Where are the Kids?

Michael A. Messner and Michela Musto
University of Southern California

Huge numbers of children participate in sports. However, kids and sports are rarely seen, much less systematically studied by sport sociologists. Our survey of the past decade of three major sport sociology journals illustrates a dearth of scholarly research on children and sport. While noting the few exceptions, we observe that sport studies scholars have placed a disproportionate amount of emphasis on studying sport media, and elite amateur, college, and professional athletes and sport organizations, while largely conceding the terrain of children's sports to journalists and to a handful of scholars whose work is not grounded in sport sociology. We probe this paradox, speculating why sport scholars focus so little on such a large and important object of study in sport studies. We end by outlining a handful of important scholarly questions for sport scholars, focusing especially on key questions in the burgeoning sociological and interdisciplinary fields of children and youth, bodies and health, and intersectional analyses of social inequality.

Un très grand nombre d'enfants participent à des sports. Cependant, les enfants et les sports sont rarement considérés et encore moins systématiquement examinés par les sociologues du sport. Notre enquête sur la dernière décennie dans trois journaux majeurs en sociologie du sport illustre la rareté de la recherche académique sur les enfants et le sport. Alors que nous soulignons quelques exceptions, nous observons que les chercheurs en études du sport ont surtout porté attention aux médias sportifs, aux athlètes élites de niveau amateur, collégial ou professionnel, et aux organisations sportives, tout en concédant le domaine du sport pratiqué par les enfants aux journalistes et aux quelques chercheurs dont le travail n'était pas directement en sociologie du sport. Nous questionnons ce paradoxe, nous demandant pourquoi les scientifiques s'attardent si peu à un si grand et important objet d'étude dans le domaine du sport. Nous terminons en soulignant les enjeux académiques importants pour les chercheurs en études du sport, en nous concentrant en particulier sur les questions clés dans les domaines sociologiques et interdisciplinaires en pleine expansion que sont les enfants et la jeunesse, le corps et la santé, et les analyses inter-sectionnelles des inégalités sociales.

Alarmist news and political discourses in recent years have warned of an "obesity epidemic" among youth, a fear fueled in part by cultural images of inactive

Messner is professor of sociology and gender studies, Musto is a Ph.D. candidate in sociology. Both are at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.

kids glued to electronic screens while hoovering down sugary soft drinks and fat-laden fast foods. While there are good reasons to encourage kids to engage with healthy eating and regular exercise, the cultural fears surrounding the image of the lazy, fat child tends to obscure a parallel empirical reality: Kids—defined here as encompassing children from around age 5 through 14—today are playing organized sports in huge numbers. But it is not just the mass media or politicians who mostly fail to recognize kids' sports. Sport sociologists too have largely ignored kids as active participants—as athletes and fans—and have mostly failed to study the ways in which sport, both for good and for ill, is so often an important and meaningful part of the larger landscape of childhood.

In this essay, we begin by documenting what we see as a paradox: the relative silence among sport sociologists concerning kids and sport, against a backdrop of massive youth sport participation. Then, drawing from the emergent scholarly study of children and youth (both as a growing subfield within sociology and as an interdisciplinary domain), we argue that a deep and critical research engagement with kids and sport will not only help make sociology of sport more "relevant" to peoples' everyday concerns, but can also contribute to central scholarly questions about embodiments, violence and health, social inequality and mobility in schools, neighborhoods and families, and questions related to consumption, audience reception of mass media, as well as engagements with new media.

Youth Sports: The Underside of the Iceberg

To provide a rough overview of the subjects sport sociologists most frequently study, we coded by subject all peer-reviewed journal articles published in the past decade within the *Sociology of Sport Journal, Journal of Sport and Social Issues,* and *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*. The results of this analysis are provided in Table 1. As demonstrated by the percentage distribution of subjects, sports media (21.3%), professional sports (10.7%), elite amateur sports (8.6%), sport organizations (6.3%) and collegiate sports (5.8%) were several of the most frequently studied topics from 2003 to 2013. We believe that comparing this percentage distribution to the image of an iceberg is useful here, if not in exact numerical proportions, then at least metaphorically. About 11% of an iceberg, we are often told, is generally visible above the waterline; the rest lies below the surface. As sport sociologists, we have spent a huge proportion of our time observing, analyzing and writing about the most publicly visible "tip" of sport: college, professional and elite amateur sports, and their coverage in print, electronic and new media. Combined, these topics comprise nearly half (46.4%) of the articles published within sport journals in the past ten years.

Like the underside of an iceberg, aspects of sport that have larger numbers of participants—such as youth sports—are less frequently the subject of sociologists' attention. At first glance, based on the results displayed in Table 1, it appears that a good number of articles—a total of 105, or 13.9%, of the 757 total articles—dealt with youth sports in some fashion. But when we examine the focus of these articles more closely, we see that 18 of these 74 articles (2.4%) primarily analyze *adults'* experiences in youth sports, such as Christensen's (2009) examination of how elite youth soccer coaches identify talent, or Swansons's (2009) study of the reproduction of class among upper middle-class mothers involved with youth soccer.

Table 1   Distribution of Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles Published 2003–2013 in *SSJ*, *JSSI*, and *IRSS*, by Subject (*N* = 757)

Subject	N	%
Sports media	161	21.3%
Professional sports	81	10.7%
Elite amateur sports	65	8.6%
Youth sports (general)[1]	53	7.0%
Sport organizations	48	6.3%
Community adult sports	47	6.2%
College sports	44	5.8%
Sport theory	42	5.5%
Fans and fandom	40	5.3%
Sport policy	39	5.2%
Other[2]	26	3.4%
High school sports	26	3.4%
Injuries & medicine	21	2.8%
Extreme sports	20	2.6%
Fitness & health	18	2.4%
Adults in youth sports	18	2.4%
Kids and sports	8	1.1%

[1] "Youth Sports (general)" category includes articles in which kids are included in a larger multiage sample, articles that look at youth sports as part of larger cultural or demographic configurations, or articles where youth sports are mentioned, but not the explicit focus of the article.

[2] "Other" category includes articles on disability, motorsports, equestrian, bodybuilding, teaching, and methodology in sport sociology.

Another 53 articles (7.0%) include young athletes as part of a multiage sample or as an element of a larger demographic or cultural sport configuration. For example, while studying the construction of masculinity in rhythmic gymnastics, Chimot and Louveau (2010) included gymnasts aged ten through twenty-three years old in their sample. Similarly, Giardina's (2003) analysis of the movie *Bend it Like Beckham* is implicitly about teenage soccer players, but primarily focuses on the gendered, racialized, and transnational discourses within the film.

When youth are the focus of sport sociologists' attention, our analysis indicates that teenagers tend to receive more attention than younger athletes. Although comprising a relatively small percentage of the overall sample, 26 articles (3.4%) focused on teenagers in high school sports, such as Azzarito and Harrison's (2008) examination of the naturalization of racialized discourses within physical education classes, or Miller et al.'s (2005) investigation of differences between "jocks'" and nonjocks' behavior within high schools. Over the past ten years, only 8 articles—approximately 1% of the total sample—focused primarily on kids' sports up to

age 14 (Cooky & McDonald, 2005; Dagkas & Quarmby, 2012; Grasmuck, 2003; King-White, 2010; Light, 2010; McHale et al., 2005; Wheeler, 2012; Wachs & Chase, 2013). Among these articles, five included kids between the ages of ten and fourteen in their samples (Cooky & McDonald, 2005; Dagkas & Quarmby, 2012; King-White, 2010; McHale et al., 2005; Wachs & Chase, 2013), leaving just three studies that interrogated the experiences of kids under the age of ten (Grasmuck, 2003; Light, 2010; Wheeler, 2012).

