The recruitment process sport recruitment as a case in point.

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THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Sport Recruitment as a Case in Point

by

Michael John Cooper

A Thesis
submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
through the Department of
Sociology and Anthropology in Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree
of Masters of Arts at
the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

1988
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the process of recruitment as it occurs in sport. The perspective of symbolic interaction provides the theoretical framework, focusing on the negotiable, emergent, processual, and interactive nature of human group life. Data was collected via qualitative interviews, documents, and observations. Sport recruitment is described through the perspective of the recruit and recruiter. Initial insights into recruitment as an interactive process are offered. Stages of recruitment are described and recruiting strategies are typified. Several of the key aspects that emerged were also developed generically.
DEDICATION

I would just like to thank everyone who was supportive throughout this research.
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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

Recruitment, when used in a sport connotation, is a term most often associated with college athletics in the United States. At this level of sport recruitment is a highly visible and publicized activity, usually involving the offering of materialistic inducements such as athletic scholarships. What we frequently fail to recognize is that the concept of recruitment has much wider applications. Recruitment occurs at all levels of sport, including little league, campus recreation, city leagues and high school, although at the lower levels it tends to be much more informal and subtle in nature.

Yea, there is always recruiting...trying to get the best athletes on the team. (college football player)

Individuals are also recruited into a variety of activities and social groups other than sport, including deviant activities such as prostitution, youth gangs and stripping; and legitimate activities such as blood donating, the military, occupations, home parties, leisure activities and religious groups.

Recruitment is one of three processes of initial involvement into groups and activities identified by Prus

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(1980, 1984), the others being seekership and closure. While it is recognized that initial involvements often reflect a complex interrelatedness between these three processes, this study focused only on the activity of recruitment. Prus (1980; 247) defines recruitment as the attempt to involve an individual in a particular activity and/or lifestyle. Griff (1970; 145) limits the term to refer to the process of bringing new members into the group. For the purposes of this study recruitment was defined as an interactive process in which attempts are made to involve an individual in a particular activity and/or social group. One recruiter explained recruitment in the following manner.

"Yea... when you mention recruiting to me, it is synonymous with showing interest. If you don't do it you are in trouble."

The acquisition of new members through recruitment is important to many social groups and organizations.

"You have got to get a lot of those kinds of athletes. And that means recruiting. Going out there and interacting and communicating with these people. This is the critical part, you have got to communicate with the potential student-athletes. You just don't expect them to fall on your campus."

(rejecter)

This is true whether discussing sport, the militia or blood donating.

Despite its importance as a social process, recruitment seems to have been overshadowed in the literature by more general concepts such as initial
involvements and socialization. The objective of this research is the study of the process of recruitment as it occurs in sport. The perspective of symbolic interaction provides the theoretical framework, focusing on the negotiable, emergent, processual, and interactive nature of human group life. Data was collected using participant observation, which was defined as a variety of methods that allow the researcher to gain the perspective of those involved in the activity. The research methods utilized were informal or semi-structured interviews, document analysis and direct observations. Although the focus was on sport recruitment, key concepts within the process of recruitment emerged and were developed generically.

The outline of this thesis is as follows. The next section, chapter two, is the review of the literature. Chapter three deals with the theoretical perspective, that being symbolic interaction. The methodological considerations are presented in chapter four. The recruitment process is discussed in chapter five. Recruitment, as is true of most interactive processes, progresses in developmental stages. Chapter six includes some of the important points that warrant consideration in discussing the recruitment process. Some recruitment strategies that emerged from the data are presented in chapter seven. The relevance of third party involvement is examined in chapter eight. The conclusions are presented
in chapter nine. Included in this last chapter are a summary of the major research findings, some final remarks and the generic implications of this study.
CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

Research dealing specifically with the process of recruitment is limited. Most of what has been written has emerged within the larger theoretical framework of career contingencies which, as proposed by Becker (1963), refers to a career or stages of involvement in a given activity. The career contingencies framework was further developed by Prus (1977, 1980, 1984). Interactionists have studied the career contingencies of involvement into activities to determine how individuals become involved in an activity, maintain this involvement and become disinvolved. While it is recognized that initial involvements reflect a complex interrelatedness between several processes, this study will focus exclusively on the recruitment aspect.

In general, there has been surprisingly little research dealing specifically with the process of recruitment into sport. This is not surprising in the sense that sport generally has been neglected in sociological research but it is surprising as sport recruitment is so controversial in the media. Most material dealing with recruitment into sport is from a non-sociological perspective. In order to emphasize the generic nature of recruitment, literature taking into consideration recruitment into activities other than sport
was also reviewed. This includes recruitment into selected deviant activities, as well as religious groups, art, ballet, and home parties. This provides some insight into the recruitment process despite the lack of literature dealing with recruitment into sport. It also allows some comparative analysis which is conducive to developing the more generic conceptualization of the recruitment process.

An attempt was made to review primarily literature utilizing an interactionist perspective. For this reason recruitment into groups such as the military, occupations, and academics which have been examined from theoretical perspectives not focusing on the interaction process were not be reviewed in this section, despite the fact that recruitment is dealt with extensively in that literature.

Many of the studies reviewed for this thesis tend to deal with initial involvements rather than recruitment per se. So the recruitment aspects must be teased out of more general literature. Research focusing on initial involvements from an interactionist perspective are especially frequent in the field of deviance. Here recruitment is often dealt with under such headings as initial involvements, initiations, becoming a member, conversion or learning the ropes. To illustrate, some of these headings include initial involvements into ballet (Dietz, 1985), initiation into the mafia (Dubro, 1985), becoming a nudist (Weinberg, 1965), becoming a marijuana
user (Becker, 1963), or conversion to the doomsday cult (Lofland, 1966). For the most part these studies suggest that recruitment into these activities does occur and then go on to briefly describe this process. This material is somewhat fragmented with regard to recruitment since the intent was to study initial involvements rather than recruitment in itself. This type of research was the primary source of information for this review, since few interactionist studies focus primarily on the process of recruitment.

According to Vold (1979: 234), studies of professional criminals indicate that they do recruit and train new members. This statement is well supported in the literature. Miller (1978) states, for example, that there are two central perspectives on recruitment into the rackets. The first proposes that this organization actively attempts to recruit members from several social strata (Miller, 1978: 93). The second perspective maintains a deemphasis on the existence of formal recruitment, suggesting an informal process involving the use of family and friends (Miller, 1978: 104-105). This distinction between informal and formal recruitment practices is an important one. While this research dealt more with formalized recruiting, some consideration was also given to informal recruitment. Literature based on the mafia or organized crime often illustrates the
recruitment practices of this type of group. In a book based on the life of New York mafioso, Joey Gallo, Aronson (1973; 132-133) discusses the attempts by Joey to recruit members to the mafia while doing time in prison. Joey's intent was to strengthen his gang with blacks. Aronson suggests that he offered them career advancement and something close to equal opportunity for muscle.²

Johnstone, (1983) researched the recruiting practices of youth gangs. He (p.262) concluded that these gangs do in fact engage in recruiting and that they typically recruit unaffiliated, street wise youth. This process is said to be typically voluntary, although strong-arm tactics may be used. Membership is for the most part a sought after honour, offering a positive attraction and excitement to the recruit. Carter, Glaser and Wilkens (1977; 190-191) examined gang recruitment within a prison setting. Two gangs were found to be skeptical of penitentiary members and thus did not recruit in the prison. The other two gangs did recruit in prison as vigorously as they did on the street! Carter et al. report that the frequent solicitation is forceful and highly sophisticated. The "fish"³ will often be confronted by

² For an interesting discussion on the initiation into the mafia, see Dubro, James; MOB RULE ; INSIDE THE CANADIAN MAFIA, 1985, CH. 3.

³ Inmate dialect used to refer to a newcomer in the prison
both a hard and soft sell. As stated by Prus (1980; 247), there are ranges of how hard or soft the attempt is to involve. Within the recruitment process in sport this was found to be quite relevant.

Dietz (1983) discusses how individuals are recruited into killing as an occupation. Interviews reflected that individuals are in fact recruited into this activity at various stages in their criminal careers. This typically occurs informally through the efforts of criminal acquaintances. Prus (1977; 41) offers some insight into how an individual becomes involved in card hustling. He states that when attempting to locate replacements, crews typically seek the services of established hustlers. If a seasoned veteran is not available, the crew will expand their field of recruitment to include individuals with lower levels of skill and experience. This is similar to recruitment into sport.

Individuals are also recruited into deviant occupations such as prostitution, stripping and taxi-dancing. Dressel and Peterson (1982; 390) report that male strippers are usually recruited through informal channels, such as family, friends and acquaintances. Money, lifestyle advantages, sexual contacts, excitement and job satisfaction are all incentives that motivated the men studied to become involved in this activity (Dressel and Peterson, 1982; 392). Female strippers also tended to be
recruited informally (Casey, Peterson & Sharper, 1974; Prus and Irini, 1980). Suggestions, advice and information given by friends were frequently cited reasons for becoming involved (Casey, Peterson & Sharper, 1974; 13). Involvement in stripping is often facilitated by the occurrence of a financial crisis (Casey et al., 1974; 19; Prus & Irini, 1980; 105; Miller, 1978; 161-162), making the woman more receptive to the recruitment pitches.

Recruitment into prostitution is also informal in nature (Luckenbill, 1985; Davis, 1981; Gray, 1972; Prus and Irini, 1980), as is recruitment into taxi-dancing (Cressey, 1932). Luckenbill (p.147) states that male prostitutes are usually recruited informally by friends and acquaintances rather than openly by agents. Gray (p.410) reports that female prostitutes are also typically recruited through informal networks. Gray (p.410) found that some women were warned against becoming involved by individuals already participating in this activity. This typifies what could be termed recruitment, which is used here to refer to attempts to inhibit involvement. This was found to be significant within sport as well, as will be illustrated in the data analysis section. Davis (p.309) found that peer groups are a major avenue of recruitment into prostitution. Cressey (1932; 72-74) found that many taxi-dancers become involved through informal networks as well.
Despite the prevalence of informal methods of recruitment into deviant activities, some more formal practices are also evidenced. Exotic dancers and taxi-dancers are occasionally recruited through newspaper advertisements. Some individuals may be solicited directly by the owner or representative of the club. Prostitutes have been noted to be solicited into the activity by pimps. Weinberg's (1981; 292) study of nudism is illustrative of how individuals can become involved through a variety of formal and informal means. Men were found to become interested through other people, magazines and mass media. Women were found to become involved through their husbands and other people. Thus individuals are recruited into deviant activities through a variety of informal and formal means, with informal tending to be the more common route.

Recruitment into religious groups seems to occur in a similar manner. Harrison (1973/74; 390-391), in studying the process of initial commitments to the Pentecostal religion, found that initial involvement was through informal contacts and friendships. Wallis and Bruce (1982; 102) point out that some religious groups are not successful at public recruitment since their members' commitment to the group and its beliefs are not strong enough. For this reason they must recruit through personal networks. In comparison, groups such as the Hari Krishna
often sever social networks outside of the Krishna, and thus must seek recruits in public places. Shaffir (1982/83) studied the recruitment practices employed by the Jewish Baalei Tshuvah. He (p.36) states that while this group does not have an elaborate recruiting system, it does actively recruit. This is done by persuading young men who have come to visit to stay longer. These visitors are brought in by Teshuva solicitors who are dedicated to finding potential recruits. This role is strikingly similar to the role played by the recruiter in college athletics. Shaffir (p.37) parallels recruitment with the sales process, saying that some solicitors are better salesmen. These individuals tend to be more effective recruiting agents, in that they are more gifted in persuasion and argument. Recruitment is often compared to sales, as will be illustrated.

Recruitment into religious groups was also studied by Prus (1976). He (p.128) points out that recruiting agents will manage dissonance in order to recruit new members. Recruiters are said to promote dissonance and then convince the recruit that joining the group is a viable solution to alleviate the discomfort dissonance creates. Prus (p.130) found that members do in fact solicit in the larger community but that the most effective means are members bringing in friends. According to Prus (1976; 127), recruitment in this case refers to
any activity promoting support of the movement objective. This reflects the process of acquiring new members, maintaining current ones and preventing existing ones from leaving. In this sense recruitment refers to more than simply initial involvements. Recruitment can be viewed as a continuous process throughout the involvement in the activity.

Recruitment into such groups as the arts (Griff; 1964, 1970) and ballet (Dietz, 1985) has also been studied. Recruitment of artists was found to be open, with few being refused. Griff (1970; 147) reported that there exists a whole social paraphernalia for getting persons committed to their artistic identities. Griff (1964; 68) also stresses the importance of scholarships when recruiting, which parallels with academic and American college athletic recruitment. Griff (1964; 73) states that the greater the ability, the greater will be the demands for this ability. Recruitment was found to reinforce the self concept as an artist (Griff, 1964; 73). Recruitment in sport also has a significant impact on the self concept of the athlete, as will be discussed in the conclusions. Griff (1964; 88-89) listed several key conceptual distinctions in the process of recruitment. The first is formal versus informal recruitment, formal meaning using more conscious inducements. The second is positive versus negative, meaning factors encouraging entry versus those
hinderings. According to Dietz (1985; 1), recruitment into the ballet begins at an early age. If a talented child is found he/she is recruited early. Nations such as China, Russia and Romania will send the child to state boarding schools. These patterns vary in North America. Parents and dance teachers recruit the child into increased involvements. These children are discouraged from involvements in other activities. This compares with religious groups, such as the Hari Krishna, which discourage contacts with those from outside the movement. It also illustrates the significance of socialization in the recruitment process. In essence, these children are recruited into the activity by a variety of significant others. This is also the case in sports.

Rooney's (1961) discussion of group process amongst skid row winos also provides some insight into the process of recruitment. Rooney (p. 166) states that the bottle gang is formed through the efforts of an initiator with some capital who recruits other members willing and able to contribute. Before a third party can be recruited he/she must be shown clearly how he/she will benefit from his/her involvements in the activity (Rooney, 1961; 167). Rooney (p. 175) suggests that in order to sell the behavior to new recruits, there must be a sales pitch, and an explanation of the benefits to be derived. For example, activities such as stripping and prostitution are financially
attractive to the recruit. The military now offers college educational programs to its recruits. Individuals are given free gifts for hosting home parties. Colleges offer academic and athletic scholarships, while lower level bar league sports may offer recruits a few free beers after the game. The offering of inducements is a common element throughout the process of recruitment into sport, as will be shown. In the case of the bottle gang this sales pitch is rather simple, "Three of us have 28 cents in on a bottle, do you want to get in on it." (Rooney, 1961; 175)

Rooney (p.175) also points out that convincing someone to make a radical alteration in one's life style, such as joining a communal family, requires a much more complete sophisticated sales pitch than recruiting members into a bottle gang. For example, Wallis and Bruce (1982; 102) point out that since becoming a member of the Hare Krishna is such a great transition, this group would have to recruit more extensively. Rooney (p. 175) argues that recruiting a person for a behavior pattern that is not conventionally legitimate requires a more complex argument. When recruiting into deviant activities, it may be necessary to incorporate some sort of legitimization into the sales pitch. Rooney states that whether recruitment is formal or informal, it requires reflective self consciousness on the part of the recruiter. Frisby and Prus (1986) support this by saying that good
recruiters have the ability to take the self and others into account. Frisby and Prus's study of home parties indicates that in order to be successful, strong recruiting is needed at all levels. The key to being successful is to be able to recruit individuals to sell under the recruiter. Recruitment strategies used include asking relatives, friends, and acquaintances; calling strangers on the phone; going door to door; using displays at fairs/malls; and advertisements in newspapers (Frisby & Prus, 1988; 8).

As mentioned, Prus (1980: 247) defines recruitment as an attempt to involve the target in a particular activity and/or lifestyle. Recruiting agents can play major roles in determining people's life chances.

As such, recruitment ranges from explicit, high pressure attempts to involve persons in an activity, to a grudging consent to give the individual every chance to become involved; from a very structured formalized approach, to a very casual kind of joint agreement to do something together.

(Prus, 1980: 247)

As was mentioned earlier, there are ranges of how hard or soft the attempt is to involve. Three levels of recruitment identified by Prus, ranging in the degree of explicitness, are inadvertent involvements, sponsored involvements, and solicited involvements. According to Prus and Irini (1980; 248), "solicited involvements" refer to situations in which persons more explicitly endeavor to involve others in particular activities. This is the most
explicit level of recruitment. Scott (1981; 187) states that this type of recruitment implies the direct intervention of someone within an organization, and often involves the offering of incentives of some description. Scott continues to say that within this more explicit type of recruitment there are various degrees of solicitation which may be determined largely by considering the incentives offered the individual, and the manner in which they are offered. The recruiting agent tries to make the prospects more enticing to the recruit. Prus goes on to say that the target (recruit), if aware of the solicitation, may use this to their benefit in bargaining. This can certainly be compared to the higher levels of sport.

Sponsored recruitment, according to Scott (1981; 188), "involves a purposeful intervention on the part of some significant person on behalf of the individual or individuals about to become involved." Prus and Irini (1980; 248) state that "sponsored involvements, building on pre-existing bonds, tend to be more stable than those arising from necessity and, overall, represent one of the most common forms of involvement." The sponsor in these cases is often a friend or family member who, in Prus's terms, "sets the person up within the organization or group."

