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# Cheering for the Children: My Life's Work in Youth Development Through Sport

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I adopt an autobiographical approach to chronicle the contexts, experiences, and individuals that shaped my academic and career choices, which resulted in finding kinesiology and, specifically, sport and exercise psychology. Consistent with the developmental perspective I employ in my research and practical applications, I trace my life's work in youth development through sport using transitional career stages. My academic path has been strongly influenced by hardworking and caring mentors and a commitment to balancing theoretical knowledge, applied research, and professional practice. Based on my many years in higher education, I conclude with some reflections on the future of kinesiology given past and present trends in the field.

***Keywords:*** autobiographical, developmental sport psychology, multidisciplinary, positive youth development, youth sport

Every person has a unique story. The contexts of our personal experiences and the significant others with whom we engage create a meaningful imprint on career choices and areas of scholarly inquiry. I can trace the moments and individuals inspiring my life's work dedicated to discovering the sources and processes influencing youths' physical, social, and psychological development through sport participation. This recounting has evoked many memories, some more nostalgic than others. Consistent with the developmental perspective I employ in my research and practical applications (Weiss, 2004), I chronicle my journey in kinesiology through transitional career stages. I purposefully chose the title of this essay to exemplify the passion, curiosity, and diligence that I believe characterize my approach to scholarly research and its applications of "cheering for the children" to derive positive experiences through sports and physical activities. I tell my story in the hope that it will resonate with young professionals as they reflect on their own growth and development as scholars and seek to make an impact on individuals' health and well-being. I follow my autobiographical account with some reflections on the future of kinesiology given past and present trends in the field.

## Infancy: Prelude to a Career in Youth Sport

> "I'd wake in the night with the smell of the ballpark in my nose and the cool of the grass on my feet. The thrill of the grass."
> W.P. Kinsella, *Shoeless Joe*, 1982

My earliest passion, one that endures to this day, is baseball, which sealed a close bond with my father. He and my mom initially came to America in the late 1930s to flee the Nazi invasion in Central Europe. Immigrants were not welcome in America during this time (post-Great Depression), so when their visas expired, my parents moved to Cuba before returning to settle in Brooklyn after World War II was declared. Before I was born, my father moved the family to Los Angeles. When the Brooklyn Dodgers became the Los Angeles Dodgers in 1958, my father instilled in me a deep interest in the game, its players, and its many statistics (leading me to love math). In 1962, my father and I attended inaugural games at Dodger Stadium and listened to Vin Scully on the radio recording the historical moments when Maury Wills broke Ty Cobbs' stolen base record and Sandy Koufax threw his first no-hitter. I was hooked. Having an older brother also meant that I was needed to round out the roster playing baseball with the older neighborhood boys. I was expected to "play up" to their rules, such as batting and pitching left- or right-handed as the situation required. I developed excellent motor skills and an intrinsic motivation for sports.

My skills, knowledge, and love of the game motivated me to go down to the local park and sign up for Little League Baseball. My next-door neighbor, Scotty, who was not very athletic, also came along. I can still hear the coach say, "You can't play, you're a girl!" I was confused and downtrodden. Despite my talent, I was the "wrong" sex and ineligible to play according to the Little League charter. Meanwhile, Scotty was welcomed on the team, relegating me to experience the "smell of the ballpark in my nose and the cool of the grass on my feet" as a spectator watching my unathletic but "right" sex for baseball friend. This experience was my first encounter with the barriers I would face because of my gender. I did not give up my deep-rooted love for baseball—in fact, this early experience of gender discrimination led to my conviction that perseverance and determination were necessary qualities to face the numerous challenges in sports and life.

Although never having the opportunity to play Little League Baseball (it was not until 1974 that a federal court mandated inclusion of girls; Wiggins, 2013), I played competitive basketball, tennis, and softball in high school and college in Southern California. Of course, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, female teams had none of the benefits and opportunities that male teams did. Title IX was enacted into law in 1972, but implementation of the new legislation did not begin until my senior year in college. I recall vividly the assistant athletic director addressing our basketball team, trying to make the case that Title IX was unfair to male athletes rather than enabling long-overdue opportunities for female athletes. It was the 1970s, and the Women's Movement was in full swing advocating for equal rights. My teammates and I did not stand for such an irrational view and vigorously pushed back on his arguments. The pendulum toward justice had swung too far.

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## Childhood: Coaching Youth Sports and Finding Kinesiology

> "When you are a little kid, you are a bit of everything: artist, scientist, athlete, scholar ... it seems life is like a process of giving those things up, one by one." Kevin Arnold, *The Wonder Years*

In 1970, I entered the University of California, Irvine, majoring in mathematics and psychology. Later that year, a game-changing event foreshadowed my future career. In seeking a job to help with the financial costs of college, I answered an advertisement seeking youth sport coaches for the City of Newport Beach Parks and Recreation. When I showed up for the interview, I discovered it would include a performance assessment, a written test on rules and strategies, a group interview, and a question-and-answer session on my philosophy of coaching children. I remember thinking that the extensive interview process was overkill. Years later and with greater perspective, it became clear to me that what this parks and recreation program did to screen coaching applicants is exactly how it should be done in youth agencies. The most competent, caring, and compassionate coaches are needed at the youngest levels to teach foundational motor skills, make sports an enjoyable endeavor, and help children feel good about themselves and their abilities.

I coached age-group sports for 5 years, including youth spanning second grade to seniors in high school. Coaching youth was a real-world application of the developmental psychology concepts I was learning from lectures and books. I began to see sport as a unique context in which children's physical, social, and psychological growth and development have the potential to flourish. Children learn skills and strategies, navigate social relationships with teammates, and experience emotions through the "thrill of victory and the agony of defeat." As a coach, I sought to effectively teach skills to and create an enjoyable experience for children and adolescents, and in the process I learned invaluable lessons that sparked my keen interest in a developmental approach to research. The opportunity to make a positive impact on youths' physical competence, self-esteem, interpersonal skills, and motivation intensified my interest in child development through participation in sport. The coaching job that entailed such a rigorous interview was the key instigator that changed my life course. After 2 years, I transferred to the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) so I could focus my academic studies and major in kinesiology (physical education and ergonomics) and psychology.

Transferring to UCSB was, in hindsight, a wise decision that launched my interest and knowledge in kinesiology. The department had established and up-and-coming scholars as well as a first-rate child psychology program. Another perk was that the university was situated on the Pacific Ocean. I lived in Isla Vista, a student community adjacent to campus, and I walked down to the beach each morning and jogged on the sand with the waves rolling in. It was the early 1970s when I started at UCSB, a time of unrest and activism, with events such as the Vietnam War, the reelection of Richard Nixon, and the Watergate scandal taking place and occupying the attention of the nation. As an emerging adult, I was fortunate to receive an excellent formal education and grow up in an era of such important historical–political events.