Examinations of kids in scholarly sport books fare no better. Of the 27 books published in the State University of New York (SUNY) Press series on "Sport, Culture and Social Relations" between 1993 and 2012, only one, *Paradoxes of Youth and Sport*, focused on kids or youth sports and this was a collection of essays that focused minimally on children (Gatz, Messner & Ball-Rokeach, 2002). Similarly, none of the 14 books published between 2004 and 2013 in the Routledge "Critical Studies in Sport" series, focused primarily on kids or youth sports. Of the 20 annual book awards given by the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS) since 1990, two went to books focused on kids or youth sports. Significantly, one of these books—Sherri Grasmuck's (2005) *Protecting Home,* a fine ethnographic study of Little League Baseball in Philadelphia—was penned by a scholar whose body of work, other than this single book, lies outside of sport studies. The second NASSS book award winner for a study of youth sports was Emily Chivers Yochim's (2009) *Skate Life*, a study that focused on skateboarders mostly in their mid-to-late teens.

A small number of book-length studies by sport sociologists skirt the edges of kids' experiences with sport: Messner's (2009) study of community-based Little League and AYSO leagues focused not on kids but on adults' experiences in youth sports. Similarly, one chapter of Heywood and Dworkin's (2003) book on cultural images of women athletes examined children's views of women athletes. Although Friedman's (2013) *Playing to Win* does not focus exclusively on sports, it examines the experiences of parents, coaches, and children involved in youth soccer and other competitive youth activities, such as chess and dance. But for the most part, going back to Gary Alan Fine's 1987 *With the Boys* and stretching through political scientist Jennifer Ring's 2009 *Stolen Bases*, sociologists of sport have primarily left the writing of books on kids and sport to scholars outside of our field or to journalists. For example, McDonagh & Pappano's influential book about sex segregation in youth sports, *Playing with the Boys* (2008), was coauthored by a political scientist and a journalist. Similarly, journalists have also written books such as *Little Girls in Pretty Boxes* (Ryan 1996), *Until It Hurts* (Hyman, 2009), *Concussions and Our Kids* (Cantu & Hyman, 2012) and *The Most Expensive Game in Town* (Hyman, 2013).

It is not a bad thing that journalists and scholars from other fields are taking on the topic of kids and sport; in fact, this may be a welcome sign that "sport studies" is becoming less insular as an academic field, and thus more broadly relevant to scholars, popular social critics and practitioners. But we contend that the scholarly study of kids and sport, and the interface between scholarship and popular journalistic treatments of the topic will be greatly enhanced if and when sport sociologists move the topic of kids to the center of our research agenda. Thus far however—be it research articles in scholarly journals, or book-length monographs—scholars who define themselves partly or primarily as sport sociologists and publish their

work in sport sociology venues have been largely silent when it comes to studying the topic of kids and sport.

Ignoring what is below the surface of the most publicly visible manifestations of sport has important implications for the field of sport studies. The part of an iceberg that lies below the water's surface may be less visible to the naked eye, but it is also the largest portion of the body of ice; its mass serves to keep the tip of the iceberg afloat and visible above the water. Although it is difficult to accurately estimate the number of children involved in youth sports annually, huge numbers of youth in the Canada and the United States appear to participate in sports each year[1]. For example, a 2008 Canadian longitudinal survey found that 71% of kids aged 6–9, and 84% of kids aged 10–13 reported participating in sports at some level (Clark, 2008; Goévremont, Findlay & Kohen, 2008). The same year, a nationally representative survey in the United States found two-thirds of youth reported being currently involved in at least one organized or team sport, and those who were involved reported that, on average, they had played on 2.1 sports teams over the past year. Moreover, the study found that an additional 16% of kids had at one time participated in an organized or team sport, leaving only 17% of respondents who said that they had never been involved in an organized or team sport (Sabo & Veliz, 2008).

The Canadian and U.S. national surveys hint at the massive numbers of kids who play at least some organized sports during their formative years. Still, these surveys asked broad questions that may have included many forms of exercise that some may not consider within the category of "organized sports," so the number of kids aged roughly from 6 to 14 who play organized sports is difficult to tally in the aggregate. However, the numbers reported by some of the largest U.S. youth sports organizations also hint at children's large participation levels: USA Hockey reports that 355,000 boys and girls (107,000 of them 8 years of old and younger) played in their youth division in 2012 (USA Hockey, 2012). Pop Warner claims 250,000 football players and 180,000 cheer and dance participants in 42 states and several countries in 2010 (Pop Warner, 2013). American Youth Soccer League [AYSO] currently claims to have 50,000 teams, with 600,000 players who are supported by 250,000 adult volunteers, mostly within the U.S., but also in Moscow, Russia, The U.S. Virgin Islands, Trinidad and Tabago (AYSO, 2013). In 2012, Little League Baseball and Softball sponsored 7,006 programs in 79 countries. From their "T-ball" for the youngest players, through Junior leagues for 13–14 year olds, Little League boasts 37,632 baseball teams with 574,450 players, plus 9,041 softball teams with 135,765 players (Little League, 2013). The U.S. Tennis Association [USTA] claims expanding programs for kids and juniors, while U.S. Kids Golf holds summer camps for young golfers, aged 6–12 (USTA, 2013). USA Swimming and USA Track and Field report 300,000 and 170,000 members as young as age 8, respectively (USA Swimming, 2013; USA Track and Field, 2013).

Although the statistical profile of youth sports participation is incomplete[2], it does not take a detailed statistical profile to understand that there are massive numbers of kids who participate in organized sports; we can see this in our daily lives, just being around kids, families, schools, neighborhoods, community parks and recreation centers, in addition to seeing the numbers of kids included as spectators at major commercial sporting events. The kids who play and watch sports today supply the demographic buoyancy for the future of sport: They later will

become the high school, college and adult athletes, the referees, the sports writers and commentators, the coaches, trainers and managers, the sports fans and consumers, as well as the volunteer parents who sustain youth sports teams and leagues.

But it would be a mistake to study kids simply in terms of ways that they constitute "the future of sport"—a construction of children that is front-and-center on the web sites of national sport organizations that fear the withering and eventual extinction of their sport if they fail to aggressively recruit and retain kids. Instead, and following the lead of the burgeoning field of the sociology of childhood and youth, we argue that it is crucial for sport scholars to study kids not simply as future adults, but as active subjects who create their own social worlds (Corsaro, 2003; Fine, 1987; Prout & James, 1990; Thorne, 1987). Deploying this approach will allow critical scholars of sport to add important depth and critical dimension to the study of kids and sport, moving us beyond statistical profiling that, while interesting and important, may be most useful for those who want to market conventional sports and athletic products to kids.

We speculate five possible reasons why sport scholars have largely ignored kids' sports. First, most scholars of sport teach and conduct research on college campuses, where (at least in the U.S.) sports are an integral component—highly popular, but also a source of problems—in the very institutions in which we work. It makes sense to study what's under our noses; in fact, some administrators on our campuses recruit sport scholars to do research on student athletes, NCAA compliance, and other issues related to college sport. Second, some scholars of sport receive funding to study adult sports, sport organizations, or mass media coverage of sports; perhaps less research funding is available to study kids and sports—especially, perhaps, for the "critical" sorts of sport research many of us do.