Inadvertent recruitment represents the least
explicit form of involvement. Prus and Irini (1980: 247) define inadvertent involvements as situations in which persons find themselves experiencing unanticipated options. According to Scott (1981: 189), "this is likely to occur when an individual encounters an opportunity at a time when she/she is unencumbered by other activities and/or demands." This study focused more on solicited recruitment, although the other types, particularly sponsored, are relevant as well. As pointed out by Prus (1984: 301), a classification of the forms of recruitment does not tell when and how people are recruited into involvements. One of the objectives of this thesis was to address this need.

Prus (1977: 163) also suggests some principles that make a target more receptive to becoming involved in deviant activity. First, persons seem most vulnerable (or receptive) to new involvements when they become disenchanted with their present situation. As you may recall, women's involvement into stripping is often facilitated by a financial crisis. This principle has some relevance to recruitment into sport as well. Second, when the new activity can be more readily integrated into the target's current orientational structure, it is more likely to be considered. Third, when the agent relates to the target in a non-threatening and personally accepting fashion, the agent is more likely to be defined as a
trustworthy other. Fourth, through continued contact, targets become increasingly exposed to codes justifying their new options. Fifth, conversion to a new perspective is further consolidated as targets make more extensive option investments. Sixth, conversion as a state of being is problematic and so conversion to a new perspective (or a reconciliation with an old one) can always take place. Keeping in mind that these principles were not developed with reference to sport, one function of this study was to contrast these principles with those that emerge in sport. There is some variance since sport, though at times involving illegitimate practices, is for the most part a legitimate activity, whereas deviant activities are not. Thus the principles that facilitate becoming involved in sport, are expected to vary somewhat from deviance.

Literature dealing with recruitment into sport from a sociological perspective is scarce. Curtis and McTeer (1981) studied recruitment into marathoning. They (p. 77) found that the influence of others was relatively important. Self-serving factors, such as getting into shape, losing weight and stress reduction were significantly more important. A useful source of material, though written from a non-sociological perspective, is a book entitled The Recruiting Game (Rooney, 1980). Rooney studied the process of recruitment into college athletics. This book was an important source of information, as well.
as offering an insightful view into the recruitment process into sport. Rooney (p.7) describes recruiters as having varying degrees of honesty, from those who are honest and straightforward with the athlete, to those who simply say whatever the recruit wants to hear. Rooney (p.25) continues to say that all recruiters are salespersons working for the athletic department and thus must be expected to portray the school in a biased manner. Rooney (p.7) also distinguishes between high and low pressure attempts to involve the recruit. Rooney (p.22-25) states that this process begins with the collecting of information on the potential recruit, including a range of appraisals and assessments. Recruiters are said to keep the recruit interested by staying in touch, which is achieved through a series of letters, phone calls and visits. Letters of intent usually signify the final stages of this initial involvement. One recruiter equated recruiting with selling: "you have to know what the customer likes or dislikes, wants or doesn't want (Rooney, 1980:30)." This material is useful in that it offers the perspectives of both the recruit and the recruiter.

Popular literature, such as The Recruiting Game, The Big Game, (Cady, 1978), and Meat on the Hoof (Shaw, 1972), which are autobiographical or based on personal experiences, served as an important source of material dealing with recruitment into college athletics.
Recruitment into sport is also commonly dealt with in newspapers and sports magazines, which made these a source of data.

One of the few studies dealing with recruitment into sport from a sociological perspective was Scott’ s (1981) study of women intercollegiate basketball players. Though Scott’s focus was on larger interactionist concepts such as negotiated identities and career contingencies, some discussion dealt specifically with recruitment. This discussion focused on the three levels of recruitment discussed earlier in this section, solicited, sponsored and inadvertent involvements. It is important to keep in mind that this study dealt with women’s basketball within a Canadian university context. Scott (p.187) reports that in this context, solicited recruitment occurs at a relatively low level. This is primarily due to the fact that Canadian universities cannot offer athletic scholarships or any other type of financial incentive. Scott (p.187) states that at this point the best that can be offered legitimately is a little recognition and advice concerning potential playing status. She continues to say that these non-material awards can have a significant impact. This relates back to Rooney’s statement concerning “benefits to be derived.” Scott reports that many players indicated that they had known the coach (or had spoken with her) prior to registration at that school. The
following quotes illustrate solicited recruitment within this context.

Basketball didn't have anything to do with it at first, but then I met Dora (the coach) in the summer at the summer league and she kept saying, "Oh you are coming to our school eh?" And she kept sending me all of these pamphlets and stuff. (player) (Scott, 1981; 188)

I met Janet (the coach) at a basketball camp and she talked to me when I was in grade 12 and said she wanted me to come here. She asked me what my ambitions were in school and when I said Kin. or physical education, she told me that their school had a really good program. Her talking to me like that definitely influenced me—one actually I think that decided it. (player) (Scott, 1981; 188)

"Sponsored recruitment", as reported earlier, represents one of the most common forms of involvement. According to Scott (p.189) this form of recruitment does seem to occur fairly often amongst those included in her sample. As said earlier, sponsored involvements build on pre-existing bonds. The following example illustrates sponsored recruitment within the context of Scott's study.

I came to Downsview I think because I was influenced by a physical education teacher in high school who went here and she was kind of my ideal teacher. She was my basketball coach and she was great, plus Downsview had the academic program that I wanted. (player) (Scott, 1981; 189)

"Inadvertent Involvement" is the least explicit level of recruitment. Scott (p.189) reports that several players
clearly found themselves in situations they had not anticipated, and chose to take advantage of emerging opportunities to play basketball. The following example illustrates this:

I didn’t know anything about the basketball program when I went there and I hadn’t been contacted or anything. I went there thinking I was going to play volleyball, basketball, track — the same things I did in high school. Basketball tryouts were before volleyball tryouts, and that was it. (player) (Scott, 1981; 190)

Recruitment does vary in explicitness, ranging from a hard sell to a soft sell. The level of recruitment varies depending on the benefits that can be offered, the level of the sport and many other factors. The athletic system in American universities will vary significantly from that of Canadian due to athletic scholarships. Recruitment in the higher levels of sport, particularly in the United States, tends to be much more explicit or “solicited.” Recruitment at the lower levels of sport tends to be much less explicit, with sponsored and inadvertent recruitment playing a much larger role.

Prus (1984) has examined the concept of career contingencies (patterns of involvement) within the context of sport and leisure activity. Though theoretical in nature, his paper does serve as a useful frame of reference for this research. In illustrating the generic nature of career contingencies, it follows that one can
conceptualize recruitment generically as well. As was evidenced in this review, recruitment into a wide variety of social groups and activities occurs. An interesting exception was illustrated in the study entitled *When Prophecy Fails* (Festinger and Shachter, 1956). Festinger et al. report that this group did not recruit since it was felt that when an individual was ready, he/she would come to the group. Thus for ideological reasons, this group claimed it did not engage in recruiting. It is safe to say that individuals are recruited into a wide variety of social groups and activities. Recruitment is an important process in society and, as stated by Prus (1980, 1984), recruiting agents play major roles in determining life chances.

In spite of this, little is known of how the recruitment process occurs in interaction or how individuals are recruited into involvements. Few studies in sociology focus on the process of recruitment, particularly within the activity of sport. Prus has distinguished between three types of recruitment, yet admits that this classification does not tell when and how people are recruited into involvements. By focusing on the process of recruitment as it occurs through the activity of sport, this research provides some insight into how people become involved in activities.
CHAPTER THREE - PERSPECTIVE

Symbolic Interaction

The theoretical perspective used in this thesis is that of symbolic interaction. "Symbolic interaction focuses on the nature of interaction, the dynamic social activities taking place between persons (Charon, 1979; 23)." Thus the individual is seen as an active agent within the situation. The emphasis in this thesis was the processual and dynamic nature of human group life. Recruitment is a social process and as such can be viewed within the framework of symbolic interaction. According to Blumer (1969; 12), group life itself is process. The perspective of symbolic interaction allows one to understand the nature of such a process.

Focusing on the processes by which interaction unfolds, the meanings experiences have for participants, the problematic and negotiable aspects of group life, interactionists have long been concerned with how people become involved in activities.

(Prus, 1984; 1-2)

As the review of the literature illustrates, recruitment as process has been neglected as an area of sociological study. Examining recruitment as a form of interaction was the major focus of this study.

According to Blumer (1969; 2), the perspective of
Symbolic interaction encompasses three basic premises. These premises are as follows:

1. human beings act towards things on the basis of meanings
2. meanings are derived through social interaction
3. meanings are handled through an interpretive process

Symbolic interactionists maintain that we act on the basis of meaning and since meaning is derived through interaction, it is important that we examine the nature of that interaction. Whereas symbolic interactionists view meanings as central, Blumer (1969; 2-3) states that the importance of meanings is often neglected by those using more deterministic perspectives. According to Prus, proponents of more deterministic orientations inevitably neglect the socially constructed nature of human group life. Thus symbolic interactionists do not see behavior as predetermined but as an active constructing process. As Charon (1979; 23) puts it, we take each other into account, act, perceive, interpret and act again. Interactionists reject the notion of human behavior as being determined by a variety of social and physical factors. Symbolic interactionists suggest that humans create, maintain and transform their social world through interaction.

This perspective also recognizes the existence of multiple meanings or realities (Schutz, 1971). Realities are constructed in the process of interacting with others.
"In contrast to positivists, interactionists recognize that the world could have multiple meanings to people. People act towards objects in terms of meanings and meanings are shaped by interactions with others (Prus, 1984; 2)." Thus rather than having a single objective reality, this perspective recognizes the existence of multiple, socially constructed realities that reflect the orientations of the various actors. This introduces an interpretive, reflective element to human behavior. We are constantly defining situations, interpreting meanings, and negotiating outcomes through our interactions with others. This approach allows us to recognize the existence of a recruitment process that involves a variety of individuals acting in relation to one another.

As stated by Scott (1981, 9), meaning is seen as problematic and negotiable, arising out of a process of social interaction in which actors continually designate, define and interpret. In negotiating problematic encounters, we are interested in what others have to offer as well as a desire to promote our own perspectives and interests.

"Focusing on the dynamic and problematic nature of human group life, symbolic interactionists are primarily concerned with understanding how human actors work out their activities in various contexts and within the framework of the symbolic realities they construct." (Scott, 1981; 11)

Thus the notion of negotiated outcomes is an important
conceptualization within this study of the recruitment process. Blumer's (1969; 72) conception of joint activity, defined as the processes by which people work out lines of action with respect to one another, was also of relevance to this study. Negotiated outcomes and joint activity are two central concepts within the process of recruitment.

In summarizing the key characteristics of the perspective of Symbolic Interaction, Prus (1985; 2) states that group life is said to be (a) perspectival, (b) reflective, (c) negotiable, (d) relational and (e) processual. Prus continues to say that this position allows for (a) the existence of multiple realities, (b) people's capacities for ongoing interpretations or symbolic thought, (c) people's abilities to influence one another's viewpoints, definitions and experiences, (d) people's tendencies to develop particularistic bonds with others, and (e) the emergent, ongoing nature of group life. These dimensions are all theoretically important in studying the process of recruitment, as they are in all forms of group life.

One important concept within the perspective of symbolic interaction is that of role taking ability. Turner (1962; 20) identifies role taking as the central process in interactionism. Role taking, in Denzin's (1970; 23) terms, is taking the role or the perspective of the acting other. Turner has further suggested that the actor
engages in role taking in order to determine how he/she ought to act toward the other. In order to act in relation to one another, individuals must role take. Mutual symbolic interaction is dependant upon effective role taking. Without this it becomes difficult to relate to the perspective of the acting other. Role taking will be an important concept to consider within the recruitment process, as it would be in any interactional process. McCall and Simmons (1966; 133) have pointed out that people vary in role taking ability. Being an effective role taker enables one to project what any given other may want to hear. Those with greater role taking ability should be much more effective in the recruitment process. Thus role taking is one of several central concepts within the process of recruitment. Some recognized roles within the recruitment process that were examined include the recruiter, recruit, scouts, appraisers and coaches/teachers. Attention was also directed to role models, parents, reference groups and a variety of significant others.

Other important concepts are found in Goffman's (1959) work on the presentation of self and the management of impressions. Goffman states that the way in which the individual presents the self will guide and control the impressions that others have of him or her. The actor will usually attempt to influence the situation in such a way
that the self is presented in a favourable light. Self presentation and impression management are important concepts within the process of recruitment. Those involved in the process, especially the recruit and recruiter, present themselves to the acting other in a variety of ways. Within sport, some of these self presentations include interactions with a variety of individuals, game films, letters, recruiting visits and a range of appraisals, including awards such as most valuable player, all league honours and so on. The recruiter must be able to present the self, as well as the organization that he or she represents, in a favourable light.

In relation to this, it is important for those involved in the recruitment process to be able to distinguish between those who are straightforward (honest) and those who are simply saying what the other wants to hear. This is often a difficult task in and of itself and is further complicated by the fact that many recruiters are good salespeople who excel at reading others. As both parties in the recruitment process are somewhat aware of the impression management taking place, one is compelled to look to discrepancies between the impressions given and the impressions given off.⁴ The building of reputations

⁴ For a more complete discussion on this, see Goffman, E., THE PRESENTATION OF SELF IN EVERYDAY LIFE (1959), p. 1-16.
through past experiences is important with respect to this. This is also important within the recruitment process. It is important to point out that although the intent of this thesis was not to study role taking or the presentation of self per se, these concepts are very important within the process of recruitment.

It is also important to consider the structure or content of experiences (Goffman, 1974; McCall & Simmons, 1966), as well as the impact of the social structure (Denzin, 1966). According to Denzin (p.10), the impact of social structure on groups and individuals in interaction must be considered. While the theoretical focus of this thesis is on the emergent nature of group life, one cannot ignore or neglect structural influences. Although interaction is emergent and processual, it is within the broad overlying structure of the situation. According to McCall and Simmons (1966; 7), usually we improvise our roles within broad limits. Limits such as gender expectations and geographical considerations were taken into account in this thesis.

As an example, the nature of past experience (knowledgeability) has an important impact in the process of recruitment. Those who have had previous involvements in an activity are able to relate experience to present involvement. This enables the individual to have a greater awareness of what to look for, how to act, what approaches
are effective, what to expect or what is expected, when involved in this activity. As an illustration, a recruiter may know which strategies were effective in the past. With reference to sport, the individual will benefit from his/her own prior involvements, as well as experiences passed on by significant others in the way of advice. These significant others may have developed a familiarity with the activity through experience. In the case of sport, this group may include coaches, former teammates, parents, and older siblings. Thus the structure of experience is an important consideration in the process of recruitment.

The influence of social structure as a limiting factor is also an important consideration. The process of recruitment is regulated by varying degrees of structure. Levels of sport involving a higher degree of skill tend to be more regulated, as illustrated by the N.C.A.A. which governs college athletics in the United States. The N.C.A.A. specifies a number of regulations and guidelines that are expected to be followed by those involved in the recruitment process. This structure must have an impact on this activity. Lower levels of sport such as Windsor city leagues (volleyball or softball for example) or the campus recreation program tend to be less formal, involving lesser degrees of structure.

This section presents the theoretical perspective of
symbolic interaction as it provides a context for the analysis of recruitment. Particular attention was paid to such concepts as the presentation of self, the management of impressions, role taking, the structure of experience and the impact of social structure. Attention will not be limited to these concepts, thus keeping within the principles of grounded theory, as well as in following the generic focus of this thesis.

**Generic Sociology**

As the study of human group life, sociology should naturally be concerned with the discovery and development of abstracted dimensions of social processes germane to human group life.

(Prus, 1985; 1)

The goal is to translate the specific materials under study into instances of widely relevant and basic human types or processes.

(Lofland & Lofland, 1984; 124)

In following this line of thought, this thesis has both a substantive and generic focus. "Substantive research tends to be descriptive and topical in nature, while to conceive of a situation generically is to discriminate and bring forward social aspects that possess more generalized, more common, more universal relevance" (Lofland, 1976; 30). Lofland (p.31) continues to say that to scrutinize a

5. This relates to Glaser and Strauss's (1967) argument that theory should be grounded in data.
situation generically is to seek out its abstract, formal analytical aspects. According to Lofland (p.32), it can be assumed that any topical situation possesses potential for conception in a vast multitude of generic ways. He feels that we must strive to go beyond the topical content of situations and seek the generic aspects or features of situations.

It is felt that generic concepts must be grounded in substantive research, making both levels of emphasis important. Throughout this thesis theory was grounded in data, as proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Several sociologists, including Blumer (1969), Prus (1985), Couch (1984), Lofland (1976), and Wiseman (1985), have argued for the need of a more generic sociology. Simmel (1950) also sought to differentiate content from forms of association. The 1986 Qualitative Research Conference, held in Waterloo, Ontario, was devoted to the topic of generic social processes. As Blumer (1969; 42-43) has emphasized, we must strive to go beyond descriptive accounts of what is in the empirical social world. This implies the use of theoretical analysis and the unearthing of generic relations. Prus (1985; 1) contends that sociology is a discipline saddled with too much substantive baggage. Prus (p.5) further argues that unless we are able to develop a set of concepts applicable across a wide variety of settings, we will only accumulate
endless scattered islands of data. According to Miall and Herman (1985; 2), it is important to extend grounded theory past this notion of little islands of knowledge. This can only be accomplished by exploring conceptual variations in a plurality of settings and through the comprehensive pulling together of forms. This generic dimension allows us to maximize conceptual development (Prue, 1985; 16). In one way or another, these authors have argued that we need to place more emphasis on the development of a generic sociology.

