified by this researcher to be key qualitative terms to inform this research study.

Credibility

Credibility is described as the researcher designing a study that will produce information that informs the research questions (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005; Gay, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Items that assist in credibility are selecting participants who meet the criteria appropriate for the study (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005), and researcher's familiarity with and careful investigation of the topic (Shenton, 2004; Yin, 1994).

Qualitative researchers begin to design a study by conducting a thorough review of the literature (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005; Gay, 1996). This allows the researcher to become familiar with what has been written, the types of studies that have been done, in order to form an appropriate research question and methods for the study (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005). For this study, the researcher completed an extensive review of the literature, which illuminated the gap leading to the problem statement and method design (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005). For instance, a number of studies specific to volunteers and children in sports events were undertaken using a quantitative design (for example, Grimm, Spring, & Dietz, 2007). In addition, the text of the literature review highlighted certain themes that were repeated throughout the literature; positive and socially valuable, participatory and cooperative, and promotes learning. These apparent and recurring themes provided the basis for the research question, and the conceptual framework for this study. This study employed qualitative methods that will give voice to the volunteers and their experiences. The participants are the experts because they are the ones with the lived experience of working with children with special needs in structured sports events. Ultimately, it is intended for their mutual experiences

to yield common themes about their own learning. The resultant themes become lessons for the rest of us.

The researcher has experience and is, therefore, familiar with the topic of study (Shenton, 2004; Yin, 1994). For approximately twenty years, I have worked with children and sports, including children with special needs. While I have some practical experience in the area, the literature review yielded a plethora of information about programs, events, and opportunities unknown to this researcher. I see this as an advantage without limitations, since there were more opportunities for volunteer experiences than one can imagine, certainly more than this researcher can imagine.

Dependability

For qualitative studies, the term dependability relates to consistency and increases confidence in a study's results. Qualitative research authors noted that verification and repeated checks are significant for dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). In qualitative research, verification refers to the participants in the study reviewing their comments, in transcript form, to essentially verify and agree that was what they said (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005). In this study, the design allowed for the researcher to share the responses with each participant in order for them to provide verification. The participants were asked to review their responses and make any changes or additions. In addition, the researcher welcomed any comment that they wanted to make on any of the other participants' responses.

Just as verification provides the participants a vehicle for reviewing their responses, the repeated checks allows the researcher to continually check to ensure that the study stays on track. The repeated checks increase the chances that all components of the study stay in alignment. The researcher conducts repeated checks between participants' responses, to see whether they agree with each other and whether any themes or patterns were visible (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005; Shenton, 2004). Repeated checks are also performed to see whether there is support or disagreement with the themes and patterns culled from the participants' responses and the literature review (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005). The researcher remains vigilant in looking for themes and patterns. While considering different perspectives, the researcher engages in reflection to explore how the themes and patterns align with her experiences (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005). For purposes of this study, this researcher uses repeated checks in all three areas; among participants, within the literature, and upon personal reflection.

This study applied the following activities to increase credibility: the researcher designed a study to answer the research question, identified criteria for the selection of participants, and demonstrated thorough knowledge of the topic (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005; Gay, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004; Yin, 1994). Additionally, the researcher addressed the concept of dependability, as it related to consistency and confidence in the results of the study, specifically through verification and repeated checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). A number of

qualitative authors (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004) emphasized the importance of trustworthiness in research design and analysis. This researcher employed concepts of credibility and dependability as noted above in an effort to increase the trustworthiness of this study.

Data Analysis and Display

The design indicates that the data collected be assembled and organized for analysis. The aim was to understand the experiences and behaviors of the participants in order to answer the research question specific to the study (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005; Gay, 1996). Content analysis is a common technique in qualitative research. Coding is used in order to identify themes and make sense of the data (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006; Creswell, 2005; Gay, 1996). Creswell (2005) describes themes as "a core element in qualitative data analysis" (p. 243). Creswell (2005) identifies the following six steps for content analysis through coding:

1. Get a sense of the whole. Read all of the transcriptions carefully.
2. Pick one document. Consider the underlying meaning and write it down in the margin in two or three words.
3. Begin the process of coding the document. This process involves identifying text segments, placing a bracket around them, and assigning a code word or phrase that accurately describes the meaning of the text segment.
4. After coding the entire text, make a list of all the code words. Group similar codes and look for redundant codes.
5. Take this list and go back to the data. Circle specific quotes from participants that support the codes.
6. Reduce the list of codes to themes or descriptions by examining codes that the participants most frequently discussed and or have the most evidence to support them. It is best to write a qualitative report providing detailed information about a few themes rather than general information about many themes (pp. 238-239).

Analyzing the data for themes includes iterative processes to uncover deep meaning from the participant responses (Creswell, 2005; Gay, 1996). When all the themes had been culled out of the data and no new data is available, a point of saturation has occurred (Creswell, 2005). Data analysis continues after the major themes have been identified. Creswell (2005) suggests that qualitative researchers deepen their analysis by layering and interrelating themes, and interconnecting themes.

Data Display

The results of qualitative data analysis may be represented in narrative text, tables, figures, diagrams, and or pictures (Creswell, 2005). The researcher presents her results in multiple data displays, written and visual, to illustrate the important findings of the study. For purposes of this study, the research findings will be presented in multiple data displays, appropriate for the study.

Issues Related to the Researcher

Researchers attempt to mitigate any research bias by making themselves aware of any biases related to their sample population, data sampling, data analysis techniques, and researcher bias (Gay, 1996). Every attempt is made in this study to minimize any research bias by using snowballing, also known as networking, to identify participants, and creating more open-ended, semi-structured interview questions to allow the participants room to share their stories. While this may reduce some bias, it may increase the possibility of other types of bias. For example, the participants may have a similar background since the participants were asked to refer someone they knew who had been a volunteer to participate in the study. In terms of researcher bias, every attempt is made to follow up with participants to clarify the responses that seemed unclear, rather than making an assumption based on my knowledge and experience of working with children with special needs in structured sports events.

In qualitative research, an often-used approach to decrease research bias is reflexivity. Reflexivity by the researcher indicates that they are cognizant of their position and influence throughout the research process. It also requires the researcher to reflect, and discuss how their experiences may impact the participants and the study (Creswell, 2005). Srivastava and Hopwood (2009) discuss a framework for understanding reflexivity in qualitative research data analysis. They suggest using the following three questions:

> Q1: What are the data telling me? (Explicitly engaging with theoretical, subjective, ontological, epistemological, and field understandings)
>
> Q2: What is it I want to know? (According to research objectives, questions, and theoretical points of interest)
>
> Q3: What is the dialectical relationship between what the data are telling me and what I want to know? (Refining the focus and linking back to research questions) (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 78)

The researcher uses these three questions to examine assumptions in this study.

Summary

This chapter focused on the research design and methods for this study. It consisted of a description of the research methods, techniques, and tools to be used in the study. The purpose of this study was to examine the socially constructed experiences of adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events. The primary research question is, *How are the experiences of adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events constructed?* The research question was culled from the literature review and the conceptual framework of this study, and the interview questions were developed to answer the research question.

The research method chosen, The Dynamic Narrative Approach (DNA), aligned with the nature of the study, and the research question guided the research method to be used in this study (Hyatt, 2011). Additional information addressed in this chapter included: the population and sample, a statement about the protection of human subjects, data collection techniques, data analysis, and how the data will be displayed for this study. Chapter 4, titled Data Collection and Analysis Processes, follows up on this chapter summarizing the execution of the methods.

CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS PROCESSES

Through an extensive literature review, the following themes emerged and were repeated throughout the literature: participation in structured sports events were experienced as positive and socially valuable experiences, as participatory and cooperative experiences, and as experiences that promoted learning. These recurring themes provided the conceptual framework of this study and resulted in the research question. In this chapter, I shall examine what participants in the study told me about how these themes were borne out. The literature shows that the role of the adult volunteers in working with children with special needs in structured sports events is extremely important for the success of the event, and meaningful to the athletes (Khoo & Engelhorn, 2011; Special Olympics, 2012). There is minimal research that addresses the lived experience of these volunteers in structured sports events with children with special needs. It was my intention to provide an avenue for these adult volunteers to share their socially constructed narratives.

Chapter Structure

This chapter contains an overview of the study including participant demographic information. A description of how the data was collected in both the first and second rounds of interviews is presented. In addition, in the first and second round interviews, the data were analyzed and described, including presentation of key themes with pertinent evidence. Next, an explanation of how the data were displayed in the first and second round of interviews is illustrated. The chapter concludes with a summary.

How Data Were Collected

Participants

The participant population for this study consisted of adult volunteers in the USA who work with children with special needs in structured sports events. The participants were sampled using the snowball process, also known as network sampling. This occurs when a participant or a few participants are identified as potentially meeting the study criteria and are recruited. I identified a few participants who met the study criteria and agreed to participate. Each sampled participant met the following criteria for this study: (a) they were adult volunteers, (b) who worked with children with special needs, (c) in structured sports events, and (d) applied technology to answer the interview questions. Following the interview process with the first few participants, I asked individually if they could recommend someone who also met the study criteria and might be willing to voluntarily participate in the study. This process was repeated with each subsequent participant until ten participants were identified and agreed to take part in this study. In addition to meeting the criteria for the study, and because the participants were identified through snowballing, all of the participants ultimately were geographically located in the USA. The study sample represented the population in that each participant met the criteria including active engagement in volunteering in structured sports events for

children with special needs. The sample for this qualitative study included the same ten participants for both rounds. All ten of them answered the interview questions in the first round. In the second round, nine participants responded to my request for additional information. One participant was unavailable for the second round. The participant demographics for education, occupation, and gender are described below. The participants have college degrees, professional experience, and an emphasis in education. There were seven female participants and three male participants in this study. Following are brief demographic profiles to introduce you to each participant.

Participant 1 (P-1)
Participant 1 is a university dean with over 26 years of experience in higher education. He has a Master's degree and has completed his coursework for his Doctorate.

Participant 2 (P-2)
Participant 2 is a middle school counselor with over 33 years of experience in K-12 education. She has a Master's degree.

Participant 3 (P-3)
Participant 3 is a teacher for children with special needs with over 20 years of experience in K-12 education. She has a Master's degree.

Participant 4 (P-4)
Participant 4 is a teacher for children with special needs with over 15 years of experience in K-12 education. She has a Master's degree and is doing coursework for a Doctorate.

Participant 5 (P-5)
Participant 5 is a teacher for children with special needs with over 20 years of experience in K-12 education. She has a Bachelor's degree.

Participant 6 (P-6)
Participant 6 is a life guard, coach, and teacher for children with special needs with over 9 years of experience in K-12 education. He has a Master's degree.

Participant 7 (P-7)
Participant 7 is an administrator/assistant principal with over 25 years of experience in K-12 education. She has a Master's degree.

Participant 8 (P-8)
Participant 8 is a teacher for children with special needs with over 4 years of experience in K-12 education. She has a Master's degree.

Participant 9 (P-9)
Participant 9 is a teacher for children with special needs with over 30 years of experience in K-12 education. He has a Master's degree.

Participant 10 (P-10)

Participant 10 is a medical professional with 4 years of experience in the medical field. She has a Bachelor's degree and is in a Master's degree program.

Round One Interviews

In this study, the interview instrument was used to inform the research question. The data was collected using open-ended, semi-structured questions, and shared through technology (Hyatt, 2011). The researcher determined if a person fit the criteria needed to be a participant in this study, and proceeded to email each participant a Consent Letter. The participants were asked to return the Consent Letter to the researcher via email if they agreed to voluntarily participate in the study. The researcher protected the confidentiality of the participants by removing all identifying information and assigning an alpha-numeric code for each participant.

In round one of the interviews, each participant was sent the five interview questions via email. Each participant answered the interview questions and returned them via email. There were a few times when I contacted a participant for simple clarification. After receiving responses to the interview questions from all ten participants, I compiled all the participant responses into a single document ordered by question, and corresponding responses. All participant information was de-identified prior to emailing the single document of approximately ten pages to them. The participants were provided an opportunity to read the responses from all the participants. The participants were asked to review and verify their responses, and to comment on any other responses. The participants then were asked to return their comments to the researcher via email.

Round Two Interviews

In round two of the interviews, nine of the original ten participants responded to my request for follow up questions. Each participant was interviewed face-to-face via computer video conferencing or in two cases, by phone due to their travel schedule. The participants were asked five new interview questions developed for continued exploration into the ongoing impact of their experiences. Any clarifying questions were conducted within the thirty minute interviews. The interviews were each recorded and transcribed by the researcher. After all the interviews were completed, the participant responses for the second round of questions were de-identified and compiled into a single document of approximately ten pages, by question and corresponding responses, and emailed to the participants for their review, verification, and comments. They were asked to review their responses to the interview questions for accuracy, were given the opportunity to review and comment on their responses, as well as any of the other participants' responses, and were asked to return any comments to the researcher via email.

In both rounds, participants responded with their comments acknowledging that their information looked accurate and that they found it interesting to read the other participants responses. I emailed each participant individually in all correspondence in

an effort to maintain confidentiality. Following round one, after review of the responses, a few participants had indicated their interest in reading the other people's/interviewees responses. After reviewing the others' responses, the participants, in rounds two, told their stories and made no changes to the transcriptions. Some participants noted appreciation for the opportunity to review all the responses. This seems to be an advantage of the Dynamic Narrative Approach (DNA) research method in that it democratizes the process. The participants were informed that at the end of the study and upon request, they may receive a summary of the results in the form of the abstract or the completed document.

How Data Were Analyzed

The same data analysis process was used for both round one and round two of the interview responses. The researcher assembled the data and organized it for analysis. The data were analyzed for themes using Creswell's (2005) six step coding process for content analysis.

The first step in the data analysis was to read through the all transcripts to get a sense of the responses. Next, I reviewed the responses to the first question, and then followed the same process for subsequent questions. This allowed for the examination of the underlying meaning, and as I did this, I began to code the document by highlighting segments of text and creating a code word or phrase to describe its meaning. After reviewing and coding the entire document, I compiled a list of code words or phrases and grouped similar ones together. With this new list of codes, I reviewed the data for further evidence from quotes that supported the codes. The codes derived from the data were then combined to create themes that emerged from the data responses from the participants.

In the first round, three focus areas emerged along with specific themes. In the second round, five focus areas emerged with specific themes. The first three focus areas and themes in both round one and two aligned with each other. This alignment occurred because the questions posed in round two were continuations of the questions in round one. In the second round two new focus areas and corresponding themes emerged as a result of new questions that were added. The questions in each round provided rich material for this study.

How Data Are Displayed

The research findings for the interview questions in the first round of interviews are displayed in Chapter five. The data analysis is organized by focus areas with the corresponding themes within each area. An overview of the themes that emerged from the interview questions is presented with supporting evidence as text from the participant responses, as well as a general summary of each theme. A comprehensive summary of the data analysis concluded the chapter.

Chapter six represents the research findings for the second round of interview questions. The data analysis for the first round of questions and the data for the second round of questions followed the same general format. Focus areas were identified with corresponding themes in each of the focus areas. Each of the themes had supporting evidence from the participant responses, and a summary at the end of each focus area displayed as text. An overall summary of the data analysis completed the chapter.

Chapter seven includes the results, conclusions, and recommendations for future research. These results are presented both in text as well as graphics. The conclusions and recommendations for future research are intended to further this research and inform practice.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the study including the participants' demographic information. A description of how the data was collected in both round one and round two of the interviews is shown. An explanation of how the data were analyzed, including evidence of the themes was described. A guide to how the data are displayed for both rounds of interviews in upcoming Chapters five (round one data) and Chapter six (round two data) are illustrated. A concluding Chapter seven provides the results, conclusions, and recommendation for future research.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS – ROUND ONE

The interview questions are designed to inform the research question. In the first round, the participants responded through email exchanges. Following are the primary focus areas (1) process of getting involved, (2) motivation for getting involved and attraction for doing it, and (3) meaning of the experience. The corresponding themes for each of these focus areas were culled from the responses to the interview questions. The participant responses specific to each emerging theme are displayed below.

1. Process of Getting Involved

People volunteer for a variety of reasons and in a variety of ways. At times, they may volunteer because they have an interest in something, know someone, or have some spare time. In other words, participants' motivation for volunteering was seldom individually constructed. It emerged as a product of relationship with others – colleagues, friends, parents. In this study, I found that the participants volunteered for three primary reasons. The themes that emerged as the process for participants to get involved were (1a) as a direct invitation from somebody else, (1b) because they were seeking out an opportunity for themselves, and/or (1c) through a personal connection they knew somebody who was involved. Following are some of the participants' responses to each of these themes.

1a. Direct invitation from somebody else. The following participants' responses describe their process for getting involved in volunteering as a direct invitation from somebody else.

> I became a volunteer for the local county spring track and field event for children with special needs. I found out about it through the PE department in the school district. They presented it to us as an opportunity to volunteer and get involved in this track and field event for children with special needs. (P-2)

> I work with children with special needs at work and participate in the school based Special Olympics Games. Because of this, I was approached by the Special Olympics to volunteer for a one-day event at the local university to participate in a pre-school age sports event. (P-3)

> I have worked with children with special needs since I was 18 years old and love working with these kids. I heard about this Special Olympics event through work, although it was held outside of work for several days including on a weekend. (P-4)

In terms of the process for getting involved, the participants were very responsive to volunteering for a structured sports event based on a direct invitation from somebody. They all expressed having a positive experience whether they were invited to volunteer or discovered the opportunity in a different way. In all three of the examples above, the

participants learned about the volunteer experience through their work. Two of the participants had been involved with the Special Olympics school games hosted during their work day. The other participant was told about the opportunity to volunteer by colleagues at her school. All three of these people are educators and two of them work with children with special needs. It is clear that they were willing to continue to work with children outside of their work day. The relational aspect of the process of getting involved as a volunteer seems very evident here, as are several discourses. Following is an example of the discourse of altruism from the above responses – "They presented it to us as an opportunity to volunteer and get involved in this track and field event for children with special needs." Evidence of a sports discourse was also present in these responses: "I work with children with special needs at work and participate in the school based Special Olympics Games." Additionally, the discourse of disability encompassed many of the participants' responses. Here's an example: "I have worked with children with special needs since I was 18 years old and love working with these kids." As one can see, these discourses were evident throughout the participants' responses.

1b. Seeking out an opportunity for themselves. The following participants' responses describe their process for getting involved in volunteering as seeking out an opportunity for themselves.

> I have volunteered several times with Special Olympics here in [my State]. My work was directly with the participants. (P-1)
>
> I had gone back to college and wanted to do some volunteer work, so I contacted the local parks and recreation department…I like to get involved in physical activities, so they suggested I volunteer for the Special Olympics Games that they were co-hosting. (P-5)
>
> …I wanted to get some experience working with people with disabilities. I heard about an organization through some friends and my parents and I decided to volunteer for the day. (P-6)
>
> …I looked for community activities so that my students would find lifelong activities specific to themselves. I was able to find many opportunities. I joined several festivals/races as a way to learn more about the activity and to support the organizations success. (P-7)

The participants in this study indicated a clear process for getting involved as a volunteer for a structured sports event by seeking out an opportunity for themselves. One of the participants was a returning volunteer who had been involved in a similar structured sports event for children with special needs. Another participant had returned to college and was interested in doing some volunteer work. This participant sought out volunteer opportunities through the parks and recreation department because of an interest in sports and physical activities. The next participant was a teacher who was exploring new activities for her students as lifelong activities. Each of these participants had individual reasons for volunteering for a very social experience. All three of these people are educators, one in higher education, one as a teacher working with children,

and the other one, who was a college student, is now a teacher working with children. And, they were all volunteering to work with children outside of their work. The following is an example of the discourse of altruism from the above responses: "I have volunteered several times with Special Olympics here in [my State]." This is an example of the sports discourse in these responses: "I like to get involved in physical activities, so they suggested I volunteer for the Special Olympics Games that they were co-hosting." In addition, the discourse of disability was evident in the following responses, here's an example: "I wanted to get some experience working with people with disabilities." The discourses of altruism, sports, and disability were present throughout the participants' responses.

1c. Know somebody/personal connection to someone who was involved. The following participants' responses describe their process for getting involved in volunteering through somebody they knew, a personal connection to someone involved.