Third, researchers who want to study kids and sport close-up, as participant observers, ethnographers or in-depth interviewers, might balk at studying kids, for fear that university Institutional Review Boards will put up roadblocks to research. There appears to be a widespread belief among researchers that there is a daunting gauntlet of gatekeepers—university IRBs, sport organizations, school administrators and teachers, and parents—who make direct research access to kids difficult, if not impossible. Fourth, sport scholars may view children and childhood from an "adult ideological perspective," where children are primarily seen as the next generation of adults. Within this perspective, children's activities—such as their involvement within youth sports—are often trivialized as "play," and not taken seriously by adults or considered worthy topics of scholarly investigation (Thorne, 1993; Speier, 1976). Finally—and we wonder if this might not be the most important reason—many sport scholars engage most readily with research on elite sports or on mass mediated sports because, admit it or not, we are fans. Just as with the tip of an iceberg, for many of us the high-profile elite sports are the most visible and attractive part to observe. We read newspaper sports pages and magazines, watch live broadcasts of our favorite sports, and catch televised or Internet sports highlights regularly, perhaps daily. In a repetitive sort of loop, there they are right before our eyes; we see them (and enjoy them), therefore we study them.

In what follows, we briefly review the burgeoning interdisciplinary and sociological field of children and youth studies as a foundation for developing a research agenda on kids and sport.

Learning From Children and Youth Studies

In 1973, Charlotte Hardman argued that children's voices were "muted" within social science research. Instead of drawing upon children's perspectives as the basis for theoretical understandings of childhood, scholars tended to conceptualize children as "helpless spectators" who simply absorbed adult generated knowledge, values, and meanings (Hardman, 1973). Since then, an emergent paradigm for studying children and adolescents has developed within sociology and the social sciences more broadly (Prout & James, 1990; Corsaro, 2003; Thorne, 1993). Unlike psychological and developmental approaches to childhood, which assume that kids passively assimilate into existing social structures as they grow older, the sociology of childhood paradigm argues that children actively construct and contest adult-based meanings and understandings during group-based interactions (Corsaro, 1988; Corsaro, 2003; Fine, 1987; Hardman, 1973; Prout & James, 1990; Thorne, 1993). Although kids' cultures are certainly related to and overlap with the adult world (Corsaro, 1988; Thorne, 1993; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001), scholars of childhood argue that children's cultures must be conceptualized as "worthy of study in their own right, independent from the perspective and concern of adults" (Prout and James, 1990:8).

When studying children and youth, scholars like Speier (1976) and Thorne (1993) have cautioned against studying children from an "adult ideological perspective," which imposes adult concepts and concerns onto children and teenagers' lives. Conceptualizing children as future adults "distorts the vitality of children's present lives to continually refer them to a presumed distant future" (Thorne, 1993: 3). However, based on our review of the past ten years of articles within *SSJ, JSSI* and *ISSR*, many articles recently published by sport sociologists have mostly emphasized future-oriented outcomes when studying youth sports. For example, sociologists often examine whether youth sports promote "positive development" among children and teenagers (see Coakley, 2011 for a review). By deploying variables such as children's and teenagers' academic outcomes (Miller et al., 2005), popularity in school (Shakib et al. 2011), or their likelihood of engaging in behavior adults might consider to be "deviant" (Denham, 2011; Sabo et al., 2005) quantitative youth sports research has allowed us to make large-scale, systematic comparisons between children—especially across social categories such as race, class, and gender. But framing studies of children in terms of their "development" (or lack thereof) risks falsely imposing adult-oriented meanings and perspectives on children and teenagers' lives. We not only miss important opportunities to explore the processes and meanings youth assign to various aspects of their lives, but also the ability to theorize how children actively construct and negotiate these practices *together*, as a part of group-based interactions that occur within their peer cultures (Ferguson, 2000; Cosaro and Eder, 1990; Thorne, 1993).

Although gatekeepers such as the IRB, parents, coaches, and kids themselves may slow the process of gaining access to field sites and potential interview participants, a multitude of studies employing the sociology of childhood paradigm demonstrates that adult researchers can and do get access to children's worlds (Ferguson, 2000; Friedman, 2013; Lareau, 2003; Lewis, 2003; Thorne, 1993). While it is possible that recent IRB policies controlling access to children's worlds have tightened in some places, the abundance of recent sociological research conducted

with children and teenagers suggests that researchers continue to develop and employ creative strategies when conducting qualitative research with kids (e.g., Currie, Kelly, and Pomerantz, 2009; Friedman, 2013; Pugh, 2009; Morris, 2012; Myers and Raymond, 2010; Risman and Banerjee, 2013). For example, in his groundbreaking book *We're Friends, Right?* Corsaro (2003) details the "reactive" entry strategy he employed when beginning participant observation research with preschool-aged children. For the first few days, he simply sat near the kids' play areas, silently observing the kids' interactions. After a few days, the students gradually started asking him questions, and Corsaro continued to interact with the children only when they asked him questions or invited him into their play. Through this process, he gradually became a "big kid" in the classroom, where he was able to "enter ongoing peer activities with little or no disruption" (14), and often asked to be part of the kids' more formal peer activities, such as their birthday parties.

Entrance into children and teenagers' peer groups, moreover, is often facilitated when researchers are able to present themselves as an "atypical, less power adult" in comparison with parents, teachers, and other adult authority figures (Corsaro and Molinari, 2008: 230; also see Corsaro, 2003; Fine and Sandstrom, 1988; Mandell, 1988; Thorne, 1993). To do so, many ethnographers avoid assuming an authoritative or disciplinarian relationship toward students in classrooms (Bettie, 2002; Corsaro, 2003; Perry, 2002; Thorne, 1993). When studying students in elementary schools, Thorne (1993), for example, did not intervene when the students broke the rules, and she sometimes broke minor rules—such as eating potato chips in class, or lending the children small amounts of money—when interacting with the kids. Similarly, Pascoe (2007), Perry (2002), and Bettie (2002) found that one's clothing and hair-style can help differentiate adult researchers from other authority figures. Finally, placing oneself in a position to learn from children can also facilitate entrance into kids' cultures. When studying kindergartners in Taiwan, Hadley (2007) argues that being a "linguistically challenged and culturally incompetent member" (158) in Taiwanese classrooms helped mark her as different from other adults. Because the kids were able to teach and guide her through classroom activities, she was able to "narrow the gap between the adult researcher and child participants" (162). Gradually, she was accepted into many of the students' peer-group interactions and became known as "Older Sister Katy," developing a rich understanding of kids' games and peer cultures in the process.

Although it takes commitment, time, and creativity to gain access to kids' groups, by taking kids' cultures seriously, scholars have illuminated how aspects of children's social relations are integral to processes that maintain inequality. Scholars, for example, have found that the informal games kids play during recess and summer camps often reinforce gender, sexual and racial hierarchies (Corsaro, 2003; Thorne, 1993; McGuffey & Rich, 1999; Moore, 2001; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). Fine (1987), moreover, found that while "hanging out" at baseball practices, boys gain status among their friends by sexually objectifying girls and insulting lower status boys. Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001) similarly argue that children as young as three employ racial and ethnic concepts to "control interactions with others, maintain their individual space, or establish dominance in interactions with other people" (96). Finally, kids also agentically use, manipulate, and negotiate meanings of consumption and popular culture within peer groups. Hadley and Nenga (2004) illustrated that Taiwanese kids as young as four incorporate popular media

into their play, enacting and resisting societal values in the process. Pugh (2009) also found that kids become recognized as "full-fledged person[s]" (81) in peer groups by making claims to or seeming knowledgeable about popular culture and commodities, although doing so reinforces the importance of consumerism in kids' lives. As demonstrated by examples such as these, it is likely that dominant patterns of social relations are created, maintained and potentially challenged within many aspects of youth sports, but remain undertheorized within existing sports literature.

