

8-13-2021

Fastest on the Playground: Four Generations of Female Sport Experience

Jessica B. Kirby

University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, jkirby@uccs.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr>

 Part of the [Leisure Studies Commons](#), [Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies Commons](#), and the [Sports Studies Commons](#)

Recommended APA Citation

Kirby, J. B. (2021). Fastest on the Playground: Four Generations of Female Sport Experience. *The Qualitative Report*, 26(8), 2558-2576. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4822>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Qualitative Report at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Qualitative Report by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact nsuworks@nova.edu.



Qualitative Research Graduate Certificate
Indulge in Culture
Exclusively Online • 18 Credits
LEARN MORE

NSU
NOVA SOUTHEASTERN
UNIVERSITY

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN

Fastest on the Playground: Four Generations of Female Sport Experience

Abstract

The life sport experiences of four generations of females were explored through narrative family research and presented through research poetry. Their stories powerfully represent the transformation of sport and exercise culture across seven decades of overlapping life experiences and demonstrate the generational transmission of value for, expectation of, and experiences with sport. A poem representing each girl/woman's story was crafted by the author, through the process of poetic transcription, and is presented alongside a photo illustrating each individual's experiences. The generational experiences and implications of the findings are discussed within the broader sport psychology and sport sociology literature.

Keywords

sport socialization, women, girls, poetry, narrative

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Maria Lahman for her mentorship in the processes of research poetry.

Fastest on the Playground: Four Generations of Female Sport Experience

Jessica B. Kirby
University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, USA

The life sport experiences of four generations of females were explored through narrative family research and presented through research poetry. Their stories powerfully represent the transformation of sport and exercise culture across seven decades of overlapping life experiences and demonstrate the generational transmission of value for, expectation of, and experiences with sport. A poem representing each girl/woman's story was crafted by the author, through the process of poetic transcription, and is presented alongside a photo illustrating each individual's experiences. The generational experiences and implications of the findings are discussed within the broader sport psychology and sport sociology literature.

Keywords: sport socialization, women, girls, poetry, narrative

Sport is one of the most pervasive vehicles for both the transmission of social norms and values, as well as a cultural mirror that reflects our greater social landscape, all the while being touted as “just a game” (Coakley, 2015). Over the past century, sport has substantially transformed in the United States, and continues to do so with each passing decade (Borish et al., 2016; Cohen, 2017; Gems, 2021). Parents, grandparents, and influential adults form the majority of a young child's cultural milieu that reinforces social norms and gender stereotypes in regards to sport and physical activity (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005), sometimes beginning before a child even learns to walk. It is not uncommon at social celebrations like “gender reveal parties” and “baby showers” for expectant parents of baby boys to be given infant sport clothing and miniature sport balls, while parents expecting baby girls, are given infant clothing with bows and ruffles and toy baby dolls. As children become physically mobile in their social environment, they rapidly internalize gendered social cues for play (Lindsey et al., 1997). Many scholars have demonstrated the importance of the family as one of the most influential socializing agents in determining whether or not a child will internalize value for sport participation through family culture and parent role modeling (Birchwood et al., 2008; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Fredricks & Eccles; Haycock & Smith, 2014; Hayoz et al., 2017; Strandbu et al., 2020; Wheeler & Green, 2014), and if a child will have the emotional and financial support to sustain participation (Coakley; Wheeler, 2012; Wheeler & Green, 2019).

The majority of the literature regarding familial influence on sport focuses on the dyadic relationships between parents and children, with data elicited through semi-structured interviews and/or surveys (Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; Hayoz et al., 2017; Holt et al., 2009; Strandbu et al., 2020; Wheeler & Green, 2019). In some instances, interview excerpts highlight parents reflecting on their own upbringing and describe their own parents (the grandparents) influence on their sporting opportunities (Stefansen et al., 2018; Wheeler & Green, 2014). Palmer (2015) reported on intergenerational transmission of physical activity across three-generation Scottish families and found beliefs and values regarding physical activity were shaped by shared family culture, as well as by broader social norms. Mercado & Bernthal (2016), in the only study found to evaluate multiple generations of sport

socialization beyond parental influence, interviewed five Cuban American families to include three generations (grandparents, parents, and children) for each family in the sample. A bidirectional, multigenerational process of sport socialization was described in which the first- and second-generation family members passed down value for, and encouragement to spectate and play sport, to the second- and third-generation family members, while the younger generations also influenced the older generations' sport interests through retroactive socialization.