I took my first sport psychology course at UCSB from Dr. Vera Skubic, who published early studies in youth sport (Skubic, 1949, 1955, 1956) yet remained an invisible woman pioneer in the history of the field (Gill, 1995). Dr. Skubic was my first mentor. She had a "tough love" style that demanded rigor but, at the same time, projected care and compassion for students. Her courses were extraordinarily challenging, and I just missed achieving an A in her first class. I remember her saying, "Mo, it was just not good *enough* ... you can do better." I was motivated to demonstrate that I was capable of excelling, and eventually, I attained that elusive A. Later, with a greater understanding of psychology, I recognized that her expectations of improved performance through effort and problem solving were a source of competence information. She was promoting what we now know as a growth mindset to achievement (Dweck, 2006). My early passion for sport psychology was fueled by Dr. Skubic's strong influence as a model of excellence. She was instrumental in promoting women's athletics and participation in campus recreational activities, was a founding member of UCSB's Women's Center, and created a scholarship for outstanding female athletes.[1] It is gratifying that Diane Gill (1995) referred to her as an "early predecessor of more recent developmental sport psychology research" (p. 425).

I was inspired to continue my studies in the graduate program. Because Dr. Skubic was entering retirement, I had another mentor at UCSB, Dr. Robert Parrish, who served as my major advisor for my master's thesis. Dr. Parrish was a human factors researcher conducting classic experimental studies. He exemplified a meticulous and ethical approach to science. My first involvement in research was my thesis, a perception–action study. Dr. Parrish methodically guided me in pinpointing a question, executing methods, conducting analyses, and interpreting findings. This experience made an enduring mark on my intellectual curiosity for the research process. Dr. Parrish also accentuated the importance of good writing, which triggered my recognition that it is a critical life skill and a value that I pass on to and expect of my students.

My last year of youth sport coaching coincided with my last year as a master's student at UCSB. I was offered a college coaching position in the wake of Title IX being implemented more widely—the floodgates had opened for women coaches. It took only 2 years, though, to realize that my heart was with participants at the youth level, where skill development and fun were the primary goals. I gave up my coach's cap and athletic focus to pursue my passion for academic scholarship melding child development and sport participation. In a decisive turning point, I was accepted, in 1977, into the doctoral program in kinesiology at Michigan State University (MSU) with an emphasis in sport psychology, a field that was just developing into its own academic subdiscipline. That same year, the department hired Dan Gould, an up-and-coming assistant professor, to launch the new program.[2] The stars were certainly aligned—Dan and I worked well together and remain close colleagues and friends to this day. A year later, the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports was born, and my dream of a scholarly focus in youth development through sport was soon to be realized.

## Adolescence: The Michigan State Years and Developmental Sport Psychology

> "It's *supposed* to be hard. If it wasn't hard, everyone would do it. The hard ... is what makes it great." Jimmy Dugan (Tom Hanks) to Dottie Hinson (Geena Davis), *A League of Their Own*

I came to MSU to explore the potential of sport to promote child development. With 5 years of age-group coaching and degrees in kinesiology and psychology in hand, I possessed the foundational knowledge for delving into advanced courses, hands-on research, and translational experiences. Formal studies in kinesiology subdisciplines, working as a graduate assistant with the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports, and teaching in the Motor Performance Study contributed to my growth as a scholar and translator of youth sport research. The synergy of these three experiences shaped my philosophy of asking research questions (developmental, theory guided, and practically significant), determining the best methods to answer them, and appreciating the need to disseminate findings to professionals in the field. Four years of intensive courses, research projects, teaching, and community outreach activities were demanding and challenging, especially during the bitter winter months in Michigan for a Southern California native. Hence, my chosen quote and favorite part, "[T]he hard is what makes it great."

In the fall of 1977, Dan Gould and I commenced a mentor–student relationship characterized by curiosity and a desire to expand the knowledge base in sport psychology. Dan pushed me to do quality work, always with words of encouragement. He extended my knowledge of the research process and afforded me opportunities to design studies, collect data, conduct analyses, write for publication, and give conference presentations. Reflecting on my experiences, Dan showed unwavering confidence and faith in my abilities, which was exactly what I needed during my doctoral studies. I think it must have been destiny that we came to MSU at the same time and ended up working together. Dan was instrumental in mentoring me to be a successful academic in every way, and I could not have done it without his guidance, generosity, and compassion. I can never thank Dan enough for his positive influence on my career.

Dan's dissertation was in the area of observational learning, and I was intrinsically interested based on coaching children varying in motor and cognitive development. In our first published study (Gould & Weiss, 1981), we found that model similarity (gender and skill level) and model talk (self-efficacy statements) influenced endurance performance. Our study constituted my first presentation at the North American Society for the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity (NASPSPA) conference, in 1980, in Boulder, CO. Becoming involved with NASPSPA allowed me to meet professionals and graduate students and be exposed to the theories and empirical research of the rapidly evolving field of sport psychology. Two significant events took place at the 1980 conference that stimulated my research directions. I met Penny McCullagh, who became an important collaborator in modeling research, and I listened enthusiastically to Susan Harter's keynote address on competence motivation theory (Harter, 1978) and its application to youth sport (Harter, 1981). I was drawn to the developmental perspective of the theory, delineating relationships among significant others, perceived competence, enjoyment, and motivational orientations and behavior. In ensuing years, we would use competence motivation theory to guide studies in youth sport (e.g., Brustad & Weiss, 1987; Klint & Weiss, 1987; Weiss et al., 1986). NASPSPA became my academic "home" and its members my "family" over the next 40 years. Presenting my research produced valuable feedback, and serving the organization in leadership roles was deeply rewarding.

At the 1980 NASPSPA meeting, Dan presented and subsequently published (Gould, 1982) a critical analysis of youth sport research. He accentuated the need for systematic lines of research as well as studies that test theory, address questions of practical significance, and use varied designs, methods, and settings. During this period, the dominant paradigm emphasized experimental designs, novel motor tasks, and laboratory settings (Gill, 2020). Martens (1979) critiqued this paradigm and implored that sport psychology researchers come out of the brick-and-mortar lab to study *sport* participants doing real-world skills in *sport* settings. The tide was turning in the 1980s—Gould's recommendations for greater impact of youth sport research and Martens' push toward inquiry in ecological settings would materialize over the next decades. Both articles made a deep impression on me and have greatly impacted my work.

## Institute for the Study of Youth Sports

In 1978, after a comprehensive survey of youth participation patterns in Michigan, approval was attained for establishing the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports with Vern Seefeldt as director and Dan Gould and others as affiliated faculty (Seefeldt, 1999). The Institute's purposes were a blend of scholarly and applied goals: (a) conduct research on the beneficial and detrimental effects of organized sport for children and youth, (b) develop educational materials for youth sport coaches and administrators, and (c) conduct clinics and workshops for youth sport practitioners, parents, and young athletes. These goals were a perfect fit for my intentions of integrating research and professional practice. My 3 years as a graduate assistant provided numerous opportunities to engage in applied research, conduct coaching workshops, and write accessible resources for youth sport stakeholders.

I was initially involved in youth motivation studies (Gould et al., 1982; Gould et al., 1985) reflective of early work that revealed multiple reasons for participating in and discontinuing sports. Motivation grabbed my interest, stemming from my youth coaching experiences and desire and curiosity to identify factors related to participation behavior. This early research inspired an essay on developmental, social, and contextual factors that explain sport involvement and withdrawal (Weiss & Petlichkoff, 1989) and critical reviews highlighting developmental theory as an appropriate way of understanding social and psychological processes underlying motivated behavior (e.g., Weiss, 1993, 1995, Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992). Motivation and core constructs of perceived competence and social relationships (parents, peers, and coaches) evolved into my major lines of scholarly inquiry.