Toward a Sociology of Kids and Sport

We end with a preliminary list of research questions and topics that we believe are relevant and interesting for developing sociological studies of kids and sport. We emphasize that we do not see these necessarily as the most important topics and questions; certainly, this is not an exhaustive list. Instead, these are topics that come to mind for us, and that potentially can connect the sociology of sport to larger scholarly directions and debates in the sociology of children and youth, and in interdisciplinary scholarship on kids. Here, we will introduce five broad potential topics of research: Kids who do not play sports; kids' experiences of play; kids as sport consumers; kids' sport as a locus of intersectional social inequalities; and kids' health and injuries in sport.

Dropouts, Failures and Refusniks

A key element of a research agenda on kids and sport would focus on kids who do not, cannot, or will not play sports. Focusing exclusively on kids who play sports—especially those who come to identify as athletes—risks falling into what Thorne (1993: 98) calls "the Big Man Bias" in social research—the tendency of researchers to focus on the most visible and high-status central players in a social setting, thus skewing or missing altogether the experiences and meanings of those at the margins and at the bottom of hierarchies. Paying attention to kids who do not play sports is especially important given the participation disparities that currently exist within youth sports. The 2008 U.S. and Canadian surveys we referenced above demonstrate that white, suburban kids have easier access to youth sports than do poor, urban, and kids of color. Moreover, when compared with boys, girls start playing sports at a later age and quit playing sports earlier (Clark, 2008; Goévremont, Findlay & Kohen, 2008; Sabo & Veliz, 2008). These survey data can generate research questions aimed at exploring the social processes through which race, class, and gender inequalities differentially constrain and enable access to, as well as experiences within youth sports (Messner, 2000; Cooky, 2009). After all, a key observation of intersectional feminist sociology is that the standpoint of marginalized groups can supply researchers with an invaluable critical understanding of the workings of power, privilege, and subordination (Collins, 1986; Smith, 1987).

But research on kids who don't play sports should not focus exclusively on access and attrition. To do so, we argue, risks colluding with an ascendant popular health discourse that uncritically promotes sports participation as always good and healthy for kids. Within this framework, nonsporty kids are either defined through a conservative lens as lazy couch potatoes, dropouts and losers, or through a liberal lens as underprivileged, "at risk" kids who lack social support to play sports.

Following Thorne (1993) and sport sociologists who are critical of the "positive development" narratives about sport, we argue that an understanding of nonparticipating kids' experiences and views of sport can yield insights that will fuel a critical understanding of institutionalized sport. There are kids who hate sports and sports culture, likely for good reasons: kids who have been alienated by PE teachers, coaches, athletes, and sports culture; kids who found early on that they lacked the skills, emotional predispositions or body-type to excel in sports (or even to fit in competently in ways that avoided humiliation); kids who hate competition; kids who may not have time to play sports, either because they work (Estrada & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2011) or pursue other extracurricular activities (Friedman, 2013; Levey, 2010). Understanding these kids' lives can helps us to move beyond liberal scholarly frameworks that emphasize better and more democratic access to existing institutionalized youth sport, toward imagining alternatives to sport that emphasize inclusiveness, lifelong physical activity and health, and building cooperative relationships and skills. An exemplary model for this sort of critical research is Atkinson & Kehler's (2010: 73) examination of young Canadian boys who are "…developing decisively anti-sport and PE attitudes" and are "choosing to withdraw from gym class as soon as they are institutionally allowed." Learning from the critical, resistant agency of these boys, Atkinson and Kehler argue that researchers can contribute to efforts to de-center and replace forms of sport and PE that have enforced and rewarded a singular and oppressive form of masculinity. "This must begin," the researchers conclude, "by changing the pedagogy of physical education" (Atkinson & Kehler, 2010: 85).

Play, Sport, and Kids' Agency

A common starting place in sociology of sport introductory courses and texts is to juxtapose "sport"—narrowly defined as institutionalized, rationalized, rule-bound and record-keeping forms of competition—with views of "play"—defined as more creative and spontaneous activities, less bound by formal rules, "an expressive activity done for its own sake" (Coakley, 2009: 7). Parents today—even as they ferry their kids from one organized activity to another—often bemoan the ways in which the formal organization of their kids' lives, including youth sports, suppresses opportunities for creative play. However, no matter how organized and routinized the lives of kids, there is always time and space for creativity, for "the play element" in daily life. Put in the language of social theory, social structure does not imply an erasure of active agency; instead, kids are always active social agents in the creation of their worlds, and their daily actions exist along a continuum of reproductive and resistant agency. Again, Thorne (1993) provides a good example and useful metaphor. In the highly regimented, rule-bound, time-bound and adult-controlled primary school classroom, Thorne observed, children still found ways to work around the rules—for instance, passing around an "illegal" snack from desk-to-desk during class time:

> The official agenda of the schools—the lessons, the rules, the overtly approved conduct—seemed like cement sidewalk blocks, and the kids' cultural creations like grass and dandelions sprouting through the cracks. I watched eagerly for moments of sprouting and came to appreciate kids' strategies for conducting their own activities alongside and under the stated business of the hour (20).

Studies of sport too can benefit from this perspective on kids' creative agency within adult-created institutionalized sport, but also during times and spaces when kids are relatively free from adult supervision and control. Some kids play self-organized pick-up sports, as well as self-created and "alternative" sports. The often troubled relationship between kid-created sport cultures like skateboarding with adult systems of authority (schools, police, parents) who might fear these kids as deviant or dangerous can be a fruitful field of inquiry (Atkinson and Young, 2008; Beal, 2008; M. Donnelly, 2008). In addition, researchers have begun to explore how commercial sport organizations and sports media have at times routinized, rationalized and commercialized kid-created street sports and youth nonsport leisure activities (Friedman, 2013; Heino, 2000; McKendrick, Bradford, & Fielder, 2000; Wheaton, 2004;). These moments are ripe sites for researchers to explore classic scholarly questions of play and sport, agency and structure, creativity and rationalization. They are also sites for contributing to an expanding field of inquiry in cultural studies, studying ways through which kids' creativity is potentially commodified (Banet-Weiser, 2007; Buckingham, 2011; Cook & Kaiser, 2004; France, 2007; Livingstone, 2002; McNeal, 1992).

Kids as Fans and Consumers of Sport

Kids not only play sports in great numbers, they watch sports, and consume sports products too. A 1999 national survey of U.S. youth aged 8–17 found that 98% of boys and 90% of girls reported using some sort of sports media (including television, movies and videos with sport themes, video games, newspapers, books, magazines, the Internet and radio). One in three kids said they did so daily, and 71% said they did so at least weekly (Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles, 1999). A content analysis of the T.V. sports programs that boys watch most found that viewers are fed a steady package of programming and commercials that, together, amounts to a "televised sports manhood formula" expressing values of aggression, violence, militarism, the erasure of women, and consumption of car-related products and snack foods (Messner, Dunbar & Hunt, 2000).