Recruitment has generic implications. Prus (1985; 16) contends that concepts such as recruitment should be examined generically in an attempt to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of any/all group life. Throughout this research attempts were made to draw out the generic aspects of the recruitment process. With this in mind, literature dealing with recruitment into a variety of activities and/or social groups was reviewed. This included recruitment into deviant activities, such as stripping and prostitution; religious groups; home partice; as well as sport. This served two main purposes. First, since there is little interactionist literature pertaining to recruitment into sport, this offered some initial insights into the recruitment process. Secondly, it allowed for comparisons to be made between this material and the data collected on recruitment into sport.
CHAPTER FOUR - METHODOLOGY

Data was collected using participant observation. According to Denzin (1970; 185), participant observation is a commitment to adopt the perspective of those being studied. Blumer (1969; vii) states that we must consider the nature of the empirical social world under study. This allows the researcher to gain the intimate familiarity (Blumer, 1969; Lofland, 1976) with the activity that is required when using the perspective of symbolic interaction. Thus in order to understand the recruitment process, it is necessary to gain the perspective of those engaged in the activity. The utilization of participant observation within an interactionist framework allows one to do this.

Within this research, participant observation was defined as a technique that employs a variety of methods (Denzin, 1970; 185; McCall and Simmons, 1969; 1). McCall and Simmons (1969; 1) stated that it is probably misleading to regard participant observation as a single method. This study, through a combination of informal or semi-structured interviews, direct observations and document analysis, examined the recruitment process as it occurs in interaction through the social world of sport.

This characteristic blend of techniques involves some amount of genuinely social
interaction in the field with the subjects of the study, some direct observation of relevant events, some formal and informal interviewing, some systematic counting, some collection of documents and artifacts, and openendedness in the direction the study takes.

(McCall & Simmons, 1969; 1)

This study was not limited by the use of a single methodological technique. According to Weick (1980; 409), multiple measures are important not only to give independent and converging indications of validity, but also because the errors inherent in each imperfect measure tend to cancel out when these measures are used for multiple confirmation. This definition of participant observation implies a triangulated perspective (Denzin, 1970), which Abrahamson (1983; 61) refers to as the utilization of multiple methods.  

As was mentioned, the research methods that were used in this study were informal or semi-structured interviews, direct observations and document analysis. Lofland (1976; 8-9) contends that the goal of qualitative interviewing is to construct records of action in progress from a variety of people who have likely performed these actions. In this case interviews were done with individuals involved in the recruitment process in sport. These interviews were informal and as advocated by

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6. For a more complete discussion on the advantages of triangulation see Denzin (1970), THE RESEARCH ACT, CH. 12.
Lofland, became semi-structured as the data collection became more focused. This means that data was analyzed continually while being collected. Continual analysis serves to develop a preliminary sense of domains and patterns that exist conceptually within the process of recruitment, while at the same time serving to focus future data collection. As proposed by Weick (1980), domains and relations that emerge from the preliminary analysis were tested and confirmed in the later, more focused data collection. This is in agreement with the general principles of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), which was discussed earlier.

A total of fifteen interviews were conducted. The interviews ranged between one and two hours in length. All of the interviews were tape recorded with the exception of one (due to recording error). These tapes were then transcribed in order to be analyzed. Data was collected from individuals who have been involved in the recruitment process in sport. These interviews were selected as they became available through informal networks. Towards the later stages of the study concerted efforts were made to collect data from recruiters. The respondents tended to be very receptive to being interviewed, with no one refusing to be interviewed. The two individuals who were still involved with a major U.S. college (as football players), although very cooperative, were somewhat more hesitant.
Both were concerned about anonymity and had some reservations about being interviewed. The majority were involved in football and to a lesser extent hockey, although data from sports such as baseball, volleyball, basketball, and soccer was also collected. Those interviewed were, for the most part, involved in the higher levels of sport such as college athletics and Junior A hockey. Some were interviewed with regard to their involvement in more than one sport. Both Canadians and Americans were interviewed. Most of those interviewed were male, although some data on women was also collected. Although the majority of those interviewed were recruits, some data was collected from recruiters, high school coaches, and parents. Some of those interviewed have been involved in more than one role within the process. For example, one individual was interviewed with regard to his involvement as a recruit, a high school coach, a recruiter, and as a parent.

Documents provided another source of data. Articles on recruitment into sport frequently appear in newspapers and sports magazines. This material was a useful source of information. Articles dealing with sport recruitment were

7 There are three Junior A leagues in Canada (tier 1), the Ontario Hockey League, the Western league and the Quebec league

8 For a more complete description of the interview sample see Appendix A
collected from three local newspapers; The Detroit Free Press, The Detroit News, and The Windsor Star; as well as from magazines such as Sports Illustrated and Sport (1986 through 1988). As mentioned in the review of the literature, books dealing with the recruitment process into sport were also useful. These included Meat on the Hoof (Shaw, 1972), The Big Game (Cady, 1978), and The Recruiting Game (Rooney, 1980). Two sets of recruiting letters, supplied by two of those interviewed, were used as well.

Direct observations and experiences were also a valuable research method in this study, since the researcher and two members of the thesis committee have been or are actively involved in sports subcultures. Through being involved in sport and interacting with those involved, one observes and develops an understanding of the recruitment process. This was incorporated within the methodological framework and provided another significant source of data.

Organizing the domains and patterns of interaction that emerged from the data proved to be a difficult task. Once analyzed, the interviews were disassembled with a pair of scissors (separating each significant statement) and organized loosely into categories. This served as a starting point. The material was then further arranged into subcategories and more specific patterns began to
emerge. The results of the document analysis were organized in a slightly different manner. In this case, patterns of interaction that developed were categorized and then transferred to cue cards. This provided the foundation for the discussion. We will now turn to the results of the data analysis.
CHAPTER FIVE - THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

According to Napier and Gershenfeld (1985; 458), groups develop through predictable stages of growth over time. The recruitment process, as is true of most interactive processes, occurs in progressive developmental stages. As mentioned in the literature review, Rooney (1980) proposes that recruitment occurs in stages. Stages of the recruitment process were developed from the data and are presented in this chapter. The stages presented in this section will focus on high school and college recruitment.

Stage One - Screening and Appraisals. At this point recruiters are beginning to identify potential recruits. The identification of talent is very important in this process and recruiters rely on a variety of sources for appraisals. Networking is important in the recruitment process. This involves building up a group of coaches, former players, alumni and a variety of others who serve as scouts for the recruiter. These individuals play a very important role in the identification of talent and will often serve as a recruiting agent as well. High school coaches are another important source of assessments. Through ongoing contact recruiters rely on high school
coaches for information on players.

The colleges, every year they will send out forms and on the forms they will ask you, they would like you to have your best players on it. Do you think this player could play for us and who are the best players in your league? And then the colleges will send letters back to these ballplayers.

(high school coach)

The initial part of the process is finding out who the kids are. And that is basically done with ongoing contact with high school coaches....My first question is, "Who have you got who is good enough to play college ball?" And he will give you a list of names.

(college recruiter)

Colleges will also rely on "bush beating", which involves recruiting specific areas, in order to find potential recruits.

...where I went to school they had a head recruiter and he had a couple of assistants, grad assistants, but they all recruit. They all go around all over the country, they all have their own section of the country and they find those kids.

(college football player)

Boston college, or one of the colleges from out east, the guy was probably told, "You have the Detroit area, hit all of the high schools and see what you can get."

(high school coach)

"Bluechip" lists, all league, all state or national honours are another source of information for recruiters, as are newspapers.

We subscribe to newspapers from the areas that we feel are good recruiting areas for us. And we clip everything out of the paper regarding high school football in those areas.

(college football recruiter)
Other players are also an important source of information. Players may be asked to list the best players in their league.

Another vehicle open to recruiters is high school camps. Some camps involve only high school seniors and are basically recruitment camps. This allows recruiters an opportunity to assess, as well as recruit, potential prospects. These camps are often seen as "meat markets" by those involved, but attendance is often necessary in order to indicate interest.

I don't enjoy going to those because of the atmosphere that is created. As I say, you will get coaches, they walk around these kids and pull kids out of drills trying to talk to them. And when the practice session finishes, the kids end up bouncing through a line of ten coaches talking to them. I don't know what anybody gets out of that, I really don't. The problem is if you don't show up, then they will take that as a message. A lack of interest. So what I do is I show up and I show my face but I don't get involved. I am there, that's it. I much prefer the way, when I run a camp it is strictly developmental.

(college football recruiter)

Developmental camps are set up for high school players who are not yet seniors and serve a variety of purposes in addition to recruitment. They improve the quality of football at the high school level. They cut down on the "meat market" mentality that prevails at camps involving only seniors. They help to develop relations between high school and university coaches. In spite of this, the main purpose of developmental camps is still recruitment.
The main reason you do the camp is to help your recruiting effort. But you set it up with another, a different emphasis. You set it up with a developmental emphasis. The kids get a lot more out of it, the coaches enjoy it a lot more because there is not the pressure of recruiting on them. And I think it is just a better experience for everyone. Plus the fact that you are getting your recruiting benefit out of it. You are getting the kids on your campus, you are getting them in a situation where you can work with them, where you can get to know them and they can get to know you.

(college football recruiter)

Like let's face it, the schools don't do it just out of the goodness of their heart. They are doing it because they want to improve the level of football coming out of high school which in turn helps them.....Like I know they had one here and it is not purely altruistic why they do it.

(college football recruit)

At this stage the recruiter is interested in collecting information from as many sources as possible so that a list of potential prospects can be developed.

In essence I am compiling a list of names. I do the best that I can to get as much information on the kid as I can before I even contact him.

(college football recruiter)

It is important at this point not to overlook or eliminate any possibilities.

Recruits are beginning to think about whether or not they are good enough to play college ball. Appraisals such as all league honours are useful to both the recruiter and the recruit. This gives the recruit some idea of what others think of his or her ability. The recruit is also beginning to consider where he or she might like to attend
college. At the lower levels of sport the athlete may begin to think about where he or she would want to play the next season.

Stage Two - Exploration - At this point colleges initiate contact with the potential recruits. These contacts, which are quite tentative and formal in nature, are often made through the high school coach of the player. Recruiters will send an information package about the school and the athletic program to the recruit. The recruit is asked to fill out and return the information forms that are included in the package. This initial contact is meant to indicate some interest in the recruit and to determine whether or not there is any interest on the part of the recruit.

And the next step is literature is sent to the athlete. Sometimes in care of the school, sometimes to his home, depending on whether or not I have gotten his home address yet. And it is just basically introductory literature outlining a bit about the university, outlining a bit about the athletic program. More or less what we are trying to determine is if there is any interest on his part. In that package is a form which I ask him to fill out and return to me if he wants more information. If you get that form back you automatically know you are dealing with a kid who really has some interest.

(college football recruiter)

We at Notre Dame have just recently learned of you and your athletic accomplishments. Hopefully, we can find out more about you and your interests. Enclosed are two questionnaires for you and your coach to
complete and return to me. These will enable us to begin to compile information about you. Our format of evaluation is based on several items: grades, overall transcript, playing film, personal interviews, etc. Primarily, it all begins with this questionnaire.

(recruitment letter)

We would like to take this opportunity to inform you of our interest in you and would like to know more about you as a student and as an athlete. With this in mind, we are enclosing a questionnaire which we would like you to return to us as soon as possible. The speedy return of this questionnaire will be indicative of your interest in attending the University of Miami. However, the submission of this questionnaire implies no obligation by you or our university.

(recruitment letter)

Failure to return the questionnaire is typically seen as indicative of a lack of interest on the part of the recruit. In this case the recruiter may decide to make another attempt at initiating contact or simply scratch the recruit off of the list.

Earlier this summer we sent you a questionnaire. Since you have not returned the same to us, we presume it may not have reached you. We are enclosing another questionnaire which we would appreciate you completing and returning.

(follow up recruitment letter)

At this early stage recruits generally will return the questionnaires, wishing to keep as many options open as possible.

I did send all the questionnaires back, no matter what school it was from. I mean even small schools, I sent everything back. My junior year I didn't turn anyone down... I mean I filled everything out, sent it off.
Like my father was telling me, you never know what is going to happen. The big schools may change their minds and you may have to fall back...

(college football recruit)

Once the initial contact has been made, recruiters may visit the high school in order to sell their school, as well as to learn more about the recruit. Many recruits are unfamiliar with the process and rely on the assistance of others such as high school coaches and counsellors. Recruiters are beginning to put players on their A, B, C, and D lists by order of preference.

And then they have lists. They'll have an A, B, and C list. The A list are all of the best ball players and they may have 100 ball players on that list and of course they are not going to get them all. If they can't get enough of that A list then they will move to the B list.

(high school coach)

You are down to a list of kids that you have ranked. Blue chip kids, very good kids, good kids, average kids and you start going through them.

(college football recruiter)

Recruits are also trying to narrow their lists to more realistic possibilities. Recruits will try to determine who they have a realistic chance of playing for. They will also begin to consider factors such as the academic programs at certain schools, the distance the school is away from home and a variety of other factors. Much of the matching up depends on assessing one's needs and whether the acting other is perceived as being able to meet these needs.
It is important that recruiters be able to determine who they have a realistic chance at getting. The elimination of potential players too early may result in the team not getting someone who is top notch and who is available. On the other hand working too hard on a highly rated athlete means that time and effort that should have been spent on more realistic choices is wasted. Smaller and less successful schools may be better off concentrating on the B and C lists, but by doing so run the risk of losing out on players who are rated more highly.

But he has got to know when to back off, when it isn't going to work...you say, "look, we are not going to get this kid, let's go to plan B for this other kid, let's go for this one...the smart guy knows when to back off and pick up another one.

(high school coach)

M.S.U. did a good job trying to sign (player's name), the state's Miss Basketball, who signed with Tennessee. But M.S.U. spent so much time with her it is way behind in the running for (another player), the best junior in the state.

(Detroit Free Press; May 4, 1987)

Appraisals from the athlete's viewpoint are also problematic. Signing with a top notch school may mean increased exposure to the pros at the expense of a quality education or may result in limited playing time. The recruit may also be too quick to sign with one college when better opportunities may have been available.
Stage Three - Signification - This is the stage when special interest in particular players/schools/coaches is shown. Recruiters have pretty well decided which athletes they want and will begin to give more personalized recruitment pitches. Recruiters will begin to send more personalized letters to the recruit and maintain regular phone contact.

They visit your school, they may even visit your home. They call you every, well sometimes they call you every night. It gets to where they really push you, they have only got so much time to sign you. They are salesmen. It really gets busy, a lot of phone calls, a lot of letters. I had one guy come every week, sometimes twice a week just to see me. Talk to me. "How you doing. We would like to set up a recruiting trip for you." They are always trying to set up a trip or something. So right away it was hectic.

(college football recruit)

Yea, we had a dance or something. Anything just to show interest, just keeping in touch. We had 40,000 at this game. We just won and beat so and so, we thought you would be interested. They used to send me out their brochures and all kinds of stuff. Christmas cards, I got everything.

(college football recruit)

The recruitment process can become quite hectic to the blue chipper, who may have as many as two hundred schools maintaining this type of contact on a regular basis. Players, if they have not already done so, must begin to narrow their choices or preferences to a manageable number.

Recruiters will also try to arrange to visit the player at his or her home. This allows the recruiter to
get more in depth with the recruitment pitch. It also gives the recruiter the opportunity to recruit the parents who may have a great deal of influence on the final decision.

The process from there for blue chippers generally moves to a personal visit on my part to their home and I try to set it up so that their parents are there. It gives you a really good chance to really sit down and get into depth... I want to know if that kid is right for this place. I want to know if this place is right for that kid.

(college football recruiter)

When I go to visit a players home there is a two way street going on there. I mean I am not in there just to sell him on the University of _________. I am also there to check him out. I want to find out what kind of kid he is. What kind of home does he come from. What kind of priorities do his parents have.

(college football recruiter)

Recruiters will also use home visits in order to further appraise the recruit as an individual.

Towards the end of this stage the recruiter will invite the player to visit the campus. Campus visits are an important component of the recruitment pitch. The recruit may also receive contact from the head coach, either by mail, phone or in person. This can be very influential and is typically reserved for the blue chip athletes. Recruiters and athletes have both narrowed down their choices towards the end of this stage and the negotiations become quite serious.

One point worthy of further discussion is the
importance of personal versus formal contact. Contacts tend to become more personalized as the recruitment process progresses. Recruits report being "turned off" by form letters, which are seen as indicative of a lack of interest. Recruiters who do not maintain contact with recruits on a personal level tend to be seen as uninterested. Personal contacts are very important in the recruitment process.