Aims and Guiding Research Questions

Beyond these few examples, there exists very little in the extant literature about the process of how sport experiences are passed down and transformed through multiple generations of families, within complex and dynamic extended family units. Beyond general sport socialization within families, it is warranted to consider what nuanced experiences exist for girls and women in the United States within families whose generational sport opportunities varied greatly before and after the passage of Title IX legislation (Schultz, 2014). Older generations of women that lacked basic access to school-based sport opportunities prior to Title IX and were socialized to sport as a strictly male domain, have raised daughters, granddaughters, and great-granddaughters who have gradually enjoyed greater depth and breadth of access to sport in the decades following the legislations' passage. This work aimed to address the gap in the literature regarding multigenerational sport socialization, and lack of research on sport socialization across three or more generations of girls and women. It appears that this work contributes uniquely to the literature by being the first to present four generations of female sport experience through an arts-based research approach. The guiding research questions were:

- 1) What are the life sport experiences of four generations of girls and women within one extended family unit following the maternal family line?
- 2) What were the earliest and most salient sport and exercise memories for each generation?
- 3) What differences in sport opportunities for girls, boys, men, and women has each generation observed over time?
- 4) How are the concepts of sport, and of being an athlete, described by each generation?

Positionality of the Author

Nothing may be more relatable, or profound, than the journey we take with our families. Family research embraces the possibilities of autoethnography, where the researcher reflexively considers and better understands his or her own social self, better understands those they are closest to, and considers with new perspectives how they form a part of our greater socialized environment (Adams & Manning, 2015). In this work, my purpose was to explore the experiences of four generations of women and girls in my family. In doing so I sat in a moment in time in which I simultaneously embodied the roles of mother, wife, daughter, granddaughter, cousin, sister, doctoral student, and emerging critical sport scholar. As I neared the completion of my PhD program, a professor challenged us to consider the opportunity that family research held; to record, reflect on, and learn from our own family histories before those closest to us were no longer alive to share them with us. This echoes the "invitation" of Adams and Manning for "autoethnographers [to] begin their journeys" by considering, "what family stories might [they] tell?" and "what insights might these stories and experiences offer to

others?" (p. 362). As an emerging critical sport scholar, I was struck by the questions of how sport experiences evolve across generations, and how value and enjoyment in regards to sport were passed down through generations within one family—my own family. I was raised in a large extended family that was very close knit, comprised of far more men and boys (e.g., brothers, cousins, uncles) than girls and women, but also a family that very much took the lead from the matriarchs (e.g., Mom and Grammy). In this spirit, I made the decision to explore my family's evolving generational experiences with sport, as I was uniquely positioned to interview four generations of females within my existing maternal family tree branches.

As a scholar, I am particularly interested in the social psychological phenomena that influence access to, and engagement in sport for girls and women. During my childhood, I was the only girl in my nuclear family, and yet I experienced equal support and encouragement from my mother and father to pursue my interests in sport and physical activity, as my three brothers did. This unconditional and ungendered parental support was a catalyst for my development of competence in the sport domain, and my sustained involvement in competitive and recreational sport into adulthood. My value for participating in, and commitment to study sport, stems in large part from these life sport experiences. I actively enjoy and value sport, while perpetually analyzing the ways sport can be made a more inclusive and healthy space for all participants. As such, I approached this work, including the development of the guiding research questions and choosing an arts-based approach, by drawing from a feminist postmodern epistemology (Cooky, 2019; Hirschmarm, 1998). My primary intention was to allow the poetic representations of each individual's lived experience to stand alone as a unique representation of the interconnected realities of women and girls in one extended family.

Approach

An arts-based approach combining in-depth narrative interviews and poetry transcription was chosen to holistically represent and honor each individual's life sport experience. Narrative interviews were conducted with four family members to represent each of the four generations of females; my grandmother (73 years old), my mother (58 years old), my cousin (19 years old), and my daughter (5 years old). Narrative interviews provide participants a space to tell their story with the depth, chronology, and cadence they are most comfortable with. The researcher is afforded the privilege to share in the details of these stories describing layers of experiences across a lifetime, without the restriction of a heavily structured interview guide (Papathomas, 2019). Interviews were audio recorded and each interview was transcribed verbatim before being inductively analyzed via the development of poetic representations.