> I volunteered at a local camp as a school student. I needed community service hours and had a friend who had a great experience there. (P-8)
>
> I became a volunteer for special needs students at a local Special Olympics event held at a local community college. I found out about this event through my teaching job, with the school district. I was a special education teacher and several colleagues told me about a Special Olympics event, where they were going to be volunteers. My colleagues provided me with the information I needed to become a volunteer at the event and I promptly applied and was accepted. (P-9)
>
> I knew an Adapted PE teacher with the local school district, and she was gracious enough to allow me to participate in the Special Olympics Spring Games. I needed the experience for credit in my Adapted PE class in college, but I also had a personal interest in this specific event. (P-10)

The process for getting involved as a volunteer for these participants was a direct result of knowing somebody and/or having a personal connection to someone who was involved in a structured sports event for children with special needs. Each of these participants had a personal connection to someone who presented them with an opportunity to volunteer for a structured sports event for children with special needs. One participant was an avid water sports person and was referred by a friend to a water sports camp. Another participant became a volunteer because colleague teachers suggested he join them as a volunteer for children in a local track and field event. And the next participant was attending college and wanted to volunteer, so she contacted a friend who welcomed her to join her at a local school event. While the circumstances differ, the similarities remain, people interested in volunteering who sign-up to volunteer through a personal referral. Once again, the participants are individuals reaching out to be of service, for a sports event, in a social context. This is another example of the relational aspect of the process of getting involved as a volunteer for a structured sports event for children with special needs. As an example of the discourse of altruism/service from the participants' responses: "I volunteered at a local camp as a school student. I

needed community service hours and had a friend who had a great experience there." Another example of discourse can be seen in the sports discourse: "I knew an adapted PE teacher with the local school district, and she was gracious enough to allow me to participate in the Special Olympics Spring Games." Following is an example of the discourse of disability in the participants' responses: "I became a volunteer for special needs students at a local Special Olympics event held at a local community college." These discourses were present in many of the participants' responses including discourse of altruism/service, sports discourse, and certainly discourse of disability.

In summary, it therefore appears that the process of people getting involved as volunteers for these events occurs as they engage in discourse with one another. The conversations and subsequent discourses include a discourse of disability - about volunteering, about working with children with special needs, and about structured sports events. The majority of the participants indicated that the reasons they got involved in volunteering were directly related to an invitation from somebody they knew, as they sought out an opportunity to volunteer, and that a personal connection to someone was a big part of their decision. When asked about this decision, each participant locates it in a relational context: either being directly invited by someone else, knowing someone who had been involved in the past, or seeking out a relational opening that leads towards involvement (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

Focus Area One: Process of Getting Involved and Corresponding Themes

Themes
1a. Direct invitation from somebody else
1b. Seeking out an opportunity for themselves
1c. Know somebody/personal connection to someone who was involved

2. Motivation for Getting Involved & Attraction for Doing It

People are motivated to volunteer and attracted to particular opportunities in very personal ways. They may be motivated to volunteer for personal reasons, for professional reasons, as an expression of a belief in equity and inclusion, and as an expression of social or political concerns. In this study, I found that the participants were motivated to volunteer and attracted to do so for six primary reasons. These represent the five themes that emerged as to the motivation and attraction for getting involved in volunteering (2a) a strong service orientation, (2b) a passion for and a personal interest in volunteering for this type of event and/or group, (2c) a professional interest, (2d) concern about equity and society, and (2e) inclusion, social, and political perspectives. Following are some of the participants' responses to each of these themes.

2a. Strong service orientation. The following participants' responses describe their motivation for getting involved, and attraction for volunteering as a strong service orientation.

> I was working with a Knights of Columbus group. (P-1)
>
> I was asked to help with this event to give the children the opportunity to experience sports with other pre-school children outside of school in a Special Olympics sponsored event at the local university. (P-3)
>
> I was happy to help them have an arena to compete and have fun! (P-10)

Many participants were motivated for getting involved and attracted to doing it, volunteering, due to a strong service orientation. They expressed an interest in giving of themselves and their time to others, in this case to a structured sports event for children with special needs. One participant was a repeat volunteer and volunteered with his Knights of Columbus group, a men's service organization, to support a local structured sports event for children with special needs. Another participant was a pre-school teacher who wanted to volunteer and be of service for a local first-time pre-school structured sports event. The next participant was a college student who volunteered so she could help children with special needs have an opportunity to have fun in a structured sports event. Each of these participants was motivated to volunteer due to their strong sense of service to others. There are longstanding religious or philanthropic discourses that support this service ethic. Following is an example of the discourse of altruism from the participants' responses: "I was working with a Knights of Columbus group." An example of the sports discourse is seen in these responses: "I was happy to help them have an arena to compete and have fun!" The discourse of disability was illustrated in the following responses: "I was asked to help with this event to give the children the opportunity to experience sports with other pre-school children outside of school." The discourses of altruism/service, sports, and discourse of disability were illustrated in the participants' responses.

2b. Passion/personal interest. The following participants' responses describe their motivation for getting involved, and attraction for volunteering as a passion for and a personal interest in volunteering for this type of event.

> I was attracted to do this because it was an athletic event for children with special needs and they needed volunteers. (P-2)
>
> It has always been my passion to work with kids with special needs. I enjoyed working with the Special Olympics because I love to see the smiles on the kids' faces and I really like the fact that the Special Olympics events focus on all athletes participating and not necessarily on the winning. This is something that really drew me to working on this sporting event. (P-4)

> I like to get involved with kids. I contacted the local Parks and Recreation Dept. who needed volunteers for a swimming meet for Special Olympics. (P-5)
>
> I love the ocean and also had an interest in working with people with disabilities. This is an organization that allowed me to pursue both interests. (P-6)
>
> I like to find connections for people to be participants in life, not spectators. (P-7)
>
> I return back to camp every year, unpaid and with a huge smile on my face, for at least three days every summer. I have consistently taken days off of work to go to camp because there's no place in the world I love more. (P-8)
>
> Also, I liked the atmosphere/spirit of the games, the competitive nature, where all of the participants won a ribbon or medal. (P-9)
>
> I knew it would be rewarding to see these kids enjoy themselves in the competition. (P-10)

Most of the participants were motivated for getting involved and attracted to volunteering, due to a passion and personal interest that seemed to connect with personal identity themes. Eight out of ten of the participants stated that they volunteered because they love to work with children, and wanted to work with the kids in a sports event. Several participants expressed their love of water and water activities where they could work with children with special needs. Another participant remarked on the joy she experienced when the children would break out into a huge smile. Other participants mentioned the non-competitive nature of the structured sports event that they were volunteering for and how every child received a ribbon. One of the participants was honored to be volunteering for an inaugural event, while another participant was impressed with how important sport is for building values, growing confidence, and having fun. Each of these participants was motivated to volunteer due to their passion and personal interest in working with children with special needs. Again, however, these statements of personal passion were usually closely related to the experiences of others, for example, witnessing participants' joy or pleasure. An example of the discourse of altruism from these participants' responses: "I return back to camp every year, unpaid and with a huge smile on my face, for at least three days every summer." Following is an example of the sports discourse seen in the participants' responses: "I was attracted to do this because it was an athletic event for children with special needs…" An example of the discourse of disability was illustrated in the following responses: "I love the ocean and also had an interest in working with people with disabilities. This is an organization that allowed me to pursue both interests." It is evident that these discourses were present in the participants' responses - discourse of altruism/service, sports discourse, and discourse of disability.

2c. Professional interest. The following participants' responses describe their motivation for getting involved, and attraction for volunteering as a professional interest.

> I work with pre-school age children to introduce them to exercise and games, and participate in a school based Special Olympics program. (P-3)

> I gravitated to Adapted PE because I enjoyed being active. I went back to school and wanted to get a degree and being physically active appealed to me…so I looked at APE and realized I can learn and do this stuff. I also like kids, and that's how I got into APE. I volunteered when I was in college and I think that is where I realized that I can do this as a career. (P-5)

> I was working towards my degree in Therapeutic Recreation and I wanted to get some experience working with people with disabilities. (P-6)

> I have been always interested in working with disabled people, which is what led me into my teaching career in the first place. (P-9)

Two of the participants were motivated for getting involved and attracted to volunteering, due to professional interest. One participant got involved in volunteering due to a work connection and referral. Another participant was motivated to get involved and attracted to volunteering which led to his going into a teaching career. Each of these participants was motivated to get involved and attracted to volunteer due to professional interest in working with children with special needs in a structured sports event. This is an example of the discourse of altruism from these participants' responses: "I volunteered when I was in college and I think that is where I realized that I can do this as a career." The following is an example of the sports discourse seen in the participants' responses: "I work with pre-school age children to introduce them to exercise and games, and participate in a school based Special Olympics program." An example of the discourse of disability was illustrated in the following responses: "I was working towards my degree in Therapeutic Recreation and I wanted to get some experience working with people with disabilities." As such, the discourses of altruism/service, sports, and disability were echoed throughout the participants' responses.

2d. Concern about equity and society. The following participants' responses describe their motivation for getting involved, and attraction for volunteering as a concern about equity and society.

> As a general education PE teacher, I saw the value in all students being a part of activity. (P-7)

> Every person at Camp is working towards a similar goal: living their best, most productive life possible with a positive attitude despite challenges. (P-8)

> The opportunity for all people to participate and compete in a sport is important for building values, growing confidence, and having fun. (P-10)

Three of the participants were motivated for getting involved and attracted to volunteering, due to concern about equity and society. One participant shared that she liked the focus of the games to be about participating and not necessarily winning, while another participant liked how some of the events were competitive. Another participant was motivated to get involved and attracted to volunteering for an event to provide access to a structured sports event for pre-school age children. Two participants mentioned a merging of two important interests in their lives, water sports and working with children with special needs, and creating a first-time opportunity for these athletes to participate in the water activities. An example of the discourse of altruism from the participants' responses: "As a general education PE teacher, I saw the value in all students being a part of activity." Following is an example of the sports discourse seen in the participants' responses: "The opportunity for all people to participate and compete in a sport is important for building values, growing confidence, and having fun." This is an example of the discourse of disability from the participants' responses: "Every person at Camp is working towards a similar goal: living their best, most productive life possible with a positive attitude despite challenges." Thus, the discourses of altruism/service, sports, and disability were demonstrated throughout the participants' responses.

2e. Belief in inclusion, social, and political perspectives. The following participants' responses describe their motivation for getting involved, and attraction for volunteering as a belief in inclusion, social, and political perspectives.

> I think volunteering is a valuable resource for anybody...If more people volunteered, we may have less hate in the world. Everyone should make a point to volunteer, because it makes a huge difference for everyone involved. (P-4)

> It sounds cliche, but these opportunities make us better as a community. It encourages individuals feeling that they belong, both the participants and those putting on the event. (P-7)

> It reminded me that no matter what abilities someone has or doesn't have, there is an art in using them to achieve goals and grow self-confidence. (P-10)

Three of the participants were motivated to get involved and attracted to volunteering, due to social and political perspectives. One participant was motivated to get involved in volunteering because she sees volunteering as making a huge difference for everyone, and suggests that if more people volunteered, it may help to create less hate in the world. Another participant was motivated to get involved and attracted to volunteering because volunteering makes us better as a community, and it helps both participants and volunteers to feel that they belong in the community. And one of the participants was reminded that regardless of abilities, the children were able to achieve their goals and build self-confidence through the experience. Each of these participants

was motivated to get involved and attracted to volunteer due to social and political perspectives of working with children with special needs in a structured sports event. The discourse of altruism was noted from the following example of the participants' responses: "Everyone should make a point to volunteer, because it makes a huge difference for everyone involved." The following sports discourse example was shared in the participants' responses: "It encourages individuals feeling that they belong, both the participants and those putting on the event." The following response is an example of the discourse of disability: "It reminded me that no matter what abilities someone has or doesn't have, there is an art in using them to achieve goals and grow self-confidence." These discourses were ever present in the participants' responses including altruism/service, sports, and disability.

In summary, therefore, participants are motivated to get involved and attracted to engaging in a volunteer experience when they have a strong orientation to service, a passion or personal interest in the children with special needs and/or the sports event, or have a professional interest in the children with special needs and/or the sports event. In addition, the prevailing discourses include a discourse of disability - about concern about equity and society, about a strong belief in inclusion, and consciousness of the social and political context of volunteering. The participants shared their compelling stories to express their dominant motivations for getting involved in the volunteers' experiences of working with children with special needs in a structured sports event (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2

Focus Area Two: Motivation for Getting Involved & Attraction for Doing It and Corresponding Themes

Themes
2a. Strong service orientation
2b. Passion/personal interest
2c. Professional interest
2d. Concern about equity and society
2e. Belief in inclusion, social, and political perspectives

3. Meaning of the Experience

People are able to make sense of their new experiences in very personal ways, based on their belief systems, expectations, learning, and sense of self and community, which includes their many previous experiences. In this study, I found that there were eight themes represented in the participants' responses about the meaning of their volunteer experiences. The following eight themes describe the meaning of their volunteer experiences (3a) a positive value of the experience, (3b) an expanded sense of family, (3c) what was learned through the experience and how it was learned, (3d) how belief in service gets strengthened and enhanced, (3e) how their view of equity developed, grows, or is enhanced, (3f) the difference between expectations and what they found, (3g) in what way was it participatory and what were people invited to participate

in, and (3h) how people are identified. Following are some of the participants' responses to each of these themes.

3a. Positive value of the experience. The following participants' responses describe the meaning of their volunteer experience as a positive value.

> While the lane assignments sometimes had the positive responses – the thank yous, the seeing the focus change from getting to the pool to the concentration of the start, I think the most positive aspects were working with the swimmers after the race was over and directing them to view the scoreboard and their standings. Even at the real competition level of statewide games, most of the participants were incredibly happy seeing their names on the scoreboard, though some were fierce competitors. (P-1)
>
> I also felt very fulfilled. I enjoyed it so much that I participated in these games three different times. (P-2)
>
> I had a good time. I was impressed by a couple who had adopted several children with special needs…They were really neat people. I'm glad I had the chance to meet them and see them with their children. (P-3)
>
> …One particular girl was in a wheelchair and when she was ready to run she would use a walker…When she ran her final race, I was waiting and cheering at the finish line. She surprised me by running to me and giving me a huge hug! This really touched me. I find that you are forever bonded with the people (volunteers and athletes) you are working with even though you may never see them again. (P-4)
>
> …I got great joy seeing her swim, then finding her parents. They were so proud of her, as were all the people that were cheering in the stands for her and other kids. (P-5)
>
> It was a great event. We were taking people with physical and developmental limitations surfing. It was amazing to see the joy in the participants' eyes when they caught their first wave. (P-6)
>
> My experience has been life changing…The campers that I have seen come and go, some for a day – some for the entire summer, have given me perspective on my own health, mobility, voice and independence. Despite being in wheelchairs, having G-tubes or being completely deaf, the campers are overwhelmingly happy to be in a sailboat or making a sand castle. I have encountered some of the happiest and most grateful people at camp and for that I am forever grateful. (P-8)
>
> It was a memorable experience…I thoroughly enjoyed working at the Special Olympics, the special needs children were so enthusiastic during

> the event; the volunteers were equally excited about participating in the Special Olympics as well. (P-9)
>
> It melted my heart and made me lose my breath to see how much they wanted to compete and do their best. (P-10)

Nine of the participants described the meaning of their volunteer experience as of positive value. One participant shared a story about a positive experience of volunteering with a group of swimmers, and how happy they were at seeing their names on the scoreboard. Another participant was nervous before the event and very happy seeing how joyous the children were throughout the event. Several other participants had positive experiences working with the children and shared their stories of helping the children in great detail. A couple of the participants were thrilled to see the joy in the children's eyes as they accomplished something new and the confidence that grew out of that experience for the children. And a few of the participants were very touched by the children's enthusiasm for participating, as well as the pride from the families as the children did their best in an event. Each of these participants painted a picture about the positive value of their volunteer experience of working with children with special needs in a structured sports event. Following is an example of the discourse of altruism from the participants' responses: "I also felt very fulfilled. I enjoyed it so much that I participated in these games three different times." An example of the sports discourse that was shared in the participants' responses: "…I think the most positive aspects were working with the swimmers after the race was over and directing them to view the scoreboard and their standings." An example of the discourse of disability from the participants' responses included: "Despite being in wheelchairs, having G-tubes or being completely deaf, the campers are overwhelmingly happy to be in a sailboat or making a sand castle." Multiple discourses were evident for these participants including altruism/service, sports, and disability.

3b. Expanded sense of family. The following participants' responses describe the meaning of their volunteer experience as an expanded sense of family.

> I had a good time…I got to meet this couple who had brought their adopted children with special needs to participate in the pre-school sports events…It was very special to see the love they showed their children, and I was impressed with who they were, and all they did for their children. They were really neat people. I'm glad I had the chance to meet them and see them with their children. (P-3)
>
> At one of the events, one particular girl was in a wheelchair and when she was ready to run she would use a walker. On several occasions, while she was waiting for her name and event to be announced, her walker would disappear. So, I was given the job of carrying her walker around until I heard her name and event called. Then, I would meet her to exchange the wheelchair and walker so she could run her race. I would bring the wheelchair to her parents. (P-4)

> I was assigned a 15 year old girl. I helped her in preparing for the meet: getting dressed, knowing when it was her time to swim, then receive her medal and find her parents. (P-5)
>
> It encourages individuals feeling that they belong, both the participants and those putting on the event. (P-7)
>
> I have always been an aquatic athlete and working at the beach (sailing, canoeing, & swimming) seemed like a fun idea. As an adult, I returned to camp because of both the individuals I worked with and because of the staff/volunteers that I was surrounded by. (P-8)
>
> Seeing their families cheering the kids on was priceless. They were so proud and supportive. After the kids finished their events they received a ribbon of achievement and had the biggest smiles on their faces. It was truly a heartfelt experience. (P-10)

Six of the participants described the meaning of their volunteer experience as an expanded sense of family. One participant shared a story about a how impressed she was that a couple that had adopted several children with special needs had brought their children to participate in an inaugural pre-school sports event and how they were making a difference in their children's lives. A couple of participants described working closely with an athlete throughout the course of the event and feeling a part of each girl's family as they reunited with the parents at the end of the race, as people were cheering for each girl from the stands. And, one of the participants expressed how touched she was at how involved the families were in the experience as they cheered for the children. Each of these participants expressed how the meaning of their volunteer experience was an expanded sense of family of working with children with special needs in a structured sports event. An example of the discourse of altruism from the participants' responses included: "I was assigned a 15 year old girl. I helped her in preparing for the meet: getting dressed, knowing when it was her time to swim, then receive her medal and find her parents." An example of the sports discourse in the participants' responses included: "After the kids finished their events they received a ribbon of achievement and had the biggest smiles on their faces." Following is an example of the discourse of disability from the participants' responses included: "I was given the job of carrying her walker around until I heard her name and event called. Then, I would meet her to exchange the wheelchair and walker so she could run her race." The various discourses were illustrated in these participants' responses including altruism/service, sports, and disability.

3c. What was learned through the experience and how it was learned. The following participants' responses describe the meaning of their volunteer experience through what they learned through the experience and how it was learned.

> I was struck by the competitiveness and focus of some and the sheer enjoyment of others at being there. Another memory was trying to help

> out parents in the stands when the best descriptions were things like, "tall" or "wearing glasses". (P-1)
>
> Since, I taught general PE, I now expect more from my general education students after seeing what the kids with special needs were able to do. They really impacted my perspective with working with my general education kids. (P-2)
>
> You learn so much about yourself. The external message of helping others, as a "hands up" and not "hand out" is very important. (P-4)
>
> I found that working with this girl was very easy. She seemed to know what to do, and I just was there to help her through things like getting ready, supervising her in the locker room, making sure she got to her event on time, and things like that. She was helping to make it easy for me. I got the sense that she had done this before and knew what to do. (P-5)
>
> This experience taught me we all have our own limitations it is merely a matter of how we treat problems we are presented with. (P-6)
>
> It reminded me that no matter what abilities someone has or doesn't have, there is an art in using them to achieve goals and grow self-confidence. (P-10)

Six of the participants described the meaning of what they learned through their volunteer experience. One participant was struck by how competitive some of the athletes were and the sheer enjoyment expressed by many of the athletes at being there. Another participant was surprised at what the children with special needs were able to accomplish in the events, and will now expect more from her general physical education students as a result. And, one of the participants learned a great deal about herself through the volunteer experience, especially that the children with special needs in the structured sports event were looking for a 'handup' not a 'handout.' This was an eye-opening lesson for her. While this expression has been used in various ways, the meaning often associated with it is that people appreciate help and guidance from us to accomplish something, not for us to do the task for us. Peter Greer, an expert on poverty, has taken the 'hand up not hand out' approach to a practical level by creating a nonprofit microfinance company. His company lends money to people in poverty areas to start and sustain new businesses, while agreeing for the principal loan amount to be repaid in a certain amount of time. His belief is that "instead of helping poor people with charity that will eventually run out, it is more effective to lift people out of poverty through microfinance" (Vu, 2009). A couple of participants also described how rewarding the volunteer experience of working with children with special needs in a structured sports event was for them. Each of these participants expressed the meaning of what they learned through their volunteer experience of working with children with special needs in a structured sports event. The discourse of altruism present in the participants' responses included: "You learn so much about yourself. The external message of helping others, as a "hands up" and not "hand out" is very important." The following example of the

sports discourse in the participants' responses included: "I was struck by the competitiveness and focus of some and the sheer enjoyment of others at being there." An example of the discourse of disability from the participants' responses included: "This experience taught me we all have our own limitations it is merely a matter of how we treat problems we are presented with." The evident discourses for these participants included: altruism/service, sports, and disability.