Well the form letters turned me off straight away because I figured if you can't type a letter to me then you are not that interested.

(college football recruit)

Recruiters must maintain personal contact with the recruit in order to indicate interest. Failure to do so will usually be equated with a lack of interest. Joe Girard, described by Cialdini (1985; 147) as the world's "greatest car salesman," claimed that the secret to his success was getting customers to like him. According to Cialdini, each month Girard would send every one of his more than 13,000 former customers a holiday greeting card containing a personal message. The message never varied. It read, "I like you." Girard claims that this simple strategy was what led to his success. Athletic recruiters use a very similar tactic, sending recruits an assortment of personal messages via greeting cards, notes and letters. An acquaintance, when recently asked how he chose a particular real estate agent, replied, "he was the one who
seemed the most interested." Athletic recruiters hope to convey much the same impression.

Stage Four - Clarification and Verification - This is where the serious negotiations occur, those involved in the process have narrowed down and finalized their choices. Both sides are to the point of saying, "I want you, do you want me." Efforts are made to determine who is sincerely interested and who is simply leading the acting other on in the event that more preferred choices do not work out. Recruiters, realizing the significance of this stage, may be continually on the phone in an effort to sway the recruit's choice. "Recruits may have difficulty narrowing to a final choice. It is at this stage that serious offers are made and commitments are asked for.

They even held a scholarship for me, up until the last signing day. He says, "we are not going to push you, we want you, there is a scholarship waiting for you, don't wait too long. We are just being honest with you. If you are going to go somewhere else, we will give it to somebody else, but we really want you."

(college football recruit)

Stage Five - Documentation - Players at many levels of sport are often required to sign contracts or letters of intent committing themselves to play for a particular team. Although there are exceptions, this generally marks the completion of the recruitment process.
Making you sign is the big thing, because once you sign they have got you.

(Recruit)

The one part of the system that I don't like was the heavy pressure to sign. Because you have got to sign a card, and once you sign that card you can't go to another team. So until they get your signature on the card...

(Recruit)

One individual recalled the signing of contracts as a little league player.

"I want to see Smith," and they would call out two or three other names, and you may have something like 32 guys out. And then they say, "here, I want you guys to sign right now." You know that is a big thrill for a kid, it's like big league stuff.

The young player may be singled out and asked to sign a contract before a majority of the players, perhaps as soon as practices have started. This is a big ego booster and usually a very effective method of getting the player to sign.

At the lower levels of sport these stages are collapsed somewhat, with the first and final stages becoming more significant, although the others still have varying degrees of relevance.
CHAPTER SIX - SIGNIFICANT FACTORS

This chapter deals with some key elements that warrant consideration in discussing the process of recruitment into sport in light of the existing literature.

Denial of Recruitment

There are certain groups, for a variety of reasons, that deny that they participate in recruitment. Statements denying recruitment are consistently made by homosexual groups and certain religious groups. For whatever reasons, these groups do not want to be seen as engaging in the recruitment of new members. The denial of recruitment occurs within sport as well. The term recruitment has taken on a negative connotation, leading some to deny being involved in the recruitment of athletes. This seems in part due to the media coverage of recruitment. Within the media, recruitment is often portrayed as something less than wholesome; an activity involving the offering of immoral or illegal inducements. While this is but a small part of recruitment, it has a large impact on perceptions of recruitment and those who engage in it. There is a tendency within this perception to equate recruitment with the offering of cash or other materialistic types of inducements, rather than simply viewing it as an attempt
to involve the player.

In Canada, there is a tendency to view recruitment as something that the Americans do. This appears to be reflective of two things. The first is the denial of being involved in recruitment. One recent Windsor Star (Dec. 31/87) article was titled, "Coach Accused of Recruiting Players." In this case a successful Toronto high school volleyball coach was accused of recruiting players. High school coaches in Windsor have faced similar charges and have gone to great lengths to deny being involved in recruitment. The fact that coaches are "accused" of recruiting players is indicative of how recruitment is perceived in Canada. Recruitment is viewed in a negative sense and as something that should not be done, especially at the high school and little league levels. Even in the United States, where the perception of recruitment is much more positive, the recruitment of youth is viewed less favourably. Coaches at these levels are careful not to be identified as recruiters even though they do often engage in recruiting. There also seems to be an assumption that recruitment violates the spirit of the game; the notion that sport is to be for fun. Recruitment at many of the lower levels of sport is denied in keeping with this philosophy.

Secondly, there seems to be a general lack of awareness that recruitment is in fact occurring.
Individuals are often unaware that they are being recruited or are recruiting. Recruitment occurs at all levels of sport in one form or another. When someone is asked to play on a campus recreation team, this is recruitment. Little league sports often advertise sign up days in newspapers and flyers. This is a form of recruitment. In recent years, Riverside Minor League Hockey has had problems with low enrollment. In order to recruit new members, first time players are given a discount on the sign up fees. The league also holds a used equipment sale on sign up day in order to cut down on the initial costs. These are very concerted efforts at recruiting new players. In spite of this, there seems to be a general lack of awareness that this is in fact recruitment. As mentioned, there seems to be a tendency to equate recruitment with the offering of material, immoral or illegal inducements. Recruitment is much more formalized and visible at the higher levels of sport, such as college athletics in the United States. The more informal, subtle forms of recruitment, that occur at the lower levels of sport, often are not identified as such. Recruitment is in fact an attempt to involve, to draw individuals to the team and/or league. The inducement may be the offer of fun, or the potential for social interaction. Many times individuals are involved in the

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3 This is a little league in Windsor, Ontario.
recruitment process without recognizing it as such. Recruitment is much more commonplace and prevalent than is realized or acknowledged.

**Decruitment**

An interesting concept that emerged from this study is DECRIPTION. In studying the process of recruitment it became apparent that there are instances in which one of the parties becomes disinterested in the other during the course of the interaction. This reflects the emergent nature of the level of interest. One who was originally interested in the acting other may become disinterested and find it necessary to act in a way that will discontinue the interaction. This compares to the concept "cooling out the mark", which has been discussed in relation to deviant activities (Goffman, 1952; Prus, 1977). This can also be contrasted to relationships. Relationships are often broken off when one decides that he or she is not really interested in becoming or being involved with the acting other. As is also the case within sport or deviance, the individual must act in a manner that indicates this disinterest. Even though it has been dealt with only briefly here, the concept of decruitment is relevant across a variety of activities and social groups and is worthy of further consideration.

It is also important to consider that one may become
interested in the acting other after initially indicating disinterest. As mentioned, the level of interest is emergent in nature, as are any assessments or appraisals of the acting other.

And it is absolutely amazing the number of those kids that you run into that in January you have crossed off of your list and in May he is back knocking on your door.
(college football recruiter)

As pointed out by McCall and Simmons (1966; 18), we choose not the best of all possible interaction partners, but the best of the available interaction partners. Those involved in the recruitment process may become more interested in a particular acting other (when initially disinterested) upon realizing that no better opportunities are available. It is significant to mention that the level of interest can decrease, as well as increase, throughout the recruitment process and that this has relevance across a wide range of activities and social groups.

Hidden Motives

Recruiter's motives for recruiting a particular player are not always straightforward. It is interesting to note that the recruiter does not always seriously intend to sign up the player being recruited.

There was an article that appeared in the Free Press that said that Bo Schembechler was not recruiting city kids, alright. ...there was a big article on it and it was quite flagrant. His chief recruiter...asked me about this kid that I had, this black
kid, and I said "Listen, I'll tell you, this kid is a late bloomer, he is not a real big kid but the kid can play. He is a good student, he has got good heart, he just came out to football too late...I see great potential in him." And they wouldn't even hear about it. And when the article came out, the next day I get a call from the recruiter, He says "...bring up this kid." I said "Why? You didn't want him." He says "Bo wants to have lunch with him."

(high school coach)

...they wanted us to come out and play. And I am sure by that time they had the team picked. Before tryouts even came. If we decided to come out and they wanted us, we were on the team before we even skated. And they probably drew fifty or sixty guys out there for tryouts. Five bucks...you know, five bucks a piece for ice time. ...these people are the bill payers.

(hockey recruit)

The individual may be recruited as a token member of a racial minority or as someone to pay the bills for ice time. In one instance a recruit recalled the time that he and a friend were invited to visit a college and he was subsequently ignored most of the time while his friend was given the majority of the attention. In this instance it appeared that he was used so that the recruiter could gain access to his friend. This is comparable to closed auditions which were proposed by Dietz (1986) in her discussion on performances. In this case many individuals are invited to tryout for a position, group or team, when in fact there are no actual positions open. Thus what seems to be recruitment, or some degree of interest on the part of the recruiter, is in fact a front for some hidden
motive. It is important to note that there are instances of recruitment where the recruiter does not actually want the player being recruited.

**Discontent**

In discussing initial involvements into deviant activities, Prus (1977; 163) states that persons seem most vulnerable to new involvements when they become disenchanted with their present situation. This is also true within the activity of sport. Players who become discontented with their current situation tend to be more receptive to recruiting efforts of others.

The coaches, Bill and I, we ran the team and we were kind of tired of running it, picking the team, looking after it, scraping the diamonds by ourselves, lining the diamonds, collecting the money, bags and uniforms. So this was our chance to get out of it. And so we were asked to come play for another team. I played there for a year.

(softball player)

Discontent arises for a variety of reasons, one of which is lack of playing time. Playing on a regular basis is usually a key concern to the athlete. Those who are "sitting the bench" are not likely to be content and are more likely to be receptive to the recruiting efforts of others. This may be especially true if recruiters promise that the recruit will play on a regular basis. As mentioned, athletes who are not content with a present situation, for whatever reason, are likely to be more
responsive to the recruitment efforts of others. Recruiters who are able to identify this discontent and the reasons for it can then incorporate this into the recruitment strategy. This requires some degree of role taking and impression management on the part of the recruiter. The recruit may even initiate the recruitment process by indicating that he or she is unhappy and willing to discontinue one involvement in favour of another. Though this would constitute seekership to begin with, the interaction becomes a complex combination of recruitment and seekership, with both recruiting and seeking one another. The distinction between recruitment and seekership is not always a clear one, with both often occurring simultaneously within the same interactive process.

Prus's (1976) study of religious groups indicates that recruiters will also manage dissonance in order to recruit new members. Recruiters promote dissonance and then convince the recruit that joining the group represented by the recruiter is a viable solution to alleviate this discomfort. This also occurs within sport. Recruiters will promote dissonance in hopes that the recruit will become more responsive to the recruiting effort. If the recruit is presently involved with a losing team, a more successful team may manage dissonance by emphasizing the losing record of the other team in the
recruiting effort. This may be effective since winning is often so critical within sport.

Prus (1977) stated that individuals who are discontent in their current situation are likely to be more vulnerable to new involvements. This statement was made with reference to deviant activities but is also relevant within the activity of sport. Athletes who are discontent with their current situation, for whatever reasons, are likely to be more receptive to the recruiting efforts of others. Effective recruiters will incorporate this into the recruitment efforts, by identifying and using this discontent to their advantage, or even trying to manage dissonance in hopes that the recruit will become more receptive to the recruiting effort. This process is evident in a variety of activities and/or social groups, and certainly could be considered to have generic implications. As illustrated by Prus, this process has relevance within deviant activities and religious groups. Studies of the activity of stripping (Casey, Peterson & Sharper, 1974; Prus & Irini, 1980; Miller, 1978), indicate that the initial involvement is often facilitated by the occurrence of a financial crisis. This would indicate that discontent with their financial situation led these women to become involved in the activity of stripping. Individuals who are discontent with conventional society are more receptive to recruitment efforts of protest.
groups, as well as unorthodox religious groups. Employment and interpersonal relations are relevant to this process. Individuals who are not happy in a current relationship or employment are more likely to be receptive to the advances of others or to seek out other involvements themselves. There are many more examples that could be given. It suffices to say that individuals who are disenchanted with their present involvement, whether it be religious, sport, a relationship, or employment, are likely to be more receptive to recruiting efforts of others or more willing to seek out new involvements.

Winning and Losing

One factor that athletic recruiters must deal with is that of winning and losing. Recruiters representing winning teams can emphasize this in the recruitment process, whereas recruiters representing less successful teams must be able to justify or negate this in order to be competitive.

Our program at Eastwood College is very strong. We won the conference championship the past two seasons, and our schedule is strong enough this year to provide us with the opportunity to make the national playoffs. We look for ladies with talent, a winning attitude, and a desire to be successful both athletically and academically.

(rerecruiting letter)

We are anxious for this 1977 season to start as we come off a Co-Championship year in the Big Eight and a super win in the Tangerine
Bowl. We also have a true Heisman candidate in Bob Smith, who should break all records in the Big-8 this year.

(recruiting letter)

They told me that they usually play for the national championship every year and that a lot of their players went to the pros.

(recruit)

Recruiters representing winning teams can emphasize factors such as league championships and winning records in the recruitment effort. Recruiters representing less successful, newer or less well known teams may make mention of being successful without giving any specific indicators of success.

Brockville's athletic program is also a strong and successful one. As a member of the N.C.A.A. and the South Regional Conference, which stresses its commitment to both men's and women's athletics, we are confident that these programs will continue to be among the finest in the nation. The Softball program is starting its second year of fast-pitch competition following a very successful first year...The combination of a strong group of returning players, a challenging schedule, quality facilities and support from the college community should ensure continued success of Brockville's newest varsity sport.

(recruiting letter)

At Northern, we can offer you the finest education available as well as the finest football program.

(recruiting letter)

Briefly, Central University is located in _____, which has a population of 45,000. Our enrollment is approx. 9,000 students. We play against some of the best teams in the country and believe we have a challenging future game schedule.

(recruiting letter)
In these instances recruiters made claims of being successful without making any mention of win/loss records, league championships or any other similar indicators of success. In this way attempts are made to manage the impression of being successful when it may not be the case.

Recruiters representing less successful teams may also offer regular playing time as an incentive, suggesting that the recruit may not be given this opportunity with the better quality teams. Since most athletes would rather play than "sit the bench", this is often an effective strategy. It is hoped that the desire to play on a regular basis will negate the stigma of being involved with a losing team to some extent, thus leading the recruit to be more receptive to the recruiting efforts of less successful teams. Recruiters may also argue that the recruit will be a star on the less successful team, whereas he or she might be just another player on the more successful teams. These strategies may be used in an effort to make less successful teams appear more attractive to the recruit. Recruiters representing smaller colleges or lower level teams may also utilize such strategies. Recruiters may also try to justify or negate the losing record by mentioning that it was a young team, that the team was rebuilding, that the team had a lot of injuries or that it simply was an "off year". These are
all common reasons used to justify a team's lack of success. The implication is that the current lack of success is temporary rather than constant, and that the team will improve and be successful in the near future. The emergent nature of teams allows recruiters to manage strategies such as this.

From this we see that the issue of winning and losing is an important factor in sport recruitment. Recruiters representing less successful teams typically have a much more difficult time convincing prospective athletes to become involved with the team that he or she represents.

We're getting bigger and better players and it hasn't been easy. I took over a program that was 2 (wins) and 9 (losses) and recruits have not been lining up outside to get in. (U.S. college recruiter)

This illustrates the problematics of recruitment for those with losing records. Recruits are typically hesitant to become involved with teams that are less successful. In this case the recruitment pitch often must include some sort of legitimization for being less successful. This compares with recruitment into deviant activities. Rooney (1961) states that in order to recruit into deviant activities it is necessary to incorporate some sort of legitimization into the recruitment effort. Athletic recruiters representing losing teams are often faced with much the same problem. Just as individuals are hesitant to
become involved with activities that are not conventionally legitimate, athletes are hesitant to become involved with teams that are not noted for being successful. In both cases it is often necessary for the recruiter to incorporate some sort of legitimization into the recruiting effort. Recruiters representing less successful teams are often required to legitimate or negate this lack of success within the recruitment effort in order to be competitive.

**Oversell/Undersell**

Recruiters must develop a sense of what may be overselling or underselling for a particular recruit. If they do not sell hard enough, the recruit is likely to conclude that they are not really interested and look elsewhere. On the other hand, if they sell too hard this may become bothersome to the recruit and may actually serve to hinder the initial involvement. The recruiter must be able to convey interest in the recruit without overdoing it. This is difficult since what constitutes too hard or soft a sell varies with each individual. The effective recruiter is able to role take in order to determine what level of contact to maintain with each recruit.

Don't overdo it. Don't try and make the decision for the kid about going. Keep the environment relaxed, like laid back. Whatever he wants to do, let him do
it... make him feel comfortable, ... and just don't talk too much.
(high school football player)

He (a good recruiter) is the guy who is going to be successful... and he has got to know when to back off... I think that to be a good recruiter you have got to have a good sense of people.
(high school coach)

Like if they don't overdo it, and let you make your own decision... But Oh my God, the coach from Western. Every minute, "Are you going to sign with us? Why don't you sign with us now?"
(college football player)

Some schools differ from others. Like some of them are more sophisticated. Like Northern, they gave me letters but they didn't flood me so to speak, but other schools flooded me. And I got tired of it, like they called me every night, see how I was doing. I was getting tired of the visits.
(college football player)

It was pretty effective, everything was laid back. They didn't really pressure me into signing.
(college football player)

It is important that recruiters be able to determine what may be overselling or underselling for each recruit. Recruiters must be able to convey interest in the recruit without using too hard a sell. The following accounts serve to illustrate efforts by recruiters to convey this interest while at the same time trying to safeguard against overselling.