These studies may now be dated, but they suggest that kids are major consumers of sports media, and they hint at what these kids are seeing and hearing as they watch. But they don't tell us much of anything about the meanings that kids make of sports entertainment: what do kids do when they watch or listen? Is sports consumption for kids an act of individual escape? Is it a means of connecting symbolically or, in the words of cultural critic Timothy Beneke (1997), of "BIRGing," or "Basking In Reflected Glory" of one's favorite sports team or athlete? Is the consumption of sports knowledge or the wearing of elite sports team clothing a resource for kids in building their own peer communities, much in the same way that Pugh (2009) sees consumption in general as a way that youth shape identities, and forge meaningful connections with peers? Under what conditions does consumption of sports reinforce or even amplify actual participation in sports, and under what conditions does it serve as a substitute or escape from physical activity (perhaps research on sports video games would be most fruitful here)? Cutting across all of these questions, how does an intersectional (race, class, gender, sexuality) perspective on kids inform our understanding of the shifting contextual meanings of kids' sports consumption? And more broadly, how does sport entertainment and brand culture

make claims about contemporary notions of citizenship and meanings related to membership, community, and individualism for children and youth? One of the few articles on kids that appeared in the sport journals we examined was an exemplary examination of the ways in which white middle class girls, aged 11–14, make meaning out of their own sport experiences. This study illuminated the contradictory dynamics of sport in girls' worlds, in particular how their narratives reflect liberal feminist corporate slogans from Nike, simultaneously reproducing and challenging intersectional inequalities (Cooky & McDonald, 2005).

Intersectional Inequalities and Social Mobility

Social inequalities of gender, race and class are not simply "reflected," but actively created and at times contested in sport. Recent decades have seen a huge influx of girls into sports, but national youth sports surveys show that "never participated" rates are still higher for girls—21% to boys' 13%—and drop-out rates for preadolescent girls are much higher than for boys. We are just beginning to understand the broad social processes—in families, schools, peer groups, media, and in youth sports organizations—that tend still to limit and in some ways marginalize girls in sport (Cooky, 2009).

Rich, yet mostly untapped research questions surround the issue of sex-segregation vs. integration of youth sports. While some have argued that sex segregation of youth sports inherently recreates and naturalizes gender hierarchies, others have expressed caution that a forced integration of youth sports might push thousands of girls away from participating (McDonagh & Pappanoe, 2008; Travers, 2008). Research on adult coed sports shows how even in contexts where men and women play a sport together, supposedly as equals, assumptions of male superiority and male-dominated interactional patterns intrude in ways that tend to recreate gender hierarchies (Wachs, 2002). What meanings to kids make from their experiences in sex-segregated versus sex-integrated sports? How do gender nonconforming kids experience sport institutions that are routinely divided in binary sexes, and how will a growing visibility of transgender kids effect youth sports (Kane, 2006; Travers, 2008)? Will a general decline in cultural homophobia shift the ground under which gender is shaped in boys' sports (McCormack, 2013)? How do kids make sense of the very stark gender divisions of labor and power they tend to experience among adult coaches, managers and team parents in youth sports and school sports (Coakley, 2006; Messner, 2009; Chafetz & Kotarba, 1995; Thompson, 1999)? The fact is, we just don't know that much about the ways that kids experience and make gender meanings in youth sports.

Research on youth swimming suggests that kids' patterns of gender relations within coed youth sports vary dramatically, depending on the context. Musto (2013) found that within the most focused aspects of swim practices, gender was a less salient aspect of swimmers' social relations. Instead, structural mechanisms encouraged the swimmers to interact in ways that illuminated the girls' and boys' similar athletic abilities. In this context, athletes undermined beliefs in categorical, essentialist and hierarchical athletic differences between the genders. When the swimmers "hung out" with their friends before and after practices, however, gender was highly salient and the swimmers interacted in ways that reaffirmed group-based boundaries between the genders. As a result, similarities between the

genders were obscured in this context and the swimmers affirmed categorical and essentialist—but nonhierarchical—meanings of gender. Because the swimmers developed and deployed nonhierarchical gender relations and beliefs across both contexts, Musto's findings suggest that the more equitable gender meanings and relations the kids enacted during focused aspects of practice "spilled over" into the swimmers' unstructured free time, thus reducing the overall degree of gender inequality at the pool. Building on this idea, future studies of kids and sport should focus on gender as a group-based accomplishment, varying in salience across differently-organized contexts, including families, relatively unstructured play with other kids, classrooms, places of worship, or the street (Musto, 2013).

Issues of race and class in youth sports are equally vexing, and present a fascinating blank slate for researchers. Again, the survey research hints at big questions: Sabo & Veliz (2008) found in their national youth sports survey that the more privileged one's family is, the more likely it is that the children will be involved in organized sports. The same national study found that white children are more likely to be participants in sports than are children of color, as are kids who live in suburban (vs. rural or urban) areas, those who live in families with two parents at home, and those whose parents are college-educated, with higher family incomes. Clearly, class and race privilege make it more likely that families will have access to youth sports, and will also have the kinds of resources (such as transportation) necessary to participate.

Poor kids and kids of color are increasingly defined as "at risk" within a social context of declining public support for schools and for poor families. Hartmann's (2001) research on "midnight basketball" is useful here for asking critical research questions: as sport is increasingly marked by advocacy organizations as a positive and healthy thing for "at-risk" kids, as a "solution" for poverty or as an alternative to gang activity, how do kids experience and make meanings of these sport programs (Coakley, 2002)? Researchers too can ask fresh and important questions about immigrant kids and sport—how do they "fit in," (or not) to existing youth sports and school sports organizations (King-White, 2010)? Do immigrant kids bring different orientations to sport, and even different sports, to U.S. and Canadian contexts? If so, how do youth sports organizations respond? Under what conditions might native-born kids' xenophobia be challenged, and tolerance and respect amplified when they team up with kids from Mexico, China, or South Asia? And, how might we think of sport broadly, as a realm of children's rights and social justice in an increasingly globalizing world (P. Donnelly, 1999; Grenfell & Rinehart, 2003; Weber, 2009)?

Research questions on kids and social inequalities should also focus on the connections between youth sports and families (Wheeler, 2011). Sabo & Veliz found in their survey that 95% of parents in the U.S. believe that sports participation helps raise their child's self-esteem, and 68% of parents believe that participating in sports will help their child get better grades in school. Messner (2009; 2011) found that professional class parents use youth sports to amplify an ascendant gender ideology of "soft essentialism", positioning girls as flexible choosers and boys as linear creatures, naturally destined for competition in public life. But kids don't passively absorb adults' belief systems. How do kids understand, reproduce, or resist adult divisions of labor, power and ideology at the nexus of work, family, and youth sports? Are these gender ideologies played out in similar or different

ways in poor and working class families? Sociologist Annette Lareau argues that professional class families engage in a process highly organized, structured and goal-oriented "concerted cultivation" of their children, while working class parents more commonly subscribe to a less-structured practice of "natural growth" for their kids (Lareau, 2003). By studying upper-middle class kids' competitive activities, Friedman (2013) similarly argues that activities like soccer allow children to acquire "competitive kid capital," which may advantage kids later in life, such as when applying to and entering elite colleges. Comparative research on kids' sports in communities with different socioeconomic bases could illuminate the extent to which these classed patterns are also evident in youth sports. Are professional class kids more likely to view sport participation as a future data point on a competitive resume for admission to a top college? Are working class or poor kids more likely to engage in sport for its own sake, or perhaps to see an athlete identity as a direct avenue to college athletic scholarship (and perhaps a pro career)? How do kids imagine this?