## Motor Performance Study

Parallel with my academic courses and research, I taught in MSU's Motor Performance Study, a program for 5- to 13-year-old youth conducted on Saturday mornings and in the summers (Haubenstricker et al., 1999; Pfeiffer et al., 2021). The program was directed by Dr. Seefeldt, an influential mentor and father figure for me (my own father died 3 years earlier). I also served as an instructor in analog programs for preschool children and youth with disabilities. I have a clear memory of Dr. Seefeldt greeting parents and children as they arrived and offering support for his graduate instructors. His devotion to children's motor skill development was evident in providing opportunities for *all* to learn and enjoy physical activities. The Motor Performance Study offered developmentally appropriate activities in a positive learning atmosphere, and it was a successful and sustaining enterprise. Teaching children motor and sport skills to promote psychosocial development and

enable a lifetime of physical activity became a cornerstone of my children's sports program at the University of Oregon.

### Academic Peer Relationships

The close friendships I developed at MSU are deeply fulfilling. My academic siblings and peers became my most supportive and trusting lifelong friends. Doctoral peers were Thelma Horn, Beverly Ulrich, Crystal Branta, and Dale Ulrich. We pushed and supported each other academically and also had a lot of fun tailgating at football games and watching Magic Johnson bring home a national championship in 1979. After taking academic positions at various universities across the country, we continued to get together for reunions despite the geographical distance and recently surpassed our 42nd year of sustained friendship. Deborah Feltz was hired as an assistant professor during my last year as a doctoral student. In her job talk, she shared theory-driven studies of modeling and self-efficacy, so I viewed her as a similar model and could envision giving a successful job interview a year later. We ran every day at noon along the Red Cedar River and, in the process, developed a close and enduring friendship. My relationships with graduate school peers have enriched my life in young, middle, and older adulthood (career and chronological).

### Integrating Program Experiences: Toward a Developmental Perspective

My academic courses coupled with formative research and teaching experiences culminated in my dissertation. To integrate theory and research in sport psychology, motor development, and developmental psychology, my study explored age differences in observational learning of motor skills. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) was prominently cited for explaining variations in modeled behavior, but developmental differences were missing. This was surprising because the theory emphasizes attention, retention, motor production, and motivation to enact observed behaviors, processes that vary developmentally. Thus, I designed a study to determine modeling effects for 4- to 5- and 7- to 8-year-old children (selected based on cognitive maturity differences) performing a sequence of motor skills. The younger children performed better by watching a show-and-tell model, whereas the older children performed equally well with the silent or show-and-tell models. I attributed findings to older children's ability to selectively attend to and spontaneously rehearse modeled behavior, whereas younger children benefited from the attentional and verbal prompting of the show-and-tell model. My dissertation (Weiss, 1983) and subsequent studies aligned with Gould's (1982) recommendations for advancing youth sport research (e.g., Weiss et al., 1992; Weiss & Klint, 1987; Wiese-Bjornstal & Weiss, 1992; see Weiss et al., 1993, for a review).

My developmental approach to youth sport research stems directly from integrating coursework, research, and teaching experiences at MSU with my years of coaching age-group sports. These knowledge sources merged in a culminating independent study for my supporting area in motor development. Dr. Seefeldt challenged me to critically analyze and integrate concepts from sport psychology, motor development, and developmental psychology to create a coherent understanding of children's motivation and participation in sport.[3] I titled the paper, "The status and direction of developmental sport psychology" (coining the term), and the ideas laid the foundation for my worldview of studying youth development through sport. In this ultimate assignment of my doctoral studies, I concluded by recommending developmental theoretical models for guiding the study of psychosocial and behavioral processes in youth sport. Such theoretical models consider children's and adolescents' variations in cognitive, social, and physical capabilities that translate to practical applications in youth sport.

I expressed the fundamental ideas from this essay in an article published just after leaving MSU, "Developmental Sport Psychology: A Theoretical Perspective for Studying Children in Sport" (Weiss & Bredemeier, 1983). We offered a rationale and supporting evidence for using developmental theory to study children's psychosocial and behavioral outcomes in sport and shared examples of research in observational learning, competence motivation, and moral development. We outlined how researchers can design studies by selecting ages of participants based on cognitive or physical maturity, comparing age groups at key periods of development, and examining age-related changes in cognitions and behaviors over time. I continued to highlight a developmental perspective in books (Gould & Weiss, 1987; Weiss & Gould, 1986), comprehensive reviews (e.g., Weiss, 1995, Weiss & Ferrer-Caja, 2002), and research articles (e.g., Horn & Weiss, 1991; Weiss & Horn, 1990).

## Young and Middle Adulthood: The Oregon Years and Building a Sport Psychology Program

> "To give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the gift." Steve Prefontaine, American long-distance runner, University of Oregon, and 5000-m competitor in the 1972 Olympics

My experiences at MSU afforded me the knowledge, skills, and autonomy to take on my next challenge. I successfully interviewed for an assistant professor position in sport psychology at the University of Oregon shortly before I graduated. No sport psychology program was in place and, in essence, they said, "If you build it (sport psychology program), they (the students) will come." The opportunity to go back West was a dream come true and at a university with a good academic reputation, in a "cool" liberal town, and with beautiful riverbanks for running. I arrived just a few years after Steve Prefontaine died in a car crash; his quote is emblematic of my determined approach to research, mentoring, teaching, and service. I hit the ground running to establish the sport psychology program and launch programmatic lines of research.

Eugene and the surrounding community highly valued sport and physical activity, and several youth sport agencies served the families that desired opportunities for their children. These agencies were critical sources for recruiting participants for my research on social and psychological development through sport. Then, a breakthrough opportunity emerged—Dean Celeste Ulrich asked me to take over as director of the Children's Summer Sports Program (CSSP), established in 1955 to coincide with President Eisenhower's creation of the President's Council for Youth Fitness. From 1955 to 1974, the program served only boys in team sports and physical conditioning, and from 1975 to 1982 separate boys' and girls' programs provided gender-typed activities (e.g., boys did team sports, wrestling, and calisthenics; girls did dance, gymnastics, and simple games). Things changed dramatically under my leadership.

## CSSP, 1983–1997: "West Coast" Motor Performance Study

Based on the developmental orientation I adopted from teaching in the Motor Performance Study and doing research with the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports, I transformed CSSP into a program featuring developmentally appropriate activities for girls and boys, enhanced public relations between the university and community, and teaching opportunities for graduate students and educators. Importantly, the program provided a naturalistic laboratory for conducting applied research on youth development through sport. Boys and girls in third through fifth grades participated together and were afforded the same activities promoting motor and psychosocial development, including gymnastics, wrestling, martial arts, swimming, track and field, and team sports. Girls and boys in sixth and seventh grades were given autonomy to select among traditional and lifetime activities, including tennis, hiking, cycling, and lacrosse, among others. I expanded the program to children in Kindergarten, first, and second grades, emphasizing fundamental motor skills and lead-up games and sports. Many children sustained involvement through age 13 and served as junior leaders at age 14. I am particularly proud of my work with CSSP over 15 years, which balanced service to the community, teaching effectiveness, and applied research.[4] I delighted in children calling me "Dr. Mo," and it was heartwarming that Vern Seefeldt referred to CSSP as Motor Performance Study "West."