What I say is don't expect to hear from me from me twice a week. That doesn't mean I am not interested. That means I expect you to make the choice, not me.
(recuriter)
I said, "Look, I know you are a fine student-athlete and I know a lot of people are contacting you on a regular basis. I don't want to wear out my welcome. I said we would love to see you at _____, I think we have what you want academically and I know that we have what you want athletically. I don't want to keep pounding you because you are going to get annoyed if I keep calling and calling. You know that I am interested in you and so I will periodically check in with you. I said I won't be calling every week." And he said, "Coach, I understand that." And then he says "people are calling me all the time, I am getting fed up with it_. But see this other guy, we are all so different. This other guy said, "Well, the coach called me 12 times and nobody else did and so I went there." He liked it, we are all so different. You have got to get a feel of the people you are working with."

(Recruiter)

In this case efforts were made to show interest in the recruit while at the same time attempting to guard against overselling. This may also be a subtle attempt to manage dissonance against those recruiters who do resort to a harder sell. Effective recruiters recognize that what constitutes overselling varies with each recruit. While some recruits may be turned off by an oversell, a hard sell may be an effective strategy on others.

A lot of kids will sit back and at the end of May or June, they will sit down and they will count the number of letters and phone calls....And he will add them up and go to the school that has contacted him the most times because he assumes they want him the most. Nothing could be further from the truth.

(Recruiter)

Both recruiters and recruits must also be careful not to
oversell as this may lead to the perception that there must be something wrong, causing the acting other to be more cautious or to become disinterested.

...a lot of them (recruiters) just don't want to oversell you because you figure out there is no way it is going to be like this (this good). Maybe they figure out you are smart enough to figure that out. They don't want to go too far with it.

(college football player)

- The recruit must also be careful not to undersell as this may be seen by the recruiter as a lack of interest (it may actually be disinterest), leading the recruiter to cease active recruitment of the individual so that the time can be spent recruiting another athlete. Thus we see that recruitment is an interactive process in which we act in relation to one another. If either party perceives the acting other to be too interested or not interested enough, this may cause the other to feel there is no point in continuing the interaction on an active level.

Recruiters from activities beyond sport must also be conscious of what may be overselling or underselling for each individual. This is certainly true of sales. Salespersons must be able to show interest in the customer while at the same time being careful not to be seen as too aggressive. This requires some degree of role taking on the part of the salesperson in order to determine what level of contact to maintain with each customer. In attempting to initiate sexual encounters or relationships,
individuals often find it necessary to be able to indicate interest in the acting other without giving the impression of "coming on too strong." Part of what constitutes "having a good sense of people" is being able to determine what may be overselling or underselling with each recruit.

Benefits to be Derived

Rooney (1961; 175) states that the recruitment pitch must include an explanation of the benefits to be derived from involvement. The recruit must be shown how he or she will benefit from becoming involved in the activity and/or social group represented by the recruiter. This is true within sport recruitment as well. The recruitment pitch must include an explanation of the benefits to be derived from becoming involved with a particular team.

So they said, "well we have a pretty good team going. We think you should come out and we will be stronger. We have got lots of tournaments." Tournaments is a big pull you know. "We go to a lot of tournaments and we have a lot of fun, great fun. We go camping and we have a good time together." (recruit)

Like a couple of the coaches would be like, the school has got a lot to offer, like it's academic reputation and all of this stuff is available. Like the guy from Stellen, had the most to offer because he is basically just outside Montreal. So that's like, MONTREAL, right....they are trying to make a complete package for you. So they would be saying how Stellen has got so much to offer as far as after the football season. The night life and everything else. (recruit)
It was pretty well all the same, they just wanted to sell their school, academics, football program. Whatever they had to sell. They sold the land a little bit. They had the mountains and all that. They had the world fair when I was there. They knew you were going to be there for the next five years so they tried to sell you a little bit of it. They say you're going to have this here, you are going to have the sun, the beach. Like Miami did that when I was down there. They took me to the everglades, the ocean and all of that. The mostly want to sell their school and the football program.

(recruit)

A lot of them, when you are younger, use trips right. Well we have got a tournament in St. Louis, we have got a tournament in San Diego or something...Sometimes it would be jackets, or a sponsor. We have got a super sponsor this year. Your jackets are only going to cost you twenty bucks or something. We are going to get leather jackets and it is only going to cost you this. All sorts of things. The past record.

(recruit)

Under the academic calendar section you will find another interesting fact. On April 19 we finish classes for the school year. This gives us a very long and enjoyable school break.

(recruiting letter)

The Hawaii trip will make us late a few days talking with you Jeff, but be assured we will visit as soon as possible and get better acquainted.

(recruiting letter)

You explain the benefits of the school. Like this school does have benefits. It is smaller, you are treated a little more personal. And like I said, you have got a shot of playing.

(recruit)

Factors such as winning, tournaments, travel, team jackets, fun and good sponsors are often benefits
associated with involvement in sport. The benefits to be derived may vary across a variety of factors, including the particular sport, the level and the team. American colleges offer athletic scholarships, while city bar leagues may offer a few free beers after the game. A recruiter representing a winning team can emphasize this as a benefit in the recruitment pitch, whereas a recruiter representing a losing team will be more likely to stress factors such as regular playing time in hopes of facilitating the initial involvement. One recruit even mentioned being offered a discount on body work for his car if he played for a team in the local city basketball league.

Recruitment is a negotiable activity and the benefits to be derived are an important element in this negotiation. The recruit will often choose to become involved with the team that seems to be the most beneficial. The recruiter with the most to offer often has a distinct advantage in the recruitment process. For example, the major difference between college recruitment in Canada and the United States is the athletic scholarship, making it very difficult for Canadian recruiters to be competitive with American recruiters. The effective recruiter is also able to determine what benefits may be important to the recruit. The recruiter can then emphasize these factors in the recruiting effort.
An explanation of the benefits to be derived must be incorporated within the recruiting effort so that the recruit can be shown how he or she will benefit from becoming involved with the team that the recruiter represents.

Recruiting the Blue Chippers

Blue chip athletes are the ones that everyone wants and tend to be recruited more heavily. Recruiters often go to greater lengths when recruiting the blue chippers. This is meant to indicate a higher level of interest in the recruit.

Because he was a Knoxville native, Williams was often asked by coaches to entertain prospects on campus visits. The N.C.A.A. allows student-athletes acting as hosts to receive a max. of $20 per day per prospect to cover expenses, but Williams says he frequently received much more. "It was like, you can tell if they really want this recruit by the amount of money they give you for a particular night," Williams says. "If you got $100 on a Friday then you figured their chances of wanting the recruit are pretty good, and you took it as such."

(Sport, Nov./1987; p.72)

Recruiters will often manage overt displays of money and material possessions in hopes that this will leave a lasting, favourable impression on the recruit. This is especially true of American college athletics, where sports is often big business.

I thought of myself as being big time, you know. Flying all over the place every week.

(college football player)
He (the head coach) came all the way from U.C.L.A. to talk to him.
(brother of college football player)

And the head coach only goes for who? The superstars. I mean everything is already set up. Steve Blake flew a private jet in to see Jeff... and had a car take him from the airport to the school. Flew in to see John. When the big man comes in it makes all of the difference.
(father of college football player)

I was really impressed with these alumni. When I went to that banquet that is all that was sitting around me, doctors, engineers, dentists. I mean some very smart people.
(college football player)

They had a private jet there for me... That Saturday they took us out to this big ranch that was owned by one of the alumni, and we did skeet shooting, horseback riding, A.T.V. riding, those three wheelers, archery. All the food we could eat. We had a good time. Fishing.
(college football player)

Overt displays of materialistic success, such as private jets, are often utilized in order to leave a lasting impression on the recruit. Alumni often take an active role in this sort of impression management. Personal visits from the head coach are typically reserved for the blue chip athlete and are meant to be indicative of a higher level of interest, as are all displays of this nature.

The recruitment of blue chippers often involves a more seductive element in which a variety of illegal or immoral inducements are offered to the recruit. It is this element of recruitment that we are most familiar with
since inducements of this nature, as well as recruitment violations, are so well publicized in the media.

They took him out for a steak and he said it was the biggest steak he ever saw. Free. And they are not supposed to do that.

(father of college football player)

When they recruited him they sent in a head coach and an assistant coach (Bob)....and the assistant coach stayed in our office for two months. One day it was Lou's birthday, Bob had a present for him. Anything Lou wanted, Bob was like his little gopher.... The man actually lived in Detroit for two months to recruit that guy. They sent a private jet up here and took him down there. The mayor and the governor of the state of Tennessee and Knoxville met Lou personally at the plane.

(high school coach)

...I had my own hotel room and I had my own tab and it was really nice. Mike, he was my host, that night we went out and he brought two girls over and they went out with us and they came back later on with us. We had a good time.

(college football player)

Yea, well, when I went down to Miami they set us up with a girl, that was kind of neat. A Hurricane Honey. Oh yea, she was like 25 years old, beautiful girl. I was just 17 years old, in my glory. They did, they set me up on a date....That was it, nothing happened. It was a drag, believe me, we tried. That was the first time I had a roommate. The other schools I went to they gave me my own room.

(college football player)

It is important to remember that although these sorts of inducements are typically associated with recruitment into American college athletics, they do
occur at other levels of sport as well, although to a lesser extent. At the lower levels of sport these practices tend to be much more subtle than the overt, materialistic displays evident in American college athletics. Many levels of sport have special practices reserved for the recruitment of blue chip athletes. These practices are meant to indicate a higher level of interest in the recruit. They are also meant to be indicative of one's value to the team once involved. Increased personal contact during the recruitment process is indicative of a higher level of interest at all levels of sport. Higher level fast pitch teams often make cash payments to key players. This is meant to facilitate the initial involvement, as well as indicate the player's importance to the team once involved. In the little leagues, coaches may maintain contact with a few key players during the off season. Recruitment of blue chip athletes, across all levels of sport, involves a variety of practices that are not used for most recruits. These practices are reserved for the blue chippers and are meant to indicate a higher level of interest.

This section has focused on a number of important points that are relevant in discussing the recruitment process in light of existing literature, including the
denial of recruitment; the concept of decruitment; the relevance of discontent and hidden motives; the importance of winning and losing; the significance of the benefits to be derived; overselling versus underselling; and the recruitment of "blue chippers". The next chapter deals with recruitment strategies.
CHAPTER SEVEN - RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

This section deals with a number of recruiter strategies that have emerged from the data. Role taking and impression management are important concepts within the process of recruitment. Those involved in this process must continually interpret, assess, negotiate and role take in order to impress and influence one another. Experienced recruiters will vary the recruitment pitch depending on the individual being recruited and must be able to determine which combination of strategies will be effective with any given recruit.

We Care About You as a Person...

One of the more important strategies is the strategy that indicates to the athlete that the recruiter and the school/team/organization behind him/her cares about the recruit as a person. If the recruiter is able to convey the impression that he/she sincerely cares about the recruit as an individual rather than simply as a "number" or a "piece of meat", the chances of successfully recruiting the athlete may be significantly increased. As illustrated by the following accounts, this impression can be managed in a number of ways.

Yea, well at Southland this one guy, I forget his name, but when he first recruited
me he told me "before I let you go back to Naples to pump gas I will kick your ass. You are going to come to school for an education."

( college football player)

They had stressed the fact that I would be living with a family. I wouldn't just be stuck in a dorm like college. I would be living with a family. Because you get your home cooked meals and you get someone to talk to other than just the other guys on the team. It sort of makes you feel at home.

( Junior A hockey player)

We are interested in more than your athletic talents, we're interested in you and your overall well-being.

( recruiting letter)

He talked to me like I was a man. But we could also joke around. I could see that he really cared about me. Sure he wanted me to play football at Eastern State, but I was more than just No. 89, Carter, tight end.

( college football player)

By focusing on factors such as education, the family atmosphere, and whatever else may be of importance or interest to the recruit, the recruiter attempts to foster this impression of caring for the recruit as an individual. A common practice is to stress the importance of education, since this is often seen as indicative of caring.

If they start talking about their school and then their football team then you should consider putting them in the top three. Because they are not trying to taunt you towards football, they are trying to get you to go to their school for an education, that makes it sound like they care about you. The other way around you are just a hunk of meat.

( high school football player)
I even met their academic counselor, which I didn’t at any other schools. They were concerned about my academics. (College football player)

The graduation rate, you look at that and you say that some schools treat their athletes better, look at their athletes more closely than other schools. I found out that Coach, and it is true, really stresses academics. When I was being recruited they were telling me that Coach really stresses that if you don’t have the grades then you are not playing. How much the coaches get along with the players, sort of like on a personal level, each player. And that is kind of what I looked at as well. I wanted someone who I could go and talk to when I had problems. Where as if I saw some other schools that the coaches did not care, as long as you played, someone else would look after the academic life. (College football player)

A variety of factors, such as the stress on educational importance, are used to indicate an image of caring about the recruit beyond sport. As shown in the following accounts, failure to make effective use of this type of strategy may be destructive in the recruiting attempt.

A few schools, even when they talked to me they didn’t seem personal. It felt like I was just going to be a number. (College football player)

The fact that they were going on probation and the fact that I was just another athlete, and then again it was Florida, that was a very good school. It always is, but I was like, "Damn you, if I go here I would just be another piece of meat." (College football player)

Failure to make effective use of this strategy may lead the recruit to feel that the recruiter and the
organization, team, or group that he or she represents only care about the person for their athletic ability. Athletes frequently use phrases such as "I would have just been another athlete, a number or a piece of meat" in describing this perceived lack of interest on a personal level. In these cases the recruit may be less inclined to become involved in the group and/or activity. By the same token, the individual may be more receptive to the recruitment pitch if this strategy is managed effectively.

This strategy, which entails showing interest in the recruit on a personal level, has generic relevance as well. It is commonly used in many sports across a variety of levels, as well as in activities beyond sport. In the little leagues, something as seemingly minor as a coach remembering a youth's name can be of great significance in the initial involvement, as well as in maintaining involvement. Pimps often make use of a strategy such as this in recruiting women to become prostitutes. By giving the woman the impression that he cares about her on a personal level, the pimp seduces the woman into the activity of prostitution. This strategy is also commonly used in attempting to initiate intimate encounters. By managing this impression, the individual attempts to convey that he or she is interested in more than merely a sexual encounter. Successful use of this strategy helps the acting other to overcome any feelings/fears of being
used (i.e. sexual object, "piece of meat", "piece of ass", a number). We often hear of bars being referred to as "meat markets", which implies this perceived lack of interest on a personal level (i.e. nonpersonalized, product orientated, objectification). This strategy is also commonly used by strippers. The stripper who is able to convey that he or she is interested in the customer on a more intimate level, rather than simply financially, is apt to be more successful. This is particularly true with personal table dancing becoming so commonplace within the activity of stripping. Individuals involved in activities such as waiting, bartending and sales may also find effective management of this strategy beneficial. Those who come across in a more personal and friendly manner are more likely to be successful. Often businesses or restaurants will claim to offer a more personal level of service, this being yet another example of this strategy.

This section has dealt with a strategy that involves attempts on the part of the recruiter to convey interest in the recruit on a personal level. As has been illustrated, this strategy can be considered generically, since it is common across a variety of social groups, organizations and activities. If the recruiter is

10 Strippers will give personalized table dances to customers, usually at a standard, set price per song.
successful in managing this strategy, the recruit is likely to be more receptive to the recruiting pitch. On the other hand, failure to make effective use of this strategy can greatly hinder recruiting efforts.

Trust Me.....

Trust is an important element in the recruitment process, as it is in most interactive processes. Prus (1986; 1) identifies trust as a generic feature of group life, and Henčlin (1985; 107) also states that trust is a fundamental aspect of everyday group life. Within this perspective trust is viewed as ongoing and emergent. It is important that the recruiter be able to gain and maintain the trust of the recruit during the recruitment process. This is often difficult to do since recruiters are often perceived as something less than trustworthy and honest. Many are viewed as simply salespeople or "good bullshitters" who will say whatever is necessary in their efforts to recruit the athlete.

Colleges pay a lot of money for these scouts and recruiters and they are all pretty fast talkers. They all bullshit pretty well. That is what they are paid for.....professional bullshitters.

(reruit)

Oh yea, they bullshit them. They will bullshit him until they get the name on the dotted line. When they get the name on the dotted line; it is over. Like my son asked the guy from Southern, "could you get me a job somewhere this summer." They said, "Oh yea, we got a lot of people around here,
don’t worry about it. Then you never hear from him again. I have heard that so many times from recruiters. It is the hardest thing to convince kids of. Not only my own but the kids who play for me. “They say they promised me a summer job.” I say they may promise you anything until they get your name on there.

(high school coach)

Developing trust does not necessarily guarantee that the recruit will become involved with the team represented by the recruiter, but it does tend to facilitate the initial involvement. Since recruitment is rarely an interaction involving only two individuals (the recruit and recruiter), the recruiter must also be able to develop trust with those who may be influential to the recruit, such as the parents or high school coaches. As one recruiter states, “if you are unable to gain the trust of the parents, you have got problems.”

