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Comments	Section		
	Title and Abstract Title to include: A concise indication of the research question/problem. Abstract to include: A concise summary of the empirical study undertaken.		
	Introduction and literature review To include: outline of context (theoretical/conceptual/applied) for the question; analysis of findings of previous related research including gaps in the literature and relevant contributions; logical flow to, and clear presentation of the research problem/ question; an indication of any research expectations, (i.e., hypotheses if applicable).		
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	Results and Analysis ² To include: description and justification of data treatment/ data analysis procedures; appropriate presentation of analysed data within text and in tables or figures; description of critical findings.		
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CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
Prifysgol Fetropolitan Caerdydd

CARDIFF SCHOOL OF SPORT

DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS)

SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

**TO EXPLORE THE REASONS INTO THE HIGH DROP OUT RATE OF YOUNG
MALE GYMNASTS AND EXPLORE THE REASONS WHY THEY RETURN TO THE
SPORT AS YOUNG ADULTS**

**(Dissertation submitted under the discipline of Management and
Development)**

Daniel Smith

ST10001496

**TO EXPLORE THE REASONS INTO THE HIGH DROP OUT RATE OF YOUNG
MALE GYMNASTS AND EXPLORE THE REASONS WHY THEY RETURN TO THE
SPORT AS YOUNG ADULTS**

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Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
List of Figures	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract	iii
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Purpose of study	3
2.0 Review of literature	4
2.1 Why participate in physical activity?	5
2.2 Reasons why young people drop out of sport	8
2.3 Reasons why young people drop out of gymnastics	8
2.4 Gender imbalance within gymnastics	10
3.0 Methodology	12
3.1 Participants	14
3.2 Pilot study	16
3.3 Data analysis	17
3.4 Reliability and validity	17
3.5 Ethical considerations	18
4.0 Discussion of Results	20
4.1 Reasons why young gymnasts start and enjoy gymnastics	21
4.2 The reasons why young males drop gymnastics	25
4.3 The reasons why young gymnasts change sports	27
4.4 The reasons why male gymnasts return to gymnastics at university	27
4.5 Participant's opinion on how to maintain young male gymnast's participation in the sport	29
5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations	32
5.1 Limitations of research	34
5.2 Additional research recommendations	35
5.3 Industry recommendation	35
Reference List	36
Appendices	43
Appendix A – Table of Results	
Appendix B – Interview Guide	
Appendix C – Participant Information Sheet	
Appendix D – Participant Consent Form	

List of Figures

Figure 1 – British Gymnastics Members by Gender

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Abstract

Sports withdrawal has proven to be a multidimensional issue within the sporting world. From previous research the reasons that people have chosen to drop out include, a lack of enjoyment, dislike of the coach, lack of progression, conflicting interest and injury. Within sporting literature there is a lack of research surrounding specific sports and associated reasons of drop out.

Within the sport of gymnastics there is a large gender imbalance with 77.4% female and 22.5% of participants being male. The average drop out age from the sport is 9.6. The aim of this research is to find out why male gymnasts are drop out at a young age, what sports they changed to and why they have chosen to return to the sport at as a young adult.

The research consisted of six in depth interviews from Cardiff Metropolitan University Men's Gymnastics team. The results of the research showed that at a young age the participants initially participated due to encouragement from influential figures. They then dropped out due to similar reasons stated in other research such as, a lack of enjoyment, lack of progression and dislike of the coach. All participants went onto participate in a variety of sports and returned to gymnastics at university. The reasons for starting gymnastics at university differed from that as a child, whereby fun, social and health related reasons were stated rather than encouragement form influential figures. Other findings that have limited research surrounding it is the negative stereotyping associated with gymnastics, and how the relaxed atmosphere of no coach in training encouraged people to join gymnastics as young adults.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Various research projects have been undertaken that seek to explain the many benefits that sport and physical activity can have. From the physical, mental and social benefits for individuals, to the social and economic benefits for the country as a whole (WHO, 2003; DoH, 2009; Bailey, Cope. and Pearce, 2013). The government has seen the benefits that sport and physical activity can bring to the country and has increased its national lottery funding by a further 20% and further invested a £135 million into Sport England's, People Places Play initiative (DCMS, 2012).

The sport policy document, Game Plan, written by the New Labour Government outlines the need to increase participation rates across sport (DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002). This is taken further by the current coalition government's aims of harnessing the nation's passion for sport through the Olympic legacy and increasing participation. As detailed in Allender, Cowburn and Foster's work, the government has outlined an ambitious target of 70% of the population to be reasonably active (30 minutes of moderate exercise, five times a week) by 2020 (2006). They also aim to increase the participation of young people and to 'bring back a culture of competitive sport in schools' (DCMS, 2010, p.2). The current participation rates of the population as outlined by the Office of National Statistics (2008) indicated that 40% of men and 28% of women are meeting the recommended amount of physical exercise. Currently, 70% of boys and 58% of girls (under the age of 18) are meeting young people's recommended amount of physical exercise.

The government has outlined the aim that all young people should be participating in one hour of physical activity, five times a week (WSFF, 2012) to gain the many benefits that physical activity and sport can have, mentally, physically and socially (WHO, 2003; DoH, 2009; WSFF, 2012). However there is a chance that young people will drop out of sport for a number of different reasons. These include, but are not limited to, a reduced sense of accomplishment (Raedeke, Lunney. and Venables, 2002), dislike of the coach (Butcher, Lindner. and Jones, 2002; Institute of Youth Sport, 2010), losing the 'fun' aspect of sport (Enoksen, 2011; Petlichkoff, 1992; Institute of Youth Sport, 2010), other life commitments, influential others

(such as parents and peers) and serious injury (Hume, 2005; Youth Sports Trust, 2010).

1.1 Purpose of study

Athlete drop out has proven to be a complex issue surrounding sports and is a well-researched area of the sporting environment (Enoksen, 2011; Molinero. Salguero. Tuero. Alvarez. and Marquez. 2006; Institute of Youth Sport, 2010; Butcher *et al*, 2002). However there is limited research into the sport of gymnastics. The Institute of Youth Sport's (2010) research is the first of its kind that really begins to underpin gymnastics drop out rates. One of the long term strategic aims of Welsh Gymnastics is to lower the drop out rates within the sport (Welsh Gymnastics, 2010). There is also a large gender imbalance within the sport. According to Leeds Metropolitan University (2012) the ratio of girls to boys is 3:1 in the sport. This is a reverse trend to normal participation rates of young people.

The purpose of this study is to examine -

- The reasons attributed to why young male gymnasts drop out of the sport.
- Whether they go on to participate in other sports.
- What brought the participants back into the sport of gymnastics.

This will be achieved by focusing on the following objectives -

- To determine the reasons why young male athletes drop out of gymnastics.
- To examine the reasons attributed to why young male gymnasts change sports and the type of sports they participate in.
- To explore and evaluate why the male gymnasts return to gymnastics at university.
- To provide recommendations on how to sustain young male gymnasts participation in the sport.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Review of Literature

2.1 Why participate in physical activity?

Reasons for the government seeking to increase rates of participation within sport and physical activity are well documented. At a national level increasing participation rates by 10% would benefit England by up to £500 million a year, through a reduced strain on the NHS (DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002) by minimising physical inactivity related diseases. Physical inactivity in the UK is estimated to cost the NHS between £1 billion and £1.8 billion each year (DoH, 2009). This is taken further by the WHO (2008) (cited in: Matheson *et al*, 2011), which suggests that income loss in the UK could increase to \$33 billion dollars due to the effects of physical inactivity between 2005-2015. By increasing sport participation levels of the nation this financial burden could be decreased.

At an individual level, sport and physical activity can have a positive benefit on health. As defined by the WHO (1999) (cited in Bishop and Yardley, 2010) 'Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (p.2).

Sport and physical activity can benefit an individual's physical health in a number of ways. It can reduce the risk of obesity, coronary heart disease, type two diabetes, hypertension and osteoporosis (Hallal, Victora, Azevedo, and Wells, 2006; DoH, 2009; Matheson *et al*, 2011). The DoH (2009) also states that physical activity can reduce premature death by 20-30%. There is limited research that contradicts the benefits that sport and physical can have on physical health. Overuse injuries are a common part of competitive sport with athletes working through, often undiagnosed injuries (Yang *et al*, 2012). This can lead to 'long-term residual symptoms and health consequences, including deformities and arthritis.' (Yang *et al*, 2012, p.198). This is supported by the DoH (2009) which determines the financial cost that physical inactivity can have to our nation minus the cost of implications that sport and physical activity injuries and related diseases have. For example, the cost of falls and related hip replacements for the elderly totalled at £1.8 billion (Johansen and Stone, 2000) (cited in DoH, 2009). However, the many positive physical

benefits detailed above outweigh the negative factors associated with sport (DoH, 2009).