3d. How belief in service gets strengthened and enhanced. The following participants' responses describe the meaning of their volunteer experience as how their belief in service was strengthened and enhanced.

> I worked poolside for several swimming events. The work involved double checking participants in the correct lanes, sometimes helping them onto the blocks and sometimes helping them exit the pool. Most of the participants had intellectual disabilities, but some were physical. I worked with other staff and coaches along with the athletes to make sure we had them in the right heats and distances. The most memorable was a high school woman who suddenly recognized that she was in a stadium that was loud and filled with lots of people. She was crying, screaming and I got to find one of her coaches (fast) and the two of us talked (and more importantly walked) her until she was ready literally seconds before the race. (P-1)

> After it was over, it was a nice experience to be able to help the kids with special needs. It was great to see how joyous they were. I felt good to be able to be involved, happy to participate. (P-2)

> I was impressed by how many volunteers there were at this event, and how the Special Olympics provided so many opportunities for these preschool children. (P-3)

> At another time, I worked at the Special Olympics Summer World Games and it was a fantastic experience! The other volunteers were incredibly supportive…And, I always enjoy working with the athletes! (P-4)

> I can see the tremendous effort it takes to make a sporting event for individuals with special needs run smoothly and efficiently. It is extremely hard work for the staff to make a little fun day at the beach, be simply that, a little fun day. (P-8)

> As a volunteer, I assisted with getting the competitors lined up in the proper order in the bull pens before their events. I observed as their coaches reminded them of their training techniques for this big moment. It melted my heart and made me lose my breath to see how much they wanted to compete and do their best. (P-10)

Six of the participants described the meaning of their volunteer experience, and how their belief in service was strengthened and enhanced. Some of the participants shared stories of how helping the athletes strengthened and enhanced their belief in volunteering. They talked about helping an athlete who was scared and crying find her parents, and helping a girl throughout the day to change into her swimsuit, listen for the location of her event, prep her to swim, greet her at the end of the race, find her parents in the stands, and help her change into dry clothes after the event. The dialogue and descriptions of the volunteers' experiences were captivating and filled with just how much these experiences meant to the volunteers. A couple of the other participants were mesmerized by the joy on the children's faces. Another participant was grateful for the hard work, dedication, and efforts by the staff to prepare and host the event. Basically, each of these participants was volunteering to make the experience meaningful for the athletes, and their belief in service as volunteers was ultimately strengthened and enhanced. The following discourse of altruism was noted in the participants' responses: "After it was over, it was a nice experience to be able to help the kids with special needs. It was great to see how joyous they were." An example of the sports discourse in the participants' responses was: "As a volunteer, I assisted with getting the competitors lined up in the proper order in the bull pens before their events." The discourse of disability from the participants' responses included: "I can see the tremendous effort it takes to make a sporting event for individuals with special needs run smoothly and efficiently. It is extremely hard work for the staff to make a little fun day at the beach, be simply that, a little fun day." As is evident, the discourses for these participants' responses included: altruism/service, sports, and disability.

3e. How their view of equity was developed, grew, or was enhanced. The following participants' responses describe the meaning of their volunteer experience by how their view of equity was developed, grew, or was enhanced.

> It was a positive experience for me. It was definitely a rewarding and positive experience for the kids. It seemed like they had an amazing time. It was more about finishing, completing the activity than winning. (P-2)

> It was just as rewarding as seeing my own kids compete. At the time, I did not realize how kids with special needs do the same types of activities as the typical kid. It was more rewarding because at the time I did not think that special needs kids could do as well as the typical kids. They really did a great job, could compete, have similar emotions, and drive as the typical kids. I think this is a key to helping me to get into enrolling in the Adapted Physical Education program and become a teacher. (P-5)

> Many of the participants had a blast and whatever disability they had was irrelevant. (P-6)

> I did not see my experience as helping individuals with significant cognitive, emotional and physical disabilities - rather it was a bunch of humans just hanging out at the beach. It was an experience that taught me equality, equity and teamwork. (P-8)

> It was a memorable experience. (P-9)

Five of the participants described the meaning of their volunteer experience and how their view of equity was developed, grew, and was enhanced. Two of the participants expressed how their view of equity developed, grew, and was enhanced as they witnessed the competitiveness of a few athletes, while most of the athletes were just thrilled to be there and participating in the event. Several participants shared stories of how the structured sports events provided an opportunity for children with special needs to participate in sports activities similarly to typical children. Another participant stated that her view of equity was enhanced and watching the children participate was just as rewarding as watching her own children play in a structured sports event. And, one of the participants described how she returned every year to volunteer to work with the children because there was no other place that she would rather be. The participants used descriptive dialogue to paint a picture of their volunteer experiences through their view of how equity was developed, grew, and was enhanced. The following discourse of altruism was noted in the participants' responses: "I did not see my experience as helping individuals with significant cognitive, emotional and physical disabilities - rather it was a bunch of humans just hanging out at the beach. It was an experience that taught me equality, equity and teamwork." An example of the sports discourse in the participants' responses was: "It was just as rewarding as seeing my own kids compete. At the time, I did not realize how kids with special needs do the same types of activities as the typical kid." The discourse of disability from the participants' responses included: "Many of the participants had a blast and whatever disability they had was irrelevant." Thus, the following discourses were present for the participants' responses: altruism/service, sports, and disability.

3f. Difference between expectations and what they found. The following participants' responses describe the meaning of their volunteer experience as the difference between their expectations and what they found through the experience.

> It was so different from a high school meet where most seemed to leave a bit dejected and places - which translated into team points – were the most important. I thought I would be the smiling face at the end of the race, or would need to console, but that was usually not the case. The other thing that stood out for many of the adults – I was working with a Knights of Columbus group – was the physical affection from many of the athletes. (P-1)

> I wanted it to go well, and the athletes to have a great experience. And, they all seemed to have a great experience. (P-2)

> Yes, it met my expectations because I have been to Special Olympics before. But, it was also a new experience because this was the first time Special Olympics held a full day sports event for pre-school age children. I was impressed by how many volunteers there were at this event. (P-3)

> Yes, these experiences both matched and differed from what I expected. In most cases, I had a wonderful bond with the athletes and other volunteers. The message of friendship was really strong. (P-4)
>
> I found that working with this girl was very easy. I got the sense that she had done this before and knew what to do. (P-5)
>
> Looking back it was a great experience. At the time I had limited experience working or interacting with people with disabilities. (P-6)
>
> The experience was always better than what I expected. (P-7)
>
> My experiences greatly differed from what I expected. I anticipated "helping those less fortunate," but the overused cliche rang true: they helped me more than I helped them. (P-8)
>
> The experiences pretty much matched my expectations because several of my colleagues had participated in the event in the past and they had informed me about their experiences. (P-9)
>
> These experiences were beyond what I expected. They matched in the sense that I knew there would be all types of special needs among the kids. And they differed because I didn't expect them to be so prepared, happy, and proud to be there. (P-10)

All ten of the participants discussed the difference between their expectations and what they found in their volunteer experience. Two of the participants had volunteered at similar events before and noted that these recent experiences met their expectations. One of the participants joined with friends who had participated in the event before, so he knew what to expect. Another one of the participants had volunteered at a high school track meet and was expecting a similar experience. He was pleasantly surprised to find that the athletes weren't upset if they did not win the race, as the high school athletes would have been. In addition, he was with the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic men's service group, who were very surprised when the children with special needs launched themselves into their arms after finishing a race. Once they got over the shock, he said they all really enjoyed themselves. Six of the participants reported that the volunteer experience exceeded their expectations. Two of these participants now expect more from their students after seeing what the athletes with special needs are capable of doing. Several participants indicated that their volunteer experience went beyond their expectations and was always better than the time before, and that they were amazed at how prepared, happy, and proud the athletes were to be at the games. Each of participants generously shared their volunteer experiences and the 'ahhs' that were so meaningful to them. Here was an example of the discourse of altruism in the participants' responses: "My experiences greatly differed from what I expected. I anticipated "helping those less fortunate," but the overused cliche rang true: they helped me more than I helped them." Following is an example of the sports discourse in the participants' responses: "It was so different from a high school meet where most seemed

to leave a bit dejected and places - which translated into team points – were the most important. I thought I would be the smiling face at the end of the race, or would need to console, but that was usually not the case." The following discourse of disability was noted in the participants' responses: "Looking back it was a great experience. At the time I had limited experience working or interacting with people with disabilities." Therefore, these discourses were stated in the participants' responses: altruism/service, sports, and disability.

3g. In what way was it participatory and what were people invited to participate in. The following participants' responses describe the meaning of their volunteer experience by the way it was participatory and what people were invited to participate in through the experience.

> Another year I worked more administratively with the short track events, lining runners "on deck" for future events. It was quite participatory and I worked with other staff and coaches along with athletes to make sure we had them in the right heats and distances. (P-1)

> During the event, I was actively involved in the track and field activities. After it was over, it was a nice experience to be able to help the kids with special needs. It was great to see how joyous they were. I felt good to be able to be involved, happy to participate. (P-2)

> It was amazing to see the joy in the participants' eyes when they caught their first wave...One thing the experience taught me was that I got just as much joy out of watching the participants catch a wave as the participants were having riding the waves. (P-6)

> I was assigned to several different events (50 & 100 yard dash, long jump), where my main task was to get the participants to the starting line and prepare them for the event. Typically, each of the children had a volunteer with them that they were familiar with and I would help them prepare the child for the event…the volunteers were equally excited about participating in the Special Olympics as well. (P-9)

Four of the participants reported working directly in a participatory way with the athletes, children with special needs. Some of these also indicated they worked closely with other staff or volunteers. And these participants expanded and described their experience working with the families of the children with special needs. Each of these participants was actively involved in a sport or activity, including track and field, and swimming events. Some of the participants shared descriptive stories of helping an athlete to change into their uniforms, and exchange out a walker and wheelchair, while others helped to locate parents at the finish line. An example of the discourse of altruism was present in the participants' responses: "It was amazing to see the joy in the participants' eyes when they caught their first wave...One thing the experience taught me was that I got just as much joy out of watching the participants catch a wave as the participants were having riding the waves." Following is an example of the sports

discourse in the participants' responses: "Another year I worked more administratively with the short track events, lining runners "on deck" for future events. It was quite participatory and I worked with other staff and coaches along with athletes to make sure we had them in the right heats and distances." The discourse of disability was evident in the participants' responses: "After it was over, it was a nice experience to be able to help the kids with special needs. It was great to see how joyous they were." The following discourses were shared in the participants' responses: altruism/service, sports, and disability.

3h. Participant perceptions of child athlete identities. The following participants' responses describe the meaning of their volunteer experience through their perceptions of the child athlete identities (for example the terms used to describe them: boy, girl, children, athletes, kids, children with special needs, kids with disabilities).

> Most of the participants had intellectual disabilities, but some were physical…I worked with other staff and coaches along with the athletes to make sure we had them in the right heats and distances. (P-1)
>
> …It was a nice experience to be able to help the kids with special needs. (P-2)
>
> This was the first time that the Special Olympics had held an event like this for pre-school children and it was very well received by families and all the many volunteers. (P-3)
>
> In most cases, I had a wonderful bond with the athletes and other volunteers. (P-4)
>
> At the time, I did not realize how kids with special needs do the same types of activities as the typical kid. (P-5)
>
> It was amazing to see the joy in the participants' eyes when they caught their first wave. (P-6)
>
> It encourages individuals feeling that they belong, both the participants and those putting on the event. (P-7)
>
> The campers that I have seen come and go, some for a day - some for the entire summer, have given me perspective on my own health, mobility, voice and independence. (P-8)
>
> I became a volunteer for special needs students at a local Special Olympics event held at a local community college. (P-9)
>
> After the kids finished their events they received a ribbon of achievement and had the biggest smiles on their faces. It was truly a heartfelt experience. (P-10)

All ten of the participants used various identifiers to discuss the children that they were working with during their volunteer experience. I found it interesting that the terminology changed as the participants were recalling their experience. Initially, many of the participants referred to the children as: kids, girl, boy, kids with disabilities, children with special needs, kids with special needs, special needs students, individuals with special needs, and then gradually, I was seeing the terms – athletes, participants, kids, and people used to identify the children participating in the structured sports event. So, as the research participants, in this case, volunteers, worked with the 'athletes' the special needs or disability of each child became less salient as an identifier, even when the child was using a walker and a wheelchair. It slipped further into the background and terms that are more inclusive of children with disabilities as members of the same community as other athletes began to achieve prominence. It all became about ability and no longer disability. The playing field was linguistically leveled, so to speak, and everyone was just an athlete. How powerful is that concept! It fits so nicely in this study and illustrates the social construction of identity, where one's identity is socially constructed in real time, as the events unfold and go live! Following is an example of the discourse of altruism present in the participants' responses: "…It was a nice experience to be able to help the kids with special needs." An example of the sports discourse was noted in the participants' responses: "Most of the participants had intellectual disabilities, but some were physical…I worked with other staff and coaches along with the athletes to make sure we had them in the right heats and distances." The discourse of disability was evident in the participants' responses: "At the time, I did not realize how kids with special needs do the same types of activities as the typical kid." Thus, multiple discourses were present in these participants' responses including: altruism/service, sports, and disability.

Therefore, it appears that the participants made meaning out of their volunteer experience in a number of ways. There are some resounding themes represented in their responses. The majority of participants shared the positive value of their volunteer experience including some heartfelt stories of them interacting with the children. As with any discourse, people tap into their previous experiences to make sense of a new situation. As such, many participants connected their experience with an expanded sense of family. Each participant was eager to share something they had learned through their volunteer experience. And, while many participants' expressed the sense of service as a motivator for volunteering, they also shared how this sense of service was strengthened and enhanced. Similarly, many of the participants illustrated how their view of equity developed, grew, and/or was enhanced through their volunteer experience. The differences between the participants' expectations and what they found through their experiences was another illuminating area. Some participants found that their expectations were met, but reported how amazed or touched they were by some aspect of their experience. Other participants shared that they were overjoyed by their experience and never could have imagined the impact their experience would have on them, both in the moment and for their future career plans. The participants described ways in which their experience was participatory and what the people were invited to participate in. Stories abounded about their experiences and final thoughts were shared (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3

Focus Area Three: Meaning of the Experience and Corresponding Themes

Themes
3a. Positive value of the experience
3b. Expanded sense of family
3c. What was learned through the experience and how it was learned
3d. How belief in service gets strengthened and enhanced
3e. How their view of equity was developed, grew, or was enhanced
3f. Difference between expectations and what they found
3g. In what way was it participatory and what were people invited to participate in
3h. Participant perceptions of child athlete identities

Summary

In Round one, the interviews were conducted using computer technology, specifically email exchange. In order to ensure confidentiality, the participant responses were each de-identified and combined into a single document for review. This document of combined responses was then emailed individually to each of the participants for them to review, verify, and comment on any of the responses as well as make any necessary changes and/or additions. The data was coded and analyzed for themes as the participant responses correlated to similar ideas and/or concepts. The participants' responses were shared and supported the emerging themes. Chapter 6 presents the research findings for the Round Two interviews. And, Chapter 7 provides the results of the study, implications, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 6: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS – ROUND TWO

In the second round, the participants responded through technology-based video conferencing. As in the first round of interviews, the second round of interviews resulted in the following three similar focus areas: (1) continuing to be involved, (2) motivation for staying involved, and (3) ongoing meaning of the experience, as well as two new focus areas: (4) participants' [volunteers'] perceptions of concerns as expressed by families or child athletes, and (5) suggestions and ideas about encouraging future volunteer recruitment. Within each focus area are specific themes which are delineated in the discussion below.

1. Continuing To Be Involved

As mentioned in the first round of responses, there are a variety of reasons and a variety of ways people volunteer. People volunteer due to an interest they have in something, who they know, or based on their time available. Their motivation for volunteering was socially, rather than individually constructed, and developed through their relationship with other people – friends, colleagues, parents. In this round of the study, I found that seven out of the ten respondents continued to volunteer for other sports events on multiple occasions, while two of them have plans to continue volunteering in the future. The participants volunteered for two primary reasons. The themes that emerged as the process for participants to continue to be involved were (1a) through a personal connection, and/or (1b) because they were seeking out an opportunity for themselves. Following are some of the participants' responses to each of these themes.

1a. Through a personal connection. The following participants' responses describe their reason for continuing to be involved as a volunteer through a personal connection.

> Yes, I have [continued to be involved] but quite honestly, not recently. I did it over four years, at least four times. Part of it was that I was with an organization that was doing it, the Knights of Columbus; and the other was that I wanted to see happy kids. I had seen videos and heard stories. And every once in a while you work with happy people, and see success. (P-1)

> I volunteered more than once, about three times for Special Olympics, with my colleagues. All of them were track and field events, and were very similar with running and long jump, so they were pretty much the same. They were all organized very well and the kids totally enjoyed them, so it was all good. The only thing different was just the locations of the events. (P-2)

> Actually the students with special needs threw me into this, then I found wonderful great opportunities and I brought them along. (P-7)

> Yes, absolutely, I come out to volunteer at least two days every summer for the past ten years...There's some paid staff and a pool of probably ten past staff members like me who make a point to come back every summer to volunteer for at least a day or more in order to see the campers. (P-8)

> A lot of the volunteers were fellow teachers and stuff…I volunteered for the Special Olympics and the other event I volunteered for was a charity bowling event. The bowling teams sponsored an event where the amount of points they earned would pay into a special fund for our kids with special needs…We were volunteers but we also had peer volunteers, same age kids for the kids with special needs. (P-9)

In terms of continuing to be involved in volunteering, five of the nine participants in round two expressed that they remained actively involved. Their involvement included participation through volunteering for a structured sports event based on a personal connection. Three of these five participants continued to be involved with opportunities with the Special Olympics. One of these five participants continued to volunteer at a sports camp for children/campers with special needs. And another of these participants continued to be involved in seeking and participating in a variety of community sports events on the weekends for her students with special needs. Four of these people are K-12 educators, three teachers and one administrator, who work with children with special needs, and one participant is a university administrator. They continue to show a willingness to volunteer with children outside of their work day. This relational aspect of the process of continuing to be involved as a volunteer is evident here, as well as several discourses. An example of the discourse of altruism (service) was evident from the responses above: "Part of it was that I was with an organization that was doing it, the Knights of Columbus; and the other was that I wanted to see happy kids." Also present was evidence of a sports discourse in the responses: "All of them were track and field events, and were very similar with running and long jump, so they were pretty much the same." In addition, the discourse of disability was found in many of the participants' responses. Following is an example of the discourse of disability from the perspective of the social model: "The bowling teams sponsored an event where the amount of points they earned would pay into a special fund for our kids with special needs…" Similar to the responses in round one, these three discourses were evident throughout the participants' responses in this theme of the round two interviews.

1b. Seeking out an opportunity for themselves. The following participants' responses describe the reason for continuing to be involved as a volunteer through seeking out an opportunity for themselves.

> You know I work with Scouts, and seeing kids who can do things that they didn't think they could do was something I enjoy whether it's physical, whether it's intellectual, helping people stretch. Over time, every year was a little bit different, one year was rainy but we were still outside. I guess the similarities we were seeing…kids achieve and do what they didn't think they could do, and even win…And that's the enjoyable part.