To choose poetry to share research is to choose the multidimensional, sensorial, and emotional complexity of the lived experience. The nuances of relived experiences shared through in-depth interviews are honored; inviting the reader to see, feel, relate, and reflect on another's journey in a way direct quote excerpts do not always afford (Lahman et al., 2010; Sparkes, 2002; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Research poetry has begun to see an increased presence in sport, physical activity, and physical education literature (Carless & Douglas, 2009; Fitzpatrick, 2018; Lail & Lahman, 2019; Owton & Allen-Collinson 2017; Sparkes & Douglas, 2007). Creating poetic representations allows researchers to creatively immerse themselves in crafting the data through writing as a powerful analysis tool (Sparkes et al., 2003). The resulting research poems are valuable alternative representations, that afford a platform for multifaceted consideration, reflection and interpretation of complex, critical issues of the human experience (Fitzpatrick; Sparkes et al., 2003). Poetic representations of data may be more accessible and relatable to those outside the academy and offer a prism of possibilities in what different nuances of experience resonate with each reader of the work.

The poems presented herein are data poems (Lahman et al., 2010) created through poetic transcription (Glesne, 1997; Leavy, 2015; Richardson, 1994). Consistent with this style of research poetry, the author spent substantial time immersed in the data in order to inductively analyze and extract themes, patterns, and significant statements from each transcript (Glesne, 1997; Leavy, 2015). Words and phrases for each poem were then taken directly from the interview transcripts to retain the tone, rhythm, pauses, and emphases of each individual, while the ordering of phrases was chosen by the author (Glesne; Richardson 1994; Sparkes, 2002). Each poem was presented to each participant for review as a form of member checking, before being finalized. After each poem was finalized, the author asked each participant to provide a photograph or image representative of their experience to include alongside each poem.

Poetic Representations and Discussion

Grammy: First Generation

One legged races at the church
Fun, and then frustrating
I was little, but I was tall
I always won because I had the longest legs!

It was just a little town
It wasn't near as hip
They didn't have that much to offer

We did a lot of track
I did a lot of swimming
I did the hurdles
I always won because I had the longest legs!

The 100-yard dash
The funnest
Everyone half a block behind me
I was the tallest girl in my class

Climbing, my forte
Climb up the rope swing
To the top of the tree
Drove my Grandma crazy
I was very adventurous

PE in school
Climbing ropes
All the way to the top of the gym
I'm very competitive

I had a bike
My grandpa welded together
Parts from the junk yard
I rode my bike all over
Now, they think of that as a sport

Football games
Boys were always just wimpy
No emphasis on working out
Or getting strong
They just played football

Babe and I used to dance
At the pool hall
Almost every night
And we danced A LOT!
I'd always sweat and she didn't

College, oh yeah, PE
That was a different story
Lock up with another body and go in circles
I just got too dizzy

What else can I do?
"Well, if you just can't handle this"
Guys were very macho back then
"Well, just go swim then"
So, I did

Jazzercise, Simmons
The focus was having your family
Your mom would do it with me
Just dancing around

Things I did normally
Were still sport things
But you never took credit
Didn't think about it like that

Doing it for fun
You didn't prep for it
You didn't prepare
You just did it

You didn't say
"Strengthen your heart
Or lose a pound
Oh, I've got to exercise"
Because it didn't exist



Image 1. “You’re just moving”

Sports, 70 years ago
 Wasn't a big focus whatsoever
 Wasn't in your magazines
 Or your newspapers

When you're moving
 You're just moving
 It didn't have an identity,
 You know, like an athlete

Sports now, it's really impressive
 And it's a good thing
 Kids have a purpose
 Sports today are amazing

In the first generation, my grandmother (i.e., Grammy), born in 1944, details a simple life of being raised in a small rural community with limited economic means. She poignantly described how the concepts of sport, and of training to be an athlete, that dominate today's media (Coakley, 2015), didn't exist in the social landscape of her rural community in the 1940s and 1950s. She viewed riding her bike down the street and the boys playing football for the high school on a Friday night as both ways to simply move one's body. She reflected that kids “just did” these activities without forethought, and without any type of formalized or prescribed physical conditioning programs. She recalls the experience of being chastised and relegated to the pool by a male physical education (PE) instructor, for a supposed lack of toughness, in “not being able to handle” the dizzying tumbling-style gymnastics that dominated women's PE classes in the 1960s. PE classes that were intentionally designed during that era to prevent women from engaging in overly competitive or strenuous activities (Henderson et al., 1996; Schultz, 2014).