My naturalistic lab in CSSP offered opportunities to study children in their real-world environment doing physical activities, and it was an essential resource for launching and extending my lines of research. Consistent with my graduate training and developmental orientation, studies reflected theory-to-practice *and* practice-to-theory topics intended to expand the scientific knowledge base *and* contribute to evidence-based best practices for professionals (e.g., Stuntz & Weiss, 2010; Weiss, 2000, Weiss & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009). Reciprocity of theoretical and practical knowledge is a thread of continuity throughout my work.

## Lines of Research on Youth Development Through Sport

My programmatic research has included graduate students at every turn and primarily focuses on developmental and psychosocial factors related to youth motivation and participation behavior. Our scholarly inquiry has predominantly explored relationships among significant adults and peers, psychological processes, and motivation and well-being (see Weiss, 2019a, 2019b; Weiss, Amorose, & Kipp, 2012; Weiss, Kipp, & Bolter, 2012). The work is guided by theory, asks questions of practical significance, and consists of a series of studies—aligning with Gould's (1982) recommendations for scholarly impact. Consistent with a developmental perspective, our research examines the psychosocial processes underlying participation behavior—*why* youth remain (or do not remain) involved in sport and, in turn, *how* to optimize motor, social, and emotional development throughout childhood and adolescence.

I highlight two publications that strongly influenced my commitment to balancing theory, research, and practical application. The first is by Dan Landers (1983), *Whatever happened to theory testing in sport psychology?* in which he highlighted that a scientific field needs to achieve a balance among theoretical knowledge, applied research, and dissemination of findings to practitioners. He argued that theory testing in sport psychology had not kept pace with advances in applied research. In advocating for more theory testing, he also addressed the need for multiple methods, settings, and analyses to derive greater impact of findings. In a companion piece to Landers' article, Bob Christina (1989) asked, *Whatever happened to applied research in motor learning?* By *companion*, I mean figuratively and literally, because Landers and Christina were colleagues at Penn State University and dialogued about issues facing their respective subdisciplines. Christina identified the opposite problem in motor learning, namely that reliance on basic theoretical research using novel motor tasks in controlled lab conditions suppressed applied research conducted in sport settings using real skills. He contended that applied and basic research exert reciprocal influence in developing theory-based and practical knowledge of sport skill learning in ecological settings. Landers and Christina represent different subdisciplines, yet both emphasized the interaction of theoretical knowledge, applied research, and practical application. I share one study to illuminate how these papers influenced my work.[5]

Research stemming from social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) shows that peer models enhance model-observer similarity, self-efficacy, and performance on academic tasks. To extend this question to the physical domain, we designed a study to examine the effectiveness of peer models for children exhibiting fear and avoidance of water activities (Weiss et al., 1998). This idea emanated from my experience as CSSP director wherein I noticed children who did not dress for swim lessons and always had an excuse. They were nervous and unconfident, and the more they missed lessons, the farther they lagged behind their peers in skill learning. We assigned children to peer or control modeling conditions, all accompanied by swim lessons. We used a child-friendly pool (shallower and warmer) at a YMCA, so the intervention was conducted in a setting resembling sport contexts with swim instructors giving lessons. Effect sizes showed moderate-to-large preintervention to postintervention differences between modeling and control groups on swim skills, self-efficacy, and fear ratings that were maintained at a retention assessment. Findings showed impact with children exhibiting psychological barriers to acquiring an important life skill. Peer modeling is a cost-effective method that can be implemented by teachers along with skill practice and feedback. This study reflects links among theory testing, applied research, and practical knowledge (Christina, 1989; Landers, 1983) and aligns with a theory-to-practice *and* practice-to-theory viewpoint employed in our studies examining psychosocial processes underlying cognitions and behaviors (e.g., Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000; Theeboom et al., 1995; Weiss et al., 1996; see Weiss, Amorose, & Kipp, 2012; Weiss, Kipp, & Bolter, 2012, for reviews).

## Paying It Forward: Mentoring the Next Generation

Dan Gould is an avid student of history and philosophy of science, so naturally, he introduced his graduate students to the pioneers responsible for establishing the field of sport psychology and the evolving paradigms describing research trends. He referred to Coleman Griffith, father of North American sport psychology (Gould & Pick, 1995), as a prophet without disciples because his graduate students did not carry on his research legacy. This observation drove my desire to mentor graduate students and encourage continuity in lines of research. With the benefit of role models at UCSB and MSU, I embraced the opportunity to mentor and was intentional in seeking doctoral students who shared the same passion, curiosity, and work ethic.

In my 16 years at the University of Oregon, we were able to methodically "build" a productive and respected sport psychology program because "they" did "come." Nineteen of my University of Oregon doctoral and master's students are (were) university professors, lecturers, and research scientists. And how apropos that Alan Smith is the kinesiology department chair at MSU—in the same building where I walked the hallways 40 years ago. After leaving the University of Oregon, I was major advisor for another eight doctoral students and numerous master's students. A total of 48 theses and dissertations are published in peer-reviewed journals. I am honored to have mentored and graduated 23 doctoral students, who are conducting lines of research in an area of youth or adult development, including social relationships, self-perceptions, motivation, and moral development. It is gratifying that developmental sport psychology research has endured with studies advancing theoretical and practical knowledge. My doctoral students at research-intensive institutions are mentoring the next generation of scholars, bearing me many academic "grad-kids." Like Dan Gould did for me, I introduced my students to NASPSPA, and they are devoted presenters of research and contributors to service. I am genuinely grateful to my graduate students for their contributions to the quality and impact of our research.[6]

## Middle and Older Adulthood: Transitions and Transformations

> "You never know what's coming for you." Eric Roth, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* Screenplay, 2008, based on the short story by F. Scott Fitzgerald

I sincerely thought I would be a "lifer" at the University of Oregon. We built a strong graduate program, lines of research were on an upward trajectory, and I was basking in the joy of directing CSSP. But, as the quote implies, life is unpredictable, and it is important to be ready for change. In 1990, the College of Human Development and Performance, which housed physical education and human movement studies, was dismantled by President Myles Brand (who later became NCAA president). The University of Oregon became yet another doctoral-granting university on the West Coast that eliminated or downsized kinesiology due to financial exigency (Wilmore, 1998). Our remaining faculty banded together to reimagine an exercise and movement science department, and we worked hard to build back and reclaim the status we once held. In 1996, I was encouraged by close colleagues to apply for a senior professor opening at the University of Virginia (UVA). I was invited to interview and visited UVA's beautiful campus in June 1996. A sustained record of scholarship, mentoring, and professional leadership boosted my chances, and I was offered the position to start in Fall 1997. I had two more summers of CSSP to enjoy and a full academic year to graduate my last doctoral and masters students.