My parents had met them at various tournaments. They called my parents as well. They talked to my parents towards the end because my parents didn’t want me to get shafted.

(hockey recruit)

Well she (mother) liked Steve, she had talked to Steve. All of the head coaches came in and met and talked to your parents too. She liked Steve and she liked the coach from Florida because he was like a southern boy, and she really liked him.

(college football player)

When I went to M.S.U. to visit, it was like a family atmosphere. Coach Perles was just like a guy you’d meet on the street. You can tell when someone is jiving you. They weren’t, they were serious. His mother said: ‘I knew Carlos liked him (the recruiter)
and that was important. They were so easy to talk to. They were straight with me and that was important. Any questions I had were answered. He did not answer on anything. When they start to hesitate, I don't know...Marino grew close to Baggett (the recruiter) during recruiting. They talked every night. Football wasn't the only subject. There were conversations about personal relationships, the future. "He is a super young man," said Baggett. "We became comfortable with each other and our relationship should continue to grow. We trust each other."

(Detroit Free Press, Feb. 12/1987)

Coach is like a brother, father and coach when he recruits you, and that is why he is such a good recruiter. You can tell when a coach comes across phony, when they say, "What's up bro," and stupid stuff like that. Coach doesn't try that, and yet he still knows what's up.

(reruit)

Reputation plays an important role in trust building. Over the years high school coaches get a sense of which recruiters are trustworthy and which are not. In this way the nature of past experience can play an important role in the recruitment process.

Sure, the credibility you establish is important in the recruiting game. If the recruiter came to me and I am an honest coach and the recruiter told me lies, I would not have that kid go to that school because I didn't trust the recruiter...the longer that you get to know the recruiter, the more success that kids that you have sent previously to that school have...Now you create a trust between the two.

(high school coach)

He was straight with her. He was up front. He said there was no way she was going to play the first year, which she didn't. She was going to sit the bench. He wanted to teach her the game and he wanted to teach
High school coaches have often dealt with the recruiter in the past, which allows for the building of reputations. Recruiters who have established trust in the past are more likely to be viewed as trustworthy, while those who have not will have a more difficult time gaining trust.

Given that trust is a fundamental aspect of everyday group life, it follows that trust is an important element in the recruitment process. Recruits and those who represent the recruit, such as high school coaches and parents, mention that they look for honesty in recruiters and will try to differentiate those who seem trustworthy from those who are not. This distinction can be quite problematic since many recruiters are in fact very good at managing the impression of being trustworthy.

What's Important is Your Education

This strategy, which is closely related to the previous two, involves efforts on the part of the recruiter to stress the value or importance of an education. As was mentioned, a stress on education is often seen as indicative of caring. Despite this, this strategy is important enough to warrant consideration in its own right. This strategy tends to be more specific to college level sports, though it is evidenced at other levels of sport as well (junior A hockey for example).
When utilizing this strategy, the college recruiter tries to emphasize that athletics will be secondary in importance to academics. It is often difficult to manage this impression since for the most part the individual is in fact being recruited based on his/her athletic ability. Thus, as evidenced by some of the accounts listed in the previous strategy, athletes are often quite skeptical about the priority of academics at some schools. In many instances recruiters are careful to stress that they want student-athletes, as opposed to athlete-students. This is one of the methods used in an effort to stress the importance of academics. It is also becoming increasingly necessary for schools to place more emphasis on academics with many of the new academic guidelines being set by the N.C.A.A.. Rules such as Proposition 48 require that student-athletes maintain certain standards academically in order to be eligible to compete in athletics. While some recruiters do stress athletics primarily, many now emphasize that the recruit will be a student-athlete. Thus, a stress on the importance of academics is incorporated into the recruiting pitch. The following accounts serve to illustrate this strategy.

It is our hope you will consider Central State for continuing your academic and athletic careers.

(rerecuiting letter)

You have been recommended to us as an outstanding student-athlete.

(rerecuiting letter)
I would like to take this opportunity to let you know again of the University of Kent's interest in you as a prospective student-athlete.

(recruiting letter)

At Westview University we can offer you the finest education available as well as the finest football program.

(recruiting letter)

Our coaches will continue to be in contact with you and we hope you will strongly consider Eastern State University for continuing your academic and athletic careers.

(recruiting letter)

J.R., head football coach at W.L.C., recently received a glowing recommendation which indicates you are an outstanding student-athlete.

(recruiting letter)

These brief accounts all illustrate the basic essence of this strategy, to emphasize the priority of education over athletics. The following account, though much more elaborate, illustrates another attempt to manage this impression.

Lockview is one the finest liberal arts colleges in the nation and is ranked as one of the highest academic colleges in the east...We need student-athletes of your caliber to maintain our standards academically and our performance athletically. You are definitely an athlete that could make a significant contribution to our program; and I would like to emphasize that you can be a part of the best of both worlds -- an outstanding academic institution and a national caliber softball
In each of these examples one can see efforts on the part of the recruiter to emphasize the priority of academics. The recruit is referred to as a student-athlete, implying that academics takes precedence over athletics. Often academics is discussed in the first paragraph of the letter, and then this is followed by a consideration of the athletic aspect. The following accounts, offered by two recruiters, serve to further illustrate this strategy.

Then you start to branch off and tell them about the academic program. And that really shocks them a little bit, they say, "Oh boy, we are into the academics already. This is fantastic, everyone wants me for football. But here he is looking at my academic side of things." So we look at that and then I say ok, what are your needs in football.

(college football recruiter)

So immediately boom, emphasize the academic aspect. Parents love that. When they look at that they say, "Hey, this guy really cares about the academic side of life." If they look at a letter that says football, football, football, they say "shut, he is not going to be a pro." And that is what happens. So you want to be sure that they understand right off the top that your priorities are where they should be. If the parents get any indication that they are not, you have got problems.

(college football recruiter)

Effective management of this strategy can be very critical in the recruitment process and many college recruiters make sure to incorporate this notion within their recruiting efforts.
With this being such a common element of the recruitment pitch, one can see how difficult it can be for the recruit to ascertain the sincerity of this strategy. Many tend to be skeptical, and often with good reason, as illustrated by the following account.

He was basically talking about the facilities at the school, the academic standards, the fact that he stresses, how did he put it, we are student-athletes, not athlete-students. Like a lot of coaches, they say that at first but when it comes down to it that is not the way it is...There is nothing that interferes with practice but academics is supposed to come first.

( college football player)

Despite this sort of skepticism, this is a common strategy used by college recruiters who recognize the importance of making effective use of this strategy. Many recruits will only consider schools that seem to sincerely care about the academic aspect. The fact that many recruits are skeptical to begin with only makes this strategy that much more difficult to manage effectively. This is especially true when the parents or high school coach of the recruit are involved in the recruitment process. These individuals are more likely to sensitive to and aware of the importance of an education.

Auburn coach R.S.'s controversial decision to play All-American tailback C.G. in the Citrus Bowl even though C.G. hadn't attended class in more than two months may have cost him the most sought-after player in the country. S.M., who set national records for career touchdowns while leading his high
school team to two straight state championships, announced that he would attend Florida. S.M., who has a 2:9 grade-point average, was also considering Auburn and Nebraska, but his mother, concerned that her son would get the best possible education, reportedly cited R.S.'s handling of the C.G. matter in arguing against Auburn.

(Sports Illustrated; Feb.23/87, p.10)

In this case Auburn was eliminated from consideration since the recruit's mother felt that there was a lack of emphasis on the academic aspect.

This section has shown the importance of this strategy within the recruitment process, particularly in college athletics. Though certainly not always the case, failure to make effective use of this strategy may be destructive in the recruiting effort.

It's All Here in Black And White...

Race is something that must be recognized as significant within the recruitment process. One individual recalled the time a recruiter told him "we have too many black guys on the team, we need to pick up some good young white players." Even though blatant racism such as this is probably not the norm, race must be considered an important factor in the recruitment process. Though this account involves what would be labelled a "token white", instances involving "token blacks" are also common. Just as universities may hire a token women or country clubs may want a token black, athletes may be recruited as a
token member of a particular race.

Players are often conscious of or have been advised about racial situations at certain schools or areas, as illustrated by the following accounts.

I visited Georgia. I had a pretty good time but the graduation rate of black athletes there is very low. So I was like, I don’t know, I don’t want to go there, a real racist area. I talked to the defensive back coach and the coach that was recruiting me... and they were trying to convince me and they had all of this information but I was like no, I already knew about the blacks.

(college football player)

I’ll have a talk with him, particularly when I have a black kid, "Now look, you’re black and you can’t change that. Now if you are going to school, one of the things that you are going to have to look out for, besides your curriculum... don’t forget to look for a social life. Are there any other blacks around or are there only going to be two or three blacks and only guys. Because of that your social life is going to be cut very severely and you are not going to be happy at university." That is one of the things that I try to stress with them.

(high school football coach)

Concerns about the racial situation at certain schools or in certain areas may cause the recruit to be hesitant about becoming involved with that particular team, school or organization. With this often being an important concern to the recruit, particularly with black athletes, recruiters must often address the issue of race in the recruitment strategy. In the above mentioned account, the recruiter unsuccessfully tried to alleviate concerns about
the graduation rate of black athletes. Some schools may claim to have a better racial situation than others. Those that are perceived to have racial problems, such as being in racist areas or having a poor racial mix, may find it necessary to address these concerns in the recruitment strategy. Attempts may be made to alleviate or minimize the perceived racial problem.

Lou Holtz was all excited about trying to recruit Billy Ray, a quarterback from Durwoody High in Georgia. The first time he was allowed to make contact with him, Holtz called the player on the phone. He said, "people may say we won't start a black quarterback at Notre Dame, but that is not true. I had three black quarterbacks at Minnesota." Ray replied: "That is good to hear coach, but I am a white guy."

(Detroit News; 1986 10 05)

Concerns that black athletes would not be used at certain positions, such as quarterback, are fairly common within sport. In this case the recruiter, anticipating that this may be of concern to the recruit, tried to alleviate this within the recruitment strategy.

Strategies based on racial stereotypes are common as well. One basketball recruit recalled the time he was told that "slow, six foot two white guys are a dime a dozen." Within sport whites are frequently perceived to be slower but more intelligent players than blacks. Black athletes, on the other hand, are seen as being quicker and more athletic. The following accounts illustrate strategies
based on racial stereotypes.

So this football coach from Boston comes in looking for Kevin. I said, "In fact Kevin is in the gym right now, do you want to meet him?" And this guy walks in and Kevin had no shirt on, just his shorts. This guy's tongue came right out of his mouth. He says, "Oh my God, you know we have special education programs for blacks." (high school football coach)

One time he even said if you need help with drugs or whatever, like if you have a drug problem, I can help you out with that too...I guess he thought being black, you would probably have a drug problem. (college football player)

In each of these examples, the recruitment strategy focused on racial stereotypes rather than the needs of the individual.

As has been illustrated, race is something that must be recognized as significant within the recruitment process.

You Will Get to Start/Play Sooner...

Given that one of the major concerns of athletes is that they will actually get to play, as opposed to being second or third string or "sitting the bench", some recruiters will attempt to incorporate this notion into the recruitment attempt.

They had said that I would be able to walk in and play on a regular basis, that I wasn't going to be there as a sixth
defenceman or something. I'd play.  
(Junior A hockey player)

The recruiter will emphasize that the athlete will be
given the opportunity to start, play sooner or on a
regular basis rather than sitting on the bench. As
described by one recruiter, "you will not just be riding
the pine." Some of the smaller or lesser name teams,
schools and organizations, as well as some of the less
talented ones, may make use of this strategy.

A team that is not so good, the big thing is
ice time. You can get as much ice time as
you want.  
(minor league hockey recruit)

Mention may be made of other teams having too many good
players, implying that the recruit may not get the
opportunity to play.

This desire to play instead of spending most of
their time on the bench is an important factor to the
athlete.

Most of the guys from my school were looking
for teams that were going to be competitive,
but where you had, a shot of playing. Maybe
not winning the whole thing but competitive
enough to make the playoffs, and you get a
shot of playing your first year. Nobody
wants to sit on the bench and I personally,
I have never sat on the bench in any sport
that I have played. I can't see going to
practice and not even dressing for the
games. Like to me, I can't fathom that at
all.  
(college football player)
I was looking to start, playing football right away, I didn't want to sit around and not play for two or three years. I wanted to come in and play right away. So I was looking for a school that was looking for linemen. I wanted to find out if they had a lot of linemen, young linemen or whatever, or if they had a lot of guys graduating.

(college football player)

That is another reason why I didn't take my visit to Miami, because they had tons of defensive backs. So it wouldn't have been a good idea, just to add to the list.

(college football player)

It is often a difficult decision for recruits who want to become involved in a winning program, but at the same time desire to play on a regular basis. Choosing a top level college or team may mean limited playing time for the first two or three years. At many levels of sport, first year players may be required to sit the bench. This is difficult for the athlete, especially those who have never had to do so in the past. Thus the promise of playing on a regular basis may turn out to be an effective strategy. Choosing a less successful team may, however, mean more playing time at the expense of winning.

This strategy may also be used by teams that need players at a certain position or that have a large number of players who are leaving the team. If a team is weak at a certain position or has a large number of players leaving, this may mean the recruit will be given the opportunity to start, play sooner or play regularly. This notion can be incorporated into the recruitment pitch.
We must replace a large graduating class of 20 seniors and we certainly need to add young men of your ability that can play big time ball as freshmen. This season we travelled with 15-16 first year players, and we plan to do the same come next fall.

(recruiting letter)

In this case no promises were made, but the implication is that the recruit will be given the opportunity to play regularly the first year. Higher level teams are less likely to be able to utilize a strategy such as this, except in cases where the recruit is a top notch player.

The opportunity to start, player sooner or play on a regular basis may be an attractive inducement to the recruit since most prefer to play on a regular basis rather than sit the bench. Many recruits enter the process with this as an expectation and are hesitant to become involved with a team that does not offer the opportunity of playing on a regular basis. For this reason the recruiters may find effective management of this strategy beneficial.

We Can Take Care of That/Minimize Con....

The recruiter may use this strategy in an effort to take care of or minimize any concerns that the recruit may have.

They would try hard to block any excuses about why you should go back to the other team.

(recruit)
These concerns may cause the recruit to be hesitant about becoming involved with a particular group and/or activity. This strategy is used in an effort to alleviate these concerns in hopes that this will facilitate the initial involvement.

This can be done in several ways. In response to, or in anticipation of a problem that may be of concern to the recruit, the recruiter may try to minimize the importance of this problem.

They said that they had more to offer, more coaching, better coaching, and that the travelling really wasn’t that big a deal. It was only forty minutes or an hour, that it really didn’t take that much time, that the practices would be at good hours so that I could get to sleep early for school the next day.

(hockey recruit)

Please pay special attention to our section on enrolment. There you will notice that Michigan is not the large state university you assume it is. On our campus in Ann Arbor we only have 21,905 undergraduate students. A large percentage of our student population is made up of graduate students.

(recruiting letter)

In this case the recruiter, anticipating that the recruit may have concerns about the size of the school, incorporated efforts to minimize these concerns into the recruitment pitch. By attempting to minimize concerns that the recruit may have, the recruiter hopes to increase the chances of initial involvement.
Another form of this strategy involves the promise to take care of any problems that may be of concern to the recruit.

In fact, he was telling us, because a couple of us were saying that Westview has got pretty good standards to get in and he was saying don't worry about that, we will get you in.

(recruit)

We have had instances where the kid has not been able to pay. What we do in those situations and we are limited in that, is to get them a job in a school where they will work in the summer. After the season they can get additional hours.

(recuriter)

And they wanted her as well. And they made it clear to me that if she wanted to go there he would take care of the tuition portion of their education at least. They made it quite clear.

(high school coach)

Well, at the first meeting I told them that travel might be a problem. But the catcher at that time, if I remember correctly, he said don't worry about that, he said we can get you a ride.

(recruit)

At many levels of sport, especially in little leagues, players may have concerns about how they will get to the games and practices. Recruiters often promise that arrangements can be made for this in an effort to alleviate these concerns. College recruits who are concerned about being able to meet the academic
requirements may be promised access to tutors. In trying to convey the impression that "we can take care of that", the recruiter attempts to alleviate any concerns that the recruit may have in order to increase the chances of being successful in the recruiting effort.

The recruiter may also try to minimize the perceived degree of life change.

And they told me about some of their experiences and how Ann Arbor was very similar to Naples.

(reruit)

Some of the things he was saying were even though you are not from the States, Michigan State is only a short distance from the border and a two hour flight home. He was saying that even though you are not in Canada, you are still not far from home. He was saying that people in Michigan are no different than people in Ontario. It was not like I was going down to Georgia or something and get some culture shock.

(reruit)

By emphasizing that people in Michigan are no different than those in Ontario or that Ann Arbor is very similar to Naples, the recruiter attempts to minimize the degree of perceived life change. In alleviating concerns of this nature, it is hoped that the recruit will be more receptive to the recruitment pitch.