In relation to psychological health, sport and physical activity have a direct link to reduced levels of stress, depression and anxiety. Within the 2005-2006 fiscal year, 10.5 million sick days were taken due to these reasons (NICE, 2008). Sport and physical activity can reduce these issues and have positive effects on an individual's self-esteem and self-perceptions (DoH, 2004; Biddle and Fuchs, 2009). An increase of an individual's self-esteem and confidence links directly to social health. The DoH (2009) policy document comments on how involvement in a team or group environment leads to social interaction and inclusion. There are many reasons into why social inclusion and sport participation are linked (Bloyce and Smith, 2009). Increasing social inclusion through sport gives young people the chance to try new activities and generate new interests, with the added benefits of reducing crime rates and improving education, all of which are aims of the government (DoH, 2009).

As well as the health benefits participating in sport can have, there are a number of other reasons to participate. Danish (1990) (cited in Ebbitts, 2011) created a list of 10 reasons why people choose to participate in sport and physical activity. The 10 reasons were to have fun, improve skills, stay in shape, be good at something, excitement of competition, play as part of a team and socialise, challenge of competition, learn a new skill and to win. These 10 reasons are consistent with a number of studies that look into the reasons why people play sport and participate.

One of the main reasons for participating in sport and physical activity, and an area that has received a large amount of research is that of having fun (Weinfeldt and Visek 2009; Institute of Youth Sport, 2010; Bailey *et al*, 2013). Participants take part in sport and physical activity to enjoy themselves and have fun (Petlichkoff, 1992). Another reason for participation is to socialise and be with friends (Petlichkoff, 1992; Institute of Youth Sport, 2010; Bailey *et al*, 2013; Iannotti *et al* 2013). Furthermore taking part in sport and physical activity leads toward the development of new skills, which is a reason why people decide to start and change sports. (Weinfeldt and Visek, 2009). Gymnastics is a sport that develops fundamental skills and movement

patterns (Broomfield, 2012). Welsh Gymnastics sees the sport as a sport that develops new and fundamental skills for children and that it has a key role in developing lifelong participation in sport (Welsh Gymnastics 2010).

At a young age, participation in sport is often the result of encouragement from influential figures (Alderman, Benham-DeaL. and Jenkins, 2010; North, 2007). Parents are seen as the main role model to encourage their children to take part in sport (Alderman *et al*, 2010; Gassewitz, 2008). Other influential people are teachers or peers (Payne, Reynolds, Brown and Fleming, 2003; North, 2007). Once involved in sport then the younger participants will gain from the benefits of participation and improvements in health (DoH, 2009; Matheson *et al*, 2011), socialising, having fun (Petlichkoff, 1992; Institute of Youth Sport, 2010), and to learn a new skill (Weinfeldt and Visek, 2009).

At an older age, the health and fitness benefits of taking part in sport became more important. This is shown in a research project by Iannotti (2013), who conducted a worldwide research study on children aged, 11, 13 and 15. The results show that even with a small age differential the reasons for participation change. The results from the study show that middle adolescent (13-15) participants more commonly referred to health benefits as a reason to start participating in a sport compared with the younger sample who did not. The young adolescent reasons were more commonly socialising and achievement based (Iannotti *et al*, 2013)

Sport and physical activity has been tasked with helping to achieve a number of national policy agendas (Houlihan and White, 2002). These include improving health, reducing crime, increasing social inclusion, improving education and enhancing the environment (DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002; Brahman and Hylton, 2007; Bloyce and Smith, 2009). People chose to take up sport for a number of reasons as detailed above. However there are also a number of reasons that people chose to drop out of sport.

2.2 Reasons why young people drop out of sport

Athlete drop out is considered to be a multidimensional issue within the sporting world, as described by Enoksen it 'can only be understood as a complex and multifactor process' (2011, p.20). There has been much research into the reasons why young sports participants drop in and out of different sports (Butcher *et al*, 2002, Molinero *et al*, 2006: Institute of Youth Sport, 2010: Enoksen, 2011). In Butcher *et al* research, 70% of the participants who took part in the research moved onto compete in another sport. This shows that 'adults should not become unduly concerned about a child withdrawing from a particular sport, since the chances are good that they are still participating in other sports' (2002, p.158).

Through-out the research conducted on athlete withdrawal from sport, many common themes arose. A reduced sense of accomplishment was found to be a major issue with talented athletes (Raedeke *et al*, 2002). Dislike of the coach was an attributed problem with many young participants, especially young females (Butcher *et al*, 2002; Institute of Youth Sport, 2010). Petlichkoff's (1992) work focused on the fun aspect of sport, which is supported by some of the other research (Butcher *et al*, 2002: Enoksen, 2011: Institute of Youth Sport, 2010) as one of the key aspects of playing or participating in a sport. Once a child stops enjoying participating then the chances are they will stop.

2.3 Reasons why young people drop out of gymnastics

A potential flaw in previous research that has been conducted around sports withdrawal is identified by Butcher *et al* (2002) It comments how in 'investigations of sports withdrawal often little is known about the details of the sports dropped, such as level and length of participation and number of simultaneous sports' (p.146). This is where the Institute of Youth Sport (2010) research really begins to underpin reasons why young athletes in the sport of gymnastics choose to drop out. The Youth Sports Trust commissioned British Gymnastics to conduct research on over 5,000 former gymnasts and their parents and included 40 telephone interviews and four focus groups at selected clubs. The research is one of the first that allows a deeper insight into the reasons for gymnasts dropping out of the sport.

A common theme that emerges from research reviewed is that a large percentage of the participants in the research took up another sport. Some 91% of the participants in Institute of Youth Sport research did not drop sport altogether, they dropped gymnastics and moved onto another sport (2010). The top three sports that the gymnasts moved onto were football (17%), swimming (12%) and dance (11%).

The Institute of Youth Sport (2010) research echoes the results of Enoksen's work in relation to the older drop out athletes, in that the priorities of the athlete begin to change as they get older. Education and work may begin to interfere with training and this may result in dropping out (2011). Furthermore, the Youth Sports Trust's (2010) work details how in some circumstances, an athlete may unfortunately receive a career ending injury which forces the athlete to drop out of the sport. This is backed up by Hume's (2005) research into gymnastics injury, which shows that 7% of 114 participants were forced to drop out the sport as a result of sustaining serious injuries.

In contrast to the Institute of Youth Sport (2010) research, Baker (2003) findings show that early specialisation is a key issue with many young athletes. As defined in Russell and Limle (2013) early specialisation refers to the focusing in on one sport, training year round and often results in dropping out of other activities (Russell and Limle, 2013). The training can be hard and intense and young gymnasts may be put off due to not believing that they are good enough. This could lead to the young gymnasts not enjoying training and dropping out (Baker, 2003). This is also documented in Enoksen's work as an issue which leads to athlete drop out (2011). Linked in with early specialisation, burnout of an athlete could occur (Raedeke *et al*, 2002). Burnout of an athlete may occur if the athlete is over training, not balancing training with other activities, or is put under too much pressure (Raedeke *et al*, 2002). This is demonstrated in work by Dubuc, Schinke, Eys, Battochio, and Zaichkowsky (2010) whose work followed 3 young female gymnasts. All the gymnasts dropped out of gymnastics due to overtraining, early specialisation and burnout, which backs up Russel and Limle (2013) and Raedeke *et al* (2002) research. The Institute of Youth Sport's (2010) research does not detail any findings of burnout or early specialisation in any of its findings even though some

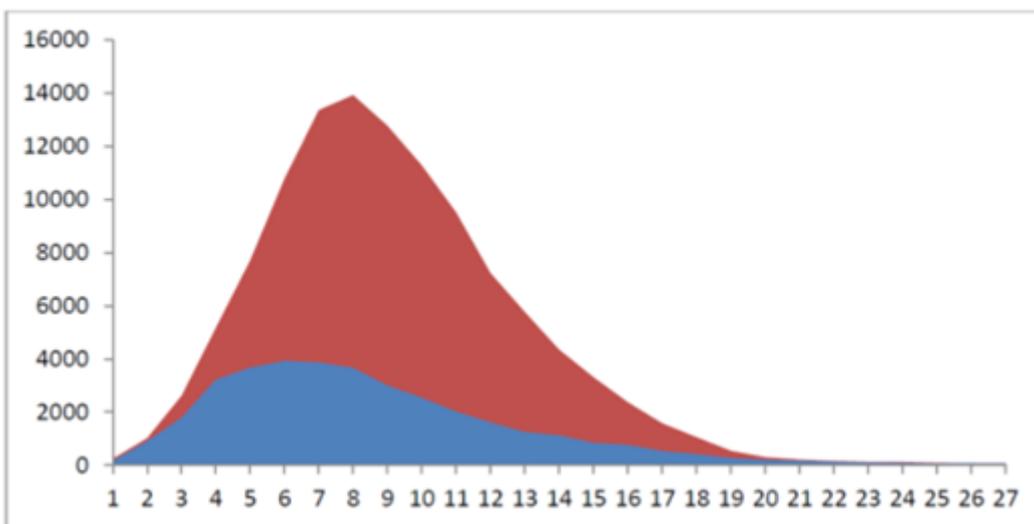
research findings suggest (Raedeke *et al*, 2002; Baker 2003; Dubuc *et al*, 2010) them as a reason for dropping out.