The transition from Oregon to Virginia was difficult, leaving behind a reputable graduate program and cherished personal friends, but it was a terrific professional move. The Curry School of Education is first rate, the students curious and diligent, and David Perrin (chair of health and physical education) was a consistent source of social support. Dean David Breneman, Associate Dean Robert Pate, and other administrators and colleagues valued and respected my scholarship and work ethic, prompting an endowed professorship and important leadership opportunities, such as chair of the school's tenure and promotion committee for 5 years. In the meantime, many faculty members left the University of Oregon, and following self-serving and imprudent decisions, the historic and prominent kinesiology program morphed into a department of human physiology a few years later.

At UVA, I transformed the sport psychology program from one with a focus on performance enhancement with elite athletes to one with a scholarly emphasis on youth development. Our lines of research continued, but I also took interest in synthesizing the literature and critically reviewing youth sport research. Writing comprehensive reviews that pull together a large body of work, integrate multiple perspectives, and propose ideas to extend knowledge involves considerably more investment of time and effort than write-ups of data-based studies. Yet, these reviews are gratifying sources of intellectual challenge by identifying gaps in the literature and encouraging studies to increase impact (e.g., Weiss & Amorose, 2008; Weiss, Amorose, & Kipp, 2012; Weiss, Kipp, & Bolter, 2012; Weiss et al., 2008).

While at UVA, I celebrated the publication of my 2004 book, *Developmental Sport and Exercise Psychology: A Lifespan Perspective,* marking just over 20 years since my MSU experiences that sparked the ideas for a developmental approach to sport psychology. Chapters on social influence, self-perceptions, emotions, and motivation are examined for youth and adolescence and for young, middle, and older adulthood. Lifespan topics on skill expertise, disability sport, moral development, gender and cultural diversity, and sport injury round out the publication. My commitment to a multidisciplinary approach and balance of theoretical knowledge, applied research, and professional practice meant that authors represented areas in sport psychology, motor development, and motor learning and were charged with including content knowledge covering theory, research, and applications. Today, I am pleased to see more developmental studies in the literature, yet there is much potential for substantially growing the knowledge base (Horn & Newton, 2019; Weiss, 2013a, 2019a, 2019b, 2020).

### Returning to My Roots: Positive Youth Development Programs

Leaving CSSP behind was difficult as I made the move to Virginia. I missed my leadership role that helped bridge instructors' efforts to promote children's sport skill and psychosocial development. My naturalistic lab that served as a source for many studies was now gone. Charlottesville is a small city with plenty of schools and out-of-school-time programs, but the same pool of research participants were vied for by many departmental units. We were resourceful by connecting with sport clubs, high schools, and afterschool organizations, but then an opportune moment emerged that I worked hard to cultivate. My subsequent years of research and professional practice with positive youth development (PYD) programs were about to be launched.

In the early 2000s, developmental psychologists proposed a paradigm shift from a focus on *preventing* undesirable behaviors to *promoting* desirable behaviors among youth (e.g., Damon, 2004; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Larson, 2000). This shift became the PYD movement. Following the vision of Don Hellison's work with underserved youth in physical activity settings (Hellison et al., 2000) and an influential essay by Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, and Jones (2005) translating PYD concepts to youth sport, I realized that PYD was fertile ground for research and evaluation. The framework is compatible with developmental sport psychology research on socioenvironmental influences, psychological processes, and behavioral outcomes (Weiss, 2013a, 2016, 2019b, 2020; Weiss & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009).

My initial involvement in physical activity-based PYD (to include *all* forms of activity) was with *The First Tee,* which uses golf as a medium for teaching life skills and core values. I noticed public service announcements during televised tournaments wherein parents were proclaiming how confident their children were *because of* participating in *The First Tee*. They were testimonials, not findings from studies assessing program effectiveness. I wrote a proposal to the national office laying out a research plan and expressing why data from third-party experts would be beneficial to the organization (donors and grants) and stakeholders (coaches and parents). The CEO was Joe Louis Barrow, son of the great Black American hero and boxer Joe Louis, who was skeptical at first about investing in the project. Over time, we met each other halfway and he became one of my strongest supporters. Our longitudinal evaluation of the life skills curriculum and delivery contributed to physical activity-based PYD knowledge, and findings were directly applied to modifying the curricula and coach training (Weiss, 2008a; Weiss et al., 2014, 2016; Weiss et al., 2013). A highlight was when the organization asked me to testify before a U.S. congressional subcommittee on character building and youth sports, emphasizing programs with an intentional life skills curriculum. Riding in a cab on Pennsylvania Avenue with the Capitol emerging from up the hill produced a "rush," and serving on a panel with golf legend Jack Nicklaus and Olympic gold medalist Nancy Hogshead provided further excitement.

It is working with *Girls on the Run,* however, that has captured my passion and joy in combining PYD research and practice. I would even venture to say that my involvement with *Girls on the Run* provided needed sustenance during my middle and older adulthood career. Young professionals reading the autobiographical careers in this issue of *Kinesiology Review* might feel daunted by the lifelong accomplishments shared by authors. But I disclose, with humility, that during the middle part of this career stage, I experienced an erosion of confidence. This downward slide was irrational but was real, and I know this happens often with women. In hindsight, I attribute my illogical feelings to the heightened emphasis in higher education that prioritizes and rewards quantity over quality of publications, external funding over scholarship impact, and basic over applied research.

Faculty were once supported for being "triple threats" by integrating discovery (research), learning (teaching), and engagement (service)—a balance of faculty institutional activities (Thomas, 2003). Today, teaching, professional service, and community outreach are minimized in exchange for greater publication numbers and external grants. I am committed to applied research that contributes to theoretical knowledge *and* professional practice. Some projects are funded but most are not; my research is dependent more on human than on financial resources, and I have supported students through teaching assistantships. I believe that opportunities for teaching are critical for preparing graduate students to be successful in academic positions, but now faculty members are encouraged to seek a course buyout as a reward for external funding. This has resulted in graduate students, lecturers, and adjunct faculty bearing responsibility of delivering the core curriculum in kinesiology. I am not suggesting that the quality of teaching has diminished, only that students are not availed of opportunities to learn from faculty who are at the cutting edge of their fields. This differs from my own experiences at both the undergraduate and graduate levels of instruction. Thus, with changing university priorities and recognitions, I started to second guess the contributions of my lifelong work.

That is when, about 12 years ago, *Girls on the Run* was a saving grace for me, reinforcing the value of applied research and collaboration with professionals on curricula, coach training, and parent education to maximize the potential for *all* girls to grow, develop, and thrive through participation in physical activities. I rediscovered what "matters" by working with an academic "grad-kid," Allison Riley, senior vice president of programming and evaluation, by sharing research evidence, giving presentations to council directors and staff, and conceiving studies to assess program impact and improve delivery. The organization's commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity, and access rings an important bell in today's social climate and resonates with my suppressed opportunities to participate in Little League Baseball and disparities experienced in college sports. My involvement with *Girls on the Run* brought me back to reality—and renewed confidence—that conducting applied research and disseminating knowledge to coaches for enriching girls' lives are, indeed, important and worthy. It has real impact.