During the caregiving period that would dominate more than three decades of her adult life, my grandmother emphasized that the main focus was on raising her children and not on sport or recreational endeavors. This is congruent with women's experiences historically in which “leisure [was] secondary in importance to the needs of the family” (Henderson et al., 1996, p. 40). Thus, she occasionally found enjoyment in the aerobics craze that emerged in the 1970s through fitness moguls like Richard Simmons and early dance-based fitness like Jazzercise (Kunitz, 2016). Moving into the present, she marveled at the intensity of the personal pressures to exercise, lose weight, and keep your heart healthy (MacGregor, 2014), and how such imperatives didn't exist in the social space of simpler times of her earlier life.

Mom: Second Generation

Playing outside
 Roller skating, riding bikes
 Basketball in the driveway
 I was never interested

I liked reading books
 I had to be outside
 Reading on the porch
 I was outside, technically

I hated PE
 The mile run every Friday
 I literally thought
 I was going to die

High school, in the 70s
 They didn't have that stuff
 Nothing like now
 I did marching band

I like dancing
 Jazzercise, Zumba
 I never took dance lessons
 We didn't have money for that



Image 2. "I like dancing, Zumba"

Sports today
 Girls play early
 Boys play the night game
 The big game
 It's always that way
 The girls are okay
 But the boys are more important

All four of you did sports
 You learn sibling bonds
 Through the sports

I made you go
To support each other

You watch each other play
You are closer as siblings
You can't watch each other
write a book report

I don't like sports, I don't play
I support the people doing it
I encouraged you
I didn't push you
You weren't forced
or expected to do it

Having Benjie [my son] in the NFL
Your whole family is involved in that sport
All of you guys in CrossFit
Going to competitions
A family activity

All four kids
Have pushed me
In different ways
To try lifting or running
More than I would have
It's harder on my own

I think it's important
Weight training
It depends how competent I feel
I don't like the social part
You just feel awkward
I like going with you

I love walking
I can just get out
Get fresh air
You can think
Get out of my office
Outside for half an hour
Mentally, makes a big difference

When you're 90 years old
You still should be moving
I don't believe
"I'm 55 and I should be done"
I don't think that's an option

In the second generation, my mother, born in 1960, a self-described introvert and bookworm, described a lack of access to basic school-based sport programs, having graduated high school in 1978 before any significant changes had trickled down from the passage of Title IX. My mother wasn't particularly interested in "sporty" activities, so this lack of access was expressed as more of a fact, rather than a disappointment. She echoed my grandmother's sentiments of an upbringing of limited economic means, in which extracurricular physical activities, such as dance classes, were inaccessible. Instead, her primary physical activity as an adolescent was playing the flute in the marching band.

My mother's narrative focused heavily on supporting her four children (one daughter and three sons), in their sporting endeavors, rather than being concerned or interested in her own. This coincides with the beginnings of a broader social shift of parents investing substantial time and resources into extracurricular activities increasingly viewed as enriching for children's development (Lareau, 2000), and in the case of women born in the 1960s, like my mother, having the novel opportunity to provide their daughters, in particular, with access to sport opportunities they were not afforded during childhood (Wheeler & Green, 2014). Despite fairly limited economic means, extracurricular sport activities were still prioritized in our family. She described supporting myself and my siblings in pursuing sport, but never forcing or demanding participation, or expecting any certain level of achievement. In supporting our autonomy to sample sport activities during childhood and adolescence (Côté et al., 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2017), my mother enhanced our likelihood to develop healthy and positive sport experiences, and competence in the physical domain (Vallerand, 1997). Having never had high perceived competence or interest in the physical domain herself, my mother described retroactive socialization (Mercado & Bernthal, 2016), in which observing and encouraging her children to be active and successful in sport, in turn encouraged her over time to push herself to try things such as weightlifting that she wouldn't have endeavored to try on her own. She additionally described the internalization of a modern personal health paradigm to include the value of physical activity for supporting physical and mental health, and also the imperative to keep one's body active as they move beyond middle age (Higgs & Gilleard, 2015).

Amanda: Third Generation

Playing at the dojo
Austin [my brother] in Taekwondo
His competitions
His soccer practices

So, I joined
Soccer, I was 5, 6...
That was my first time
Being in sports

I was the goalie
I was aggressive
I used to get penalties
Kicking out people's shins
Not on purpose
But it happened

I wanted to play center

The first and last time
I scored my first ever goal!
It was for the wrong team

People don't consider
marching band a sport
I challenge them to try it
Tell me otherwise

Music is really beautiful
Really emotional
A bond through musicianship
Your team, your family

7 AM to 3 o'clock
Outside, marching drills
Running laps
Dedicated to the band

Going through hell together
It's really hot, it's snowing
You're outside in it
The football team
They're inside

I would practice
Over and over and over
20 times a day, for months
One two-minute chance
at competition