Yeah, it was long days and we left all of them energized as opposed to drained. (P-1)

Yes, volunteering has been a very big part of my life. I did Ameri-Corps, the domestic Peace Corps. So, volunteering period, I'm very inclined to do. You get a lot out of it. You learn a lot about yourself. You feel good about helping people. And the best benefit is watching them smile just because you've done something to help them succeed. (P-4)

No, it was a one-time thing with Special Olympics. I went back to school and it was part of my college experience for pursuing the Adapted PE credential. I haven't done it again because I am an Adapted PE teacher and I teach kids with special needs every day. Unless a friend would ask me to help, I haven't thought to do it. But I am going to pursue volunteering more after I retire from teaching. (P-5)

I have volunteered a couple different times. The time I was reflecting on the last time we spoke was for an organization. And, it was basically taking people with varying physical and psychological disabilities surfing and treating them through being in the ocean and experience riding a wave and other water activities. I volunteered twice and we spent the whole day on the beach and always felt fulfilled. And, it was doubly fulfilling because you knew you spent the day making someone else's day better. It was cool because I go to the beach every day, and I'm in the ocean almost every day. And I know what it does for me, so it's cool to see what it does for other people, especially people who don't get to experience it all the time. (P-6)

I continue to do it, sometimes with an individual family that we have tied ourselves to, and we make sure we take them to new exciting events…I think I get more out of it than they do but it's something you don't want to give up so you are always looking for those opportunities…So, some of the activities were aquatics. We are close to a stadium and the beach and so we try to get the kids comfortable with the water because we are right there on the beach and a lot of kids don't know how to swim. So the first one felt like we were Sisyphus and pushing the rock continually up the hill...we would teach them in a pool first and then took them to the beach and so that took a lot. So I think that was the biggest lift but then what we got back was so amazing it was worth it but then every time getting involved in the next event, whether it was aquatics or whether it was track and field or helping out at the university. (P-7)

No, I have not [continued to volunteer]. That's not to say that I wouldn't want to. It's that I just haven't actively pursued it. But this is coming up again so, it's a good reminder that I should volunteer again. I had such a good time with it before. I'd do it again for the variety. It would be fun. I

> really had such a good time doing it and those kids were like fire. Their energy is what I still remember… (P-10)

Just as in round one, the participants, in this case six out of the nine participants, expressed clear reasons for continuing to be involved as a volunteer for a structured sports event by seeking out an opportunity for themselves. Four of these six participants in round two had volunteered multiple times for similar structured sports events for children with special needs. Two of these six participants had volunteered for Special Olympics events many times over the years, while another two of these six participants frequently volunteered in their communities for local swimming/surfing events. The last two of these six participants volunteered as part of a class at their college and continue to be interested in volunteering in the future. Therefore, these six out of nine total participants were continuing to seek opportunities for themselves through volunteering, each of them individually volunteered for a social experience with children with special needs in a structured sports event. Five of these participants are educators, and they all chose to continue to volunteer at events with children outside of their work day. Following is an example of the discourse of altruism, which is that of helping and serving others, is culled from the above responses: "I volunteered twice and we spent the whole day on the beach and always felt fulfilled. And, it was doubly fulfilling because you knew you spent the day [helping] making someone else's day better." An example of the sports discourse in these responses is: "So, some of the activities were aquatics. We are close to a stadium and the beach and so we try to get the kids comfortable with the water because we are right there on the beach and a lot of kids don't know how to swim." Additionally, the discourse of disability, including aspects of the minority model (Davis, 2013; Grue, 2011), social model (Corker, 1999; Grue, 2011; Oliver, 1990, 1996; Shakespeare, 2006), as well as the gap model (Grue, 2011) can be seen in the following response: "I guess the similarities we were seeing…kids [with special needs] achieve and do what they didn't think they could do, and even win." These discourses of altruism/service (helping), sports (athletics, competition), and disability (awareness and equity) were present throughout the participants' responses and illustrated social constructionist perspectives.

In summary, it appears that the process of people continuing to be involved as a volunteer for structured sports events is similar to how they initially got involved which occurs as they engage in discourse with each another. Following are the ongoing conversations surrounding the discourse of disability - about volunteering to work with children, working with children with special needs, and working at structured sports events. The majority of the participants indicated their reasons for continuing to be involved in volunteering was through a personal connection and/or because they were seeking an opportunity for themselves. Each of the participants referenced their decision in a relational context: through a personal connection and/or seeking out a relational opening leading towards involvement (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1

Focus Area One: Continuing to Be Involved and Corresponding Themes

Themes
1a. Through a personal connection
1b. Seeking out an opportunity for themselves

2. Motivation for Staying Involved

Just as people are motivated to initially volunteer, they also continue to volunteer in very personal ways. They are motivated for staying involved in volunteering for very personal reasons – as a strong service orientation, passion for and personal interest in volunteering, professional interest, concern about equity and society, a belief in equity and inclusion, and social and/or political concerns. In round two of this study, I found that the participants were motivated to stay involved in volunteering which represent the following five themes: (2a) a strong service orientation, (2b) a passion or personal interest, (2c) a professional interest, (2d) concern about equity and society, and (2e) a belief in inclusion, social, or political perspectives. The following are participant responses to each of these themes.

2a. Strong service orientation. The following participants' responses describe their strong service orientation as their motivation for staying involved in volunteering.

> [It was] positive but not easy to clarify. It brought me back for a few years even after I stopped being as active with the group I was in [Knights of Columbus]. (P-1)

> I think it's all been positive in that when you volunteer, people seem to be appreciative of you because you are volunteering. And they explain things, explain the event, or they include you at least in my experience, maybe because I was with the girl with special needs (that they had assigned me to work with) they wanted to make sure that I knew what to do. The good feelings have stayed with me, knowing that I was helping somebody. Like I said I like kids and so it's just…Everybody's happy actually! (P-5)

> And for the students, they get these opportunities that they wouldn't have gotten before, and then their families realize they have access to more things, so that helps…I don't think I had to learn empathy, because that's something I feel I have but it made me appreciate many more facets of humans. (P-7)

> It's always about [helping] the campers with various disabilities…It's similar in that there were a lot of the same campers, a lot of the same

> people who come back, the same systems and structures, camp stays really true too… (P-8)
>
> Well, it's positive…We were all there for the kids. (P-9)
>
> Overall, it was definitely positive and it makes you think why aren't more people out there doing that and why am I not doing something like that and getting that excited about something…Everyone did their part well and we all set up and tear down and do all the individual events. (P-10)

Many participants were motivated for staying involved in volunteering because of a strong service orientation. They indicated a continued interest in giving of themselves and their time to volunteer for structured sports event for children with special needs. Three of them continued to volunteer for the Special Olympics events, one of the participants for the camp for children with special needs, and one for local community events for children with special needs. Each of these participants was motivated to continue to volunteer due to their strong sense of service to others. There are discourses that support this service ethic, including some that are religious and/or philanthropic. An example of this service ethic can be seen in the discourse of altruism from the participants' responses: "It's always about [helping] the campers with various disabilities…" The following is an example of the sports discourse, where everyone did their part and contributed to all aspects of the event can be seen in these responses: "Everyone did their part well and we all set up and tear down and do all the individual events." And the discourse of disability, in particular the minority model (Davis, 2015; Grue, 2011), that sees disability through the lens of social justice and aims to bring awareness of disability rights to the forefront, was depicted in the following responses: "And for the students [with special needs], they get these opportunities that they wouldn't have gotten before [due to their disabilities], and then their families realize they have access to more things, so that helps…" Again, these discourses of altruism/service (helping), sports (athletics, competition), and discourse of disability (awareness and equity) were evidenced in the participants' responses and seen through a social constructionist perspective.

2b. Passion/personal interest. The following participants' responses describe the reason for their motivation for staying involved in volunteering.

> When somebody wants to do something, it's a different feeling than having to do something. High energy, tremendous! It was tremendous while it was there and when everybody was there, you'd think they were heavily caffeinated. But really…Even in the third and fourth year, it was hard to get to sleep at night because the energy was still…this was truly charging and empowering and after being out for 12 hours and standing and running and walking, the car ride home was energetic! And, yeah, it was very high energy. The kids brought everything to this. Everyone was all in! Certainly from the beginning, the volunteers were smiling and happy people, because they were smiling, happy people everywhere the

whole time. And we probably pulled this from the kids and from each other as well. (P-1)

There was definitely a sense of community. I don't that think I've ever been in one place in my entire life that you feel so much love as when you attend these events, it's a really overwhelming feeling. (P-4)

It was all positive, I think, and even more positive when she completed her swimming heat and her parents and everybody were clapping. Her parents were happy, she's happy! We were all happy! If there was anything negative I don't remember what it was. It was all positive… (P-5)

As a positive, it makes you feel good and it was enjoyable enough that I would like to do this in some way as a career. And the negative, if there is a negative, seeing some people's reality can be a little tough, just knowing that there are certain things they can't do on their own or having to help someone who is a paraplegic and will never have the use of their legs, is kind of tough to see. But the other side of that is that you're helping them and hopefully putting a smile on their face. (P-6)

I looked at opportunities outside of school and that got me involved in volunteering. You look at your group of kids that you are working with and you want to sure that you're providing extensions, so that they can do things outside of school, because all of what we do at school is nothing if they can use it later. So to make sure all my students had opportunities, I searched for activities and they helped me find activities that would meet their needs. So, I guess they helped me become a better person by finding great activities outside of school, weekends, and after school opportunities. (P-7)

There's no other place that exists where there is like-minded people that spend their time doing something like this. They could be doing something where they are making a lot more money doing so many other things. And it's the "lifers" that come back year after year who know all the songs and can do all the lifts (transport kids) and there's just something special about your peers in addition to the campers, a real sense of community.…We have two former staff members who are active service members in the Navy and every time they are in town, they make a day to come to camp. We have the bay side and then the wind side, and because we are on the strand we get the bay and the ocean to work in, so it's pretty cool. It's a pretty unique place…the singing of the same songs since the 80's, and a lot of that stuff, the spirit, the love, and the ebbs and flows of energy. (P-8)

The kids are having so much fun and it was great to see all of them competing in a level playing field with their like peers, fellow disabled peers. And Special Olympics is alive and well because of it…So there

> was all that camaraderie because we were all in that line of work or were parents. So it was a sense of belonging. (P-9)

> I would say that it was definitely positive...Because you can just really see that this is what these kids were training for, they were so excited and all their coaches had so many tips and trigger words like, 'Okay, remember this is what we were training for.' (P-10)

Most of the participants were motivated for staying involved because of a passion and personal interest in volunteering. Eight of the participants stated that they volunteered because they love to work with children, and they chose to work with the children in these particular sports events. A number of the participants talked about combining their love of water and water activities with their love of working with children with special needs. All of them enjoy working with children. Many participants remarked on how much fun they were having as a result of the children having fun and enjoying themselves. This was a pivotal motivation for many of the volunteers to stay involved with volunteering. Each of these participants continued to be motivated to volunteer due to their passion and personal interest in working with children with special needs in a structured sports event. The participants' responses of passion and personal interest were connected to the overall social experiences of themselves and others, since many of the participants volunteered with friends, family, and colleagues. Following is an example of the discourse of altruism (helping, service) from the participants' responses: "And, yeah, it was very high energy. The kids brought everything to this. Everyone was all in [to help and participate]!" An example of the sports discourse (athletes, competition) seen in these participants' responses is: "…and even more positive when she completed her swimming heat and her parents and everybody were clapping." Additionally, an example of the discourse of disability (social and gap models) was shown in the following responses: "The kids are having so much fun and it was great to see all of them competing in a level playing field with their like peers, fellow disabled peers." In addition, one participant went a step further and introduced the concept of choosing to volunteer and be of service (discourse of altruism) as opposed to doing something to make money (capitalist discourse of economics for self-interest): "…They could be doing something where they are making a lot more money doing so many other things…" These discourses of altruism (helping, service), sports (athletes, competition), and disability (social, gap, and minority models) were illustrated in the participants' responses above for motivation for staying involved in volunteering based on passion and personal interest.

2c. Professional interest. The following participants' responses describe professional interest as their motivation for staying involved in volunteering.

> It's wonderful, everyone who is there throughout the day, I was there two days, was there because they wanted to be there. Some were probably there because of their company, but for the most part, everyone who was there wanted to be there. This was their primary interest for the day, and they went beyond. It was truly…yeah, beyond. Everyone was a team, everyone pulled together for the same thing. And that unit spirit was

there. You didn't see or notice, it was probably there, but part of it is me, part of it was getting caught up in the excitement and I'm not a terribly emotional person. But I didn't see the angry coaches or parents, or didn't see the kids being berated for not performing. But all the volunteers were there because they wanted to be there. (P-1)

I volunteered for these events with some of the people I worked with at my school. (P-2)

I am getting my doctorate. One avenue that I may seek is to get a professorship and teach Adapted PE. What I'd stress is to teach cultural intelligence too. (P-4)

This volunteer experience reinforced me wanting to be an Adapted PE teacher, a positive feeling...I think it reinforced the feeling that I wanted to help or teach kids with special needs even more, even though this was a pretty high functioning girl. (P-5)

It definitely pushed me to pursue making it a career and that's why I got into Adapted PE, along with knowing a couple of Adapted PE teachers. So that definitely pushed me in that direction. (P-6)

As I have said before I was a general physical education teacher. At work, they would come to me to make sure that the students were placed in my class so they had a good learning environment, which then I got to meet lovely students to make sure that they would get good connections that I was making for all my general PE students. So, since they were my students, I wanted to make good connections with community activities for them too. That was the spring board to get me into these great opportunities. Actually the students with special needs threw me into this, then I found wonderful great opportunities and I brought them along…So I think that has helped me a lot in my work world. (P-7)

Camp is why I have the career that I have, why I got the Bachelor's degree I got, why I got a teaching credential, special education credentials, and a Masters' degree. (P-8)

It was kind of like camaraderie like in college, you know. Only a few of them I work with at my school but these were a bunch of special education teachers from all around the East Valley, and instructional aides as well, and then you had parents. (P-9)

I did get college credit for going to it as part of my volunteer experience in the physical education field. And for a while actually when I was doing it, I was working on my kinesiology degree and I was considering all the different pathways and I was definitely considering physical education and adapted physical education during this volunteer experience. And I was

> taking my Adapted PE class at that time and it definitely opened my eyes to it as a career…So, yes, it has definitely impacted my career. (P-10)

Nine of the participants were motivated for staying involved in volunteering due to professional interest. Several participants got involved in volunteering as part of their university program and it helped to solidify their choice of a teaching career for children with special needs. Some of the participants were already teachers when colleagues encouraged them to join them as volunteers for a structured sports event on multiple occasions. Each of these participants was motivated to stay involved due to professional interest in working with children with special needs. Here is an example of the discourse of altruism (helping, service) where the participant described helping a girl before, during and after her swimming races, as seen in the participants' responses: "I think it reinforced the feeling that I wanted to help or teach kids with special needs even more, even though this was a pretty high functioning girl." The sports discourse can be seen in this example of these participants' responses: "It definitely pushed me to pursue making it a career and that's why I got into Adapted PE [sports, physical education], along with knowing a couple of Adapted PE teachers." Another example is of the discourse of disability (minority model of disability awareness) which was illustrated in the following responses: "Actually the students with special needs threw me into this, then I found wonderful great opportunities and I brought them along…" The following discourses of altruism (helping, service), sports (athletes, competition), and disability (social, minority, and gap models) were echoed throughout the participants' responses.

2d. Concern about equity and society. The following participants' responses describe their concern about equity and society as their motivation for staying involved in volunteering. In expressing their concerns about equity and society, the participants were also acknowledging that inequalities and injustices have existed for people with special needs and therefore, it is important to provide equitable opportunities for children with special needs to participate in structured sports events.

> It's more of the overcoming than the succeeding, such a visceral reaction, such as an emotional reaction. And they don't have that opportunity at home or school, they can't, to fail. This gives them a chance to try something, get out of your comfort zone, but also if it doesn't work, it's okay… (P-1)

> I think that working with this population you learn more about different cultures, you become more empathetic, sympathetic, and you have a better understanding of the world around you. I strongly believe that anybody can do anything that they want to do, they just do it through different avenues. And it's really reinforced my train of thought about mind over matter. You know, you have a goal and I don't care what your obstacle is, there's a way to get there, determination. (P-4)

> And I also might have mentioned that what I got out of it was that I have kids of my own and I've gone to their sporting events and as a parent you are looking at your kid and you're just happy for them too. Well I got that

> feeling with this girl too. I mean it wasn't any different than my own child in the feelings and supporting them. She was like a typical kid. It just adapted the activity to her abilities. I think it reinforced the feeling that I wanted to help or teach kids with special needs even more, even though this was a pretty high functioning girl. I wanted to let them and their families experience what my children and I have experienced at a sporting event. And I had a feeling that there weren't enough of these kinds of events for kids with special needs where the typical kids have such a variety of events. (P-5)

> I looked at opportunities outside of school and that got me involved in volunteering. You look at your group of kids that you are working with and you want to be sure that you're providing extensions, so that they can do things outside of school, because all of what we do at school is nothing if they can use it later. So to make sure all my students had opportunities, I searched for activities and they helped me find activities that would meet their needs. So, I guess they helped me become a better person by finding great activities outside of school, weekends, and after school opportunities. (P-7)

> Things that struck me when I first started was the idea that these activities at camp are things that we all take for granted. Most able bodied, cognitively developed people can go to the beach, and go boogie boarding, kayaking, and do arts and crafts. These are all mundane things for many people but at camp these are truly once in a lifetime experiences for some of the campers… (P-8)

> It feels like home, we had a lot of the same views about things. We were all there for the kids. It's all about the kids. I'd say they're having so much fun, come out for a day with us and see. (P-9)

> The only negative that I would think is that it is sad that other people who have maybe different abilities that these kiddos didn't have, that other people don't use them and they could. But it's a good reminder, a positive reminder, that whatever you're given or whatever you have to work with, just use it and get excited about it. (P-10)

Seven of the participants were motivated for staying involved in volunteering due to concerns about equity and society. One participant was motivated by the fact that the games provided a vehicle for people to learn about one another's cultures (athletes and volunteers from different countries), while another participant enjoyed that children with special needs were able to attend structured sports events and have similar experiences as her own children. One of the other participants was motivated to stay involved in volunteering in order to afford those who are paraplegic the opportunity (equity) to experience riding a wave on a surfboard. Each of these participants was motivated to stay involved in volunteering with children with special needs in structured sports events in order for the children to have equitable sports experiences. An example of the

discourse of altruism (helping, service) from these participants' responses is: "I think that working [helping] with this population you learn more about different cultures [athletes from different countries], you become more empathetic, sympathetic, and you have a better [social] understanding of the world around you." Also, an example of the sports discourse (athletes, competition) seen in these participants' responses: "She was like a typical kid. It just adapted the activity to her abilities." Following are two examples of the discourse of disability (from the perspective of the minority model) from these participants' responses: "Most able bodied, cognitively developed people can go to the beach, and go boogie boarding, kayaking, and do arts and crafts. These are all mundane things for many people but at camp these are truly once in a lifetime experiences for some of the campers [children with special needs]…" Another participant shared how some of the children with a disability (special needs) use more of their 'abilities' than some people that do not seemingly have a 'disability,' and perhaps we can all learn a lesson from them, as is evident in the following response: "…But it's a good reminder, a positive reminder, that whatever you're given or whatever you have to work with, just use it and get excited about it." Therefore, the discourses of altruism (helping, service), sports (athletes, competition), and disability (minority, social, and gap models) were demonstrated throughout the participants' responses.

2e. Strong belief in inclusion, social, or political perspectives. The following participants' responses describe their strong belief in inclusion, social, and political perspectives as their motivation for staying involved in volunteering.

> It's about letting them see they can do something that nobody else thought they could do and succeed, not the first time, not in that perfect way that someone else could but succeed nonetheless…So, I think of Scouts, and I work individually with boys in a Troop as a Program Leader, and we have boys who are both physically and intellectually challenged. And while I'm not usually taking no for an answer anyway, and push them a little bit, I've probably pushed the Scouts harder, definitely pushed them harder since I've worked with the kids at Special Olympics, and they've succeeded…(P-1)

> It allowed me to have an appreciation for people with disabilities. I would say that it was positive because I could use this experience to incorporate it in my classroom at work with kids who have disabilities or not when I was a teacher, and lately in my job as a counselor. (P-2)

> But the other aspect of that is I want to somehow influence policy because these people that are making educational policies for this population are not qualified to make the decisions. I want to help this population through policy decisions. (P-4)

> I wanted to let them and their families experience what my children and I have experienced at a sporting event. And I had a feeling that there weren't enough of these kinds of events for kids with special needs where the typical kids have such a variety of events. (P-5)

> At work, they would come to me to make sure that the students were placed in my class so they had a good learning environment, which then I got to meet lovely students to make sure that they would get good connections that I was making for all my general PE students. (P-7)

> I think what has changed and logistically is really cool is that the camp has gotten a lot more funded, so we have a lot more opportunity to do more, and the paid staff changes every year. But there's definitely the fresh blood, new people, which adds something great every year, there's something special…There's a lot of deep traditions both at camp and at the end of the day where the staff gets together to socialize and enjoy each other's company. (P-8)

> There were a handful of kids with special needs that bowled too, the ambulatory ones that could participate, and they had that ramp thing where they could place the ball on it to roll down the ramp for you. The higher functioning kids could roll the ball, some of the other kids that didn't have the upper body strength would use the ramp, so they were participating and having a great time… (P-9)

Seven of these participants were motivated to stay involved in volunteering due to a strong belief in inclusion, social, or political perspectives. One participant was motivated to stay involved in volunteering for structured sports events with children with special needs, because he had fun and as a byproduct of his experience, he was able to transfer the knowledge and skills to help some of the boys with special needs that he works with in Scouts. His expectations for what they were capable of doing increased and how far he could push them to accomplish tasks came directly from his Special Olympics volunteer experiences. Another participant was motivated for staying involved in volunteering due to her strong belief in inclusion and commitment to providing her students and their families opportunities for structured sports events outside of school. And another participant was motivated to stay involved in volunteering, because she was able to incorporate the inclusion strategies she learned into her classroom environment. Each of these participants was motivated to stay involved in volunteering due to a strong belief in inclusion particularly with children with special needs in a structured sports event. The term inclusion in this example means a situation where children with special needs and children without special needs have the same opportunities to participate together in games and activities with modifications, as needed, as opposed to separating the children with special needs from playing with the other children due to their disability rather than looking at their ability. Basically, it is about including everyone, rather than excluding some of them.