2.4 Gender imbalance within gymnastics

Within gymnastics there is a large gender imbalance in relation to participation rates. Girls outnumber boys 3:1, this can be seen in the graph below which demonstrates that male gymnastics participation peaks around the age of six (with 4,000 participants) and girls' participation rates continue to grow until the age of nine with 14,000 participants (Leeds Metropolitan University, 2012). This is further evidenced by Welsh Gymnastics (2012), who state how the sport has a role reversal compared to national data of approximately a 50/50 split in most sports. Equality profiling of gymnastics conducted by Welsh Gymnastics (2012) indicates the participation rates within the sport are 22.5% male and 77.4% female, showing the large gender imbalance in the sport.

Leeds Metropolitan University (2012) data details the number of registered members of British Gymnastics. The data confirms that there is a major issue with the number of male participants in the sport in that there are far fewer and they drop out at a younger age. This follows on from the Institute of Youth Sport (2010) findings of the young drop out rate of gymnasts.

Chart: British Gymnastics Members by Gender (Red=females; Blues=males) and Age



(Figure 1, Leeds Metropolitan University, 2012)

Research has been extensively conducted on the reasons for drop out in the wider sporting world. However, little research has been conducted on specific sports and ages. The Institute of Youth Sport (2010) research has begun to focus its work on gymnastics but more research needs to be conducted on the high drop out rate and low participation rate of young males (in relation to girls) (Leeds Metropolitan University, 2012) within the sport.

The literature review provides a rationale and a justification to conduct further research into the reasons for the high drop out rate of young male gymnasts. The issue of drop out rate in sport has been discussed but focusing on male gymnasts will provide information into why there is such a large drop out in this particular sport at such a young age. The research will determine which sports the gymnasts who dropped out moved in to and find out whether or not they regret dropping out of the sport and moving onto another.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Methodology

To collect the best information from participants a qualitative approach was adopted. As stated in Gratton and Jones (2010)

‘ Qualitative research ... aims to capture meaning or qualities that are not quantifiable, such as feeling, thoughts, expressions and so on, that is those concepts associated with interpretative approaches’ (p.30)

Using a quantifiable approach for this research was not considered as the responses from participants would be hard to quantify (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Using a qualitative approach does however have draw-backs. The process of collecting, analysing and interpreting the data is a lengthy procedure when compared with quantitative (Creswell and Clark 2011), but the benefits of using a qualitative approach out-weighs this. Using interviews allows for more in depth responses from participants (Gratton and Jones, 2010) and allows for probing by the researcher if new themes are identified (Flick, 2009).

As stated by Flick (2009) qualitative data can be collected in a number of ways. These include interviews, observation, focus groups and the review of written documents. For the purpose of this study interviews were chosen as they allow individuals to express their feelings and experiences about a topic. Conducting interviews has been proven to result in in-depth and rich responses, that supply a large amount of information on a given subject (Brinkman and Kvale, 2009; Flick, 2009). By conducting an appropriately planned conversation, the researcher can gain a vast amount of information from an individual, and when needed can draw more information out of the participant (Gratton and Jones, 2010) with simple questioning techniques (Brinkman and Kvale, 2009). Using simple questioning techniques the researcher can probe the participant into expanding on certain points, or focus in on a specific response to further develop a point (Brinkman and Kvale, 2009). Interviews were also considered a more appropriate choice, as the questions relate back to childhood. There may be issues that the participants are not happy to share with a group due to sensitivity, but may be more willing to share in an interview (Brinkman and Kvale, 2009).

Gratton and Jones (2010) describe a number of different interview types that can be conducted. A structured interview is effectively a questionnaire with the researcher reading the questions. This allows for clarity of questions by the participants if they are unsure on what is being asked (Gratton and Jones, 2010). A semi-structured interview follows a set of standard questions that can be adapted for each participant. It also allows the researcher to gain more information surrounding topics if needed by asking further questions (Flick, 2009). The final interview type is the unstructured interview, which is more participant led with the researcher supplying the topic. An unstructured interview allows the participant to talk freely about the topic and detail the areas that they feel are most important, however unstructured interviews can easily go off topic which will affect the validity of the data (Gratton and Jones, 2010).

The final interview type that could be used is a focus group, which follows a similar method to semi-structured interviews but with a number of people in the room. Focus groups can lead to some people not having their say due to other people dominating the discussion, or an individual may choose not to share information as it is too sensitive (Gratton and Jones, 2010). For the reasons detailed above, a semi-structured interview was selected as most appropriate to this research as it follows a set of questions tailored to the subject, it allows probing for more information, has an open element allowing interviewees to talk openly and results in valid information (Brinkman and Kvale, 2009; Flick, 2009; Gratton and Jones, 2010).

3.1 Participants

In order to select the correct participants for this study, Flick (2009) suggests using selective sampling.

‘ Sampling ... is conceived as a way of setting up a collection of deliberately selected cases, materials or events for constructing a corpus of empirical examples for studying the phenomenon of interest in the most instructive way.’ (Flick, 2009, p.27).

In order to create a specific sample, a defined set of criteria must be created and adhered to. The purpose of this research was to look into the high drop out rates of young male gymnasts at a young age and the reasons they chose to return to gymnastics. The criteria for selecting participants in this research project included:

- Being male.
- To have participated in gymnastics at a younger age for at least a year to show commitment (rather than a passing phase).
- To have dropped out of gymnastics and have taken up another sport.
- To have returned to the sport at university.

For the purpose of this research, participants were selected from Cardiff Metropolitan's Men's Gymnastics club. The sample was readily available and easily attainable, as the researcher knew the members of the club. This allowed the participants to feel relaxed and not pressured in the interview, as there was an established rapport between the interviewer and interviewee. As a result of the interviewee being relaxed, it allowed them to talk confidently and openly, compared to an interview where the participants did not know the interviewer (Brinkman and Kvale, 2009). This situation can however result in participants tailoring their responses to what they believe the researcher is looking for. In order to minimise this risk, an interview guide was developed and handed to the participants before the interview to allow them time to plan their answers and think about in depth responses.

As stated by Flick (2009) 'interview studies in most cases is about finding a variety of cases and experiences and sometimes about finding similar cases for comparison' (p.80). Using Flick's (2009) statement, a total of 6 participants were required for this research. The participants were selected using a purposive sample instead of a random sample in order to meet the set requirements for the research project (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Data was collected from gymnasts who had trained from around the UK. This provided a range of responses resulting in rich and in depth research into the reasons into the high drop out of young male

gymnasts. Sufficient data was collected to undertake comparisons and identify differences in experience.

However a potential limitation of this study is the sample may be perceived as 'convenient'. As described in Gratton and Jones (2010) convenient samples are 'chosen as it is convenient in terms of location and accessibility' (p.113), this may also result in bias in selection of samples due to researcher knowing the participants (Gratton and Jones, 2010). The set criteria for this study require a purposive sample so the gymnastics team were selected. Patton (2002) argues that purposeful sampling will result in information-rich data for in depth study as the participants are selected due to meeting a set criteria.

3.2 Pilot study

Before the actual interviews were conducted, a pilot study was conducted on an individual who met all of the interview criteria. The purpose of the pilot exercise was to test the procedure for the actual interviews. It also allowed the researcher to practice an actual interview. As detailed by a number of authors in research processes (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2009; Flick, 2009; Gratton and Jones, 2010) the quality of qualitative research in an interview comes down to the interviewer. A confident and experienced researcher will make their participants feel relaxed and at ease, build trust and develop a rapport, allowing them to talk freely (Flick, 2009).

The pilot study allowed the researcher to test the questions to ensure they flowed well, drew all the information required out of participants and were sufficiently detailed. It also allowed the researcher to gain feedback from the interviewee, about what they thought of the interview, if they thought any of the questions were misleading or if anything else could be added. From the pilot study it was decided that the responses gained from the participants were of a sufficient standard to include the responses in the research results.