The worst coaches
Build you up by tearing you down
"You're not good enough to play that"
If they hurt you like that
You would push to be better

Are you dedicated enough to prove yourself?
I was good
But I was never good enough
In their eyes

Stressful, taxing
Emotionally, mentally
So physically demanding
It was a lot of fun

Swimming, my first team
Austin joined swimming
Dad always talked about swimming

A way to make him proud

Swim meets

Me, my brother, my dad

Bonding over doing races

Bonding on swimming

Not just how to swim

How to really move

Stretch your body out over the water

Small things make you fast

My swim coach told me

I would swim the 500

I just laughed

Impossible! I swim the 100

I swam the 500, 3 years

I felt like an outsider

Never the fast swimmer

You kinda get left behind

You can be a team

but still exclude people

She didn't give up on me

She knew that I was trying

Somebody else would've given up on me

Always there, and still is

Makes you feel, not alone

Well, alone in the pool

She can't swim it for you

It all comes down to

yourself in the water



Image 3. "It all comes down to yourself in the water"

You hurt, it's really cold

But the feeling of success

Strength in yourself

You feel unbeatable

I think of myself
 As a really strong person
 Try to say,
 I'm not good enough
 I know I am
 Nothing is impossible
 I can do it on my own
 I can be successful

Mom, Dad
 My main coaches
 They're the reason
 I was strong enough
 Well, this family is pretty strong

Sports really pushed me
 In all aspects of my life
 Work harder
 Be dedicated
 And, I did have fun

In the third generation, my cousin, born in 1998, joined our extended family, as the first female born since my birth 14 years prior. She described a childhood typical of modern youth sport, sampling team sports like soccer, and eventually joining the swim team to bond with her father and older brother. Following in the footsteps of my mother in the second generation, and actually inheriting and playing the same flute, she boldly asserted that the requisite demands of high school marching band were just as rigorous, if not more so, than those of the football team they performed alongside. Several examples of toxic motivational sport climates were recounted in which her typical coaching encounters were described as “tearing you down to build you up,” recalling on multiple occasions being told she wasn’t good enough. Rather than developing sport competence through positive reinforcement from coaches, she developed resilience and persevered despite her sport environments. She attributed her perseverance to the support she received from her family. Specifically, unconditional family support protected her development of competence and self-worth in the physical domain (Côté et al., 2014; Harter, 1978; 1985) despite exposure to harmful coaching behaviors.

Avery: Fourth Generation

Soccer, Basketball
 Volleyball
 Mommy’s favorite
 Tennis, Hockey

Gymnastics, CrossFit
 Ballet, Yoga
 Zoe! “Gymnastics!”
 My baby sister

Momma Jess!
Daddy Dan!
Grammy Syndee!
CrossFit!

Yoga with Miss Jenny
And soccer
In Grammy Gigi's playground
I do CrossFit

I used to do ballet and yoga
When I was three
That kept me really happy
I just love doing it

When I was two or one
I was doing gymnastics
My first day of gymnastics
I was a little nervous

Gymnastics is my favorite
Doing pull-ups on the bar
My favorite skill
Cause it's very easy

This really is a true story
I couldn't do it when I was little
I just put my toes to the bar
When I turned two
I was doing pretty good



Image 4. "I just put my toes to the bar"

When I got to three
Still doing toes to the bar
But when I got to four
I was pulling up on the bar
I was all the way up
I was like "this tall"

I was LOVING gymnastics
SO MUCH
I was freaking out!
I'm staying in gymnastics
And I'm going to be
even better when I'm six!

Sometimes I fall down
On the playground
I hurt my knee
But I got right back up
and kept trying!

Running VERY speedy
Charlotte has really speedy boots
I can't even catch up to her
I wear tennis shoes
I still don't catch her

I work really hard
Push my muscles
to get them strong Momma!
"You are getting really strong Avery"

My heart is beating really fast
My muscles feel STRONG!
It makes more blood in your body
Push up and down
And that's good for you

Winning is not important
Sports are really important
They're good for you
Because it keeps you really healthy
Because it's good for your brain

It's really important
For your brain
And your legs
Mostly your brain

I have an awesome mind,
Momma
Let's talk a lot about my mind
My mind is very important to me

I take great care of my mind
I don't eat sugar
I drink healthy drinks
To keep my mind healthy

Girls and boys
 All of the sports
 Are for boys and girls together
 Boys and girls can work together