In addition, several participants were motivated to stay involved in volunteering due to social and political perspectives. One participant was motivated to get involved in volunteering, because she saw how we can learn about other people's culture (different countries, different languages) through volunteering. She is continuing her education in order to make a difference for children with special needs through influencing important policy decisions. Another participant was motivated to stay involved in volunteering,

because she believes that children with special needs should be given similar opportunities to participate in structured sports events as her children. And another participant was motivated to stay involved in volunteering, because she has gotten so much joy out of being able to help the children with special needs at the camp to enjoy many of the same water activities as other children without special needs have been able to experience. Following is an example of the discourse of altruism (helping, service) noted from these participants' responses: "I want to help [advocate for the people in] this population through policy decisions." Many of the opportunities for people with special needs have occurred as a result of social and political activism for the rights of the individual to have access to similar opportunities as everyone else, which illustrates the discourses of disability (social, gap, and minority models), as well as political discourses (basic rights, and equity) to challenge politicians and citizens to make changes in the laws to ensure the rights of people with disabilities (for example, in the USA – Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; in the UK – The Disabilities Discrimination Act of 1995). The following example of the sports discourse (athletics) was illustrated in these participants' responses: "I wanted to let them and their families experience what my children and I have experienced at a sporting event." And an example of the discourse of disability (from the perspective of the minority model) can be seen in these participants' responses: "It's about letting them [the children with special needs] see they can do something that nobody else thought they could do and succeed, not the first time, not in that perfect way that someone else could but succeed nonetheless..." Each of these discourses were present in the participants' responses including the discourses of altruism (helping, service), sports (athletes, competition), and disability (social and minority models).

In summary, therefore, participants are motivated to stay involved in volunteering when they have a strong service orientation, a passion and/or personal interest in volunteering for structured sports events for children with special needs, a professional interest in working with children with special needs in structured sports events, a concern and developing views about equity and society, a strong belief in inclusion, and social and/or political perspectives relative to children with special needs. The discourses evident in the participants' responses as motivation for staying involved include a discourse of disability – specifically concerns about equity and society, strong beliefs in inclusion, and keen awareness of the social and political context of volunteering. The participants' responses were rich with stories about their personal experiences to express their motivations for staying involved in volunteering to work with children with special needs in a structured sports event (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2

Focus Area Two: Motivation for Staying Involved and Corresponding Themes

Themes
2a. Strong service orientation
2b. Passion/or personal interest
2c. Professional interest
2d. Concern about equity and society
2e. Strong belief in inclusion, social, or political perspectives

3. Ongoing Meaning of the Experience

People continued to make ongoing meaning of their volunteer experiences in personal ways. The meanings they derived from these experiences are in direct relation to their belief systems, their expectations, what and how they're learning, and their sense of themselves and their communities, including their previous experiences. In this round of the study, I found that there were seven themes that were culled from the participants' responses concerning the ongoing meaning of their volunteer experiences: (3a) a positive value of the experience, (3b) an expanded sense of family, (3c) what was learned through the experience, (3d) how belief in service gets strengthened and enhanced, (3e) the difference between expectations and what they found, (3f) in what ways was it participatory and what were people participating in, and (3g) how people were identified. The participants' responses for each of these themes illuminated how the ongoing meaning of their volunteer experiences contributes to their continued involvement with volunteering for structured sports events for children with special needs. Following are some of the participants' responses to each of these themes.

3a. Positive value of the experience. The following participants' responses describe the ongoing meaning of their volunteer experience as a positive value.

> My sense was that it was positive. (P-1)
>
> It was enjoyable and we had fun doing it together. (P-2)
>
> As I think about it, at the World Games, this one boy was from a different country and the soles of his shoes kept falling off as he was running the track. So, obviously, he wasn't going to run as fast. So, I taped up his shoes and he won, and of course, he came running over to me and gave me the biggest hug. So, it's those moments that keep you going forward. So, the experiences keep you coming back, you realize you are there for a bigger reason. And, so, when those kids respond that way with a hug, it gives you fuel. 'I want to do this again. I want to make a difference again!' (P-4)
>
> And the Special Olympics is the epitome of children participating in sporting events, and so I wanted to be part of that. It was an event at a local level with kids from this area. A nd I wanted to see what it was like since Special Olympics was what I thought was the highest level sporting event for kids with special needs. When I called the recreation department to volunteer, I met them, and they were so friendly, 'yes come help us.' They are just all welcoming and positive, and so that's why I volunteered. (P-5)
>
> And, those days were ones that made me really want to be an Adapted PE teacher, and volunteer when I can! (P-6)

> And, I think that this [experience of working with the children with special needs] is what illustrated to me that that was a good direction for me. (P-7)

> So it's positive, I would say. As I was talking to my boyfriend's mom, she asked me if I was getting paid to go to camp. I told her it doesn't really matter because it's my favorite place in the world, my favorite place on earth, favorite place in history! (P-8)

> It's just the reactions of the kids. It made their day! The look on their faces, they were so happy. It didn't matter if they had a first place ribbon or not, they all had a ribbon, and all had participant awards. (P-9)

> I would say that it was definitely positive… I think it was sparked by a conversation based on the Adapted PE class that I was taking at school. And I knew that my friend's mom was an Adapted PE teacher. So we were all talking and hanging out and it came up and she said, "Hey, they are always looking for volunteers" and I said, "Oh my gosh, that would be perfect". So, it ended up being perfect timing. (P-10)

All nine of the participants shared that the ongoing meaning of their volunteer experience was positive. Many of the participants shared stories about positive experiences of continuing to volunteer, including how much fun the children and families were having throughout the day at the event, and how contagious that joy was to everyone around them, including the volunteers. Several other participants described their positive experiences of helping the children and how appreciative the children were for their help. A few of the participants enjoyed seeing the joy in the children's eyes as they completed an event and received ribbons for participation, regardless of what place they came in the event. Each of these participants enthusiastically described the positive value of the ongoing meaning of their volunteer experience of working with children with special needs in a structured sports event. An example of the discourse of altruism (helping, service) from these participants' responses is:

> So, I taped up his shoes and he won, and of course, he came running over to me and gave me the biggest hug. So, it's those moments that keep you going forward. So, the experiences keep you coming back, you realize you are there for a bigger reason.

As an example of the sports discourse (athletes, competition) that was shared in the participants' responses:

> It's just the reactions of the kids. It made their day! The look on their faces, they were so happy. It didn't matter if they had a first place ribbon or not, they all had a ribbon, and all had participant awards.

And following is an example of the discourse of disability (social, and minority models) from the participants' responses included: "And I wanted to see what it was like since

Special Olympics was what I thought was the highest level sporting event for kids with special needs." These discourses were evident in the participants responses including altruism (helping, service), sports (athletes, competition), and disability (social, gap, and minority models).

3b. Participants' expanded sense of family. The following participants' responses describe their expanded sense of family as the ongoing meaning of their volunteer experience.

> Yeah, I realized more of what some of these kids could do that I didn't know before. I guess I knew before intellectually but didn't experience, more of an emotional response. I think what stayed with me, I guess true the memories of seeing the kids finish, they did swimming, the races. I just liked watching the success. It's weird, but it was between that and the parents, this one family, parents and two other kids, just were so excited, and again I think looking at them, they caught my eye, and seeing their kids do more than and they were happy and successful. And it was the whole family getting excited about it. That was neat! (P-1)

> I think I've always said that I wanted to be a teacher and I was always leaning towards special education without ever really knowing anything beyond being a kid and then being a student in college. And then, I got into recreation and spoke with other life guards who were also Adapted PE teachers [sense of family]. They kind of pushed me in that direction. And the other thing is my work with the Water Program, as life guards [sense of family], we take different classes from different schools down to the beach and teach them a one day ocean safety class. We get a lot of special education classes and those days are really about getting the kids to have fun in the ocean. And, those days were ones that made me really want to be an Adapted PE teacher [sense of family], and volunteer when I can! (P-6)

> So, I started at camp when I was sixteen years old because I just needed a job and they paid more than most other jobs for sixteen year olds and I figured why not and I have returned every year since then as a volunteer [sense of family]. And then I became a Psychology major with a focus in developmental disabilities, and went on to become a behaviorist, and it's all from my experiences at camp. (P-8)

> And then, the look on the parents' faces when their kids are there doing well. They are so proud of their kids and happy that they are having a great time. You know, it's also the parents' reactions that are good. There's a lot of excitement. (P-9)

Four of the participants described the ongoing meaning of their volunteer experience as an expanded sense of family. Several of the participants described how touched they were at how many of the families were involved in the event and proudly

cheering for their children. Each of these participants expressed how the ongoing meaning of their volunteer experience was heightened by an expanded sense of family while working with children with special needs in a structured sports event. Following is an example of the discourse of altruism (helping, service) from these participants' responses: "…and I figured why not and I have returned every year since then as a volunteer…" An example of the sports discourse (athletes, competition) in the participants' responses included: "And then, the look on the parents' faces when their kids are there doing well. They are so proud of their kids and happy that they are having a great time." In addition, an example of the discourse of disability (social and minority models) from the participants' responses is: "…as life guards, we take different classes from different schools down to the beach and teach them a one day ocean safety class. We get a lot of special education classes and those days are really about getting the kids to have fun in the ocean." These discourses were illustrated in the participants' responses including altruism (helping, service), sports (athletes, competition), and disability (social, and minority models).

3c. What was learned through the experience and how it was learned. The following participants' responses describe what they learned and how it was learned as the ongoing meaning of their volunteer experience.

> I'll always look at something to try to figure out how it could be better, but it was all high energy. I look at the logistics thing, but it was still high energy and emotional in terms of all that motivation and enthusiasm. It was the experience that kept me coming back. (P-1)

> I think I've always said that I wanted to be a teacher and I was always leaning towards special education without ever really knowing anything beyond being a kid and then being a student in college. And then, I got into recreation and spoke with other life guards who were also Adapted PE teachers. They kind of pushed me in that direction. (P-6)

> So, I've always wanted to be a helper, an educator, a detective in finding something that makes somebody else happy. So, I think it's just a spinoff of that and then I've always had professors who have been supportive of me looking at connections and pulling into those for specific populations. And, at work when you can do something for the kids and the families, oh my gosh, the families when they know you've got something for them on a weekend and know you're thinking about them not just during school but, ahhh, the parents. Yes, so I think I feed off of them a lot. (P-7)

> Things that struck me when I first started was the idea that these activities at camp are things that we all take for granted…What I take for granted is very special to other people and if I can help someone else experience that, I'm going to do my best to do it. (P-8)

> So, all around it was fun. These events were similar in that the kids had a great time and the activities were adapted for their disabilities so they

> could compete…The only difference I can think of is that in the bigger Special Olympic events, the kids earned ribbons, and in the bowling event the bowlers were earning points to earn money for a special general fund for the kids. (P-9)

Five of the participants described the ongoing meaning of what they learned through their volunteer experience. Many of the participants mentioned that they volunteered again for a structured sports event for children with special needs as a direct result of how meaningful their previous experience(s) were to them. One participant expressed how he was always looking at how to improve situations and to his surprise, each event ran smoothly and everyone had a fun time. Another participant shared how his volunteer experiences helped him to decide on a career of working with children with special needs. One participant offered that she is always looking to learn and experience new things and her volunteer experiences provided opportunities for her to learn about more ways to find additional sports opportunities for her kids, while continuing to help both the children and families. Each of these participants conveyed positive meanings about things they learned through their volunteer experience of working with children with special needs in a structured sports event, such as realizing that the children could train and compete at a higher level than they had thought they could. Following is a discourse of altruism (helping, service) present in the participants' responses: "I look at the logistics thing, but it was still high energy and emotional in terms of all that motivation and enthusiasm. It was the experience [of helping others] that kept me coming back." An example of the sports discourse (athletes, competition) in the participants' responses is: "The only difference I can think of is that in the bigger Special Olympic events, the kids earned ribbons, and in the bowling event the bowlers were earning points to earn money for a special general fund for the kids." Additionally, an example of the discourse of disability (from the perspective of the minority model) from the participants' responses is: "So, all around it was fun. These events were similar in that the kids had a great time and the activities were adapted for their disabilities so they could compete…" The discourses evident for in these participants' responses included: altruism (helping, service), sports (athletics, competition), and disability (minority model).

3d. How belief in service gets strengthened and enhanced. The following participants' responses describe how their belief in service gets strengthened and enhanced as the ongoing meaning of their volunteer experience.

> I truly had fun! I had fun primarily because the kids had fun more so than because of the volunteers. The volunteers were good but it all made you want to come back. It was fun! I did something good for the day. It was a good use of time. (P-1)

> I think this is just a part of my character makeup. It's something that is ingrained in me and I've had other volunteer experiences that were also memorable. (P-4)

> And the other thing is my work with the Water Program, as life guards, we take different classes from different schools down to the beach and teach them a one day ocean safety class. We get a lot of special education classes and those days are really about getting the kids to have fun in the ocean. (P-6)

> Well, I've got to go back to when I was thirteen, and started working teaching swimming, and people were happy and prideful that they could learn something. And I got to be part of teaching them something, so I was sort of hooked on making sure I was a helper. I think I'm a helper. Again, this is sort of me being greedy about the good feeling. But when you help people and you can see pride on their face or you can see happiness or genuine authentic glee, it makes you want to do it more. (P-7)

> It's just…there is nowhere else where I'm happiest and it literally resets me for the next school year. Every time I am at camp, it reminds me that this is why I volunteer every year, why I make time in my schedule to drive down just to be there… (P-8)

> As far as doing it again, I do remember I had to sign up for the Special Olympics group. I think I've lost touch with the account I used then that, but think that it would be a good influence or help to sign up to do more. I felt it was readily available where you can find different opportunities for Special Olympics and it would then be easier to put on your calendar. (P-10)

Six of the participants described how their belief in service was strengthened and enhanced and how this contributed to the ongoing meaning of their volunteer experience. Many of the participants expressed how their volunteer experiences were strengthened each time they volunteered. They shared personal stories of their experiences that illustrated why they continued to volunteer in structured sports events with children with special needs. Several participants mentioned the fun they had helping the children before, during, and after the event, and how meaningful it was to see the families actively involved in the sports events. All of these experiences strengthened and enhanced their belief in volunteering. The stories of their volunteer experiences were descriptive and evidence of how much these experiences meant to the volunteers. Additionally, each of these participants was volunteering to make the event meaningful for the athletes, and their families, which also strengthened and enhanced the volunteers' experiences. Following is an example of a discourse of altruism (helping, service) in these participants' responses: "It was fun! I did something good [helping] for the day. It was a good use of time. And good for the kids…" An example of the sports discourse (athletics, competition) in these participants' responses is: "…and started working teaching swimming, and people were happy and prideful that they could learn something. And I got to be part of teaching them something, so I was sort of hooked on making sure I was a helper." Also, an example of a discourse of disability (minority and social models) from these participants' responses is: "We get a lot of special education classes

and those days are really about getting the kids [with special needs] to have fun in the ocean." These discourses of altruism (helping, service), sports (athletics, competition), and disability (minority, and social models) were evident in these participants' responses.

3e. In what way was it participatory and what were people invited to participate in. The following participants' responses describe in what way their volunteer experience was participatory and what people were invited to participate in as the ongoing meaning of their volunteer experience.

> One of my colleagues referred us and we did it together as a group and worked some of the same events at the track and field. We all kept in touch at meetings and told each other about what was going on and volunteered together a couple more times. (P-2)
>
> I don't really have a sage quote. But, a sage quote that I use for my family and people I love is, "Let's be participants, not spectators." So, I wanted my kids to be participants. (P-7)
>
> ...And the joy you see in a campers' face when they first crash into a wave or when they feel the sailboat or you put them in a boat, they are terrified because they don't think they can do it and they come back thirty minutes to an hour later and shout, "That was the best day!" (P-8)
>
> It's just a matter that they are out there playing, like doing the long jump or the hurdles or something…There's a lot of excitement. (P-9)

Four of the participants reported working in a participatory way with the athletes, children with special needs, their families, and other volunteers. Each of these participants was actively involved in working with the athletes in a sport or activity, such as track and field, and swimming events. One of the participants shared descriptive stories of helping an athlete to tape his shoes so that he could run in the race, while several participants commented on how thrilled they were to see the families so actively involved in the events. An example of the discourse of altruism (helping, service) present in these participants' responses is: "One of my colleagues referred us and we did it [helped] together as a group and worked some of the same events at the track and field." Following is an example of the sports discourse (athletics, competition) in the participants' responses: "It's just a matter that they are out there playing, like doing the long jump or the hurdles or something." In addition, the discourse of disability (social model) was evident in the participants' responses: "But, a sage quote that I use for my family and people I love is, 'Let's be participants, not spectators.' So, I wanted my kids to be participants." These discourses of altruism (helping, service), sports (athletics, competition), and disability (social model) were present in the participants' responses.

3f. How people are identified. The following participants' responses describe how they identified the children with special needs, in particular the words they used as identifiers for the children (kids, athletes, campers, kids with disabilities, children with special needs, boy, girl), as part of their ongoing meaning of their volunteer experience.

> I had fun primarily because the kids had fun… (P-1)
>
> As I think about it, at the World Games, this one boy was from a different country and the soles of his shoes kept falling off as he was running the track…And so when those kids respond that way, with a hug, it gives you fuel. (P-4)
>
> I'm guessing that maybe I chose this event because I was new to the area of Adapted PE and working with kids with special needs. (P-5)
>
> …And those days are really about getting the kids to have fun in the ocean. (P-6)
>
> So, I wanted my kids to be participants. (P-7)
>
> For some kids, they come out every single day…but for some, it is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity and the joy you see in a campers face…that's what keeps me coming back! (P-8)
>
> They are so proud of their kids and happy that they are having a great time. (P-9)
>
> I really had such a good time doing it and those kids were like fire. Their energy is what I still remember. (P-10)

Eight of the participants used a variety of words to identify and refer to the children that they were working with in a structured sports event during their volunteer experience. Following is an example of the discourse of altruism (helping, service) present in the participants' responses: "For some kids, they come out every single day…but for some, it is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity and the joy you see in a campers face…that's what keeps me coming back [to be of service]!" An example of the sports discourse (athletics, competition) noted in the participants' responses is:

> As I think about it, at the [Special Olympics] World Games, this one boy was from a different country and the soles of his shoes kept falling off as he was running the track…And so when those kids respond that way, with a hug, it gives you fuel.

The discourse of disability (minority model) present in the participants' responses is: "I'm guessing that maybe I chose this event because I was new to the area of Adapted PE and working with kids with special needs." These discourses of altruism (helping, service), sports (athletics, competition), and disability (social model) were present in the participants' responses.

Therefore, it appears that the participants continue to make meaning out of their volunteer experiences in a variety of ways. There continue to be some resounding themes represented in their responses in round two of the data collection. The majority of

participants shared stories of the positive value of their volunteer experiences including some personal stories of them interacting with the children and what it meant to them. As an aspect of discourse, the participants tapped into their previous experiences to make sense of each new situation. In doing so, many of the participants made connections between their volunteer experiences and their expanded sense of family. Each participant shared something they had learned through their several volunteer experiences. And, many of the participants' offered that their sense of service was a motivator for continuing to volunteer, and that their belief in service was strengthened and enhanced. In addition, many of the participants described how their view of equity developed, grew, and/or was enhanced through their multiple volunteer experiences. The participants' discussed the differences between their expectations and what they found through their volunteer experiences. Some participants found that their expectations were met, while others' experiences were beyond their expectations. Other participants shared that their volunteer experiences had a powerful impact in shaping their future career plans. Most of the participants explained how their experiences were participatory and what the people were invited to participate in. The participants shared beautiful stories of their volunteer experiences with heartfelt reflections on how they volunteered to help the children and walked away so much richer for volunteering (see Table 6.3).