3.3 Data analysis

In order to analyse the data, the raw data in audio form was transcribed into word format to allow analysis (Dawson, 2009). Once transcribed all the interviews were combined into a table of results (appendix A). A combination of analysis techniques were used. As the interviews began, it became clear that certain themes arose in each interview. This led to thematic analysis of the data. As stated by Dawson (2009), thematic analysis allows data collection and analysis to happen simultaneously. It also allows for previous research to be used to help explain emerging themes. To make the analysis of data easier at the end, a coding system was used to identify the common themes throughout all interviews. As described by Dawson (2009) content analysis is a method that systematically works through each transcript assigning, in this case, numbers to common themes that arise within each transcript. This is confirmed by Gratton and Jones (2010) as a key part in the analysis of qualitative data. It brings to light common themes throughout the pages of transcripts that the interview produced.

As well as the thematic and coding analysis, comparative analysis was used. This took into account the interview transcripts to identify common themes that appeared and also identify any anomalies (Gratton and Jones, 2010). This was aided by the coding which made it easier to locate similar themes throughout each of the transcripts.

3.4 Reliability and validity

As described in Brinkman and Kvale's (2009) work on interviews, the reliability of a research project is related to the issue of whether or not the results would be the same if carried out again by another researcher. In order to maintain reliability within this research project, the same procedure was carried out for each interview. Participants received the same interview guide (appendix B) and information sheet (appendix C) before the interview took place and each interview was recorded and carried out in a relaxed environment. By following this procedure consistency is maintained and another researcher would be able to conduct the same research if needed.

In order to create a successful research project the procedure has to ensure that it will generate valid results. The validity of research is concerned with how true the results are and if the method being used is actually achieving the desired result (Gratton and Jones, 2010). To ensure the method being used is valid, the pilot interview results were compared to common themes in the literature review, this ensured construct validity, in order to quantify face validity at the end of the pilot interview. Feedback confirmed that the questions all resulted in answers surrounding drop out from the sport (Gratton and Jones, 2010).

By using participants that the interviewer had built a rapport with through training, trust was already established. This would allow for the interviewee to feel relaxed in the interview and to supply rich and true responses resulting in valid results (Flick, 2009). However as stated before this may result in the participants wanting to fix the answers to what they feel the researcher is after (Gratton and Jones, 2010). This was minimised by the use of the interview guide.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Prior to any interviews taking place consent forms were completed by each participant (appendix D) This allowed the researcher to inform the participants about the procedure of the interview, why the data was being collected and how the data would be used (Gratton and Jones, 2010). As stated by Nelson, Silverman and Thomas (2005) it is of vital importance that all researchers protect the rights and wellbeing of all participants involved in the study as well as ensure all data is remains confidential to ensure privacy.

Furthermore before the interview was carried out it was confirmed with the interviewees that their involvement was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any time. Throughout the process of the interview no misleading questions were used and at no point were the participants pressured into answering any questions (Gratton and Jones, 2010).

In order to maintain confidentiality to the participant's responses, which according to Gratton and Jones (2010) is of utmost importance, a programme called Audio Memos was used to record the interviews. This programme allowed each interview

to be locked and a password to be placed on it to ensure confidentiality. Also once the interviews were transcribed they were saved onto a laptop that also had a password. This ensured that only the interviewer could access them.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.0 Discussion

As stated in the literature review, athlete drop out is considered as a multidimensional issue within sport (Enoksen, 2011). According to Welsh Gymnastics (2012), within gymnastics there is a large gender imbalance with a female to male participation ratio of 3:1. Furthermore the drop out rate of males is higher than that of females as shown by Leeds Metropolitan University (2012). This discussion is tasked with reviewing the results from the interviews conducted and the literature reviewed to formulate a discussion surrounding the objectives of the research project.

As detailed in Institute of Youth Sport (2010) work for British gymnastics, the average age that a gymnast starts gymnastics is 6.2. The average age that a gymnast drops out of the sport is 9.9. From the interviews conducted the average age that the participants started gymnastics was 7.1 years of age. The average age that the research participants stopped gymnastics was 10.2 years of age. These findings confirm the results of Institute of Youth Sport's (2010) work as the research participants were on average within 0.9 years of the starting age and 0.3 years of the drop out age.

4.1 Reasons why young male gymnasts start and enjoy gymnastics

Firstly it is important to take account of the initial reasons why the participants chose to take up gymnastics. As detailed in the literature review, young people choose to participate in sport for a number of reasons, Danish (1990) (cited in Ebbits, 2011) generated a list of 10 reasons why people chose to participate in sport an physical activity. As previously stated they are to have fun, improve skills, stay in shape, be good at something, excitement of competition, play as part of a team and socialise, challenge of competition, learn a new skill and to win.

From the research conducted it is clear that the reasons the six participants chose to start gymnastics is consistent with that of previous research. All participants were encouraged to participate by influential figures at a young age. There are a number of people who are regarded as influential figures and role models for children, parents are key to a child's participation in sport (Gassewitz, 2008; Alderman *et al*, 2010). Peers are also seen to influence participation in sport at all ages (Payne *et*

al, 2003). Influential figures such as coaches and teachers are seen as one of the main reasons to participate in sport at a young age (North 2007). Furthermore as shown by participant three, role models continue to influence participation throughout a sporting career. The participant stated 'I personally didn't chose to compete but umm my coaches thought that I should be so I umm did compete'.

As well as influential figures, participant two saw gymnastics as a progression on from trampolining. The participant details how he was encouraged by peers in trampolining to develop his skills by stating 'my trampolining coach encouraged me to, she suggested I go, go and start gym at my local club and a couple of girls from trampolining went there, said I should go'. Bailey *et al* (2013) sees this as a natural progression for children as a key role in participation is learning and developing new skills.

Participant six was informed of the benefits that gymnastics can have for the development of other sports by his parents. This confirms Broomfield's (2012) work surrounding gymnastics as a sport that develops fundamental skills and movement patterns. This is further confirmed by Welsh Gymnastics (2010) who state that gymnastics is seen as a fundamental sport which develops a wide range of fundamental skills which are transferable to other sports.

A key element of this research project was to examine the reasons why males took part in gymnastics. During the interviews the participants were asked what strong positive memories they have of gymnastics as a child. As some of the participants started gymnastics at a young age, the interviewees may be subject to problems of recall (Gratton and Jones, 2010). This is a limitation of the study and why the question was worded as 'what strong positive memories do you have?' In response to the 'what strong memories of gymnastics do you have?' question, the participants came up with a variety of responses. Participants two and three's strongest memories were that of winning and of success. This contradicts research undertaken by Bailey *et al* (2013), who discuss how winning and competition should not be seen as a key driving force to participate. Bailey *et al* (2013) discuss how, fun, enjoyment, teamwork and effort should be put above the competition and winning. Participants two and three show that their strongest positive memories of

participation as a child is that of winning. Demonstrating more ego-orientated goals than those of the other participants (Bailey, 2013).

The strongest memories for participants one, four, five and six were related to the fun and social element of gymnastics. This supports the work undertaken by the, Petlichkoff's (1992), Butcher *et al* (2002) and Institute of Youth Sport (2010) which shows that the priorities of young people are to have fun and to socialise.

4.2 The reasons why young males drop gymnastics

The first objective of this research project was to assess the reasons why young male gymnasts chose to drop out of the sport. Having analysed why males take up and enjoy gymnastics, the discussion will now focus on the period of withdrawal from gymnastics as a child.

As with the take up of the sport, influential figures were found to be a contributing factor to dropping out of gymnastics (Weiss and Petlichkoff 1989; North 2007; Bailey *et al*, 2013). Participants three, five and six all identified how their coach had a negative impact on their time in gymnastics. Participant three, (who reached the highest standard in gymnastics out of the participants) commented on how his coach was harsh and pushed them hard during training, resulting in lack of enjoyment by the participant. Participant three's response to the question 'was your coach harsh?' was 'yes, but it did get results'. The participant understood the benefits of hard training but it led to a lack of enjoyment and was a contributing factor to dropping out. This concurs with by Enoksen (2011) and the Institute of Youth Sport (2010) highlighting the 'fun' element of training, and how once a child stops enjoying training then it can result in dropping out. Participant three also explained how he felt the 20 hours a week led to burn out, he stated that "I think I got a bit burnt out from training about 20 hours a week at the end and like at such a young age don't really end up doing much else apart from training when you're doing that". This is supported by Baker's (2003) work, detailed in the literature review, of early specialisation and burnout. The intensity of the training was a key reason this particular gymnast left the sport.

Participant five's main reason for dropping out was due to a change of coach. The new coach that came in resulted in a different training style which participant five did not enjoy. Participant 5 stated that "A male coach came in and he more dominated it and was more of a boot camp style regime of training and I just found it not fun not social" Similar reasons were cited by a group of swimmers in work by Pelletier, Fortier, Vallerand, and Briere (2001) (cited in Bailey *et al*, 2013). Butcher (2002) supports the view that a lack of enjoyment at training contributes to drop out.