Keep doing sports
 Take a break
 Keep doing sports

In the fourth generation, my daughter, born in 2012, was born into what had evolved into a very physically active and sport-centric family. Her descriptions of sport are comprised of enthusiastic recollections of observing family members across the four generations, participate and compete in sport and recreational activities (Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Strandbu et al., 2020). From the age of 1 year, she spent more days than not, playing in CrossFit™ gyms while her parents, uncles, and/or grandma worked out. She had spent countless evenings and weekends in a gym watching me play volleyball or the family compete in CrossFit™, at an ice rink watching her dad play hockey, on a street corner watching one uncle's collegiate cycling races, and/or in a stadium watching another uncle play professional football. In her short lifetime, she had a collection of race bibs displayed in the hallway for 5k and 10k races that she had participated in with all four generations of the family, albeit from the comfort of a jogging stroller.

At the young age of 5 years old, she excitedly recalled participating in a wide range of sport and physical activities to include soccer, gymnastics, swimming, CrossFit Kids™, and yoga. She described participating in these organized sport activities that have become the social norm for the third and fourth generations, with equal enjoyment and enthusiasm as she described racing classmates on the playground; just as my grandmother of the first generation had recalled her enjoyment racing on the playground. Her substantial exposure to a plethora of sport activities by the time she started Kindergarten mirrors the often-reported modern parenting ideals to keep kids actively involved in extracurricular physical activities to support development of optimal health and well-being (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001; Vealey & Chase, 2016; Wheeler & Green, 2019). While my grandmother had marveled at the sociocultural obsession with exercise to keep the body healthy that did not exist in her memory of childhood, my daughter joyfully described the process and value of exercise in strengthening her body and mind. This stark generational contrast reflects both the transformation of social and cultural norms in the United States, as well as my daughter's direct socialization through my occupation as a university faculty in the Sport and Exercise Science discipline, that undoubtedly shaped my parenting practices.

Implications

These poetic representations powerfully represent the transformation of sport and exercise culture across seven decades of overlapping life experiences shared within four generations of one family. From my 73-year-old grandmother, who grew up before sport sat at the center of popular culture; a time when adolescents did not train to compete, they just played sport. To my 5-year-old daughter, strong in her worldview that girls and boys are equally matched in sport. Their collective stories illuminate the massive shift American sport and exercise culture has taken, from play for novel entertainment and basic bodily movement, to popular culture craze (Coakley, 2015) and personal health imperative (MacGregor & Wathen, 2014; Wiltshire et al., 2018). Their stories tell how the women and girls in our family have negotiated and transmitted generational values for sport and physical activity to one another

and highlight the invaluable impact that steadfast family support had on sustaining sport participation of adolescent girls into adulthood (Strandbu et al., 2020). These narratives echo decades of research on the evolution of sport opportunities for women and girls, continually in conflict with the dominantly masculine sport domain (Coakley, 2015; Gregg & Gregg, 2017), and were uniquely experienced by immersing in, and learning, from four generations in a familial context.

These poetic representations offer sport and exercise science practitioners (e.g., researchers, coaches, youth sport club managers) an example with which to ponder the valuable role that family can have in supporting children and adolescents to pursue sport and physical activity. Children in the latter generations of my family experienced steadfast encouragement and resource support from parents that supported their autonomy to pursue activities in the physical domain, regardless of gender, and without any expectations of achievement. This work provides a novel inquiry regarding the phenomenon of multi-generational transmission of value for sport for girls and women; especially for families whose generations' sprawl across the pre- and post-Title IX divide. Arts-based research in sport and exercise science, with a feminist approach, holds great value and potential to showcase the female experiences in these domains; in fields heavily dominated by male perspectives (Cooky, 2019; Reifsteck, 2014).

Conclusion

My family's journey mirrors the greater social changes that have occurred in regards to society's increasingly intense focus on, and value for, sport and physical activity. These four research poems, formed of each woman/girl's narrative transcript, personify the multitude of ways women have experienced sport opportunities and have simultaneously internalized value of, appropriateness of, and expected engagement in, sport. Sport began as merely an afterthought in my grandmothers' generation, the first generation. Yet, fast forward to the third generation, my and my cousin's generation, sport has steadily evolved into a primary determinant of both extracurricular and professional endeavors, and as exemplified here, has substantially shaped the socialization of the fourth generation, in my daughter's five short years of life.