Table 6.3

Focus Area Three: Ongoing Meaning of the Experience and Corresponding Themes

Themes
3a. Positive value of the experience
3b. Expanded sense of family
3c. What was learned through the experience
3d. Belief in service gets strengthened and enhanced
3e. Difference between expectations and what they found
3f. What ways was it participatory and what were people participating in
3g. How people were identified

4. Participant [Volunteer] Perceptions of Concerns as Expressed by Families or Athletes

All of the volunteers stated that neither families nor children/athletes expressed any concerns about working with a variety of volunteers during the events. Thus, there was only one theme evident in the data. Following are the participants' responses for this focus area:

> I didn't experience it. The kids were competing in different events and we were in the different events but I didn't notice a sense of them being lost or confused or anything. (P-1)

> No, the kids were very appreciative of the fact that they were able to participate with any volunteer that was working with them. (P-2)

> Not that I'm aware of, because my experiences left me very limited contact with the parents. I don't think it was really a concern. They are there for the event and they know that the volunteers are there for the event to help the athletes. And, I think that it is just naturally a loving and nurturing environment and everybody is just accepting of each other. I didn't see any favoritism happening. (P-4)
>
> I don't think so. I actually didn't know who all the volunteers were and I couldn't tell the difference between the volunteers and any paid staff. I met the organizer and the leader but didn't know the others. I just worked with the one girl during the day and everybody seemed happy. (P-5)
>
> The organization that I volunteered for was a one day event. And everyone was just so grateful to be down there and enjoying it. (P-6)
>
> I have not experienced anything negative. Everyone was happy about getting to participate in all the possible events, and they're tired afterwards so they don't complain at that point anyway. At the different events I've been to they didn't complain. (P-7)
>
> No, but sometimes because we have to lift some of the kids, certain staff will do the heavy lifting. But I think there are generally open arms when it comes to general working with the kids. But there are favorite staff members that parents and campers will request to be with because they know them. It's a mixed bag, more because they know them and not due to criticism of anyone else. (P-8)
>
> I noticed that some kids worked better with some volunteers than others, maybe they knew them. No, I didn't hear anyone mention this at the sports events. (P-9)
>
> I didn't even see it as an issue. We weren't really near the parents because the parents had to sit in the stands. And it was just the coaches and the aides at the actual events section which is where I was for pretty much all the time, so I don't know if the parents did have any concerns. And as far as the athletes, I'm not really sure because they all had their own form of communication, and I didn't hear any verbal communication that they were irritated. Some of them weren't very verbal. I don't remember anything about that. I don't remember hearing any concerns about the changes in volunteers. I was only volunteering for one day. It might have been different if I was volunteering for a longer event or more frequently. (P-10)

All of the participants responded that they did not hear any concerns from families, coaches, or athletes about any experiences with the volunteers, including the variety of volunteers each athlete may come in contact with during the events. In fact, many of the participants offered that everyone – athletes, coaches, families – were

appreciative of all the volunteers for helping to make the event possible and for all the hard work and dedication to the kids/athletes and the structured sports event. Similar to the previous focus areas, several discourses were evident in the participants' responses. Following is an example of the discourse of altruism (helping, service), "The [service] organization that I volunteered for was a one day event. And everyone was just so grateful to be down there and enjoying it." The sports discourse (athletics, competition) was also present in the participant responses as evidenced here, "I didn't experience it. The kids were competing in different events and we were in the different events but I didn't notice a sense of them being lost or confused or anything." In addition, the discourse of disability (medical, and minority models) were seen in the following quote, "No, but sometimes because we have to lift some of the kids [with special needs], certain staff will do the heavy lifting. But I think there are generally open arms when it comes to general working with the kids." So, each of these discourses of altruism (helping, service), sports (athletics, competition), and disability (medical, and minority models) were evident in the participant responses for this focus area (see Table 6.4).

Table 6.4

Focus Area Four: Participant [Volunteer] Perceptions of Concerns as Expressed by the Families or Athletes and Corresponding Themes

Themes
4a. N/A – No concerns were expressed

5. Suggestions and Ideas About Encouraging Future Volunteer Recruitment

The data revealed suggestions and ideas about encouraging future volunteer recruitment for structured sports events for children with special needs. The following three themes were culled from the responses: (5a) appeal to them where they are, (5b) expanding reach through social media, and (5c) other collateral material and recruitment. Each of the nine participants offered ideas for recruitment and getting more people involved in volunteering.

5a. Appeal to them where they are. The following participants' responses describe how to appeal to people where they are as suggestions and ideas about encouraging future volunteer recruitment.

> I'd reach out to the service organizations, there are service organizations that are looking for a cause, or this gives them exposure to something different. I was working with other young people, if 40 is young, and there were older people too some of whom were doing it for the first time – retirees and things like that. This is a new world for that. So yeah, I would go to any of those, e.g. Rotary Clubs, and I'd actually look at the Scouts too. Use the kids, 14, 15, 16 year olds to 18 and young 20's, and get them to be a part of something bigger than themselves and this will have an impact on their lives in a short period of time. You can see

immediately the results! Immediately! As opposed to a delayed gratification, maybe I need that, (laugh). You know, I wonder if that is part of it. You see immediately the results of what you are doing. It's the families. That may be part of it! It's kind of unfiltered and immediate in terms of feedback. Yeah, now I've got to go back! Oh, you've got me! I think it's at the end of July or beginning of August here in [the State]. Now, I have to go back, my recollections are good ones. I've just been involved in so many things. (P-1)

I would put it out…flyers for somebody at a school to put up on a bulletin board, put it on school websites, or as broad as you'd like. But schools are pretty safe communities, and colleges & universities, so target groups that like who work with kids. If they have contacts at companies, that might be a place to look too. I think those people that have a connection through education also have connections in other areas, such as businesses or corporations that could send people wherever they are. Everyone can just reach out a little bit more to their friends and contacts, maybe just extend some more. If I had the time, I'd definitely volunteer again! It was positive and fulfilling! (P-2)

They all have a heart in it, they are all trying, and things are going to happen. But, I think the lack of volunteering usually comes, because people don't know about it and don't know that they can volunteer…and asking people that are volunteers to spread the word, like the Special Olympics "Spread the Word to End the Word"— Campaign for awareness to stop using the "R" word ("retarded") when referring to children with intellectual disabilities. For people not on social media, I suppose doing community visitations and giving presentations and speeches would help that. Show up more to events and have their little tent pop-up, even if it's fairs and what not, to get the word out there… I think this world would be a better place if people did more volunteering, for sure. These experiences are enlightening and amazing. They really leave you with the feeling you can do anything, you can conquer it all. If you can see these athletes achieve and succeed, it's an amazing thing. (P-4)

If you're talking to somebody, definitely describe it as a positive experience and it won't be difficult. If you need help there's always someone there for you to ask questions and get help. Making it a positive experience, telling people how much they're helping and how much they are needed. There should be a follow up. (P-5)

In terms of recruiting people to volunteer, it's tough because unless they've done it, they don't know how good it feels to help like that. In recruiting, I would say that direct to direct communication, communicating with someone face to face, talking to them about the experience would probably be the best way to recruit someone. In order to really touch someone or get to them that straight face to face

communication and letting them know how much it will benefit them to help others would be a good recruiting tool. I imagine it's pretty tough to recruit people to give up their time, but I think the number one thing I would say to them is that you're going to be helping others and more than anything you're going to be helping yourself, and it's going to make you feel good and you're going to be so happy you did it. Those few times I had the opportunity to volunteer were super impactful and I remember thinking it was the coolest thing ever! (P-6)

A life of volunteering! We can always have more events and more volunteers. Well you've got to appeal to people where they are. There are some people who want to give back and they're ready to give back, but they don't know what to do. So you want to make sure that you appeal to that group. You want to appeal to the other group that are teachers who want to extend learning, who are always a good source for me because whenever you say that you have an opportunity to teach kids to swim, or to row, or to horseback ride, it's nice. A lot of times people don't take the time to find an activity…I think when I hear people ask about something, I want to make sure that I follow up and give them the contact information for the activity. So, I am always a detective and finding stuff. So, it is good to find people who want to be detectives. Also, you want to appeal to parents because if you have parents who are interested and they say only if I knew how to get there or get this information, I know there are other people who would want to make sure they are helping others. There's way more people that want to make things better for people than not… Everyone would enjoy doing this! Reach people through their social connections…It would really have to be different degrees of separation. It would have to be - I touch you, you touch somebody else, and then "come on friend get out of the house from in front of the computer", "come on help us design some cool outfits". You really have to meet people where they are. (P-7)

If it's going to convince a sixteen year old like me with no contacts, I had no investment and came and thought, "this is fun!" and I kept coming back. And, I think that is how we can get people to volunteer. (P-8)

Maybe for a computer guy you can come down to the Special Olympics and use some of your technology for organization of the events or participants. For a fashion designer maybe come up with some ideas about athletic outfits, something the kids could wear to make them feel like they are Olympic athletes besides their regular stuff. So try to drag them in there through their interests…Yeah, my friend had done it before and he found another teacher to do it too. And said "come on man it will be fun, we'll go out there and spend the day, we can help organize one of them for several events." It was through a friend who had done it several times. Gosh, I mean another way to maybe to also recruit people is to get businesses involved…I'm really glad I could help!! (P-9)

> Maybe putting it on a flyer in a workout gym would be helpful, since it's a physical thing, make people feel lucky to have their functioning bodies, and be willingly to help other people with challenges to their bodies and see how they can help out. I just remember those kids faces right at the start of the race and I do remember a relay when they might go out of the lines a little or off track but it was really nice that they were still able to compete and that didn't disqualify them. Maybe just looking at that metaphorically, it's kind of nice. I'm glad that they were able to still have fun and the rules weren't 100% strict, but they still finished their competition. They were so cute! (P-10)

All nine of the participants offered suggestions and ideas for future volunteer recruitment based on appealing to people where they are, for example, based on their interests, things they are passionate about, and causes they support. Some of the participants suggested that the most powerful way to reach someone was direct face-to-face communication, reaching out to a friend, colleague, or someone you know through a social connection (relational), and sharing how meaningful the experience was for you (making meaning in collective), very much in a social constructionist context. They also offered that there are people and groups/organizations that are looking for a cause to support, a service project to be part of, a place/event to participate in together. Some of these groups may include: teachers, college students, high school students, parents, coaches, youth sports teams, people who like to continually learn and help, people in service organizations, for example, Scouts, Rotary Club, Knights of Columbus, to name a few. Several participants mentioned that people could use their skills to contribute, for example, a computer person could use his skills to create lists for events, mailing information, website information, social media content, while a fashion designer may use her skills to design t-shirts for the athletes. One participant suggested that local businesses could sponsor the event, for example, banners for advertising, pay for t-shirts and put their business logo on it, pay for the water or refreshments at the event, and reach out to their clients to also participate in the sports event. Many of the participants thought that posting flyers in multiple locations to attract new and returning volunteers would be beneficial for recruitment too. The discourse of altruism (helping, service) is displayed in the participants' responses in this focus area:

> In order to really touch someone or get to them that straight face to face communication and letting them know how much it will benefit them to help others would be a good recruiting tool. I imagine it's pretty tough to recruit people to give up their time, but I think the number one thing I would say to them is that you're going to be helping others and more than anything you're going to be helping yourself, and it's going to make you feel good and you're going to be so happy you did it.

Another response illustrates the sports discourse (athletes):

> I think this world would be a better place if people did more volunteering, for sure. These experiences are enlightening and amazing. They really

> leave you with the feeling you can do anything, you can conquer it all. If you can see these athletes achieve and succeed, it's an amazing thing.

And, following is an example of the discourse of disability (minority model):

> "Maybe putting it on a flyer in a workout gym would be helpful, since it's a physical thing, make people feel lucky to have their functioning bodies, and be willingly to help other people with challenges to their bodies and see how they can help out. I just remember those kids faces right at the start of the race and I do remember a relay when they might go out of the lines a little or off track but it was really nice that they were still able to compete and that didn't disqualify them."

These discourses of altruism (helping, service), sports (athletics), and disability (medical model) continue to be seen in the participants' responses about how to appeal to people where they are for future volunteer recruitment.

5b. Expanding reach through social media. The following participants' responses describe how expanding reach to people through social media as suggestions and ideas about encouraging future volunteer recruitment.

> I'll have to look now [as he looks on the local website]. You've reignited that. Truly because I had fun [helping] and it changed my little part of the world! We had a short-term commitment for volunteers (show up for the day) while coaches had longer term commitment and time with the kids. (P-1)

> I would put it out on Facebook, social media…put it on school websites, or as broad as you'd like. But schools are pretty safe communities, and colleges & universities, so target groups that like who work with kids. (P-2)

> But advertising for sure, but not just TV but maybe the internet and Facebook, and asking people that are volunteers to spread the word…You know they have the little Facebook things you can forward with the video clip about the campaign, sign the petition, forward it and post it onto your website. And, I think that could be used just as well for recruiting volunteers. (P-4)

> Everyone would enjoy doing this! Reach people through their social connections, and it can't be purely a generic connection, e.g. Facebook post. (P-7)

> But I think that social media is a really good, big tool that hasn't really been tapped into that if you can really get it trending or to the right hashtags, you can get awareness for its existence. And I think that alone would help recruit more people and get more interest, including donors,

> daily volunteers, and other staff or whatever, to parents to bring more campers [kids with special needs]. I think social media is the biggest, best tool we have going for us because as cheesy as it sounds, your heart melts when you see a kid with downs syndrome on a boat, like just for the lay person who is not familiar, it's cute, if nothing else it's cute! (P-8)

> Gosh, we have to do it through blog sites, we put events out there like on Facebook, get them out there that way. Some links that through the common media that other people like that would use who aren't connected to our field. We need to use social media connections or referrals through friends or something. (P-9)

Six of the participants indicated that future volunteer recruitment could have an expanded reach through social media. Many of them mentioned reaching out to social contacts by using Facebook posts, and targeted advertising for specific sports events. Several participants also suggested other forms of social media, for example, online advertising, postings on school, college, and teacher websites. One participant told me about how the camp she volunteered at uses social media (Instagram) to showcase the camp, advertise for donors, recruit for campers and for volunteers. She mentioned that this was primarily done in their local market because that is the market they draw from for campers (children with special needs) and volunteers. They have seen some good results from these efforts. I was impressed with how creative the participants were in sharing their ideas and suggestions about encouraging future volunteer recruitment.

Several discourses were prominent in the participants' responses. The discourse of altruism (helping, service) was present in the following participant's response: "Truly because I had fun [helping] and it changed my little part of the world!" And, the sports discourse (athletics) was also seen in the participants' responses:

> …I think social media is the biggest, best tool we have going for us because as cheesy as it sounds, your heart melts when you see a kid with downs syndrome on a boat, like just for the lay person who is not familiar, it's cute, if nothing else it's cute!"

Additionally, the discourse of disability (social, and minority models) was evident in the participants' responses:

> …And I think that alone would help recruit more people and get more interest, including donors, daily volunteers, and other staff or whatever, to parents to bring more campers [kids with special needs]…"

These discourses of altruism (helping, service), sports (athletics), and disability (medical and social models) continue to be present in the participants' responses to suggestions and ideas for future volunteer recruitment.

5c. Other collateral material and recruitment. The following participants' responses describe other types of collateral material that may be useful as suggestions and ideas about encouraging future volunteer recruitment.

> Share thirty second videos to put out with the advertisements of the kids competing, get some volunteers in there who are cheering, who're involved. I think that I probably saw myself in that situation again where I tried it with the volunteer organization that I worked with, and I like kids. I think we are seeing the results. I mentioned videos before and I'd mention videos again. (P-1)

> I would put it out…flyers for somebody at a school to put up on a bulletin board…or as broad as you'd like. But schools are pretty safe communities, and colleges and universities, so target groups that like who work with kids. (P-2)

> I think they should have some kind of training, whether it be just watching a video or just having discussions, but some kind of training to let them know what to expect, and also for them to emphasis that the volunteers are there with the same purpose as them…Advertising would be good. But maybe there would be some local news networks that would allow them some airtime…But advertising for sure, but not just TV…I suppose doing community visitations and giving presentations and speeches would help that. Show up more to events and have their little tent pop-up, even if it's fairs and what not, to get the word out there. (P-4)

> …so being a resource for people and having easily accessible phone numbers or contacts works. When you say that you've heard of that but don't give them any info then they don't follow through, not because they don't want to but maybe they're not curious enough or don't know how to go about it. But once you give them the information, they'll be curious enough to do something…So, each event brings different populations and different groups that are so excited that you want to be part of it. I suppose I need to be more of a champion of recruiting and getting people to do this because you can't pay for this feeling! You can't make this feeling in any other way! Having a great family, having a great job, having a great fill in the blank, does nothing for what you feel when you are in this environment of working with the kids! The most important thing is to give out the information to others…We have to be more strategic. Right now, in our world, doing this would make a lot of people much nicer humans! You know, doing this volunteering, would just make people's minds feel so much better. Spread a lot of kindness! It's almost mental wellness, because I tell you when I do these events it physically tires you out but wow, the mental wellness soars. It's almost in the land of mindful, being mindful of others. This would go a long way to us not needing healthcare, if we spread kindness! (P-7)

> Two years ago, we started an Instagram program where everyone that we had photo releases for we could post pictures on Instagram all summer long…And if that's going to get someone in the door I don't care. If it's going to convince a sixteen year old like me with no contacts, I had no investment and came and thought, "This is fun!" and I kept coming back. And, I think that is how we can get people to volunteer. I know we have had articles written in the newspaper about us, pretty local area newspaper. But I think if we can get articles/news about us on local news stations or in the local papers, I think that's a human interest story where we might get responses. We've had people contact us saying they read about us in the local paper and they said, "I loved it!" If we could get more out there, even if it's not social media but more traditional forms of media, I really think just getting out there would be really good for us at least. I don't know about other organizations. I love it! It's my happy place! It refuels me for the school year actually. And it reminds me that I want to go back to volunteer every summer. What volunteering means to me is: Life, you appreciate your life, you feel more life around people. There's just more life and beauty, because I appreciate the beauty in nature. I appreciate the beauty in abilities that you have more need to work on. So what it means to me is appreciation, life, and beauty – all of these together and in isolation! (P-8)

> Get businesses to sponsor an event. Maybe work it out with that particular company to get people to sponsor for the day, like buy the hats for the event or maybe our company will pay for the refreshments. You know kind of like how you see them at sporting events. You see advertisers on uniforms and things like that. Maybe we can get them at a local level, and that way they can get the word out to their people too, through their public relations. With mass media you can find out what's happening around the world within minutes. If you see something advertised and friends say that they are going to it, you may decide to go too. That combination works. (P-9)

> First thing that I think comes to mind is that maybe people get caught up in the monotony of their regular lives and this would be a perfect thing to prevent it, to break up the monotony and give meaning to their lives. So maybe it's presented as a chance for inspiration and giving back, and maybe they could offer different levels of commitment, like if someone wanted to volunteer for a couple hours or if they wanted to do all day or multiple days, then that would give them the flexibility to fit it into their schedule. And having it as an option online or right through email signup would help. (P-10)

Seven of the participants shared other collateral material and recruitment ideas for future volunteer recruitment. Several of the participants suggested using various types of advertising to reach volunteers, including creating and distributing short videos to show people what a great experience volunteering for structured sports events for children with

special needs is for everyone. Some of the participants mentioned continuing to use traditional media – newspapers, radio advertising, television ads and special interest stories. One participant proposed using businesses to sponsor events, refreshments, uniforms, and/or have them co-market the event with their name listed as the primary sponsor. Another participant heralded the use of Instagram for showcasing the camp, the campers, and the amazing camp experience to future campers, parents, volunteers, and potential donors. Some of the participants also suggested that flyers at schools and colleges, and people that love to work with children. One participant offered that flexible levels of commitment may be interesting to future volunteers. As you can see, the participants were very eager to come up with a variety of ideas to encourage future volunteer recruitment. Everyone said that the key is to connect with potential volunteers and provide collateral material to show them what a great time they would have while helping kids out at the same time. As such, the discourse of altruism (helping, service) was present in the following participants' response:

> But once you give them the information, they'll be curious enough to do something…So, each event brings different populations and different groups [to help] that are so excited that you want to be part of it. I suppose I need to be more of a champion of recruiting and getting people to do this because you can't pay for this feeling!

Additionally, the discourse of sports (athletics, competition) was seen in this participant response:

> Share thirty second videos to put out with the advertisements of the kids competing, get some volunteers in there who are cheering, who're involved. I think that I probably saw myself in that situation again where I tried it with the volunteer organization that I worked with, and I like kids. I think we are seeing the results.

And, the participants' responses showed evidence of the discourse of disability (social model):

> What volunteering means to me is: Life, you appreciate your life, you feel more life around people. There's just more life and beauty, because I appreciate the beauty in nature. I appreciate the beauty in abilities [including children with disabilities] that you have more need to work on.