There are a variety of strategies used which aim to alleviate any problems that may be of concern to the recruit. These concerns often hinder the initial involvement, making it important for the recruiter to
address these concerns in the recruiting effort. If the recruiter is successful in alleviating these concerns, it stands to reason that the recruit will be more receptive to becoming involved in the activity and/or social group that the recruiter represents. This is true in sport, as well as in a variety of activities and social groups beyond sport. As stated by Rooney (1961), the greater the life change, the more complicated the recruitment pitch will have to be. It follows from this that if one can minimize or alleviate any concerns that the recruit may have, the degree of perceived life change would be decreased. This in turn should increase the chances of initial involvement.

Tradition...

The stressing of tradition, whether it be athletic or academic, is commonly used by recruiters representing older and more well known schools. Recruiters often emphasize that the recruit would be enrolled in one of the better quality academic and/or athletic institutions. Academic recruiters will emphasize factors such as academic standards in an effort to convey the impression of academic excellence. Athletic recruiters will emphasize, to varying degrees, the athletic and academic tradition of the school. By stressing the tradition of the school, both athletic and academic, the recruiter hopes to
attract the more serious student-athlete.

The University of Southern California has been able to maintain a rich tradition of excellence in education and athletics over the years.

(recruiting letter)

In stressing athletic tradition, recruiters may mention records of previous teams, championships, bowl games, former players who have gone on to play at higher levels and a variety of other factors in order to convey a tradition of athletic excellence.

Bowling Green football has made a name for itself throughout the country. It is a place where winning is a tradition. Playing a national schedule over the past 21 years, Bowling Green has had 20 winning seasons, has been ranked nationally seven times, and has won the tough Mid-American Conference six times. Throughout this football rich time, many outstanding men have come through Bowling Green’s football program. Head coaches such as Bo Schembechler, Jim Young, Bill Mallory, Bob Gibson and Doyt Perry; along with N.F.L. All-Pros Bernie Casey, Mike Weger, and Phil Villapiano have worn the Falcon Orange and Brown.

(recruiting letter)

Because I would say that (name) is the best high school in the state, one of the best high schools in the state I mean. In the last six years, they have won the state championship the last six years. So they have, I guess, tradition, a great tradition.

(recruit)

Recruiters representing older and more well known schools will often incorporate this notion of tradition into the
recruiting effort.

While it is often incorporated within the recruitment pitch, tradition often gives the recruiter an advantage above and beyond the recruitment process. Schools that are established and that have been successful over a period of time tend to receive a great deal more exposure and as a result are known to the recruit. Schools become known for their academic and/or athletic excellence. This in turn means that these schools often have an advantage prior to the recruitment process.

...yes, I think the biggest help to them is their tradition. They'll get someone that we may struggle to get. They'll go ahead and get them without struggling. "Well, you are going to play for the best team, we are going to get you in college, winning." That is where the tradition comes in.

(high school coach)

Teams that have a winning tradition often have an advantage within the recruitment process. Lessor known or established schools will usually have to sell themselves that much more in order to be successful in the recruiting effort.

The tradition of a particular school is often advantageous within the process of recruitment. While tradition is usually helpful in and of itself, recruiters will often stress tradition within the recruiting effort. Schools with tradition tend to have had successful and winning programs over the years and are well known to the recruit. Many schools are known for their athletic and/or
academic tradition. This emphasis on tradition is also used frequently by companies and businesses which may claim to have served a particular community for a certain number of years.

Last Ditch Efforts...

Some recruiters, when realizing that their chances of obtaining a particular recruit are minimal, will utilize this strategy in hopes of catching the recruit on the rebound. Recruiters realize that recruits often become discontent with their original choice and decide to discontinue the involvement.

And one coach, the coach from Georgia, I told him I was skeptical about coming to Georgia because I knew that the graduating rate of black athletes there is very low, and I guess that he kind of sensed that I wasn't going to go to his school, and he said "even if, whatever decision you make, if later on down the line you make a decision about coming here I will always be here and you will still get a scholarship."
(recruit)

The following lengthy account also serves to illustrate the nature of this strategy. Recruiters from Canadian universities, realizing that they cannot compete with American schools which have much more to offer, will utilize this strategy in the event that things do not work out at the American school. If the recruit does become discontent and return back to Canada, as is often the case, the recruiter may then have an advantage in any
renewed recruitment attempts.

There is no way I can out-recruit a major U.S. college that has a scholarship to offer. I can't do that. I am wasting my time. So I will let that kid know, hey, we are quite interested and we would like to have you, but I have got to know that you are interested in this situation. And I will leave it right there. And usually, as I say, 90% of the time I never hear from him again. He is gone and then he comes back in a year. And with a kid like that once he gets a scholarship I will write him a letter of congratulations. And the last paragraph of the letter is if I can ever be of further assistance just let me know. Because most of the kids that go to the States come back after the year.... These kids go down there for a recruiting weekend and they are wined and dined and they get the scholarship, the fancy weight facilities, this, that and the other thing. And they are just in seventh heaven. I know, I went through it. And then you get down there and you get on the practice field and you are dogmeat. And you are literally dogmeat when you are a freshman down there. The kids can't handle that and so they quit and come back. Now when they quit and come back I want to be one of the first people they think of. And usually they come back and if they call when they get back or contact me in some way, shape or form, that is a good sign. If they don't it won't take me more than two weeks to learn that they are back. I will find out from somewhere and then I will just pick up the phone and try to re-establish the connection.

(recruiter)

This strategy can be effective since athletes at all levels of sport become disenchanted with their present involvement.
Criticizing other teams or schools is rarely done openly.Recruiters seldom speak negatively about another team,school or coach.

I don't mention other schools,you open a whole can of worms when you do that.
(recruiter)

When they do choose to do so,it is usually done in a subtle manner.Comparative strategies are often used in such a way as to make the represented team look better.

No doubt,you will be contacted by many colleges,most of which will have good football programs and good,academic opportunities.We think we have something special at Northwest State;some of the reasons you will find enclosed.
(recruiting letter)

If they knew I was getting recruited by another school,sometimes they brought the other schools into it by saying "I think you might like our campus life or this school has this to offer"...they tried stressing their schools was better but they never said the other school stinks...They just said you might like this better.
(Junior A hockey player)

I don't remember them cutting up an organization as much as saying,well I guess when you say you are better you are cutting up,but they don't do it in a sense that they are no good.They do it in a sense that we are good.There was a couple of guys but very few that would actually personally attack another coach.And from my point of view once a guy did that it put me off right away anyway.
(hockey recruit)

In using comparative strategies,efforts are made to
convey the impression of being better without having to resort to direct criticism of other teams and schools.

Though this is normally avoided, at times recruiters will downgrade another school or team openly. Direct criticism of other teams and schools does occur, although this seems to be the exception rather than the rule.

They (recruiters) were trying to talk me out of going to other schools. They were putting down other schools. They really didn't have too much to say about Eastern, just that it was really cold there, that was about it. (college football recruit)

...you will get others that will come in and ask if you want to win. If you want to win you will come here; if you don't want to, go to that other place. (college football player)

Well they will use such things as a better education. You are a very bright student, why would you want to go there? (high school coach)

Although in these cases attempts were made to downgrade other teams and schools, this seems to be uncommon. Criticism is usually done in a much more subtle manner. In using comparative strategies, recruiters will emphasize why their schools or team is better rather than why the other is worse.

Getting Away From Home/Being Close to Home...

Geographical concerns such as this often play an important role in the recruitment process. Due to a
variety of constraints, athletes are often restricted to playing for teams that are closer to home. Travelling the extra distance can be costly in terms of time, as well as financially. This is certainly the case in little league sports, where parents are often unable or unwilling to travel the extra distance. Adults often choose to be involved with teams that are closer to home due to constraints such as time, family and employment. Thus distance is an important factor to consider in the recruitment process for both recruits and recruiters. The distance that a particular school is away from home is an important factor to the college recruit, many of whom will be leaving home for the first time.

"I couldn’t go that far or I would have went."
(reruit)

Marinovich was highly impressed with coach Don James, who came by the apartment. He liked Seattle but was concerned about its distance from home.
(Sports Illustrated, Feb. 22/1988)

I came here because everything was right, so to speak. I mean it wasn’t far, the great tradition, and the program. That is the main thing. Tennessee, I wanted to go to Tennessee but it was a little too far.
(reruit)

...and I tell them another thing. Don’t go too far from home if you can help it.
(high school coach)

Also, I really thought about the location of the school, because my brother ran track at the Naval Academy. He ran track and he was really successful at that, but he told me that the only thing he hated was that after a big meet he would look up into the stands
and my parents were not there...He talked to me about that, and I guess that kind of touched me because my family is very close.
(college football player)

Their big thing was you stay at home and save money right. But most of the guys that I know, the whole idea of university was to get away from home, right. Get out of the house. They said that they do have residences if you want to stay in residence but their big thing was you stay local still. All of your family could come out and watch the games.
(recruit)

Recruiters representing local schools will at times pressure the recruit to stay close to home by stressing family and community ties.

You've got to understand, he's special because he called us. Before that, we didn't know a thing about him. His coach was reluctant to call us (Michigan), being from Texas and being loyal to the Texas schools. The kid had a lot of pressure and was being called a traitor by his peers for wanting to come here. He's got guts.
(Detroit Free Press, Feb. 12/1987)

The in-state schools would talk about why do they (out of state schools) have to come down here to recruit. Especially from Florida. You should stay home. Your mother wants you to stay home.
(recruit)

...and your parents are not going to be able to see you on T.V. because you would be so far from home. If you were to stay here and play, your parents could see you on T.V. all of the time. And it was like they can come up and see you play.
(recruit)
Making Future Contacts...

This is often an important consideration in the recruitment process. Recruiters, knowing that many athletes have aspirations to move on to higher levels, may utilize a strategy emphasizing the opportunity for future advancement. The implication is that playing for the team that the recruiter represents increases the chances of playing at the next level. College and Junior A (junior hockey in Canada) recruiters may emphasize the number of players they have had go on to play at the professional level. Some coaches will make efforts to play in tournaments that are scouted by higher level teams. Those playing for more successful teams tend to get more exposure.

We were very pleased to have two of our seniors chosen in the first round of the NFL draft last month. In the past I have coached such players as Chuck Foreman, an N.F.L. rookie of the year; John Matusak, the number 1 draft choice in 1973; and Ted Hendricks, a perennial All Pro with the N.F.L. champion Oakland Raiders....To date, more than 20 players that I have coached have been placed in the N.F.L.

(rerecuiting letter)

That you are going to play for the best team, that we are going to get you to college, the winning.

(high school coach)

Players went there because they knew of the winning program in volleyball that this coach had, so kids would go out of their way to go to that high school to play volleyball. And he has had a lot of success and a lot of his student athletes were
recruited by the American universities... So the kids go there because they know they are going to learn the game and they know their chances of getting a scholarship are a lot higher.

(high school coach)

Many college athletes are also aware of the importance of establishing future contacts which are outside of sport. While many hope to play at the professional level, most realize that the odds are against them. With this in mind the prospects of gaining employment upon graduation are an important consideration.

Oh, you have to pay attention to the alumni because they have been there and most of them were doctors, engineers and I looked at that and I went, "Hey, you know, they would probably help me out once I got out of school." Maybe they could help me find a job or something.

(college football player)

A degree from a major college, such as Notre Dame, can be very useful in terms of future employment.

This strategy is especially visible in the sport of hockey. Percentage wise, the majority of N.H.L. players still come out of Junior A hockey in Canada, particularly the O.H.L. (Ontario Hockey League). Junior A recruiters will emphasize this as a benefit over playing hockey for an American college. The standard pitch may be, "If you want to play pros, you are better off playing Junior A." It is said that the number of games played per season and the travel in Junior A is similar to the pros, better preparing the player for professional hockey. This
schedule makes it very difficult to maintain educational commitments. Meanwhile, American college hockey offers increased educational opportunities which are important in terms of future employment but decreases the chances of playing pro hockey. This makes it very difficult for the hockey player to decide which route to take.

While these are but a few of the strategies available to recruiters, this chapter allows the reader to develop a sense of the kinds of strategies that can be utilized in recruiting. The next section deals with the significance of third party involvement in the recruitment process.
CHAPTER EIGHT - THIRD PARTY INVOLVEMENT

Recruitment is rarely an interactive process involving only the recruit and the recruiter. A variety of others can play significant roles within the recruitment process. For example, the parents and coaches of recruits are often very influential within this process. The parents are especially important in the little leagues. Recruiters recognize the importance of leaving a positive impression on these third parties. Recruiters must not only work on the athlete, but also any others who may have an influence on the final decision made by the recruit. In order to do this recruiters must be able to determine who is influential to the recruit, as well as to what extent.

It is interesting to note that while recruits will acknowledge that others played an important role within the recruitment process, many felt that the final decision was their own. Parents and high school coaches will also claim to have helped out, but note that the final decision was left up to the recruit.

My parents had no influence on my decision.

(Recruit)

...it was basically, as long as my parents agreed with what was going on, it was my decision.

(Recruit)

My coach, he was very important, but he had
told me that I would have to make the decision and that he would help me. He would point out the important parts but he would not help me make that decision. He pointed out the good and the bad aspects of most schools and I made the decision based on that.

(recruit)

My coach knew what was going on because he had been through it several times before. And they tried playing through to him but he wouldn't try to help me make my decision. It was based on my decision, no one else's.

(recruit)

It was all me, it was my decision. Nobody was going to influence me either way, whether they tried or not.

(recruit)

The hardest thing for me to do, I don't know how it is for the other high school coaches, is to try to not make myself make the decision for the kid. You try to guide them and give them the pitfalls, the pluses and the minuses, and then let them make the decision...because I don't want someone to come back to me and say you told me to go to such and such and it didn't work out, it was no good and it is your fault. I try to avoid that pitfall as a coach.

(high school coach)

In spite of this, recruiters recognize the influence that others have on the recruit.

...most high school coaches will tell you that they are not going to advise a kid to go to any particular school and it is not wise for them to do it. But if they are subconsciously supporting one school or another they are going to lean that way regardless of what they say they are going to do. They are going to make sure that posters like this are going to get in front of the kids. They are going to make sure that any material that I send to the school that is designed for the kids will get to the kids. That sort of thing. They will be very positive. So you have got basically
that kind of connection. And you want to develop that kind of relationship. (college football recruiter)

With this in mind, recruiters will gear their recruiting efforts to include those who may be influential to the recruit.

Recruiters realize the importance of developing a positive relationship with the parents of the recruit. The recruiter who is unable to get on the good side of the parents is not likely to be successful in the recruitment effort. The parents usually have a great deal of influence on the recruit.

Meet their parents because their parents are concerned about where their son is going. And they say, "Well I think I like this guy, he has got pretty good stuff, I like him," or, "I really didn't enjoy what he had to say to our son." You know the parents are very important in this whole process. (college football recruiter)

He (recruiter) was at my house waiting for me when I got home from school and he had been talking to my Ma. He knew I was really close to my Ma, and so he was trying to get with her, get close to her. (college football recruit)

Everyone of them, everyone that I can remember wanted to talk to my dad right. They would talk to me just to see if I was interested in coming out and then everyone of them would want to talk to my dad....Like it seemed that they talked much longer with my dad than with me. It was like I am the beef and my old man is selling it. (minor league hockey recruit)

He (recruiter) was in my house. He basically, he hardly talked to me at all. He kind of just talked to my dad. He had come down and had a beer in my basement. I was
sitting there and it was like I was just listening to him and my dad talk. He was talking to my dad. He was stressing the academic side of the school. But it was funny because I was sitting there on the couch and I was like, "No way, you guys don't even need me here. What am I doing here?"

(college football recruit)

On his (recruiter) first visit to Denton, he took my father and me out to dinner. Most of the conversation was between the two of them. My father was ready to sign after about 30 minutes.

(Meat on the Hoof, 1972; 27)

You do work on the parents and you know it is a tough thing to do sometimes because of time. . Once you get a kid to a point where you think he is a legitimate candidate that is when you make the home visit. And the home visit, as I say, I don't want to go on the home visit without his parents there. I want his parents there. And usually if go and spend an hour in somebodies house, 45 minutes of that time is spent talking to his parents, not him. The other thing is most of the letters, most of the mailings that I send to the kids, they show this stuff to their parents.

(college football recruiter)

One recruiter, in discussing the importance of recruiting parents, went as far to say that it was usually the mother who made the decision.

Coaches also play an important role within the recruitment process, particularly at the high school level. College recruiters, realizing the impact that high school coaches can have, stress the importance of maintaining good relations with these individuals.

A high school coach can wield a tremendous amount of power over a kid in terms of his decision. So there is an awful lot of
politics that goes on there. And you want to try and stay on the good side of them, whether you like the guy or whether you respect him or not, you still have to because it is going to cost you. You know that.

(college football recruiter)

The better the relationship I have with them (coaches), the more information I am going to get on these kids and the earlier I am going to get it.

(college football recruiter)

Say you are the coach and one of your players is playing for me. All of a sudden you get a colour photograph in the Viking uniform. This is your product playing at the University of Norfolk. You put it up in your office and the other players see it, and they look at it. And it makes you feel good as a coach too and you say, "this is my player down there and look at this. And you should consider going down there." You know it all adds up and it all comes back.