Participant six gave reasons for dropping out of gymnastics that further confirm previous research that dislike of the head coach (Butcher *et al*, 2002) and losing the fun element (Youth Sport Trust, 2010; Enokesen, 2011;) are contributing reasons into dropping out. The participant also describes how he felt the head coach "wouldn't let us progress past a certain level and just focused on the girls constantly." This demonstrates a lack of progression, resulting in athlete drop out. Which follows the same trends as one of the case studies in Dubuc *et al* (2010) work.

Participant one's reason for dropping out was due to an injury. The participant describes how "I broke my collar bone, which was one of the reasons I quit really ... it was worth having a break from gymnastics, and kind of just didn't really get back into it." Injury is a fairly common reason why sports people to drop out. As detailed in the literature review, Hume (2005) research found that 7% of 114 participant stopped gymnastics due to an injury that prevented them from continuing, demonstrating that participant one's reason for drop out is consistent with previous findings.

Another key theme that was identified from this research was the lack of time to train. Participants two, five and six all commented on how their gymnastics training had to stop due to a lack of time. Time constraint is a common reason for withdrawal from a sport, as shown in work by Enoksen (2011). As a child gets older and matures then their priorities begin to change. School work, paid employment and other sports may become more important and more opportunities outside of school begin to arise (Petlichkoff, 1992). This was the case for participants two who states that "I was still training for trampoline and this was a couple of times a week

plus in year seven I was trying to do all the sports possible” and participant five who describes how “I had just been accepted into the Hong Kong under 14s development squad for rugby and so training for this doubled”. Their other sports were progressing and the participants were competing at a higher level so in order to progress they stopped gymnastics. Participant six stopped due to having to get a job, which was deemed to be a higher priority than gymnastics training. Stopping sport due to time constraints confirms research by Dubuc *et al* (2010), who state that training becomes less important when compared with other life commitments.

Participant four was forced to drop out of gymnastics for external reasons. In this instance the participant had been forced to move away from his gym as his parents split up with the result that he was not able to carry on training. Had the external event not occurred the participant would have continued with the sport. Throughout the literature review no research was identified that detailed forced withdrawal from sport due to external circumstances. If further research were to be conducted, then a sample of sports participants who were forced to drop out of sport could be considered.

Throughout the research conducted, every participant describes how they had to rely heavily on their parents at a young age to attend gymnastics. They had to be transported to and from training and to competitions. This underlines work by Gassewitz (2008) who shows how parents must be there to support children. Participant three’s response to the question relating to parental involvement was ‘yes, definitely my parents drove me to competitions all over the south of the country and also to training which was about a 40 minute drive from my house’. Research conducted by Gassewitz (2008) confirms that support of the parent is crucial to allow children to participate in sport at a younger age. Support of the parents as a child gets older diminishes as they become more independent as demonstrated in Payne *et al* (2003) work. Payne *et al*’s (2003) work surrounds influences of sporting role models. The most influential person in a child’s early life is their parents. As they grow older this changes as they are introduced to more people.

Another reason that participant two dropped out was the stereotypes associated with gymnastics. He details how he used to get called ‘camp’ for participating in

gymnastics. From the literature review conducted, no previous research was found surrounding stereotypes and gymnastics. However after further reading it was found that there is limited research surrounding the issue. Schmalz and Kerstetter (2006) interviewed 444 students in years 8-10 (age. Part of the study was to find out which sports were classed as 'masculine' or 'feminine'. Out of the 30 sports assessed gymnastics was ranked as the fourth most 'feminine' sport with 46.3% of participants saying it was a 'girls' sport behind dance, ballet and cheerleading. Even with the success of the Olympics, certain sports still have issues surrounding sporting stereotypes. Tom Daley, Olympic bronze medallist in diving has been the focus of media attention which questioned his sexuality (Marin, 2012). Marin (2012) also details how gymnasts and divers have been assumed to be 'gay' for many years. The stereotyping in the sport was also addressed by participant three who commented on how 'stereotypes associated with male gymnasts like being, people thinking there gay and like, its ballet' Also participant four comments on how 'when I was younger people saying that gymnastics is poufy and don't appreciate how difficult the sport is'. This shows that the participants were exposed to stereotypes associated with the sport.

The objective of this segment of research was to determine the reasons attributed to drop out of the gymnasts at a young age. To summarise, participant one's reasons were attributed to injury which is confirmed in work by Hume (2005). Participants two and five's reason for drop out were related to lack of time and other training commitments, which follows on from research by Dubuc *et al* (2010) and Enoksen (2011). Participant six's reason for drop out was also related to a lack of time but for other reasons not associated with sport. Participant four was forced to drop out of gymnastics due to external circumstances. Burnout and early specialisation were the reasons that participant three dropped out which were associated reasons to participants in Dubuc *et al*'s (2010) study and also researched by Baker (2003). Other reasons that were outlined as reasons for drop out were linked to dislike of the coach (Institute of Youth Sport, 2010) and also an area for further development being stereotypes associated with gymnastics.

4.3 The reasons why the young male gymnasts change sports

Previous research supports the view that when stopping gymnastics, another sport is undertaken (Institute of Youth Sport, 2010). The Institute of Youth Sport 's (2010) work found that a total of 91% of their participants moved onto another sport from gymnastics, with Butcher *et al* (2002) supporting this and finding that 70% of their participants move on to compete in another sport.

Within this research all six participants continued to play a variety of sports. As only six participants were used in the study, there were no conclusive themes relating to the sports the gymnast moved on to. Participants four and five moved onto compete in rugby, participants one and two both took up swimming Both of these cases support the Institute of Youth Sport (2010) research into training after their gymnastics. Four of the six participants spoke about how they competed for their school teams in a variety of sports. This information shows that dropping out of gymnastics does not mean that the individuals stop sport all together but that they are moving on to other sports. This is supported by Butcher *et al's* (2002) work which concluded that at a younger age, children want to experience a wide range of sports and activities and do not necessarily want to be tied to one sport.

4.4 The reasons why male gymnasts return to gymnastics at university

From the research conducted all participants took a lengthy break from gymnastics. The longest break was participant one who recorded 10 years. The shortest break was participant four who finished gymnastics just before his 14th birthday so had a five year break.

After conducting the interviews, it is evident that the two main reasons participants take part in gymnastics at university is due to the fun and social element. All participants describe how they have fun during training and that the social element of the team is important. As described by Petlichkoff (1992) and confirmed in Butcher *et al* (2002) and Institute of Youth Sport's (2010) research these are key areas attributed to the reasons into participation of sport. Iannotti *et al* (2013) looks into the reasons for participating in physical activity as individuals get older. The research found that as males get older the reasons they participate begin to

change. Social motives (defined in Iannotti *et al* (2013) as having fun and seeing friends) become more important at an older age. This is consistent with the results of this research as all participants commented on how social motives are one of their reasons for participation.

Participants two, three and five all commented on how the gymnastics at university is more relaxed than other sports. One of the reasons being that there is no coach present at training. All the gymnasts are self-taught and drive each other to train. Participant two states how the gymnasts 'didn't have a coach and looked so driven to train' and participant five talks about how 'UWIC rugby was extremely serious ... I was looking for something more social, more flexible'. This again has resonance with Petlichkoffs' (1992) work on how fun and enjoyment are key to participation in sport, with the social aspect becoming more important with age (Iannotti, 2013)

In the research on dropping out of gymnastics as a child, none of the participants commented on the health and fitness benefits of taking part in sport and physical activity. This is consistent with Iannotti *et al's* (2013) work surrounding motives of participation throughout childhood and adolescent years. Findings from the work identified that children were not as focused on the health benefits as young adults are. The health benefits of taking part in gymnastics were a contributing factor of participants four and five's re-entry back into the sport. This is consistent with work by Weinfeldt and Visek (2009) who conducted research into 450 American students aged 18-25 into the reasons they participated in collage sport. The three main reasons identified were to improve fitness, exercise regularly and have fun. Participants four and five commented on how they wanted to participate in gymnastics to stay fit and to get into good physical shape. This demonstrates how the young adults wanted to stay fit in order to gain benefits from participating in physical activity, such as the benefits detailed by DoH (2009)

Another theme that arose from the research and is consistent with previous research, such as Weinfeldt and Visek (2009) and Iannotti *et al* (2013) was trying new things. Participants two and six both commented on how they took gymnastics to learn new skills. Learning new skill was also a reason why 73% of Weinfeldt and Visek's (2009) research participants took sports classes at university.