As depicted here, there continue to be many participant responses that addressed the discourses of altruism (helping, service), sports (athletics, competition), and disability (social model), as depicted in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5

Focus Area Five: Suggestions and Ideas About Encouraging Future Volunteer Recruitment and Corresponding Themes

Themes
5a. Appeal to them where they are
5b. Expanding reach through social media
5c. Other collateral material and recruitment

Summary

Round two of the interviews were conducted using computer technology enabled video conferencing. All individual responses were de-identified and merged into a single document. The responses were sent to participants to review, verify, and comment on responses as well as make any necessary modifications. Similar to the data collection in round one, the process of review and reflection allowed for the sharing of ideas, promoted the relational aspect through social constructionism, and allowed new ideas to emerge. Data from themes were established through coding when participant responses presented related ideas. The participant responses were displayed and provide support for the emerging themes. Chapter 7 presents the study results, implications, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 7: RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a wealth of research attesting to the many benefits of how sports related activities are good for the whole person – physically, mentally, psychological , and socially (Lakowski & Long, 2011; Murphy, Carbone, & the Council on Children With Disabilities, 2008; Wanderi, Mwisukha & Bukhala, 2009). These health benefits are important for all people – adults and children, and extend to children with special needs. As Wanderi, Mwisukha, and Bukhala (2009) state, "Individuals with disabilities who participate in sports activities are less depressed, perform better academically, are more stable in behavior as well as in their overall social interactions" (p. 3). I will extend this even further to include the general population – all individuals benefit from participating in sports activities. Similarly, people that participate in sports activities demonstrate better health, perform well academically, and have improved social relationships. A well-rounded person - physically, mentally, psychological, and socially - demonstrates more balance in all areas of their life.

In reviewing the literature, there were a number of studies that addressed the basic benefits of participating in sports activities, (Briere & Siegle, 2008; Moran & Block 2010; Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson, 2010). More recently, researchers have also explored the benefits of participating in sports activities for children with special needs (Briere & Siegle, 2008; Little League, 2012; Moran & Block 2010; Murphy, Carbone, & the Council on Children With Disabilities, 2008; Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson, 2010). These studies looked at the children with special needs as the primary focus. A few of these studies addressed the adult volunteers that were working with the children with special needs, as a secondary focus but not as the primary focus. Since the volunteers were an integral part of making the sports experience for children with special needs a meaningful one, in this study, I examined the volunteers experience of working with the children (Bouchet & Lehe, 2010; Pauline, 2011). In the process, this research study applied the concepts of social constructionism to explore and report on how the volunteers made meaning of their experiences of working with children with special needs in a structured sports event.

Chapter Structure

This chapter begins with an introduction, followed by an overview of the study, including a review of the problem, discussion of the conceptual framework, restatement of the purpose statement and research question. It continues with a synopsis of the methodology and followed by limitations. Then, the results of the findings from the interview questions informed the research question followed by a discussion related to the themes. Implications of the study are presented, recommendations for further research are noted, and subsequently a summary concludes the chapter.

Overview of Study

This brief overview of the literature is intended to provide context to this chapter's findings. A more detailed literature review can be found in Chapter 2. The literature showed that a number of studies addressed that sports are important for all youth including children with special needs, and the role of the volunteers are important for delivering these sports activities to the children (Bouchet & Lehe, 2010; Lakowski & Long, 2011; Murphy Carbone, & the Council on Children With Disabilities, 2008; Pauline, 2011; Wanderi, Mwisukha & Bukhala, 2009). Additional researchers have studied the importance of the role of volunteers to the success of the structured sports events for children (Bouchet & Lehe, 2010; Pauline, 2011). However, there is little literature exploring how volunteers socially construct their experiences working with children with special needs. This qualitative study, then, explored how adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events socially construct their experiences.

Review of Problem

As many studies have shown, there are a number of benefits of participating in structured sports events for children with special needs, and volunteers play an integral role in the success of the structured sports events for children with special needs. However, there is very little literature that gives voice to the volunteers, and even less written about the volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events. Thus, there is very little research that exists that applies social constructionism, as a framework, to illuminate the volunteers' experiences. Several authors have called for further research focused on the experiences and perceptions of volunteers (Bang & Ross, 2009; Bouchet & Lehe, 2010; Giannoulakis, Wang, & Gray, 2008). Therefore, the results of this study are intended to respond to the scholars call and to contribute to the conversation.

Conceptual Framework

A review of the literature in this study resulted in the following recurring concepts: discourse of disability, social constructionism, structured sports events for children with special needs, and adults who volunteer for the events. The literature that was reviewed included peer reviewed articles (Khoo & Englehorn, 2011; Martinez, Zeelenberg, & Rijsman, 2010), and academic books (Gergen, 2009; Furtmueller-Ettinger, Wilderom, & van Dick, 2012; Hosking & McNamee, 2006), while some also included application-based content, such as websites (Special Olympics, 2012a), to demonstrate theory to practice in a social context. These three themes serve as the basis for the research questions and provide the conceptual framework for this study.

Restatement of Purpose of Study and Research Question

The purpose of this study was to examine the socially constructed experiences of adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events. The primary research question was, *How are the experiences of adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events constructed?*

Synopsis of Methodology

There remains little research on the lived experience of adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events. Therefore, this study was exploratory in nature, qualitative in design, and applied the Dynamic Narrative Approach (DNA) research method (Hyatt, 2011). The DNA research method advances technology to enable data collection and encourages social construction and democratizes the research process (Hyatt, 2011).

Purposeful, criterion-based sampling occurred through snowballing, also known as network sampling, to identify participants. A total of ten participants who met the criteria were selected and agreed to voluntarily participate in the study. Eight of the ten participants worked in a K-12 environment, and were faculty, counselors, or administrators. Of the two remaining participants, one worked in healthcare and the other was a university administrator. Two rounds of interviews were conducted, the first in which all ten participants responded. In the second round, nine participants responded and one was unavailable.

In both rounds, the interview instrument consisted of semi-structured and open-ended questions. Round one interview questions were:

1) How did you become a volunteer working with children with special needs in a structured sporting event?
2) What attracted you to doing this?
3) Describe your personal experiences as an adult volunteer working with children with special needs in a structured sporting event.
4) Did these experiences match or differ from what you expected? How?
5) Is there anything else you would like to share about this experience?

Round two interview questions were:

1) Have you continued to be involved as a volunteer at structured sports events? Why? Or Why not?
2) What has been the impact on your life or your experience from becoming a volunteer?
3) What ideas/concerns have you noticed having an impact on volunteers for structured sports events since the last survey?

4) A concern has been voiced that sometimes people/athletes in structured sports events have too many changes in the volunteers they have to deal with. What is your experience?
5) What thoughts do you have about the most important things to emphasize in the recruitment of volunteers in the future?

In the first round, the participants were emailed the questions and responded to them by email. In a few cases, follow up questions were used for clarification. In the second round, interviews were conducted by computer video conferencing which allowed for both the researcher and participant to view each other in real-time. Clarifying questions also applied to this round and were posed within the thirty minute interview. I sent the de-identified responses to each participant for comments and verification.

I compiled the transcripts and used Creswell's (2005) coding process. Focus areas were revealed and subsequently themes emerged. In addition, three discourses became apparent. The combination of focus areas, themes, and discourses provided the data that informed the research question (see Chapters 5 & 6).

Discussion of Results and Conclusions

Results - Round One

Participants described their experience of working with children with special needs in a structured sports event. The study showed that the participants' responses to the interview questions culled out three primary areas and key themes specific to each of these areas. The three focus areas identified by the participants for volunteering included: (1) the process for why they got involved in volunteering; (2) the motivation for why they got involved in volunteering; and (3) the meaning they made of their volunteer experience. I will discuss each of these findings in more detail.

Findings for the themes in focus area 1 – *process of getting involved.* People volunteer for various reasons. They may volunteer because they have an interest in a particular activity, or because they know someone who was connected to a particular organization or cause, or they have time in their schedule to volunteer. Therefore, participants' motivation for volunteering was rarely individually constructed, but rather emerged through relationships with others such as colleagues, friends, or family members. In this study, I found that there were three primary reasons why the participants volunteered. The themes that emerged for why the participants got involved were (1a) they received a direct invitation from somebody else, (1b) they were seeking out an opportunity for themselves, and/or (1c) they knew somebody through a personal connection who was involved.

Thus, it appears that the process for why people got involved as volunteers for the events occurred as they engaged in discourse in social relation with one another, and socially constructed their experiences. The conversations and subsequent discourses included discourses of disability, about volunteering, about working with children with

special needs, and about structured sports events. Several participants noted that the reasons they got involved in volunteering was directly related to an invitation from somebody they knew, "I found out about it through the PE department in the school district. They presented it to us as an opportunity to volunteer and get involved in this track and field event for children with special needs." A couple of the participants got involved as they sought out an opportunity to volunteer, "…I wanted to get some experience working with people with disabilities. I heard about an organization through some friends and my parents and I decided to volunteer for the day." And some of the participants offered that a personal connection to someone was a big part of their decision to volunteer, "I knew an Adapted PE teacher with the local school district, and she was gracious enough to allow me to participate in the Special Olympics Spring Games." Therefore, all ten of the participants volunteered for a structured sports event for children with special needs based on a direct invitation from somebody, seeking an opportunity for themselves, or through knowing somebody.

Findings for the themes in focus area 2 – m*otivation for getting involved and attraction for doing it*. Participants were motivated to volunteer and were attracted to specific opportunities. They were motivated to volunteer for personal or professional reasons, due to a belief in equity and inclusion, and/or through commitment to social or political concerns. In this study, the data showed five themes that described what motivated and attracted the participants to volunteer. The following five themes that emerged as to the motivation and attraction for getting involved in volunteering: (2a) they had a strong service orientation; (2b) they had a passion for and a personal interest in volunteering for this type of event and/or group; (2c) they had a professional interest; (2d) they had a concern about equity and society; and (2e) inclusion, social, and political perspectives.

Therefore, the participants were motivated to get involved and attracted to participating as a volunteer when they had a strong service orientation (informed by a service or altruism discourse), a passion and/or personal interest in the children with special needs or the event (informed by their knowledge of the discourse of disability), and a professional interest in the children and/or the event. In addition, the participants had a concern about equity and society, a strong belief in inclusion, and the social and political perspectives of volunteering. People with a strong service orientation participated as volunteers, because they wanted to be of service and help others in a relational context. Many of these same people volunteered for structured sports events for children with special needs, because they had a passion or personal interest in sports and/or children with special needs. People bring their previous experiences with them and they influence what they do and why, and in some situations they have a concern for equity and society, as well as a belief in inclusion, which allows the children to have the opportunity to participate in structured sports events with their peers. In other words, the discourses at work in the field of disability studies are also at work in the volunteers. As an outcome of their experiences, some volunteers expressed some social and political perspectives, for example, "… Everyone should make a point to volunteer, because it makes a huge difference for everyone involved." Their stories about their volunteer experiences were eye-opening and shed light on their primary motivations for getting

involved and volunteering with children with special needs in a structured sports event, for example, "I anticipated 'helping those less fortunate,' but the overused cliché rang true: they helped me more than I helped them." Understanding how people were motivated to volunteer assists organizers to know where to recruit from and how to speak to people about their participation. It also says something about what discourses were already in people's thinking and how to connect them.

Findings for the themes in focus area 3 - m*eaning of the experience*. People were able to understand and articulate the meaning of their volunteer experiences. The participants shared personal stories about their experience, including shedding light on their previous belief systems, expectations of the experience, what they learned from the experience, and their sense of self and community. In this study, I found eight themes in the primary area of the participants' responses about the meaning of their volunteer experiences. The following eight themes described the meaning of the volunteer experiences (3a) a positive value of the experience, (3b) an expanded sense of family, (3c) what was learned through the experience and how, (3d) how belief in service was strengthened and enhanced, (3e) how their view of equity developed, grew, or was enhanced, (3f) the difference between expectations and what they found, (3g) the way it was participatory and what people were invited to participate in, and (3h) how people were identified.

Therefore, the participants made meaning out of their volunteer experience in several ways. There were a number of themes echoed throughout the participants' responses. Many participants expressed the positive value of the experience, for example: "I think the most positive aspects were working with the swimmers after the race was over and directing them to view the scoreboard and their standings." Several participants mentioned how they witnessed an expanded sense of family, for example: "…I got great joy seeing her swim, then finding her parents. They were so proud of her…" All of the participants marveled at what they learned through the experience, including, "…I now expect more from my general education students after seeing what the kids with special needs were able to do..." Some of the participants shared how their belief in service was strengthened and enhanced in a relational context to others including, "…We were taking people with physical and developmental limitations surfing. It was amazing to see the joy in the participants' eyes when they caught their first wave." A few participants noted how their view of equity developed, grew, and was enhanced through their volunteer experience, for example, "It was just as rewarding as seeing my own kids compete. I think this is a key to helping me…become a teacher..." All of the participants discussed the difference between their expectations and what they found through their volunteer experience, including: "These experiences were beyond what I expected. They matched in the sense that I knew there would be all types of special needs among the kids. And they differed because I didn't expect them to be so prepared, happy, and proud to be there." In other words, the participants were taken to new places by their experience of these social interactions. A number of the participants shared in what ways their volunteer experience was participatory, for example: "As an adult, I can see the tremendous effort it takes to make a sporting event for individuals with special needs run smoothly and efficiently…to make a little fun day at the beach, be

simply that, a little fun day." All the participants used language in their responses that showed an evolution of how people were identified, for example in the initial interview question, a participant used the term 'kids with special needs' when describing the children. By the time the participant finished answering the last interview question, the children were now 'athletes.' This shift amounted to a development in how the participants identified the children and young people they were working with. This was evidence of the effect of the relational aspect of their experiences, and hence of the social construction of identity.

Results – Round Two

In round two, the participants continued to share their ongoing experiences of working with children with special needs in a structured sports event. The participants' responses to the interview questions offered five focus areas, three that were similar to those in round one, and two new focus areas that addressed two new questions. Each of these focus areas had specific themes relative to each of these areas. The five focus areas identified by the participants for volunteering included: (1) the process of continuing to be involved in volunteering; (2) the motivation for staying involved in volunteering; (3) the ongoing meaning of the experience; (4) the participant [volunteer] perceptions of concerns as expressed by families/ and/or athletes; and (5) suggestions and ideas about encouraging future volunteer recruitment. I will have a discussion about each of these findings in greater detail.

Findings of the themes in focus area 1 – *process of continuing to be involved*. Just as people volunteer for a variety of reasons, they also continue to volunteer for a number of reasons. The data showed that there were two themes that emerged for why the participants continued to be involved in volunteering: (1a) they knew somebody through a personal connection who was involved; and (2b) because they were seeking an opportunity for themselves. Both amounted to recognition of the importance of relationship to the experience.

Five of the participants expressed that they continued to be involved in volunteering, because they knew somebody through a personal connection, often volunteering for the same event in subsequent years. "I volunteered more than once, about three times for Special Olympics, with my colleagues." In addition, six of the participants continued to volunteer because they were seeking an opportunity for themselves, "Yes, volunteering has been a very big part of my life. I did Ameri-Corps, the domestic Peace Corps. So, volunteering period, I'm very inclined to do." And two of these participants continued to volunteer because they both knew somebody and they were seeking an opportunity for themselves, "I did it over four years, at least four times. Part of it was that I was with an organization that was doing it, the Knights of Columbus…" As a note, seven of the nine participants in the second round continued to volunteer multiple times for a structured sports event for children with special needs, while the other two participants have not volunteered again, they expressed an intention to do so, "I haven't done it again because…I teach kids with special needs every day…But I am going to pursue volunteering more after I retire from teaching." The

responses showed that the participants arrived at volunteering for different reasons, and continued to volunteer at subsequent events for those reasons. Therefore, the participants continued to be involved as volunteers as a process of social discourse and in relation with one another, and their experiences thus were socially constructed. The discourses of altruism, disability, and sports were evident in the participants' responses.

Findings of the themes in focus area 2 – m*otivation for staying involved.* The participants were motivated for staying involved in volunteering for multiple reasons including both personal and professional reasons. In this round of the study, the data showed five themes that illustrated what motivated the participants for staying involved in volunteering. Following were the five themes that were culled from the data as to the motivation for staying involved in volunteering: (2a) they had a strong service orientation; (2b) they had a passion for and a personal interest in volunteering for this type of event and/or group; (2c) they had a professional interest; (2d) they had a concern about equity and society; and (2e) inclusion, social, and political perspectives.

In round two of this study, all nine of the participants shared their motivations for staying involved in volunteering. Six participants indicated that they volunteered for a structured sports event for children with special needs because they were motivated by a strong service orientation. "Well, it's positive…We were all there for the kids." Additionally, eight participants expressed a passion and/or personal interest in staying involved as can be heard from this participant, "There was definitely a sense of community. I don't that think I've ever been in one place in my entire life that you feel so much love as when you attend these events, it's a really overwhelming feeling." Many of the participants also had a professional interest in staying involved, some volunteered with colleagues, others volunteered as college student, while other participants worked with children with special needs and wanted to continue to volunteer outside of their work day. "I think it reinforced the feeling that I wanted to help or teach kids with special needs even more…" And, several of the participants responded about their concern about equity and society, particularly concerning providing opportunities for children with special needs to participate in structured sports events. "I wanted to let them and their families experience what my children and I have experienced at a sporting event. And I had a feeling that there weren't enough of these kinds of events for kids with special needs where the typical kids have such a variety of events." In addition, a number of participants addressed their beliefs about inclusion, social and political perspectives, "It's about letting them see they can do something that nobody else thought they could do and succeed, not the first time, not in that perfect way that someone else could but succeed nonetheless..." Therefore, the data continued to reveal evidence of the discourses of altruism, disability, and sports throughout the participants' responses, similar to the responses in round one.

Findings of the themes in focus area 3 – *ongoing meaning of the experience.* All nine participants shared the ongoing meaning of their volunteer experiences. Many of the participants continued to volunteer for a structured sports event for children with special needs on multiple occasions because their experience was so meaningful to them, the athletes, and the families. In round two of this study, the data revealed seven themes

about the ongoing meaning for why the participants continued to volunteer including: (3a) a positive value of the experience; (3b) an expanded sense of family; (3c) what was learned through the experience and how; (3d) a belief in service; (3e) the difference between expectations and what they found; (3f) the way it was participatory and what people were invited to participate in; and (3g) how people were identified.

Many of the participants described the ongoing meaning of their volunteer experiences in several ways, which covered a number of themes culled from their responses. All nine participants cited the positive value of their experience, "It was enjoyable and we had fun doing it together." Another aspect of the positive experience for several participants was the expanded sense of family that they witnessed and experience, "…seeing their kids do more than, and they were happy and successful. And it was the whole family getting excited about it. That was neat!" Four participants stated what they had learned from their subsequent volunteer experiences including, "Things that struck me when I first started was the idea that these activities at camp are things that we all take for granted…What I take for granted is very special to other people…" An integral aspect to their continued participation in volunteering for structured sports events for children with special needs was how their belief in service was strengthened and enhanced, "But when you help people and you can see pride on their face or you can see happiness or genuine authentic glee, it makes you want to do it more." And several of the participants remarked on ways in which their experience was participatory, that is constructed in a social context, including remarks about how everyone was so involved in helping and doing whatever was needed that they were unable to determine who was who between the volunteers, coaches, and families. "But, a sage quote that I use…is, 'Let's be participants, not spectators.' So, I wanted my kids to be participants." In addition, in this round, all the participants responded with terminology as identifiers when referring to the children with special needs. Similar to round one, the participants used some of the following words as descriptors – kids, children, athletes, girl, boy, and kids with special needs/disabilities, although, in general, most participants dropped the terminology describing the kids from a "disability" perspective in favor of and "abilities" perspective, basically their responses were human-centric. And this evolution of terminology when identifying another person was crucial for the athletes' identities as "people-first", rather than "disability-focused." In using this "people-first" terminology, the volunteers demonstrated the positive aspects of the discourse of disability, and illustrated the social and relational effects of their experiences, thus adding to the social construction of identity.

Findings of the themes in focus area 4 – *participant [volunteer] perceptions of concerns as expressed by families or athletes.* In this second round of interviews, I was interested in exploring whether the participants witnessed directly or indirectly, any concerns as expressed by the families or the athletes about the volunteers, including especially any concerns over working with a number of volunteers throughout the sports event. In some situations where people volunteer on a regular basis for the same clients, such as with the elderly in a retirement home, the clients may request to work with a particular volunteer. In this study, however, the structured sports events were often one to two day events with a large number of volunteers. Some of the volunteers will be

assigned to work with an athlete for the day or will work at a particular activity and all the athletes that rotate through that activity. So the nature and setting of the event, as well as the culture of the event, seem to be important factors in whether the clients, in this case the families and athletes express any concerns. In other words, the event was socially structured so that this concern did not arise. In this focus area, there was one theme present, (4a) none of the participants heard any concerns expressed by the families or athletes about their experience with the volunteers.