At first, I contributed to *Girls on the Run* by identifying a PYD framework compatible with the mission, vision, and core values and serving on the board of directors. After Allison Riley's hiring, we worked closely on curricula and coach training and envisioned a longitudinal study evaluating program impact. Findings revealed that girls participating in *Girls on the Run* compared favorably to girls in organized sport and school physical education on life skills learning and transfer and showed positive preseason to postseason change, maintained at 3 months retention, on measures of competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring as well as physical activity (Weiss et al., 2020; Weiss et al., 2019). Translating findings to council directors and staff through verbal and written communications (e.g., webinars, summary reports, and publications) resulted in their success attracting donors, funders, and grants. Enabling others to attain financial support for grassroots efforts to improve children's lives has been fulfilling. Thus, my experiences with *Girls on the Run* renewed my confidence, reminded me of my core commitment to research *and* practice, and sustained my career at a time when I needed it. My future developmental career stage will no doubt continue to include a strong connection with *Girls on the Run*—and perhaps even circling back to my roots of coaching girls!

I share my moment of disillusionment during my middle/older adult career stage because I think it is more prevalent than people admit. The take-home message is to be resilient, remain committed to core values, and do things that bring you joy and happiness. Physical activity-based PYD research and practice have served those roles for me. I am fortunate to have received many accolades for my scholarship from national research organizations, but three recognitions hold particular meaning because of the research/practice connection: Legacy Award from *Girls on the Run,* Founder's Award from *The First Tee,* and Most Influential in Research and Evaluation by the *National Afterschool Association.* Being acknowledged by grassroots youth-serving organizations reinforces my conviction that our scholarly work is not only important but also has real impact.

## Giving Back to the Kinesiology Community

Professional service gives me a keen sense of contributing to the greater good of the field. Over the course of my middle and older adulthood career stage, I sought more involvement in leadership roles within professional organizations. Earlier on, I was elected to executive board positions in the American Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (President, Sport Psychology Academy), NASPSPA (Secretary-Treasurer), and the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP;

President). I also served a 3-year stint as Editor-in-Chief of *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* (meaningful because *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* is where Dr. Skubic published her youth sport studies). I enjoyed contributing to conversations about the field and formed close relationships by collaborating with individuals cutting across many subdisciplines. Perspectives from scholars in the humanities and social–behavioral and biological–physical sciences elevated the quality of initiatives and forged mutual respect.

Later in my middle/older adulthood stage, I was privileged to serve as Science Board Chair of the President's Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition, President of the Research Consortium of AAHPERD, President of NASPSPA, and President of the National Academy of Kinesiology (NAK). As Past-President of NAK, I relished organizing the conference theme—Physical Activity Across the Lifespan—and playfully ordering talks from older adulthood to infancy based on *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (Weiss, 2013b). Animated discussions followed presentations, such as senior fellows Roberta Park and Charles Tipton debating opposing views about Title IX following David Wiggins's (2013) lecture on the history of organized youth sport in the United States. From 2014 to 2018, I served as Editor-in-Chief of *Kinesiology Review,* the official journal of NAK and AKA, and administered The Academy Papers, AKA Leadership Workshop Papers, and special issues highlighting multidisciplinary views on hot topics, such as early sport specialization, concussion management, and multicultural issues in sport and physical activity. Giving back to the field that nurtured my academic career has been stimulating and enriching and has given me a gratifying sense of accomplishment.

## Reflections on the Past, Present, and Future of Kinesiology

> "Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind." Theodore Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss), American Author

I noted the budget crisis in the 1990s when kinesiology programs were eliminated, downsized, or restructured. Today, kinesiology is thriving as one of the most popular majors at institutions ranging from small colleges to research universities. Our discipline is unique, as described on the NAK website wherein kinesiology is said to include "many specialized areas of study in which the causes, processes, and consequences, and contexts of physical activity are examined from different perspectives. The specialized areas of study apply knowledge, methods of inquiry, and principles from areas of study in the arts, humanities, sciences, and professional disciplines." Thus, kinesiology is distinguished from other disciplines now studying physical activity (e.g., public health, neuroscience) by including the humanities (history and philosophy), sciences (social and biological), and professions (physical education pedagogy and sport management) as central for advancing knowledge and translation to healthy lifestyles. But how multifaceted and integrative is kinesiology today? (Gill, 2007, 2020; McCullagh & Wilson, 2007; Newell, 2017)

I disclosed that my work has been enlightened by scholarship in kinesiology areas other than sport and exercise psychology, such as motor development and motor learning. Knowledge from philosophy and history has also been instrumental. Scott Kretchmar's visionary writings that conceive the multidisciplinary study of physical activity using a riverbank metaphor (Kretchmar, 2005a) and kinesiology specializations as silos and bunkers (Kretchmar, 2008) challenge current thinking and propose possibilities for the future. In his book, *Practical Philosophy of Physical Activity,* Kretchmar (2005b) states, "The value of philosophy lies in the search for practical answers, the kind that improve the lives of real people" (p. x). I have taught undergraduate students the benefits of holism over dualism for respecting each individual's unique story by responding with physical activity-based interventions that satisfy personal meaning. As students advanced to graduate allied health programs, I received e-mails reinforcing philosophy as an integral area of study, such as the concept of creating "movement playgrounds" to motivate individuals during rehabilitation and to embrace physical activity to achieve the good life.[7]

Similarly, David Wiggins (Wiggins 2006, 2010, 2013; Wiggins & Rodgers, 2010) brought out my "inner historian" through essays demonstrating how sports have served a crucial role for building community among racial, ethnic, and cultural groups; challenging and overcoming gender and racial barriers; and creating a platform for social and political activism. Many students are unaware of the role of sport in uniting our country or, conversely, dividing us in times of sociopolitical unrest. I hope my students connect the Black Lives Matter Movement with the Civil Rights Movement, such as when Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised black-gloved fists at the 1968 Olympics, and link the U.S. Women's Soccer team's fight for equitable pay with the battle to implement Title IX. Being an effective clinician or health care provider working with African American men and female athletes, among other sociocultural groups, must consider the historical–political contexts that have shaped attitudes and behaviors.

I am reminded of a question after giving the Dorothy Harris Lecture at Penn State University in 1995. After honoring Harris' research legacy that took a multidisciplinary approach to girls' and women's participation in sport, Ron Smith (sport historian), sitting with Scott Kretchmar (sport philosopher), asked me, "What happens when *you* go away?" I had no idea what he meant. He clarified, what did I think would happen when social science scholars, like myself, and scholars in the humanities are not replaced or retained in kinesiology departments. Still in my young adulthood stage, I was tongue tied and probably gave a nonsensical response. Years later, I get it. Despite NAK's multidisciplinary definition of kinesiology, how many departments maintain graduate areas in sport history? Sport philosophy? Sport sociology? Sport psychology? Glancing at websites of the 15 top-ranked doctoral programs in the 2015–2020 NAK review reveals only three programs with specializations in the humanities (history, philosophy, or cultural studies) and social sciences (sport psychology, sport sociology, or health behavior), whereas all 15 programs have areas of emphasis in exercise physiology, and one program *only* has a doctoral option in exercise physiology. I question whether this can truly be considered a *kinesiology* program given the NAK definition (Wiggins, in press).