The reasons why participants decided to take a break from gymnastics differ significantly. At a young age, as confirmed by Alderman *et al*, (2010) and Gassewitz, (2008) role models were key in children starting up a new sport. Parents, coaches and peers all had an input into the participants starting. This was not the case at an older age. The social life and the chance to develop sporting skills were more significant factor in the young adults taking gymnastics back up at university, in support of work by Weinfeldt and Visek (2009) and Iannotti *et al* (2013).

This section of research looks into the objective of why gymnasts return to the sport as a young adult. The main themes that arose from the participants where the social and fun aspect of training, backing up work from Petlichkoff (1992), the Institute of Youth Sport (2010) and Enoksen (2011). Other reasons that the young adults decided to return were to increase their health and fitness, which is a key drive for participation in sport and physical activity (Weinfeldt and Visek, 2009). A new theme that arose and should have further research is that of training without a coach. Participants two, three and five comment on the relaxed atmosphere of the gymnastics and how they don't have a coach. This should be developed further to investigate the benefits and challenges associated with training without a coach.

4.5 Participant's opinion on how to maintain young male gymnast's participation in the sport

The final section of the interviews aimed to find out the opinions of participants on what needs to be done to keep young males in the sport, and what would have needed to be different for the participants to carry on training.

The main theme that arose from the research was the use of role models in the sport. Participants three, four and five all described how role models should be used to encourage on-going participation. As shown in work by Payne *et al* (2003) there is limited research on actual evidence to support the fact sporting role models actually increase participation rates. However, the prominence of role models in a related discipline may inspire gymnasts to continue with their chosen sport. For example, the participants also describe how using free running role models such as

Damian Walters, (an elite gymnast and free runner), could be used to increase the awareness of, and ultimately participation in, the sport. Free running has been a massive hit on the internet over the past five years and coaching qualifications in free running are now available (Attwood, 2013). This, according to the participants will appeal more to young males as it is not based on the aesthetics of gymnastics, but still incorporates many of the skills required.

Participant two and four felt that the success of the 2012 men's Olympics will promote the sport. Louis Smith (Olympic gymnast) also agrees with this statement. In an interview with the BBC Smith comments on how British Gymnastics is continuing to grow and the success of the Olympics motivates British Gymnastics even more (Williams, 2012). With the NGB for the sport having its highest men's success of any previous men's team and the legacy of the Olympic games, participant two and four felt that more young males will be attracted to participate in gymnastics.

Participant three's response to the question 'what would have had to be different for you to stay in the sport?' was that he was glad to have dropped it when he did otherwise he may not have picked it back up at university. The reason participant three dropped out was he felt he burnt out, due to overtraining, a common reason for many gymnasts to drop out (Dubuc *et al*, 2010). Dropping out of sport is not necessarily for good, but taking a break may rekindle motivation to participate.

Two of the participants, (three and four), stated that in order for more young males to enter the sport, then the stereotypes associated with gymnastics need to be expelled. Schmalz and Kerstetter's (2006) work found that 46.3% of year eight-10 students perceived gymnastics as a girls sport. With the use of role modelling as suggested above the attitudes of children may be changed. There is little research into the area and abolishing these stereotypes could result in more young males taking part.

Participant six commented that in order to stay in the sport, more effort could have been made by his local gym to encourage male participation. In addition, his lack of progression was a contributing factor to his withdrawal. The participant describes

how 'the coach wasn't really up to standard, and didn't let us progress'. This was also found in Weiss and Petlichkoff's (1989) work surrounding drop out amongst 1,440 competitive swimmers, which found that lack of progression resulted in drop out.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

This research project has been consistent with previous research surrounding sporting drop out (Butcher *et al*, 2002; Institute of Youth Sport, 2010; Enoksen, 2011; Iannotti *et al*, 2013). One focus of the research was to examine the reasons that young males drop out from gymnastics.

A common theme throughout the research was reference to the participants' coach. Coaches can have both positive and negative impacts on participants. Coaches act as influential people who may initially encourage participation (Bailey *et al*, 2013) however coaches can also put people off participating, as participant three, five and six identified. The negative attitudes toward their coaches, and the lack of enjoyment due to the coach's sessions both resulted in drop out from gymnastics. This is backed up Enoksen (2011) and Institute of Youth Sport (2010).

Another key finding surrounding the participant's withdrawal was the lack of time to train. As participants grow older, their priorities change. Participants two and five both had other training commitments and participant six stopped completely due to work commitments. This was also found to be the case in Dubuc *et al*'s (2010) work surrounding drop out of young gymnasts. Enoksen (2011) confirms that as an individual's priorities change, participation in sport may decline to free up time for other activities.

One theme that was commonly mentioned during the course of research was that Stereotyping in gymnastics had an influence over male gymnasts participating. Two of the gymnasts had experienced stereotyping and though it didn't necessarily affect them, they felt that it may prevent other males from participating in the sport. Stereotyping in gymnastics was confirmed in Schmalz and Kertis (2006) work where 46.3% of participants regarded gymnastics as a feminine sport.

The second objective of the study was to look into participation after withdrawal from gymnastics. All the participants in this study took part in a number of sports throughout childhood and after gymnastics took up other sports with varying levels of participation. Butcher *et al* (2002) concluded that parents should not become

concerned if their child drops out of a particular sport as the chances are they will take up another.

The main reasons for the participants taking up gymnastics at university were to have fun and for social interaction. This backs up work by Petlichkoff (1992) who comments on enjoyment being the main reason for participation. Enoksen (2011) stated that social elements will allow a higher level of enjoyment. Weinfeldt and Visek (2009) indicated that health and wellness benefits are more of a concern for young adults. This was endorsed by participants four and five who wanted to take part to maintain and build fitness. Other findings show how the participants found the relaxed atmosphere in training appealing. With no coach at training, the participants had a lot of fun, motivating each other. This reduces the chance of drop out related to dislike of coaches (Youth Sports Trust, 2010)

5.1 Limitations of research

Another limitation of the research was the lack of interview experience from the researcher. In order to develop the most in depth results an interviewer needs to be experienced (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009). At points throughout the interviews the interviewer could have elaborated on questions to generate richer data. It is felt that the lack of interview experience resulted in themes arising but not being probed for expansion.

A possible limitation of this study is that of participant recall. As stated in Gratton and Jones (2010) interviewees may struggle to recall events of when they are younger. The questions being asked to the participants were that of activities undertaken as a child. Some of the participants, such as participant 1. Participant 1 started gymnastics at the age of five, when asked why he started gymnastics his response was "Umm I think it was because my brother did it". This example shows that he may be unsure as he uses the words I think. If the research was to be carried out again then the sample may focus in on people that had recently dropped out of gymnastics.

5.2 Additional research recommendations

From the research conducted, it is clear that there are two areas where additional research would be appropriate. Firstly the stereotypes associated with gymnastics. There is limited research surrounding people's opinions of male gymnastics. Further work needs to be undertaken on attitudes and stereotypes towards the sport, particularly amongst younger people with a view to increasing participation and reducing drop-out.

The second recommendation relates to attitudes of young people towards coaches. The participants commented on how the relaxed attitude at training was very appealing as there was no coach. At an older age from this research the participants enjoyed not having a coach. Research should look to develop the idea of young adults and training without a coach. The research could look into the perceived benefits of not having a coach, and what would be lost if no coach was present in training sessions, for example the knowledge and discipline that a coach has.

5.3 Industry recommendation

After assessing the responses from the interviews, recommendations would be made to focus on what the young males want, which based on participant feedback is a focus on free running. Classes are beginning to be developed to focus on free running sessions, for example VGA gymnastics academy now have two free running sessions (VGA, 2013). However high demand for these classes mean that children are being turned away. More cases need to be run to accommodate for the demand.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Table of Results

Theme	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6
Age starting gymnastics	I was about 5 years old	I was fairly young err think I was around the age of 10.	Since the age of about 4	I was around 7ish	at around age 8 in primary school	Around 9 years old
Age finishing gymnastics	8 when I broke my collar bone.	Start of year 7 so I would have been 12.	Around the age of 12	Was just before my 14 th birthday	I was around 12 years old	14
Reasons for starting gymnastics	<p>It was because my brother did it.</p> <p>It was easy for us to go at the same time so I could go into younger classes while he was taking part in the older ones.</p> <p>Yer I would say they got me into it, and I really enjoyed going once I started it</p>	<p>I chose to start gymnastics as my trampolining coach encouraged me to, she suggested I go, go and start gym at my local club and a couple of girls from trampolining went there, said I should go should go and join so guess it was due to their encouragement</p>	<p>I think it was cos my sister did it and like at that age I wanted to be like her, she was the big older sibling who I looked up to</p>	<p>I started because my parents encouraged it. It was straight after school so it was convenient and it was in the gym on the way home.</p>	<p>At that age I was more concerned about just learning cool stuff and flips, I mean this is when YouTube got big and I was seeing people do it online. And I really wanted to do it. As well as this in my Primary School I had umm a female err PE teacher who was umm really enthusiastic around gymnastics and err trampolining so she encouraged me to go join a gymnasium outside of school and start training.</p>	<p>Just trying all sports really, think my parents would of uhu said something, they wanted me to try everything, said gymnastics was a good sport, good benefit for everything else, so decided to join</p>