(college football recruiter)

College recruiters must often rely on high school coaches for assessments and appraisals of potential recruits, particularly during the early stages of the recruitment process. This can at times be problematic to recruiters since high school coaches do not always give accurate assessments of a player's abilities.

There is one coach here who boggles me. When I approached him he said, "I have no one here that can play university football." And I said well ok. And that was a mistake of mine. I should have still pursued it. And so I went on and I didn't pursue this and a couple of the guys went on to play A.K.O. football and had a tremendous career. They were both university students and played A.K.O. football. And I asked the one, "Why didn't you play at Cresthill." And he said, "well, I was told by my high school coach
that I couldn't make it in university, so I didn't go out for the team. And I said, "Oh no."

(recuriter)

Well this happened at Norfolk. When I was there the first two weeks of September and I was a guest coach at Norfolk, down in the Maritimes, the coach said to me, "Yea, this high school coach really pushed this guy that I have got; this guy over here." And I was shaking my head. "He really pushed him, told me how great he was going to be and things like that." And he didn't belong there. He didn't belong there and I said "isn't that too bad." He said, "I should have followed up, I should have followed up and watched him, got some videos and watched him play."

(recuriter)

The appraisals of high school coaches carry a great deal of weight. An athlete's career can be greatly affected by such an assessment.

Anyway, if the coach doesn't like you and a college asks about such and such a person and the coach says I don't think so, then the college guy will not even write your name on the list.

(college football player)

Over time recruiters develop a sense of which high school coaches can be trusted to give an accurate appraisal and which cannot.

Like for example, I think ____ was the chief recruiter for Southwood, he was there for a long time. So you get to know him. You get to trust him, and he gets to trust you too. Because coaches will lie, they will lie about their kids. They will lie on the statistics, the size. I mean they will lie to try and get this kid in.

(high school coach)

After 2 or 3 contacts with the guy you get a pretty good idea of whether he is dealing
with you straight or whether he knows what he is talking about or just exactly what it is. And you file that for future reference. So that if there is a good kid coming out of his school and I am still going to have to talk to him, I am not going to give any credence to what he says. Fortunately there are not too many like that.

(recruiter)

And so we started talking a little bit and he said "Listen Bill, if there is anyone that you have that you think will help my program, I don't even have to come down." He says that, "I know that if you were to call me and you had a student athlete for me, that I would be willing to take her virtually sight unseen."

(high school coach)

High school coaches develop reputations as to the degree they can be trusted, just as recruiters do. The high school coach who can be trusted to give an accurate assessment of a player's ability is a great asset to the recruiter.

Many coaches will assist the recruit throughout the recruitment process. Some will take it upon themselves to initiate contact with college recruiters on behalf of the recruit.

I was her coach and I felt it my role as a coach was to get whatever was possible for Lori after high school. And so I initiated that process. I started the ball rolling. I made the initial call and from there I continued it through.

(high school coach)

High school coaches will often serve in an advisory sort of role, familiarizing the recruit with the ins and the outs of the recruitment process. College recruiters will
often maintain contact with the recruit via the high school coach, especially during the initial stages of the process. In the United States, there are regulations limiting the personal contacts that college recruiters can have with recruits. In these cases, contact is maintained through the head coach, allowing this individual to serve as a filter.

If it was a good message or he (the coach) thought I should hear something, he would relay it to me. Call me in his office and say this coach is really interested and I gave him some film. He will tell me he is going to call me on a certain day, so be around. Warn me, let me know to sound interested or be at my best. You know, don't be or sound like an asshole and blow it for yourself if it is a good school. But I had a good coach, so he would help me a lot.

(college football player)

Everything was up in the air that night and my coach asked me to write down the good things, like things that I remember about the school. The things that I liked and disliked about the school. And I narrowed it down.

(college football recruit)

The head coach will sit down with them and he'll ask them, he'll ask the kids at the end of the season, "Do you want to play college ball?" And when the kid comes in he will ask the kid, "What schools would you like to play at?" Now if the kid says "Michigan, Michigan State, Southern Cal.," and all of that, he'll tell the kid, "No, you have to be more realistic. And he will get a list of the different schools and he will send films to the different schools to see if they are interested. Now he will also recommend, if a school does not have a good reputation for being honest, he will tell the kid.

(high school coach)
I had the best teacher there was, my father, and my coach as well. So I had good people guiding me.

(college football recruit)

Yea, he (coach) watched out for me, because he was telling me about the things that go on with recruiting and what schools are good and which are not.

(college football recruit)

Not all high school coaches are willing to become this involved in the recruitment process. Coaches who are willing to promote and guide their players through the process can be a great help to the recruit. Those who are reluctant to take on this role can cost the player recruitment opportunities.

He doesn’t have a coach that does very much to help his athletes. He (the coach) is very, very poor. He doesn’t care. I coached with this guy, he was a jerk then and he is still a jerk. He just doesn’t follow through...He doesn’t really help his kids. Now John’s coach, (coaches name), he was really good for that. He was super at making sure his kids got recruited and talking to them. He did one hell of a job...and this guy at (school’s name) doesn’t do anything. He does not push his kids. He is not exposing his kids and that is what you have got to do.

(high school coach)

There are some coaches, you will call them up and try to set up a school visit; they just don’t want to be bothered. They just don’t want to take the time and effort to set it up. Fine. Sometimes you have to go around them to get the kids.

(college football recruiter)

The degree to which the high school coach is willing to participate in the recruitment process is an important
consideration.

High school coaches can have a great deal of influence on the recruit and recruiters are aware of this. Recruiters realize that high school coaches vary as to the degree of influence they have on the recruit's decision.

So we had a panorama. Some it was an ego thing. "My boy went to the States, he got a scholarship. Oh boy, what a great coach." You know that attitude. And the other guy said, "I want the best for my boy, I want to see him get a good education and get a chance to play, so I am going to push him here." Others might say, "I want to make sure he has got all of the information straight, and then he makes his own decision. And I am not going to push him anywhere, he is going to make up his own mind."

(recuriter)

...usually if they are more cooperative it is because they care about their kids. They want to do everything. My definition of an ideal high school coach in this situation is the guy who wants to make sure that his kids get information on every opportunity that is available to them. And then let them make their own decision. And he will guide them and advise them and basically go out of his way to make sure that they get that information. But he is not going to try and make that decision for them. Now that is the kind of guy that, hell, half the time they will call me and say, "I have got three kids this year."

(recuriter)

In this case the ideal coach is defined as one who does everything he or she can for both the recruit and the recruiter, while at the same time remaining impartial in the decision making process. Despite this, it is realistic
to assume that some of the biases and assessments of the high school coach will have an impact on the recruit.

The recruiter hopes that leaving a good impression on the high school coach will be helpful in the present recruiting attempt, as well as in any future efforts. Developing and maintaining positive relations with high school coaches is a very important part of the recruitment process. This reflects the importance of networking in recruitment. Developing a strong network comprising individuals such as high school coaches and former players is one of the central elements to effective recruitment. This cuts down on a lot of the initial groundwork in assessing and identifying potential recruits. These individuals can also serve as recruiting agents on behalf of the team that the recruiter represents.

You get that kind of support and that kind of, you know, your recruiting network. The alumni, former player contacts, who are actually out there working for you. They are key.

(rerecruiter)

...develop a network out there of feeder schools... develop a network with the coaches and athletic directors at these schools and develop a good relationship... and once you develop the network. You can't go all over the place because you don't have the resources to do that.

(rerecruiter)

The development of a strong network is one of the key aspects in the recruitment process.

In this section the importance of third party
involvement within the recruitment process has been illustrated. Recruiters must be conscious of the influence that others can have on the recruit. The recruiter must impress not only the recruit, but also any others who may be influential to the recruit. If the recruiter is successful in developing positive relations with these others, they may actually serve as recruiting agents on behalf of the recruiter. By the same token, the recruit must also deal with a collection of individuals. The appraisals of his or her coach are often important. There are a variety of individuals who take part in the assessment and identification of recruits. While only one person may be perceived as the recruiter, there are often a variety of people who take on this role at one time or another. Third party involvement is an important consideration in recruitment. We will now turn to the conclusions.
CHAPTER NINE - CONCLUSIONS

This section will begin with a summary of the major research findings that emerged from this study. This will then be followed by some concluding remarks, as well as a review of the generic implications.

Summary of Research Findings

1. Recruitment, as is true of most interactive processes, occurs in progressive, developmental stages. These stages were labelled screening and appraisals; exploration; signification; clarification and verification; and documentation.

2. Those involved in the recruitment process utilize a variety of strategies and roles in an effort to impress and influence one another.

3. The actors involved in the recruitment process continually interpret, assess, negotiate and role take in order to determine which roles and strategies will be effective with any given recruiting interaction. Those involved in the process must continually act in relation to one another.

4. Athletes are not always aware that they are being recruited nor are others always aware that they are recruiting. This is particularly true at the lower levels. Recruitment is often seen as involving the offering of scholarships, cash etc., not simply an attempt to involve.

5. Recruitment involves much more than an interaction between two individuals (recruit and recruiter). A variety of others play significant roles within the process.

6. Recruitment at the upper levels of sport tends to be more formalized and thus had more regulations that may be violated, whereas recruitment at the lower levels is more subtle and informal.

7. The recruitment pitch includes an explanation of the benefits to be derived from involvement. At the lower
levels these benefits may be factors such as a few free beers after the game, the promise of fun, and tournaments; at the higher levels athletic scholarships, cash etc.

8. Recruiters play major roles in determining the sport career of the athlete and the recruitment of a given athlete may have positive or negative effects on the recruiter's career as well.

9. Although, athletes get guidance from a variety of individuals, they typically claim that the final decision was their own; that no one else was going to influence their decision.

10. Recruiters sometimes engage in the recruitment process when they do not actually want the individual being recruited. The individual may be recruited as a token member of a certain group or simply to pay the bills.

11. Personalized contact is a key component in recruitment. Personal contact indicates care, a higher level of interest and aids in trust building.

12. While recruiters must show interest in the recruit, recruits tend to be turned off by overselling or excessive persistence. By the same token, an undersell is perceived as a lack of interest.

13. Recruiters may make use of stereotypes in the recruitment process, especially when little is known about the recruit or during the initial stages of the process.

14. There are differences between American and Canadian attitudes towards recruitment. Recruitment in Canada tends to be more subtle and more likely to be viewed as deviant.

15. There are a variety of recruiting practices that are reserved for the "blue chip" athlete which are meant to indicate a higher level of interest.

16. Certain groups see recruitment as unacceptable and deny involvement in the process.

17. Individuals who are discontent with their present involvements are more likely to be receptive to the recruiting efforts of others.

18. The concept of "decoration", which parallels to "cooling out the mark", is an important aspect of the process and worthy of further study.

19. Winning and losing is an important issue within sport
and a key factor within recruiting efforts.

20. The recruitment process has a vast multitude of generic implications.

Final Remarks

Given the complexity of this activity, this was but an initial examination into the process of recruitment into sport. Naturally there are issues that were not dealt with in this study. How recruitment varies across level, sport (i.e. football versus basketball), and gender are all important issues that need to be explored further. The impact of recruitment on self concept was a very important factor that was not dealt with. Being recruited confirms or enhances one's self concept as a good athlete.

...that was when I started to realize that I was a pretty good athlete and that I was valuable to some people...I got a lot of media attention but I mean that only tells you so much, I mean when you start to find out that you are a good athlete is when the colleges start to recruit you.

(college football player)

Snyder (1986) reports that the volume of letters that the recruit received from college recruiters enhanced and supported their perceived athletic abilities. Being recruited into activities typically gives the individual a feeling of being wanted or being important to somebody. This is true at any level of sport, right through from little league to the professional level. Conversely, recruitment can have a negative impact on the self concept
of the individual. This may hold true in cases where the person is seldom recruited or not recruited at all. The influence of recruitment on self concept is a significant consideration. For most higher level athletes their identity as an athlete is what Becker (1963) would call MASTER STATUS.

For someone like John, that was his identity, otherwise his identity was a jerk. That was him, he was a good ball player, that kind of status. (softball player)

The relationship between sport involvement and self concept is an extremely important one and certainly warrants further consideration.

We need to envision recruitment as involving serious life choices for the people involved. As stated by Prus (1984; 18), recruitment plays an important role in determining our life chances. It may make a significant difference in an athlete's career. Successful or unsuccessful recruitment may also cost a coach his or her job. Recruitment is often an important factor in determining a team's success. It is difficult to win without the good players and this usually requires recruiting.

So recruiting is...a difficult thing. It is difficult for the young man to decide because of the pressures they put on him and it is difficult for the coaches who recruit them, because young coaches compete against each other you know. The kid comes in and (the coach) says, "Hey, that is my recruit.", it is always "my recruit" when he
is doing good and if he is not, then the head coach is sitting there saying, "It is your recruit who is not doing good." And so they have to care and...the young guy who is making a tenth of what the head coach is making...he is, aspiring towards the big dollars...so he wants to bring in the recruits the best he can.

(high school coach)

The success of those involved in the process is typically dependant on recruitment.

Although this was but an initial examination of the recruitment process, this study makes an important contribution to our understanding of the recruitment process and how people become involved in activities, as well as interactional processes and group life in general. This research also illustrates the importance of sport as an area of sociological study and in following the lead of Blumer, this research reflects the nature of the empirical social world.

Generic Implications

Generic aspects of the recruitment process were developed throughout the data analysis. The generic relevance of various processes and concepts, such as impression management, role taking, joint activity, negotiations, and trust building, were discussed throughout the research. Parallels were drawn to deviant activities, occupations, religious groups and a variety of other activities and/or social groups. Recruitment was
often compared to sales, with recruiters being equated with salespersons. The recruitment pitch is frequently referred to as the sales pitch and recruiters are seen as selling their particular team to the recruit, who is viewed as the customer.

The guy who sold Phil to go to Southwood could sell snowballs to the eskimos. I mean this guy was a real salesman. He did a sales job on Phil. You know the guy would not give up at all, he was persistent. (parent of recruit)

Comparisons were also made with the development of relationships. Courtship is basically a form of recruitment and many of the processes within each are similar. For example, the concept of recruitment was shown to be relevant to both relationships and recruitment into sport. John Cooper, newly appointed football coach at Ohio State University, when asked about his recruiting ability, looked to his wife and replied:

If I can convince a beautiful woman like this to spend 31 years with me, then I can surely recruit 17 and 18 year old athletes to come to a fine academic institution such as Ohio State.

This simple analogy serves to illustrate the similarity between courtship and recruitment.

Following is a summary of the generic aspects that were developed in this study. The importance of personal contact was discussed as it relates to sport and sales (specifically used cars and real estate). Personal contact
is typically seen as indicative of interest in a number of different settings. The denial of recruitment was examined generically, as was the concept of "decriment". Decruitment was discussed as it relates to sport, as well as relationships and deviance (cooling out the mark). Prus's (1977; 163) statement, that persons seem most vulnerable to new involvements when they become disenchanted with their present situation, was analyzed with reference to sport, religious groups, stripping, protest groups, employment and interpersonal relations. The importance of overselling and underselling was examined with regards to sport, sales and interpersonal relations. Rooney's (1961; 175) notion, that the recruitment pitch must include an explanation of the benefits to be derived from involvement, was shown to be applicable across a wide range of activities and social groups. The recruitment strategy, "we care about you as a person", was discussed in relation to sport, prostitution, intimate encounters, stripping, waiting, bartending, sales and business. The strategy based on the development of trust has generic implications since trust has been identified as a generic feature of group life (Prus, 1986; 1).

As illustrated, recruitment can be conceptualized in a vast multitude of generic ways. In studying interactive processes such as recruitment, it is important to focus on
the generic aspects as well as the substantive, as has been done in this study.
APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW SAMPLE

1. Played in the Ontario Hockey League; a goalie who was drafted by the St. Louis Blues of the N.H.L.; recruited by the Canadian junior leagues as well as American colleges.

2. Played in the Ontario Hockey League; a defenceman who was drafted by the Chicago Black Hawks of the N.H.L.; recruited by the Canadian junior leagues as well as the American colleges.

3. Played high school football in Detroit; a linemen considered a college prospect; was involved in the initial stages of the recruitment process at the time of the interview.

4. High school football coach in Detroit.

5. Former football player at a major U.S. college; a lineman; was a high school All American as a senior; considered a pro prospect until career ending injury.

6. Was recruited academically and athletically (softball). The only female interviewed.

7. Former Canadian intercollegiate basketball player. A starter at guard.

8. Played football at a major U.S. college at the time of the interview; a starter at defensive back; considered a pro prospect.

9. Played football at a major U.S. college at the time of the interview; 2nd string at defensive back.

10. Was involved in the process as a player (drafted by Baltimore Colts), high school coach in Detroit for many years, and as a parent (father of interviews 3 and 5).

11. A Canadian involved in a variety of higher level sports, including hockey, softball, and soccer in Southern Ontario.


13. Former Canadian university football coach, played college ball as well as professional (C.F.L.).
14. Current Canadian university football coach, played at the college level in both U.S. and Canada

15. Former Canadian university football player as a tight end; also involved in hockey and soccer at the higher levels.
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Paper Presentation