As priority in higher education escalates toward greater external funding and publication rates, will faculty hiring practices and graduate specializations exclusively favor the biological and physical sciences? How would this map onto NAK's definition of kinesiology as inclusive of "many specialized areas of study in which the causes, processes, and consequences, and contexts of physical activity are examined from different perspectives … ?" Will undergraduates who aspire to health care professions miss out on important lessons from the humanities and social sciences that

add concepts of meaning and motivation to working with clients varying in racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds? What lessons can be learned, and mistakes avoided, from the changing landscape of kinesiology over the past 25 years? Excellent sources remind us of issues and challenges: (a) The Academy Papers, 1998, "Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century in Higher Education;" (b) Gill (2007), sustaining kinesiology through integration of multidisciplinary scholarship and integration of academic scholarship and professional practice; (c) Kretchmar's (2005a) riverbank metaphor and silos and bunkers essays (2008), which accentuate interdependence of areas in studying physical activity; and (d) essays in the special issue of *Kinesiology Review,* 2017*,* "Reflections on Kinesiology: Past, Present, and Future."

My second reflection pertains to sport and exercise psychology, which I believe has an identity conundrum. I am referring to the dualism of sport psychology and exercise psychology (Gill, 2007, 2020; Weiss, 2008b). Gill (2007) called the sport psychology–exercise psychology dualism an artificial split that "destroys the integrative nature of both the subdiscipline and kinesiology" (p. 279). The term "sport" expanded to "sport and exercise" psychology in U.S. programs and scholarly journals in the 1980s to reduce the misperception that research is exclusive to competitive athletes and to convey the goal of studying psychological factors related to physical activity in inclusive settings (e.g., adult exercise, injury rehabilitation, recreational sport). Terminology is not consistent, however, in graduate programs and organizations. Programs are called sport psychology, exercise psychology, sport and exercise psychology, sport and performance psychology, and psychology of physical activity. Organizations use "sport and physical activity" (NASPSPA), "psychology of physical activity" (NAK), and "applied sport psychology" (AASP). The potpourri of labels causes confusion and divisiveness.

Matters become more confusing when organizations use "applied" with sport (and exercise) psychology. The subdiscipline is, by definition, *applied*: researchers do *applied* research to build knowledge and translate findings to teaching and coaching *applications* (Gill, 2020; Weiss, 2008b). Whether one studies youth development through sport, psychological responses to injury, or motivation to increase exercise adherence, these are all *applied* topics. I am critical of AASP's practice of rating programs on a continuum with anchors of "applied" and "research" orientations. These are not opposite ends of a continuum. AASP's use of "applied" is in reference to performance enhancement with athletes (Martin, 2020; Weiss, 2008b) and implies that research is not applied. Recently, Martin (2020) wrote a critical essay sharing evidence that a sport psychology "profession" is more myth than reality. Few individuals occupy full-time jobs as sport psychology consultants, and there is little demand for services. Yet, students who pursue master's degrees with the aim of becoming "sport psychologists" are ill informed of the field as a profession (Martin, 2020). Ethically, we must be honest with students inquiring about programs in sport (and exercise) psychology and inform them of realistic job opportunities with a master's degree (e.g., coaching, youth organizations, health coaching, teaching).

Several senior scholars recommend that the inclusive term "psychology of physical activity" or "physical activity psychology" be used for academic programs along with clarifying that "physical activity" is an umbrella term encompassing a wide range of contexts (Gill, 2020; McCullagh & Wilson, 2007; Weiss, 2008b). Physical activity occurs in school, neighborhood, and community settings (e.g., physical education, leisure activity, organized youth sport). Researchers who study "sport" will be reluctant to drop the term, but adopting common language is an effort to unify the subdiscipline, eliminate the implied dualism, and accentuate a goal of integrating theory, research, and practice (Gill, 2020; McCullagh & Wilson, 2007; Weiss, 2008b). As Gill (2007) implores, "our subdiscipline should be an integrative psychology of physical activity, connecting with motor behavior and other subdisciplinary areas while contributing to a larger integrative kinesiology discipline" (p. 279).

My final reflection stems from my gendered experiences. I shared the unfair treatment I received and lack of equal opportunity in Little League Baseball and college sports. In honest disclosure, I have experienced a number of instances of misogyny and sexism, and even anti-Semitism, during my academic career. I have also observed many instances with female colleagues. I became especially introspective when Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg passed away during the writing of this essay. Her experiences of gender discrimination and anti-Semitism, and her resilience in challenging those who sought to deny her ambitions, are woven into her unique life story. Justice Ginsburg's legacy made an indelible impact on my generation, and her diligence and courage on so many levels project hope and optimism. I am reminded of being hired as an assistant professor, after achieving my PhD, at a salary of $14,000. The inflation calculator reveals that $14,000 in 1981 converts to $40,031 in 2020! In the 10 years that followed, it was the case that only men were hired as assistant professors. I discovered from befriending my new colleagues that they were hired at much higher salaries than me. None of them were more qualified, and many had not yet attained their advanced degrees. I did not bring up this discrepancy to administrators until years later when I achieved tenure and promotion. I was afraid of "rocking the boat" and being fired. The men who were hired during the decade following my appointment did not make it past their third-year review or left the university due to an unlikely positive tenure decision. Meanwhile, I was climbing the ranks from assistant to associate to full professor based on meeting standards of excellence in research, teaching, and service. I was still making a paltry salary when I left the University of Oregon as a full professor.

As a result of my experiences, I support and advocate for junior female faculty as they navigate the challenges of higher education. I have observed administrators ask female faculty to take on leadership roles or be members of numerous committees, organize departmental social events, and assume curriculum development positions. At first glance, these gestures might be interpreted as opportunities for advancement and a show of confidence. However, these tasks are time consuming, individuals pursue assignments with diligence, and it means less time and energy for scholarly endeavors. Women are also likely to be the primary caregivers for their families. Women may feel obliged to say yes because they are untenured or want to show they are a team player. Being chair and member on tenure and promotion committees at three universities and at all institutional levels, I observed that female faculty who engaged in more service or administration than male peers, even with similar research records, were often evaluated more critically for not being productive "enough" in their scholarly work. As a senior professor, I have stood up for and provided guidance to female faculty in their goal of advancing in rank based on demonstrated excellence in the criteria for promotions.

It is remarkable that the Fair Pay Act was only enacted in 2009 with Congress inspired to draft the law in response to one of Justice Ginsburg's infamous dissents. Today, there is still inequity among

female and male professors, and in broader society, on salaries and access to resources. It is imperative that young women use their voices in challenging discriminatory practices. Just like my generation stood on the shoulders of women who inspired change, I hope that younger generations will explore what my cohort, and heroes like Justice Ginsburg, did to pave the way for gender equity and reject attitudes and behaviors reflecting sexism and misogyny. Vikki Krane and Diane Whaley (Krane & Whaley, 2010; Whaley & Krane, 2012) documented the challenges of "trailblazing women" in sport and exercise psychology, and it is important that young academics be reminded of these challenges. Still, we know more than ever that bias of all kinds remains rooted in society in both overt and covert ways. Kinesiology, with its multifaceted approach to physical activity, health, and well-being, can lead efforts to reduce prejudice and chauvinism, among other discriminatory practices, in serving the profession, community, and larger society.