References

- Adams, T. E., & Manning, J. (2015). Autoethnography and family research. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 7(4), 350-366. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12116>
- Babkes, M. L., & Weiss, M. R. (1999). Parental influence on children's cognitive and affective responses to competitive soccer participation. *Pediatric Exercise Science*, 11(1), 44-62. <https://doi.org/10.1123/pes.11.1.44>
- Birchwood, D., Roberts, K., & Pollock, G. (2008). Explaining differences in sport participation rates among young adults: Evidence from the south Caucasus. *European Physical Education Review*, 14(3), 283-298. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356336X08095667>
- Borish, L. J., Wiggins, D. K., & Gems, G. R. (2016). *The Routledge history of American sport*. Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315767123>
- Carless, D., & Douglas, K. (2009). Opening doors: Poetic representation of the sport experiences of men with severe mental health difficulties. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 15(10), 1547-1551. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800409332081>
- Coakley, J. J. (2015). *Sports in society: Issues and controversies* (11th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.
- Cohen, K. (2017). *They will have their game: Sporting culture and the making of the early American republic*. Cornell University Press.

- Cooky, C. (2019). Feminisms. In B. Smith & A. C. Sparkes (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise* (pp. 97-109). Routledge.
- Côté, S., Bouffard, T., & Vezeau, C. (2014). The mediating effect of self-evaluation bias of competence on the relationship between parental emotional support and children's academic functioning. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 84(3), 415-434. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12045>
- Côté, J., Horton, S., MacDonald, D., & Wilkes, S. (2009). The benefits of sampling sports during childhood. *Physical & Health Education Journal*, 74(4), 6-11.
- Eccles, J. S., & Harold, R. D. (1991). Gender differences in sport involvement: Applying the Eccles' expectancy-value model. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 3(1), 7-35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413209108406432>
- Fitzpatrick, K. (2018). Poetry in motion: In search of the poetic in health and physical education. *Sport, Education and Society*, 23(2), 123-134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2016.1155149>
- Fredricks, J. A., & Eccles, J. S. (2005). Family socialization, gender, and sport motivation and involvement. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 27(1), 3-31. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.27.1.3>
- Gems, G. R. (2021). *Sport history: The basics*. Routledge.
- Glesne, C. (1997). That rare feeling: Re-presenting research through poetic transcription. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3(2), 202-221. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107780049700300204>
- Gregg, E., & Gregg, V. (2017). Women in sport: Historical perspectives. *Clinics in Sports Medicine*, 36(4), 603-610. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.csm.2017.05.001>
- Harter, S. (1978). Effectance motivation reconsidered. Toward a developmental model. *Human Development*, 21(1), 34-64. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000271574>
- Harter, S. (1985). Competence as a dimension of self-evaluation: Toward a comprehensive model of self-worth. In R. L. Leahy (Ed.), *The development of the self* (pp. 55-122). Academic Press.
- Haycock, D., & Smith, A. (2014). A family affair? Exploring the influence of childhood sport socialisation on young adults' leisure-sport careers in north-west England. *Leisure Studies*, 33(3), 285-304. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2012.715181>
- Hayoz, C., Klostermann, C., Schmid, J., Schlesinger, T., & Nagel, S. (2019). Intergenerational transfer of a sports-related lifestyle within the family. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 54(2), 182-198. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690217702525>
- Henderson, K., Bialeschki, M. D., Shaw, S. M., & Freysinger, V. J. (1996). *Both gains and gaps: Feminist perspectives on women's leisure*. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 29(1), 141-144. Venture Publishing.
- Higgs, P., & Gilleard, C. (2015). Fitness and consumerism in later life. In E. Tulle & C. Phoenix (Eds.), *Physical activity and sport in later life* (pp. 32-42). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hirschmarm, N. J. (1998). Feminist standpoint as postmodern strategy. *Women & Politics*, 18(3), 73-92. https://doi.org/10.1300/J014v18n03_05
- Hofferth, S. L., & Sandberg, J. F. (2001). How American children spend their time. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63(2), 295-308. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2001.00295.x>
- Holt, N. L., Tamminen, K. A., Black, D. E., Mandigo, J. L., & Fox, K. R. (2009). Youth sport parenting styles and practices. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 31(1), 37-59. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.31.1.37>
- Kunitz, D. (2016). *Lift: Fitness culture, from naked Greeks and acrobats to jazzercise and ninja warriors*. HarperCollins Publishers.
- Lahman, M. K. E., Geist, M. R., Rodriguez, K. L., Graglia, P. E., Richard, V. M., & Schendel, R. K. (2010). Poking around poetically: Research, poetry, and trustworthiness.

- Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(1), 39-48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800409350061>
- Lareau, A. (2000). Social class and the daily lives of children: A study from the United States. *Childhood*, 7(2), 155-171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568200007002003>
- Lail, A. J., & Lahman, M. K. E. (2019). Mascots, metaphor, methodology: Counter poetics. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 25(2), 154-159. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800417745918>
- Leavy, P. (2015). *Method meets art: Arts-based research practice* (2nd ed.). The Guilford Press.
- Lindsey, E. W., Mize, J., & Pettit, G. S. (1997). Differential play patterns of mothers and fathers of sons and daughters: Implications for children's gender role development. *Sex Roles*, 37(9-10), 643-661. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02936333>
- MacGregor, J. C. D., & Wathen, C. N. (2014). My health is not a job: A qualitative exploration of personal health management and imperatives of the 'new public health. *BMC Public Health*, 14(1), 726-726. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-14-726>
- Mercado, H. U., & Bernthal, M. J. (2016). Hispanic subcultural sport socialization: An initial investigation. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 25(2), 103-114.
- Owton, H. & Allen-Collinson, J. (2017). 'It stays with you': Multiple evocative representations of dance and future possibilities for studies in sport and physical cultures. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 9(1), 49-55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2016.1187662>
- Palmer, V.J. (2015). Fitness and consumerism in later life. In E. Tulle & C. Phoenix (Eds.), *Physical activity and sport in later life* (pp. 32-42). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Papathomas, A. (2019). Narrative inquiry: From cardinal to marginal... and back? In B. Smith & A.C. Sparkes (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise* (pp. 37-48). Routledge.
- Reifsteck, E.J. (2014). Feminist scholarship: Cross-disciplinary connections for cultivating a critical perspective in kinesiology. *Quest*, 66(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2013.824903>
- Richardson, L. (1994). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 516-529). Sage.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. Guilford Publications.
- Schultz, J. (2014). *Qualifying times: Points of change in U.S. women's sport*. University of Illinois Press.
- Sparkes, A.C. (2002). *Telling tales in sport and physical activity: A qualitative journey*. Human Kinetics.
- Sparkes, A. C., & Douglas, K. (2007). Making the case for poetic representations: An example in action. *The Sport Psychologist*, 21(2), 170-190.
- Sparkes, A. G., Nilges, L., Swan, P., & Dowling, F. (2003). Poetic representations in sport and physical education: Insider perspectives. *Sport, Education and Society*, 8(2), 153-177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573320309256>
- Sparkes, A. C., & Smith, B. (2014). *Qualitative research methods in sport, exercise and health: From process to product*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203852187>
- Stefansen, K., Smette, I., & Strandbu, Å. (2018). Understanding the increase in parents' involvement in organized youth sports. *Sport, Education and Society*, 23(2), 162-172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2016.1150834>
- Strandbu, Å., Bakken, A., & Stefansen, K. (2020). The continued importance of family sport culture for sport participation during the teenage years. *Sport, Education and Society*, 25(8), 931-945. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2019.1676221>
- Vallerand, R. J. (1997). Toward A hierarchical model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In M. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (pp. 271-360). Elsevier

- Science & Technology. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(08\)60019-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60019-2)
- Vealey, R. S., & Chase, M. A. (2016). *Best practice for youth sport*. Human Kinetics.
- Wheeler, S. (2012). The significance of family culture for sports participation. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 47(2), 235-252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690211403196>
- Wheeler, S., & Green, K. (2014). Parenting in relation to children's sports participation: Generational changes and potential implications. *Leisure Studies*, 33(3), 267-284. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2012.707227>
- Wheeler, S., & Green, K. (2019). 'The helping, the fixtures, the kits, the gear, the gum shields, the food, the snacks, the waiting, the rain, the car rides...': Social class, parenting and children's organised activities. *Sport, Education and Society*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2018.1470087>
- Wiltshire, G. R., Fullagar, S., & Stevinson, C. (2018). Exploring parkrun as a social context for collective health practices: Running with and against the moral imperatives of health responsabilisation. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 40(1), 3-17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.12622>

Author Note

Jessica Kirby is an assistant professor in the Health Sciences department, and the assistant director of the Center for Critical Sport Studies, at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. Her research explores experiences with, and access to, sport and physical activity across the life course. Please direct correspondence to jkirby@uccs.edu.

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Dr. Maria Lahman for her mentorship in the processes of research poetry.

Copyright 2021: Jessica Kirby and Nova Southeastern University.

Article Citation

Kirby, J. (2021). Fastest on the playground: Four generations of female sport experience. *The Qualitative Report*, 26(8), 2558-2576. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4822>