All nine of the participants resoundingly answered that they were unaware of any concerns about any issues with the athletes working with the volunteers. "I didn't experience it. The kids were competing in different events and we were in the different events but I didn't notice a sense of them being lost or confused or anything." And the participants also described that they did experience an overall feeling of gratitude from the families and the athletes. "No, the kids were very appreciative of the fact that they were able to participate with any volunteer that was working with them." Some of the participants also stated, "I don't think it was really a concern. They are there for the event and they know that the volunteers are there for the event to help the athletes." One participant shared that there were situational times when one or another volunteer might be better equipped to handle a child with special needs. For example, due to safety concerns with lifting some of the campers into and out of the kayak, certain volunteers would be more physically able do those lifting jobs. No…certain staff will do the heavy lifting. But I think there are generally open arms when it comes to general working with the kids." And several other participants described experiencing a dynamic event, where everyone was actively involved, families, coaches, and volunteers, in such a way that they weren't able to identify who played each role, everyone was doing what was needed to make the moment and the sports event successful. "I don't think so. I actually didn't know who all the volunteers were and I couldn't tell the difference between the volunteers and any paid staff." Therefore, the participants did not experience any concerns or criticisms as expressed by the families or the athletes about working with a variety of volunteers during the structured sports event. Several participants voiced that they volunteered for a one day event and that if it was a regular activity, perhaps it might be an issue but they did not experience criticisms. "I don't remember hearing any concerns about the changes in volunteers. I was only volunteering for one day. It might have been different if I was volunteering for a longer event or more frequently." This information may be useful when planning future events and recruitment which will be addressed in greater detail in the next section.

Findings of the themes in focus area 5 – *suggestions and ideas about encouraging future volunteer recruitment.* Many non-profit organizations rely extensively on volunteer assistance to plan, and execute events. Structured sports events are almost entirely operated using a large group of volunteers in a variety of roles. Therefore, it is imperative to understand why and how people volunteer, as well as what ideas and suggestions they have about encouraging future volunteer recruitment. This is especially helpful coming from people who have volunteered on multiple occasions. In the second round of this study, all nine of the participants eagerly offered a list of ideas

that can be seen in the following three themes: (5a) appeal to them where they are; (5b) expanding reach through social media; and (5c) other collateral material and recruitment.

All nine of the participants responded that it was crucial to appeal to people where they were, for example appealing to them with something where they have an interest such as working with children, an interest in sports, and being part of a service organization that is looking for a cause, such as: "I'd reach out to the service organizations, there are service organizations that are looking for a cause, or this gives them exposure to something different." In addition, the participants suggested sharing stories of their experiences with people close to them such as friends, families, and colleagues. The participants stressed the importance of connecting with people to describe how impactful the volunteer experience was for them and how meaningful their volunteering is for the kids, for example: "In recruiting, I would say that direct to direct communication, communicating with someone face to face, talking to them about the experience would probably be the best way to recruit someone." Another participant made the suggestion to target groups of people that already enjoy working with children and/or with sports, such as teachers, all people in education, people that are on sports teams or work out at a gym, and advertise at their work sites with information flyers and recruitment materials: "I would put out…flyers for somebody at a school to put up on a bulletin board, put it on school websites." Some of the participants have made a career of volunteering and feel a responsibility to share their experiences and new opportunities with others. One of the participants described it as reaching people where they are including promoting these events to families for their children to participate as well as for the families to be involved as volunteers: "There are some people who want to give back and they're ready to give back, but they don't know what to do. So you want to make sure that you appeal to that group." Another interesting finding was that all nine participants suggested the expanded use of social media, including Facebook, and various websites to recruit volunteers, to advertise, and to showcase special events. One participant said:

> …I think that social media is a really good, big tool that hasn't really been tapped into that if you can really get it trending or to the right hashtags, you can get awareness for its existence. And I think that alone would help recruit more people and get more interest, including donors, daily volunteers, and other staff or whatever, to parents or to bring more campers.

She further added:

> I think social media is the biggest, best tool we have going for us because as cheesy as it sounds, your heart melts when you see a kid with downs syndrome on a boat, like just for the lay person who is not familiar, it's cute, if nothing else it's cute!

"Relationships are the foundation for social networking sites" (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009, p. 102). In essence, social media has become the 21st century

phone call, letter, or personal note. It has become a frequent way that we connect with each other. Some organizations, such as Special Olympics and Red Cross, present social media using sophisticated interfaces with multiple clear avenues to connect volunteers to their organizations. Special Olympics (Special Olympics, 2017) focuses on sports, and the Red Cross (Red Cross, 2017) is best known for health/disaster relief, and both are international nonprofit service organizations. Each of these organizations needs and operates with a large volunteer force and uses social media to provide useful information to the public, and shares heartwarming stories about the lived experience from multiple perspectives, including those served, their families, and volunteers. Examples of other nonprofit organizations using social media include AARP (AARP. 2017) and International Federation on Ageing (International Federation on Ageing, 2017), each of which are global, nonpartisan, non-governmental organizations that advocate for rights and provide service for seniors. Both AARP and the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) partner with the United Nations on key initiatives, policy, and advocacy for seniors, and use social media to link their members to volunteer opportunities. Another group of organizations operate as a bridge to third parties. Organizations such as Volunteer Match (Volunteer Match, 2017), All for Good (All for Good, 2017), and Senior Planet (Senior Planet, 2017) are conduits for matching volunteers to opportunities that fit their interests. Both Volunteer Match and All for Good have databases of projects that need volunteers and lists of people that want to volunteer. Volunteer Match (2017) focuses on "Bringing people together" (p. 1), and All for Good (2017) believes that "Volunteers can change the world" (p. 1). Senior Planet (2017) provides information and resources for seniors, and celebrates "Aging with attitude" (p. 1). The aforementioned organizations use social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, and Blogs to share and disseminate information, and recruit volunteers.

Social media started as a way for people to keep in touch and connect with each other using technology (Miller, 2010). Several articles support that social media also has the potential to help nonprofit organizations to connect with more people (Miller, 2010; Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). Additional research shows that it is important for nonprofit organizations to not only have a presence on social media but also to have strategies in place to use social media effectively (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). Nonprofits can use social media to share information about their organizations and their activities, provide updates on policy issues, promote their areas of advocacy, list information about volunteer opportunities, request donations, and focus on recruiting volunteer support from individuals and corporations for upcoming events and activities (Miller, 2010; Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). In addition, Pew Research found that in terms of recruiting, "Not only are groups using social media to communicate and mobilize members, but the members themselves are often active in using social media to connect with the group and evangelize for the group with others" (Rainie, Purcell, & Smith, 2011, p. 27). In this study, participants offered that they saw social media as an important tool for personally connecting to friends, colleagues, and organizations for recruiting volunteers and maintaining relationships. The aspects of social media identified in this study further adds to the literature related to the relational nature of volunteering and to its potential uses for nonprofit organizations.

The resounding voice of the participants encouraging social media evidences the ubiquitous use of technology that has already extended to other areas and that would be a useful tool in our contemporary culture for recruiting volunteers. In summary, the participants, in this study, all addressed the importance of personally appealing to people where they are, using social media to expand their reach, and using other collateral material in order to connect to people and encourage future volunteer recruitment as illustrated in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: Mapping volunteer recruitment for structured sports events for children with special needs.

Synopsis of Results

The results of the study are illustrated in the table. There was an additional focus area about the participants' [volunteers'] perceptions of concerns as expressed by the families or athletes that was not included in this table, because none were expressed. Therefore, the four focus areas and corresponding themes are listed below in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1

Results of Focus Areas and Corresponding Themes

Become & Continue Involvement	**Motivation**	**Meaning of Experience**	**Volunteer Recruitment Ideas**
Direct invitation from somebody	Strong Service orientation	Positive value of experience	Appeal to them where they are
Seeking an opportunity for themselves	Personal interest	Expanded sense of family	Expand reach through social media
Personal connection	Professional interest	Learnings from the experience	Other collateral material
	Concern about equity and society	Belief in service was strengthened	
	Inclusion, social, and political perspectives	Increased view of equity and society	
		Difference between expectations and what they found	
		The way it was participatory and what people were invited to participate in	
		How child athletes were identified	

Implications for this Study

There were many implications for this study, some explicit and others implicit. The focus of this study was learning about the volunteer experience of working with children with special needs in a structured sports event. As such, it was imperative to

explore and attempt to understand aspects of that experience from the volunteers' perspective.

Understanding the process of why participants got involved and continued to volunteer for structured sports event for children with special needs is very beneficial. As the results of this study have shown, most people got involved and continued to stay involved in volunteer opportunities, because they knew someone and had a personal connection to someone who was a volunteer or was working with an organization that needed more volunteers. There are many vehicles that people use to stay personally connected with one another, including through social media, for example on Facebook where they share posts about upcoming events, causes, and opportunities. Organizations and friends share this information with each other and join one another in activities of mutual interest. This is very powerful, because it is an example of how people operate in relationship to one another, how they influence each other through social discourse, and how they make meaning of their experiences in relation to one another. For example, the participants in this study self-identified as volunteers, helpers, learners, camp staff, coaches, teachers, and life guards. They also made sense of the experience through their comments such as related to being a 'helper': "You learn so much about yourself. The external message of helping others as a "hands up," and not "hand out" is very important." Related to being a 'learner,' a participant noted: "My experiences greatly differed from what I expected. I anticipated 'helping those less fortunate,' but the overused cliche rang true: they helped me more than I helped them." In each of these situations, the participants linked their identities with others (volunteers, child athletes, and families) as a human experience that was socially constructed.

It also is important to know the answer to this question for recruitment purposes when hosting an event where many volunteers are needed to run a successful event. It suggests that people organizing an event that relies on volunteer support make a concerted effort to recruit new volunteers from their other volunteers and contacts, since most volunteers learn about opportunities through someone they know.

The results of this study have shown that people were motivated to volunteer due to a strong service orientation, for personal or professional interests, due to concerns about equity and society, and for inclusion, social and political perspectives. This information is useful as it adds to the literature in each of these topics, individually and collectively. It also informs volunteers, practitioners, organizations, and those who lead them by providing information related to recruiting, training, and retaining volunteers. Understanding what motivated people to volunteer was not conducted individually and in isolation but rather in a social context where there is a compelling reason for joining with others to help make an event successful for everyone involved, a true social construct.

And the data indicates that people found great meaning from their volunteer experience. This information is useful to know, because the people who have memorable experiences often look to repeat the experience. It is important to understand how people make meaning of their volunteer experience, in a social context or community and not individually. Additionally, the participants in this study indicated that they did not hear

any concerns expressed by the families and athletes. The absence of concerns was encouraging and likely supported the positive environment the volunteers recalled.

There was a plethora of information offered related to encouraging future volunteer recruitment. Multiple respondents noted that technology provides an avenue through social media in order to engage potential volunteers for structured sports events for children with special needs. The implications for this involve both research as well as practice. Scholars who study volunteer recruitment for children with special needs can utilize these findings to include technology. Organizations who engage volunteers will welcome this opportunity to increase the number of volunteers to meet their needs.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study explored how volunteers made sense of their experience of working with children with special needs in structured sports events. Several discourses were evident throughout the data - service, sports, and disability. All of these discourses were operating in a relational context, in relation to other people.

Some recommendations for future research involve delving deeper into each of these discourses to understand how people specifically made sense of each of them. Some of the findings that would be fascinating to understand in greater detail in relation to the volunteer experience include: understanding the implications for training of volunteers, ensuring equitable access and inclusion in structured sports events for all children, leveraging key social and political perspectives throughout the process of volunteering, involving the families in the volunteer process, and researching further this study's results regarding recruiting specifically utilizing technology to reach potential volunteers. Another potential research area is modeling the positive use of terminology to identify people in a respectful way. In addition, it would be interesting to explore with the athletes and the families an understanding of their experience in structured sports events and their perceptions of the volunteers. The possibilities abound and each of these potential research streams would yield valuable information from a social and relational perspective. This study has been instrumental in using a social constructionist lens to the volunteer experience.

Limitations

The nature and specificity of research contains limitations. Following were some of the limitations specific to this qualitative study. Common to qualitative research, the sample size was small, which limited generalizability. Although generalizability is decreased, the results of this study add to the general body of the scholarly literature. There was potential for bias among participants based on their beliefs, and previous experiences. In order to mitigate for that, I provided an opportunity for the participants to review, reflect, and revise their responses. The participants may have preconceived ideas and beliefs based on their social and/or cultural experiences.

There was also a potential for researcher bias in this study, since I have had experience as a volunteer working with children with special needs in a variety of structured sports events. The challenge was that as a researcher I may have influenced how the participants responded to the interview questions. To minimize my bias in this study, I continually reflected on every part of the process, from the design of the study to the interview questions, and from the data collection to the analysis of the data. The purpose of such reflection was to understand reflexivity in my qualitative study by asking myself the following three questions: (1) What are the data telling me? (2) What is it I want to know? (3) What is the dialectical relationship between what the data are telling me and what I want to know? (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 78).

The only participants in this study to be interviewed were adult volunteers. I did not, for example, interview athletes or their family members about their experience of the volunteers. Research involving other groups such as families and the athletes would add further information that could be useful. The participants were only from one country, thereby limiting geographical reach. The same conclusions might differ in other countries. In some cases, the electronic data collection limited the opportunity for visual cues. However, recent literature notes that while visual cues are limited, visual bias involving both the researcher as well as the participant is also limited, thereby creating an open environment to give and receive information (McCoyd & Schwaber Kerson, 2006). In round two of the data collection, additional interviews were conducted using computer video conferencing. During this time, both the researcher and the participant were able to observe each other. While visual cues were available, the interview time was bounded in individual segments of thirty minutes each, and the recordings were transcribed and interpreted by the researcher. According to several researchers, while these limitations existed, qualitative research still presented opportunities for a deeper understanding of meaning regarding the topic and the participants' lived experiences (Creswell, 2005; Gay, 1996).

Summary

This study sought to discover the socially constructed experiences of adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events. The design of this study was qualitative in nature using the Dynamic Narrative Approach research method (Hyatt, 2011). Two rounds of interviews were conducted through a sample of ten participants who met the criteria specific to this study. The data were collected using technology, and analyzed and coded for themes (Creswell, 2005).

The first round of data collection illuminated the perceptions of the participants' experiences as volunteers for children with special needs in structured sports events. In the second round, the participants' responses supported, advanced, and added to the first round narratives. The research yielded rich data providing information in the following key areas: process of becoming and continuing to be involved; motivation for getting and staying involved; ongoing meaning of the experience; and suggestions and ideas about encouraging future volunteer recruitment. Three discourses were also revealed: the discourse of altruism/service, the discourse of sports, and the discourse of disability.

Volunteering to work with children with special needs and their families is by default relational. The evidence of these relationships was apparent in the responses that were socially constructed by the participants. Examples of these constructions were revealed in the passion and dedication expressed by the participants that moved past the identity of disability, and thereby encouraged the identity of possibility.

The results of the study add to the literature about the volunteers lived experience, in structured sports events, for children with special needs, as well as recruitment. In addition, this study offered useful information for organizations, and practitioners, including volunteers and any other stakeholders in those future endeavors.

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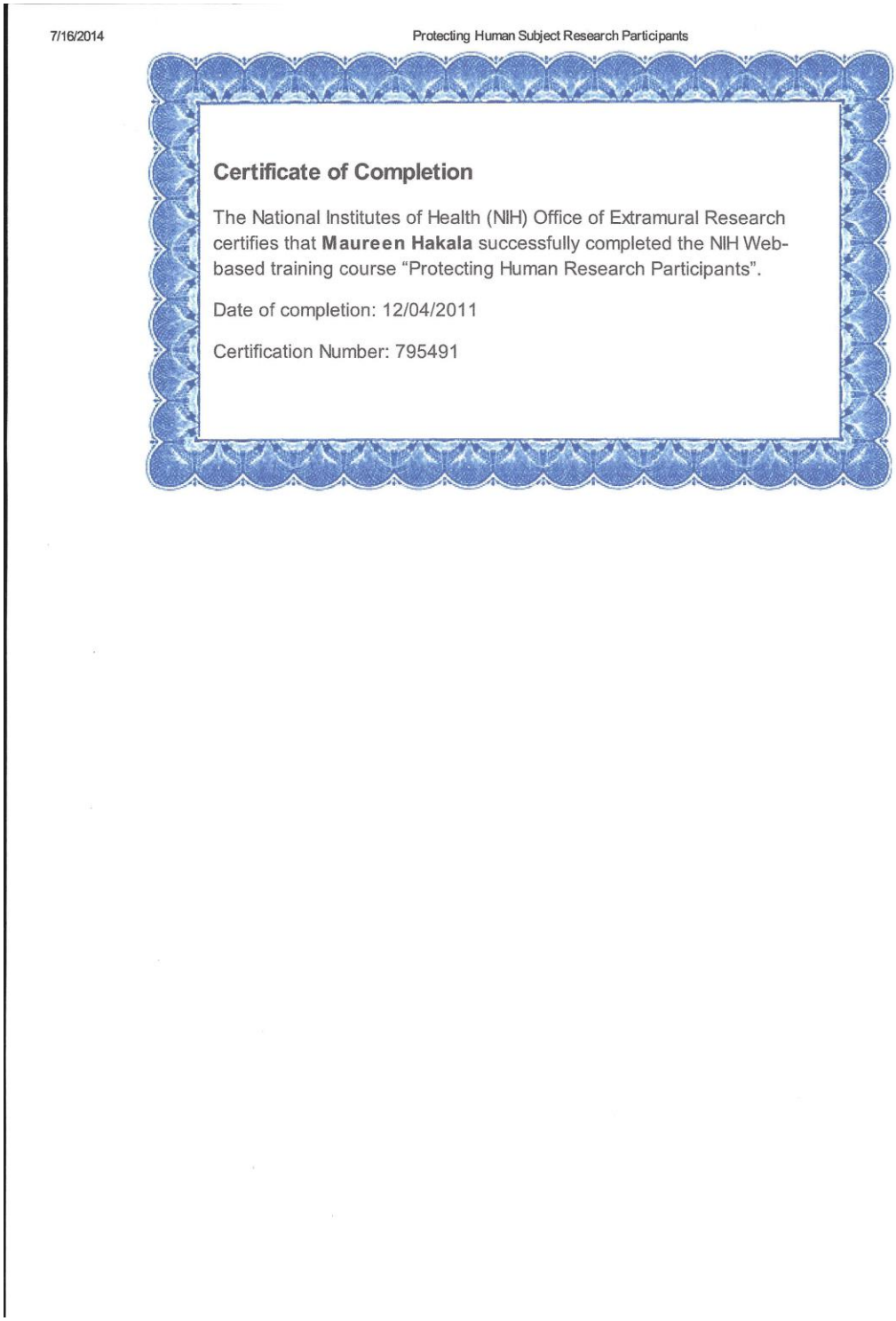
APPENDIX A

Certificate of Completion for Protection of Human Subjects Training



7/16/2014 Protecting Human Subject Research Participants

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Maureen Hakala** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 12/04/2011

Certification Number: 795491

APPENDIX B

Interview Instrument

A. Alpha Numeric Code of Participant: _____
B. Date: _____
C. Demographics

- Occupation: _____
- Highest Level of Education Earned: _____
- Age Range:
  - 21-35
  - Over 35
- Gender:
  - M
  - F
- Type of Structured Sporting Event: _____

Interview Questions

The primary research question was, *How are the experiences of adult volunteers who work with children with special needs in structured sports events socially constructed?* As an adult volunteer for children with special needs during a structured sporting event:

The first round interview questions consisted of:

1) How did you become a volunteer working with children with special needs in a structured sporting event?
2) What attracted you to doing this?
3) Describe your personal experiences as an adult volunteer working with children with special needs in a structured sporting event.
4) Did these experiences match or differ from what you expected? How?
5) Is there anything else you would like to share about this experience?

The second round interview questions consisted of:

1) Have you continued to be involved as a volunteer at structured sports events? Why? Or Why not?
2) What has been the impact on your life or your experience from becoming a volunteer?
3) What ideas/concerns have you noticed having an impact on volunteers for structured since the last survey?
4) A concern has been voiced that sometimes people/athletes in structured sports events have too many changes in the volunteers they have to deal with. What is your experience?
5) What thoughts do you have about the most important things to emphasize in the recruitment of volunteers in the future?

APPENDIX C
Photo Permission

Begin message:

From: David Evangelista <DEvangelista@specialolympics.org>
Date: November 23, 2017 at 3:07:30 AM PST

All photos approved! Just got the word. Please feel free to share with your friend. And thank her for us!

David

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