<p>Did you choose to compete?</p>		<p>Err I was only in gymnastics for a short time and at this club there was no chance to compete so no I didn't</p>	<p>I personally didn't chose to compete but umm my coaches thought that I should be so I umm did compete.</p>	<p>Yer I started to compete first in the club competition, it was only small, on a small scale</p> <p>I really enjoy winning</p>		<p>Yer at my school we had a competition each year, thought I would just take part in, part in that</p>
<p>Reasons you didn't enjoy gymnastics as a child</p>	<p>kid who always disrupted the class</p>	<p>The only problem with gymnastics was the lack of time to train.</p> <p>We didn't have all the equipment that males should have, no single high bar, p bars or rings</p> <p>boys had two sessions a week, but one of these had a lot of older boys in it and it wasn't as fun really. Went a couple of time but didn't really fit in.</p>	<p>I had a coach that was very harsh but got good results and umm we were stretching splits err for about an hour or so and he pushing us so hard that pretty much all of us were in tears and umm one of my team mates ended up biting the coach until he stopped stretching him</p>	<p>the worst memory I have is of when I severely sprained my ankle doing a round off, it really hurt and it set me back a bit</p>	<p>Conditioning at that age, I obviously, I was so young and I wasn't fully aware of what it took to err participate in the sport. Conditioning was a major negative for me. I hated waking up and going conditioning sessions. Umm small injuries umm with my shoulders and err my shoulders especially but other than that, the main thing was err a change in coach. Err I got on really well with the first coach then she left and</p>	<p>Yer the head coach, she was a nightmare, Mrs Jones, really didn't like her to be honest don't think she liked any of the boys, naa didn't like anyone, she would never really help us, we were the big minority in the club, only about 5 of us and she just drilled us all the time, didn't let us progress onto the next stage,</p> <p>always like hard when you go into the conditioning room which was named the torture</p>

					we had another coach. A male coach. Came in and he more dominated it and was more of a boot camp style regime of training and I just found it not fun not social and as someone who wasn't competing not what I was looking for.	room, it reminds me of how hard we had to train,
Reasons for dropping out of gymnastics	I broke my collar bone, was one of the reasons I quit really	<p>Started getting some stick for doing gymnastics. Some people thought it was a bit camp</p> <p>Also it was a lack of time, I was still training for trampoline and this was a couple of times a week plus in year 7 I was trying to do all the sports possible umm, we had training for sports on the same day as</p>	We had quite a harsh coach and it made training [laughter due to distraction] training difficult, umm soo I err wasn't really enjoying it towards the of like my competitive stage of gymnastics, and umm yer so I I think I got a bit burnt out from training about 20 hours a week at the end and like at such a young age	So err my parents split up and me and my mother had to move. We sort of moved in with my grandparents for a bit and err we didn't know how long we would be there. While going through all this it kind of meant I couldn't get to training or anything. Obviously because we lived quite far away and there wasn't really	Firstly it was a change in coach had deeply decreased my motivation and at that particular gymnasium. It was the only one around that I could get to at that age. As well as this I had just been accepted into the Hong Kong under 14s development squad for rugby and so training for this doubled umm and had no time	Training was on a Wednesday after school and I had to start earning money, got to that age, so I got a paper round, problem was paper round was on a Wednesday as well, so in the winter I couldn't fit it all in, plus the progression had stopped completely. Mrs jones didn't let us move on to the next like stage so it kinda just got a

		<p>gymnastics so I had to make a choice and chose to try the new sports.</p> <p>the skill got a a bit repetitive once we had learnt the flips there wasn't much else we could do as we didn't have any of the guys kit but it was still fun.</p>	<p>don't really end up doing much else apart from training when you're doing that, umm so I think it was just time for a change</p>	<p>much facilities in the area so I err chose to stop. Loved to of carried on with gym, I really enjoyed it but just one of those things I had to do.</p>	<p>for a lot of gymnastics training sessions. And at this point as well was my first sponsorship for skateboarding. Umm so I was beginning to get paid and had contracts and things like demos and certain events I had to attend and gymnastics, between skateboarding and rugby. Gymnastics just didn't fit and the change in coach had unmotivated me and just didn't want to go so felt that it was time to withdraw and focus on other sports.</p>	<p>bit repetitive and obviously swimming, I decided to take swimming up more as obviously I was showing I was good at it so I tried to train more, so better.</p>
Participation in other sport	Only did swimming lessons once a week but that because my mum made me otherwise I wouldn't of really	Trampolining, gymnastics, basketball, badminton, swimming, football rugby. Most of the sports	Played a bit of football when I was younger when I was like 7 or 8	So gymnastics, rugby, football err athletics, swimming, and then anything we did in PE lessons at school	I've always participated in surfing. Umm around the world which has been great fun. Umm from a young age	badminton, tennis, quite a few, highest one properly swimming got to county

	<p>bothered doing anything else.</p> <p>my parents did encourage me to take something up so I took up judo a few times a week.</p>	I played was for school team		I like to think I was really quick and agile, err it was from gymnastics training that made me really enjoy training	as well I participated in skateboarding and got to a semi-professional level and was paid at events to do demos for kids in the neighbourhood and things like that. I competed from the age of 6 till 12 years old in umm British Kyuokushinky karate for great Britain	
Reasons for starting gymnastics at university	my friend dragged me along to the gym team and I had also seen it on the tele and wanted to get back into it	I was asked to start trampoline in a practical session by a lecturer so I took it up for a year. We had a couple of sessions in the gymnasium why the gymnasts were in there, and it looked class. They didn't have a coach a they looked so driven to train. After their competition I	it was due to the social aspect that was there for the university gymnastics that wasn't so much there when I was a kid. Err I think a lot of people err I figured a lot of people doing gymnastics at university just for a laugh rather than take it really seriously.	Umm on the open day we came into Syd Arron gym and saw the gymnast training. It made me want to start all the training again so when I came I found them at the fresher's fair and went along to the open trial. When they explained about their social life and training it really appealed	I was looking for something more social, more flexible and that could keep me healthy but be fun at the same time and UWIC gymnastics really seemed to offer this and at the open days.	Honestly had no intention of starting gymnastics again, was playing rugby at 6 th form but when I got to uni didn't want to play rugby here cos everyone was a lot bigger. Was thinking of starting a new sport, hockey or lacrosse or something but to be honest one of

		decided to give it ago and slowly stopped trampolining and move onto gymnastics				my flat mates didn't want to go to the gym trials by himself so asked if I wanted to go with him. Even though I was hung over still went. Was the best decision I've ever made, never really looked back. Walked in turned into a child, equipment was awesome, never had trampoline into a foam pit before which was awesome plus one of the older gymnasts obviously new from home convinced me to come back. Seems like I never left.
Have to rely on parents at a younger age	Parents said I was too young, so they came with me every time. I wasn't really allowed to leave the gym till they	I had to be taken to training by my parents at the start. But when my mum changed jobs I had to ride there	Yer defiantly my parents umm drove me to competitions all over the south of the country and err also to training	Yer, of course 100%. I really relied on my parents. When they could not take me to competition or	Training was in walking distance so it was fine getting there and at that age I was trusted to walk to training and back.	Yer my parents had to take me to training and pick me up, when I was older I was allowed to ride but yer obviously at

	got there and picked me up either.		which was about err a 40 minute drive from my house.	training I couldn't go	So I didn't need to but umm at the same time I would if, like later training sessions on, well when it was dark, my parents were quite concerned so I would have to rely on them to drop me there, but as I got a bit older, past the age of 10 they did trust me and felt it was safe enough	the start I wasn't old enough so they had to take me. Obviously they paid for training, so if it wasn't for them, I couldn't of joined gymnastics.
What did you enjoy most about gymnastics as a child	I remember having lots of fun, seemed like a massive playground.	When I had been doing gymnastics for abit I was allowed to do flips on the floor and I loved it. I've always enjoyed trying new things and throwing myself about. I really had fun playing around in the gym and we always had good fun at training.	Going to the South West Gymnastics championship and err the team for Dorset which I was on came away with a silver medal.	Winning my first gold medal. My parents were there supporting more and to be honest I was supposed to beat the other guy, but I nailed my routine so was really pleased. A close group of friends that trained together. It was really good we all pushed each other to	Strongest memories was my first time learning to tumble just simple tumble round off, back flick, back summy. The social side of it. The messing around in gymnastics gym with umm, the other kids my age, all the older kids like to train as a team umm and just helping each	