Health and Injuries

We know very little about kids, sport and health. However, the growing body of research on teens, sport and health correlates is suggestive: Kathleen Miller and her colleagues, in several national studies of youth, adolescence and sports found differences between teens who played some sports, and those who were "highly involved" in sports. Teenaged boys and girls appear to derive some health benefits from playing sports: they are statistically less likely than nonathletes to use illicit drugs, drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, or attempt suicide. In addition, girls who played sports were found to have more positive body images than girls who did not play sports, and were more likely to use seatbelts when riding in cars. On the other hand, "highly involved athletes" were found to be *more* involved in dangerous risk-taking and unhealthy practices: they were more likely to use anabolic steroids, more likely to binge drink, and twice as likely to be suicidal. Highly involved girl athletes were also more likely than nonathletes to use dieting and exercise to control their weight, and to use extreme forms of weight control like vomiting and/or laxatives (Miller et al., 1999; 2001; 2005; 2006).

The findings of Miller and her colleagues' national studies converge with those of journalists Joan Ryan (1996) and Mark Hyman (2009) whose work emphasizes the health dangers and risks that inhere when families and communities over-emphasize sport for kids. For this reason, research on kids' sports should explore the hypothesis that—for girls and for boys—*playing sports* can be a very good thing; however, becoming a highly involved *athlete* may not be a very good thing. Sport organizations, as well as schools, the mass media, and many families often operate on a taken-for-granted assumption that the goal of youth sports is the creation of athletes; it is possible that the potential health (and other developmental) benefits of playing sports may actually be lost or worse when kids pour too much into sport identities, practices and goals.

The growing controversy around head injuries in football and other sports is an opportunity for research on pain, injury, and risk in youth sports. How are youth sports organizations responding? In 2013, Hockey Canada banned body checking for pee wee (up to age 12) participants (Gretz, 2013). On the Pop Warner Football

web site in 2012, and in the midst of revelations about widespread concussions in football, Pop Warner's Executive Director cheerily reassured readers (many of them presumably parents) that although concussions do occur in football at older age levels, Pop Warner's rules and protective equipment make the game safe for kids: "We've been growing each year. This is the 22nd season for which we have data, and we've been up 19 of those 22 years. This year was about flat. So under the circumstances, that's not bad…I think football is not going to go away." Are families reassured by this, or are they steering their kids away from tackle football or other combat and collision sports? A 2013 national poll in the U.S. found that 33% of parents say that their knowledge of head injury dangers make them now less likely to allow their kids to play football (Marist Poll 2013). If this is a trend, then which families are, and which are not opposed to their kids playing football (Dagkas & Quarmby, 2012)? And more generally, how is a "no pain no gain" values system being deployed, incorporated and embodied, or resisted in kids' sports today?

Another pertinent body of research might bring empirical observations to bear on the current scholarly chasm between the two currently prominent perspectives on childhood health, obesity and sport. On the one side, we have epidemiologically-based research and public programs that fuel fears of growing levels of childhood obesity, and posit youth sports and physical activity as a key element of a solution. On the other, cultural critics argue that the "obesity epidemic" is a construction of a bipartisan neoliberal political spectrum and a burgeoning social problems industry that views sport and exercise as a convenient means to individualize "solutions" to health problems. Given their complex etiology, cultural critics argue, such health problems would be better addressed with massive social programs that provide decent jobs, housing, schools, healthy and affordable food for people and their kids who are currently marginalized and limited by class and racial inequalities (Campos et al., 2006; Wachs & Chase, 2013). What is currently missing from this debate is an understanding of how kids experience being at the nexus of these debates, targeted by social policies (including sport and exercise) aimed at getting them to "take responsibility" for their own health and bodies. Under what conditions is this healthism-though-sport empowering for kids (and for which kids)? Under what conditions does it deflect attention away from awareness of social inequalities, or when might it spark a critical understanding and progressive action?

Conclusion

Sport is an important area in the lives of so many kids, and it is also becoming a field of debate in public policies related to schools, violence prevention, gender equality, and class and racial mobility. However, we have argued here that sociologist of sport have been slow to focus on children and sport. Perhaps ironically, given the general sense in the field of sport studies that qualitative and interpretative methodological approaches in recent decades have largely eclipsed quantitative approaches, the study of kids in sport suffers from an opposite asymmetry. If anything, quantitative approaches—especially national survey studies—are well out in front in building sociological understandings of kids and sports. While more and better quantitative studies will be beneficial, we call here especially for a deep research engagements

in the worlds of children and sports, especially from qualitative and interpretive sociologists who are best positioned to investigate kids as active, meaning-making agents. Sport sociologists have much to contribute to the rich and growing field of interdisciplinary and sociological children and youth studies.

Notes

1. Within aspects of sport that involve older athletes, such as the NCAA and the National Federation of State High School Association, statistics are annually compiled and published to report the number of athletes involved with these aspects of sport. However, no central organization collects information on children, making the statistical profile of the number of children playing sports less clear.

2. In a personal communication, sociologist Jay Coakley, author of the top sociology of sport text (Coakley, 2009) and arguably the scholar with the best global understanding of the sport research literature, told us that he is skeptical of the sorts of numbers for youth participation rates that we outlined above. First, Coakley says, he doubts the validity of the participation numbers commonly reported on the web sites of sport organizations because of the political and economic implications these participation rates have for the organizations. Furthermore, with regards to national surveys, Coakley speculates that it has become customary for individuals to report that they are physically active and play sports, potentially generating inflated participation rates.

References

Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles. 1999. *Children and sports media*. Los Angeles, CA: AAFLA. Retrieved from: Info@aalfa.org

American Youth Soccer League. (2013). About AYSO. *AYSO.* Retrieved August 29, 2013 from http://ayso.org/AboutAYSO.aspx

Atkinson, M., & Young, K. (2008). *Deviance and social control in sport*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Atkinson, M., & Kehler, M. (2010). Boys, gyms, locker rooms and heterotopia. In M. Kehler & M. Atkinson (Eds.), *Boys' bodies: Speaking the unspoken* (pp. 73–90). New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Azzarito, L., & Harrison, L. (2008). `White men can't jump': Race, gender and natural athleticism. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 43*(4), 347–364. doi:10.1177/1012690208099871

Banet-Weiser, S. (2007). *Kids rule!: Nickelodeon and consumer citizenship*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books.

Beal, B. (2008). Skateboarding. In M. Atkinson (Ed.), *Battleground: Sports* (pp. 383–389). Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Beneke, T. (1997). *Proving Manhood: Reflections on men and sexism*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bettie, J. (2002). *Women without class: Girls, race, and identity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Buckingham, D. (2011). *The material child: Growing up in consumer culture*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Campos, P., Saguy, A., Ernsberger, P., Oliver, E., & Gaesser, G. (2006). The epidemiology of overweight and obesity: public health crisis or moral panic? Point-Counterpoint. *International Journal of Epidemiology, 55*(1), 55–60.

Cantu, R.C., & Hyman, M. (2012). *Concussions and our kids*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.