## Concluding Remarks

> "She had fouled off of the curves that life had thrown at her."
> W.P. Kinsella, *The Thrill of the Grass,* 1984

Every person has a unique story. Mine is no more special than yours, but maybe my story will spark recollection of the contexts, experiences, and individuals that have influenced your academic, career, and life choices. My opportunity to reflect was both therapeutic and personally meaningful. Perhaps you will find comfort in recalling the developmental transitions and transformations that brought you to where you are today and imagining what kind of professional contribution you want to make.

My life's work in youth development research and practice has been a true labor of love. Along the way were barriers and challenges, but it is reassuring that my resilience was bolstered by the intense passion, curiosity, and work ethic in doing what I love *and* loving what I do. I have always kept a baseball on my desk as a reminder that you have to play hardball to survive and thrive in the academic world. It is also a tribute to my father who instilled in me my love of baseball and would be proud of his youngest child achieving the American dream. My father passed away 2 months before I graduated from UCSB, on the evening of April 8, 1974, a date sport historians will readily recognize. I have no doubt my dad was listening to Vin Scully call Hank Aaron's 715th home run off Dodger pitcher Al Downing in Atlanta—the home run to eclipse Babe Ruth's record.

I am grateful and humble to have fulfilled my dream of blending child development and sport participation in sustained scholarship for over 40 years. But you do not get to this place in your career alone. This invited essay gave me an opportunity to honor and thank my mentors, peers, colleagues, and graduate students who generously shared their knowledge, skills, and support that enabled me to succeed in my life's work in youth development through sport. Cheering for the children will always be my foremost and enthusiastic promise as I continue to age—just as it has been throughout my developmental career transitions.

### Acknowledgment

I would like to thank David Wiggins for his constructive comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this essay.

## Endnotes

1. Dr. Skubic passed away in 1998, and my deep regret is that I never explicitly told her what an impact she had on my academic career. The following summer, I was invited by the UCSB Women's Center to pay tribute to Dr. Skubic as a fervent supporter of women in academics and athletics. In an effort to redeem myself, I told a packed room of young women professionals and collegiate athletes that their more equitable opportunities and experiences can be attributed to Dr. Skubic and individuals like her, who had the courage and conviction to engage in efforts that blazed the path for those who came after them.

2. Deciding to attend MSU was coincidental, a decision that I am so grateful for. I spent the preceding summer lying on the beach, reading books, and contemplating the next chapter of my life. I knew I would pursue a doctoral degree, but it was just a matter of timing. When I decided to apply for graduate school, the deadline had passed for schools with established sport psychology programs. I shared my dilemma with my brother, a physician in Lansing, MI, who said he would check the possibilities at MSU. He met with the department chair, who advised him of Dan Gould's hiring and, importantly, that applications were welcome because MSU was on the quarter system and did not start until the end of September. I am very grateful for this coincidental turn of events.

3. Dr. Seefeldt was influential in taking me under his wing and improving my professional writing skills. He was generous in sharing his wisdom and would not settle for anything less than my best work. My coauthors and I have been fortunate to be seven-time recipients of the outstanding research writing award for articles published in *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, an achievement that I directly credit to Dr. Seefeldt's mentoring and encouragement.

4. I am indebted to Celeste Ulrich for the CSSP opportunity, but she was influential in many ways. By the time I arrived in Eugene, she was an icon in the field. She was the only woman dean at the University of Oregon, and I observed her confidence and resilience as she deftly handled challenges. She enthusiastically supported women faculty, an attribute accentuated in Spirduso's (2012) acceptance of the NAK Hetherington Award. I was fortunate to have Dean Ulrich's support, such as when I received the Mabel Lee Award from AAHPERD and she gave me a tapestry woven by Mabel Lee herself, or when she sent a personal note complimenting my McCloy Lecture publication (Weiss, 2008a) and research contributions to the profession. Upon her retirement, she invited me to choose from her library of books by leaders in the field. I have kept them all throughout my moves and will pass them on to my own students.

5. As a graduate student, I took a 1-week motor learning course from Bob Christina at the University of Illinois, part of a summer series to launch publication of *Coaching Young Athletes* (Martens et al., 1981). His teaching style made a positive impact on me and, later, so did his framework of theoretical and applied research and practical knowledge (Christina, 1987, 1989). Following my Academy Papers article (Weiss, 2008b) wherein I highlighted Landers' and Christina's essays, I received an e-mail from Dr. Christina, who was pleased that I resurrected his framework but also that I connected his collegial friendship with Dan Landers as a matter of historical record. Landers and Christina learned from each other and wrote essays that challenged thinking in their respective subdisciplines. Discussions across subdisciplines are not as frequent today, which is unfortunate because it could lead to more critical and integrative essays like those by Landers and Christina.

6. My graduate students and the universities where they are (were) professors or lecturers: Virginia Neal, 1984, Lewis and Clark College, OR; Thomas Romance, 1984, Illinois State University; Warren Friedrichs, 1984, Whitworth University, WA; Robert Brustad, 1986, University of

Northern Colorado; Gloria Solomon, 1987, Texas Christian University; Diane Wiese, 1989, University of Minnesota; Kirk Westre, 1989, Whitworth University, WA; Vicki Ebbeck, 1990, Oregon State University; Frances Flint, 1991, York University, Toronto; Heather Barber, 1992, University of New Hampshire; Carl Hayashi, 1994, Texas Tech University; Thomas Raedeke, 1995, East Carolina University; Megan Babkes, 1996, University of Northern Colorado; Nicole Culos, 1996, University of Calgary; Alan Smith, 1997, Michigan State University; Emilio Ferrer, 1997, University of California, Davis; Anthony Amorose, 1999, Illinois State University; Amy Halliburton, 2000, Oklahoma State University; Windee Weiss, 2003, University of Northern Iowa; Cheryl Stuntz, 2005, St. Lawrence University, NY; Jennifer Bhalla, 2009, Pacific University, OR; Melissa Price, 2010, Wellesley College, MA; Nicole Bolter, 2010, San Francisco State University; Lindsay Kipp, 2012, Texas State University; and Alison Phillips, 2015, University of Iowa.

7. I taught a writing-intensive course in history and philosophy of sport for many years. Students aspired to health care professions, so the philosophy unit was geared to translating concepts to real-world applications (Kretchmar, 2005b). Most students took this course, often reluctantly, in their last semester, but after the course ended, student e-mails revealed a deeper awareness of the utility of philosophy for working with patients, such as the benefits of holism over mind-body dualism, finding movement playgrounds for motivating a physically active lifestyle, and the importance of professional ethics. A favorite note came from a student starting graduate school: "Just thought I would let you know the first unit in my Foundations of Occupational Therapy Course is History and Philosophy of OT! There was a collective groan as the unit was introduced, but a BIG smile from me. I'm so grateful you introduced me to the importance of these topics in a field of practice!"

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