				<p>progress and motivate each other so really enjoyed training. Plus we all got on really well with each other and our coach err he was a nice guy, coached us really well which made it really enjoyable.</p> <p>I suppose so he was really fun, he made the sessions more enjoyable and err sort of had a laugh with us and make everything like I said enjoyable.</p>	<p>other out with things and it was all really social and everyone was really open and you could go and just try it out on the floor.</p>	
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<p>What do you enjoy most about gymnastics at university</p>	<p>Really good fun, err the sessions are kind of unstructured as there is no coach so we umm when we focus on routines we help each other. But then again we do</p>	<p>We do a lot of free running, just for fun in training. Just chucking stupid things we see people like Little B and Damian Walters, we also have a lot of social with</p>	<p>I'd say one of the most important things nowadays for me is defiantly the social aspect, err but to be honest I just enjoy throwing myself about and chucking</p>	<p>I have always loved the sport and really enjoy the conditioning behind training. I'm really into my health and fitness as well and gymnastics training helps me</p>	<p>Thing I enjoy most about gymnastics is the social element. We all come in every training session, you know, prior to competitions we will be training hard and will be</p>	<p>Focusing on what children enjoy, and especially for males its free running, many males just come into the sport and want to do free running, learn all the cool stuff they</p>
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	<p>just play around in the foam pit, being kids again</p> <p>a lot of fun at uni, the social side is awesome, err we have some awesome nights out and it's a good break from all the uni work.</p>	<p>some big nights out.</p>	<p>ridiculous skills.</p>	<p>maintain a good physique. Umm also the social life behind the team is great fun, we are a really tight bunch and have a good laugh with epic nights out so err gymnastics has made university for me and I love it</p>	<p>really omitted, but we also know that not everyone is competing, and not everyone wants to like make it their life and everyone has studies and other things so we come in, we can mess around for 2 hours, try things, learn things, things that aren't going to use in competition. Things that look cool, and outside of it is the socials. We have a really good social sec who organises everything, we go on a trip each year, just things like that, it's just really really fun and just get involved in. we all see each other, were like a family and we see each other outside of training as well.</p>	<p>see people doing, like for instance on YouTube. Or on TV or things like that and just. If we had a focus on sessions on just on doing free running, not so much about neat, tidy competition style routines but, tumblers, cool things to do with ropes and bars and rings and different apparatus.</p>
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<p>What do you feel needs to be done to keep young male gymnasts in the sport</p>	<p>more structured sessions, not having other kids miss behave.</p>	<p>The more relaxed side of things like free running should be advertised more and show how it can develop into actual gymnastics. The Olympics was amazing over the summer and I guess seeing how well the men did will increase interest in the sport.</p>	<p>think one of the most important things is role models for them, and umm I think as a country we are doing quite well with that at the moment. Especially with the success of the Olympics err with Lewis Smith and Daniel Purvis. Umm and I think apart from that is one of the important things is getting rid of the stereotypes associated with male gymnasts like being, people thinking there gay and like, its ballet and that kind of stuff.</p>	<p>I remember when I was younger people saying that gymnastics is poufy and don't appreciate how difficult the sport is. Think it would put some people off to be honest but after the men's Olympics more people will be attracted to the sport</p>	<p>Mainly it's focusing on what children enjoy, and especially for males its free running, many males just come into the sport and want to do free running, learn all the cool stuff they see people doing, like for instance on YouTube. Or on TV or things like that and just. If we had a focus on sessions on just on doing free running, not so much about neat, tidy competition style routines but, tumbles, cool things to do with ropes and bars and rings and different apparatus. Obstacle courses anything like that would keep it like keep males, especially at</p>	<p>, the coach wasn't really up to standard, she didn't let us progress. Obviously I needed money at the time, everyone needs money when they get to that age. And obviously that I trained for other sports, obviously played a lot, swam a lot. Had to train constantly on one sport really and wasn't that good at gymnastics so had to drop out.</p>
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					<p>university level, and even at a younger age really interested in the sport. Because a lot of it is it looks cool, and we know that we are getting fitness out of it but that's not really our main focus, we like going things that are fun. It is enjoyable it is fun, the sense of achievement of going things. So free running sessions focusing on what people actually want to do. Whether they want to competed, whether there doing it for fitness, whether they are doing it purely out of enjoyment. So I think that's a major focus.</p>	
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All answers are transcribed word for word

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

1. Introduction

1.1. Make participant feel welcome

1.1.1 Hi there, how are you doing today?

1.1.2 Can you please tell me what sports you have participated in and what has been your highest level of participation ?

1.2. Explain purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the multidimensional issue of sports withdrawal from gymnastics at a young age within male gymnasts. There is a high drop out rate at a young age from the sport and the participation numbers of males compared to females is particularly low. For your information the current participation rates are 22.5% male and 77.4% female. This interview is aiming to find out the reasons that you chose to drop out of gymnastics. What other sports you changed to and why you have chosen to return to the sport at university. At the end you will be asked what, in your opinion would of needed to be changed for you to stay in the sport.

I would also like to thank you for you participation in this study.

2. Participation as a child

2.1. At what age did you start participating in gymnastics?

2.2. Can you explain the reasons you chose to participate in gymnastics?

2.3. Did you ever choose to compete?

2.3.1. If yes at what level did you compete and why did you choose to compete?

2.4. Can you tell me about any strong memories you had of gymnastics?

2.5. Do you have any negative memories of when you participated and if so can you please explain them?

2.6. While you were participating in gymnastics were you participating in any other sports? If so which sports?

3. Period of withdrawal

- 3.1. At what age did you stop participating in gymnastics?
 - 3.1.1 if yes to “did you ever chose to compete” did you stop competing before withdrawal from the sport?
- 3.2. Do you feel there was a single specific reason for you stopping gymnastics or was it a number of issues? If it was for a number of reasons can you please explain these.
- 3.3. When you dropped out of gymnastics did you continue with any other sports?
 - 3.4.1 If yes to 3.4 – what? To what level? Why did you choose that sport?

4. Re Entry into the sport

- 4.1. When you came to university what encouraged you to return to the sport and be part of gymnastics again?
- 4.2. Now you are back in the sport, do you intend to compete, and at what level?

5. How to keep young male gymnasts in the sport

- 5.1. In your opinion what needs to be done to keep young male gymnasts in the sport?
- 5.2. What would have needed to be different for you to stay in the sport when you were younger?

APPENDIX C
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Participant Information Sheet

Title of Project

To explore the reasons into the high drop out rate of young male gymnasts and explore the reason that they return to the sport as young adults

Background

The purpose of this study is to examine the multidimensional issue of withdrawal from gymnastics at a young age within male gymnasts. There is a high drop out rate at a young age from the sport and the participation numbers of males compared to females is particularly low. For your information the current participation rates are 22.5% male and 77.4% female. This interview is aiming to find out the reasons that you chose to drop out of gymnastics, to find out what other sports you changed to and why you have chosen to return to the sport at university. At the end you will be asked what, in your opinion would have needed to be changed for you to stay in the sport.

Why Have You Been Asked To Participate

The reason that you have been asked to participate is that you have said that you fit the criteria for the study. Which are as follows

- To be male.
- To have participated in gymnastics at a younger age for at least a year to show commitment (rather than a passing phase).
- To have dropped out of gymnastics and have taken up another sport.
- To have returned to the sport at university.

If you do not fit this criteria, please inform me.

If You Agree to Take Part In This Study

If you are happy to take part in this research, you will be asked to attend an interview, at a time and place most suitable for you. The interview will last no longer than 30 minutes. You will be provided with an interview guide, detailing the questions you will be asked.

What Are The Risks?

I do not anticipate any risk if you choose to participate in this interview. If you are not happy to answer any of the questions then please feel free to pass. If you want to withdraw from the study at any time please just say.

Your Rights

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time with no repercussions. Once the interview is completed, a typed up copy of your interview will be sent to you and you are given the opportunity, to amend any answers you want to.

What Will Happen With Your Results

The interviews will firstly be transcribed as a hard copy. Both the transcripts and audiotapes will be securely stored. Your names will not be used so that confidentiality can be maintained. Your results will then be compared to other responses.

How I Protect Your Privacy

In order to fully protect your information, all your personal information will be stored away from consent forms.

What Happens Now

If you are happy to take part in this study please sign the consent form and a suitable time and location will be arranged to conduct the interview.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank You

Daniel Smith

APPENDIX D
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