Chafetz, J.S., & Kotarba, J.A. (1995). Son worshipers: The role of little league mothers in recreating gender. *Studies in Symbolic Interaction, 18,* 217–241. doi:10.1525/si.1995.18.2.217

Chimot, C., & Louveau, C. (2010). Becoming a man while playing a female sport: The construction of masculine identity in boys doing rhythmic gymnastics. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 45*(4), 436–456. doi:10.1177/1012690210373844

Christensen, M.K. (2009). "An eye for talent": Talent identification and the "practical sense" of top-level soccer coaches. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 26*(3), 365–382.

Clark, W. 2008. Kids' Sports. *Canadian social trends.* Retrieved August 29, 2013 from http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/11-008-x2008001-eng.htm

Coakley, J. (2002). Using sports to control deviance and violence among youths: Let's be critical and cautious. In M. Gatz, M.A. Messner, & S.B. Rokeach (Eds.), *Paradoxes of youth and sport* (pp. 13–30). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Coakley, J. (2006). The good father: Parental expectations in youth sports. *Leisure Studies, 25,* 153–163. doi:10.1080/02614360500467735

Coakley, J. (2009). *Sports in society: Issues and controversies*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Coakley, J. (2011). Youth sports: What counts as "positive development?". *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 35*(3), 306–324. doi:10.1177/0193723511417311

Collins, P.H. (1986). Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of black feminist thought. *Social Problems,* S14–S32. doi:10.2307/800672

Cook, D.T., & Kaiser, S.B. (2004). Betwixt and be tween: Age ambiguity and the sexualization of the female consuming subject. *Journal of Consumer Culture,* 203–227. doi:10.1177/1469540504043682

Cooky, C. (2009). "Girls just aren't interested": The social construction of interest in girls' sport. *Sociological Perspectives, 52,* 259–283. doi:10.1525/sop.2009.52.2.259

Cooky, C., & McDonald, M.G. (2005). "If you let me play": Young girls' insider-other narratives of sport. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 22*(2), 158–177.

Corsaro, W.A. (1988). Peer culture in the preschool. *Theory into Practice, 27*(1), 19–24. doi:10.1080/00405848809543326

Corsaro, W.A. (2003). *We're friends, right?: Inside kids' culture*. Washington, DC: Joseph Henry Press.

Corsaro, W. A., & Eder, D. (1990). Children's peer cultures. *Annual review of sociology*, *16*(1), 197-220.

Corsaro, W.A., & Molinari, L. (2008). Entering and observing in children's worlds. In P. Christensen & A. James (Eds.), *Research with children: Perspectives and practices* (2nd ed., pp. 239–259). New York: Routledge.

Currie, D.H., Kelly, D.M., & Pomerantz, S. (2009). *'Girl power': Girls reinventing girlhood*. New York: Peter Lang.

Dagkas, S., & Quarmby, T. (2012). Young peoples' embodiment of physical activity: The role of the "pedagogized" family. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 29*(2), 210–226.

Denham, B.E. (2011). Alcohol and marijuana use among American high school seniors: Empirical associations with competitive sports participation. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 28*(3), 362–379.

Donnelly, M. (2008). Alternative *and* mainstream: Revisiting the sociological analysis of skateboarding. In M. Atkinson & K. Young (Eds.), *Tribal play: Subcultural journeys through sport* (pp. 197–216). Emerald Group Publishing.

Donnelly, P. (1999). Child labor, sport labor: Applying child labor laws to sport. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 32*(4), 389–406. doi:10.1177/101269097032004004

Estrada, E., & Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. (2011). Intersectional dignities: Latino immigrant street vendor youth in Los Angeles. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 40*(1), 102–131. doi:10.1177/0891241610387926

Ferguson, A.A. (2000). *Bad boys: Public schools in the making of black masculinity*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Fine, G.A., & Sandstrom, K.L. (1988). *Knowing children: Participant observation with minors*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Fine, G.A. (1987). *With the boys: Little League Baseball and preadolescent culture*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

France, A. (2007). *Understanding youth in late modernity*. New York: McGraw-Hill International.

Friedman, H. (2013). *Playing to win: Raising children in a competitive culture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Gatz, M., Messner, M.A., & Ball-Rokeach, S.J. (2002). *Paradoxes of youth and sport*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Giardina, M.D. (2003). "Bending It like Beckham" in the Global Popular: Stylish Hybridity, Performativity, and the Politics of Representation. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 27*(1), 65–82.

Goévremont, A., Findlay, L., & Kohen, D. (2008). Organized extracurricular activities of Canadian youth. Statistics Canada: Component of Statistics Canada. Catalogue no. 82-003-XPE. *Health Reports, 19*(3).

Grasmuck, S. (2003). Something about baseball: Gentrification, "race sponsorship," and neighborhood boys' baseball. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 20*(4), 307–330.

Grasmuck, S. (2005). *Protecting home: Class, race, and masculinity in boys' baseball*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Grenfell, C.C., & Rinehart, R.E. (2003). Skating on thin ice: Human rights in youth figure skating. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 38*(1), 79–97. doi:10.1177/1012690203038001729

Gretz, A. (2013, May 25). Hockey Canada votes to ban body checking at pee wee level. *EyeOnHocke*y. http://www.cbssports.com/nhl/blog/eye-on-hockey/22302086/hockey-canada-votes-to-ban-body-checking-at-pee-wee-level.

Hadley, K.G. (2007). Will the least-adult please stand up? Life as 'Older Sister Katy' in a Taiwanese elementary school. In A.L. Best (Ed.), *Representing youth: Methodological issues in critical youth studies* (pp. 157–181). New York, NY: New York University Press.

Hadley, K.G., & Nenga, S.K. (2004). From Snow White to Digimon: Using popular media to confront Confucian values in Taiwanese peer cultures. *Childhood, 11*(4), 515–536. doi:10.1177/0907568204047109

Hardman, C. (1973). Can there be an anthropology of children? *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford, 4*(2), 85–99.

Hartmann, D. (2001). Notes on midnight basketball and the cultural politics of recreation, race, and at-risk urban youth. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 25*(4), 339–371. doi:10.1177/0193723501254002

Heino, R. (2000). New sports: What is so punk about snowboarding? *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 24*(2), 176–191. doi:10.1177/0193723500242005

Heywood, L., & Dworkin, S.L. (2003). *Built to win: The female athlete as cultural icon*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Hyman, M. (2009). *Until it hurts: America's obsession with youth sports and how it harms our kids*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Hyman, M. (2013). *The most expensive game in town: The rising cost of youth sports and the toll on today's families*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Kane, E.W. (2006). "No way my boys are going to be like that!": Parents' responses to gender nonconformity. *Gender & Society, 20*(2), 149–176. doi:10.1177/0891243205284276

King-White, R. (2010). Danny Almonte: Discursive construction(s) of (im)migrant citizenship in neoliberal America. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 27*(2), 178–199.

Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Levey, H. (2010). Trophies, triumphs, and tears: Children's experiences with competitive activities. *Sociological Studies of Children and Youth, 13,* 319–349. doi:10.1108/S1537-4661(2010)0000013015

Lewis, A. (2003). *Race in the schoolyard: Negotiating the color line in classrooms and communities*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Light, R.L. (2010). Children's social and personal development through sport: A case study of an Australian swimming club. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 34*(4), 379–395.

League, L. (2013). "Little league around the world." Retrieved August 29, 2013, from http://www.littleleague.org/learn/about/historyandmission/aroundtheworld.htm

Livingstone, S. (2002). *Young people and new media: Childhood and the changing media environment*. London: Sage.

Poll, M. (2013). "Youth football takes hard hit: One-third of Americans less likely to allow son to play football because of head injury risk. (October 22). http://maristpoll.marist.edu/1023-youth-football-takes-hard-hit-one-third-of-americans-less-likely-to-allow-son-to-play-football-because-of-head-injury-risk/

Mandell, N. (1988). The least-adult role in studying children. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 16(4), 433-467. doi:10.1177/0891241688164002

McCormack, M. (2013). *The declining significance of homophobia: How teenage boys are redefining masculinity and heterosexuality*. Oxford University Press.

McDonagh, E., & Pappano, L. (2008). *Playing with the boys: Why separate is not equal in sports*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

McGuffey, C.S., & Rich, B.L. (1999). Playing in the gender transgression zone: Race, class, and hegemonic masculinity in middle childhood. *Gender & Society, 13*(5), 608–627. doi:10.1177/089124399013005003

McHale, J.P., Vinden, P.G., Bush, L., Richer, D., Shaw, D., & Smith, B. (2005). Patterns of personal and social adjustment among sport-involved and non-involved urban middle school children. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 22,* 119–136.

McKendrick, J.H., Bradford, M.G., & Fielder, A.V. (2000). Kid customer? Commercialization of playspace and the commodification of childhood. *Childhood, 7*(3), 295–314. doi:10.1177/0907568200007003004

McNeal, J.U. (1992). *Kids as consumers: A handbook of marketing to children*. New York: Lexington Books.

Messner, M.A. (2011). Gender ideologies, youth sports, and the production of soft essentialism. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 28*(2), 151–170.

Messner, M.A. (2009). *It's all for the kids: Gender, families and youth sports*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Messner, M.A. (2000). Barbie girls vs. sea monsters: Children constructing gender. *Gender & Society, 14*(6), 765–784. doi:10.1177/089124300014006004

Messner, M.A., Dunbar, M., & Hunt, D. (2000). The televised sports manhood formula. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 24*(4), 380–394. doi:10.1177/0193723500244006

Miller, K., Sabo, D., Melnick, M., Farrell, M., & Barnes, G. (2001). *The women's sports foundation report: health risks and the teen athlete*. East Meadow, New York: The Women's Sports Foundation.

Miller, K., Melnick, M., Farrell, M., Barnes, G., & Sabo, D. (2006). Jocks, gender, binge drinking, and adolescent violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 21*(1), 105–120. doi:10.1177/0886260505281662

Miller, K., Melnick, M., Barnes, G., Farrell, M., & Sabo, D. (2005). untangling the links among athletic involvement, gender, race, and adolescent academic outcomes. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 22*(2), 178–193.

Miller, K., Sabo, D., Farrell, M., Barnes, G., & Melnick, M. (1999). Sports, sexual activity, contraceptive use, and pregnancy among female and male high school students: Testing cultural resource theory. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 16*(4), 366–387.

Moore, V.A. (2001). "Doing" racialized and gendered age to organize peer relations: Observing kids in summer camp. *Gender & Society, 15*(6), 835–858. doi:10.1177/089124301015006004

Morris, E.W. (2012). *Learning the hard way: Masculinity, place, and the gender gap in education*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Musto, M. (2013). Athletes in the pool, girls and boys on deck: The contextual construction of gender in coed youth swimming. *Gender & Society*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0891243213515945 (published online before print).

Myers, K., & Raymond, L. (2010). Elementary school girls and heteronormativity: The Girl Project. *Gender & Society, 24*(2), 167–188. doi:10.1177/0891243209358579

Pascoe, C.J. (2007). *Dude, you're a fag: Masculinity and sexuality in high school*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Perry, P. (2002). *Shades of white: White kids and racial identities in high school*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Warner, P. (2013). About us. Retrieved August 29, 2013 from http://www.popwarner.com/About_Us.htm

Prout, A., & James, A. (1990). A new paradigm for the sociology of childhood? Provenance, promise and problems. In A. James & A. Prout (Eds.), *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood* (pp. 7–34). London: Falmer Press.

Pugh, A. (2009). *Longing and belonging: Parents, children and consumer culture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Ring, J. (2009). *Stolen bases: Why American girls don't play baseball*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Risman, B.J., & Banerjee, P. (2013). Kids talking about race: Tween-agers in a post-Civil Rights era. *Sociological Forum, 28*(2), 213–235. doi:10.1111/socf.12016

Ryan, J. (1996). Little girls in pretty boxes: The making and breaking of elite gymnasts and figure skaters. New York, NY: Warner books.

Sabo, D., Miller, K.E., Melnick, M.J., Farrell, M.P., & Barnes, G.M. (2005). High school athletic participation and adolescent suicide a nationwide US study. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 40*(1), 5–23. doi:10.1177/1012690205052160

Sabo, D.F., & Veliz, P. (2008). *Youth sport in America*. East Meadow, NY: Women's Sports Foundation.

Shakib, S., Veliz, P., Dunbar, M.D., & Sabo, D. (2011). Athletics as a source for social status among youth: Examining variation by gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 28*(3), 303–328.

Smith, D.E. (1987). *The everyday world as problematic: A feminist sociology*. University of Toronto Press.

Speier, M. (1976). The adult ideological viewpoint in studies of childhood. In A. Skolnick (Ed.), *Rethinking Childhood* (pp. 168–186). Boston, MA: Little Brown.

Swanson, L. (2009). Soccer fields of cultural [re]production: Creating "good boys" in suburban America. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 26*(3), 404–424.

Thompson, S. (1999). *Mother's taxi: Sport and women's labor*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Thorne, B. (1993). *Gender play: Girls and boys in school*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Thorne, B. (1987). Re-visioning women and social change: Where are the children?. *Gender & Society*, 1(1), 85-109. doi:10.1177/089124387001001005

Travers, A. (2008). The sport nexus and gender injustice. *Studies in Social Justice, 2*(1), 79–101.

United States Tennis Association. (2013). About Us. *United States Tennis Association.* Retrieved August 29, 2013 from http://www.usta.com/About-USTA/?intloc=headernav

U.S.A Hockey,. (2012). USA hockey 2011-2012 annual report. *USA Hockey, Inc.* Retrieved August 29, 2013 from http://www.usahockey.com/about_usa_hockey/Annual_Report. aspx

U.S.A. Swimming, (2013). What is USA swimming? *USA Swimming.* Retrieved August 29, 2013 from http://www.usaswimming.org/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabId=1398&Al ias=Rainbow&Lang=en

Van Ausdale, D., & Feagin, J.R. (2001). *The first R: How children learn race and racism.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Wachs, F.L. (2002). Leveling the playing field: Negotiating gendered rules in coed softball. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 26*(3), 300–316. doi:10.1177/0193723502263006

Wachs, F.L., & Chase, L. (2013). Explaining the failure of an obesity intervention: Combining Bourdieu's symbolic violence and the Foucault's microphysics of power to reconsider state interventions. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 30*(2), 111–131.

Weber, R. (2009). Protection of children in competitive sport some critical questions for London 2012. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 44*(1), 55–69. doi:10.1177/1012690208101485

Wheaton, B. (2004). Selling out? The globalization and commercialization of lifestyle sports. In L. Allison (Ed.), *Global politics of sport: Sport in the global society* (pp. 127–146). London: Routledge.

Wheeler, S. (2012). The significance of family culture for sport participation. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 47*(2), 235–252. doi:10.1177/1012690211403196

Yochim, E.C. (2009). *Skate life: Re-imagining white masculinity.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.