Almost 209 million Americans participate in some sort of physical activity (e.g., individual, racquet, team, outdoor, water or fitness sports), but as Americans get older, they become increasingly inactive (Physical Activity Council, 2015). Nevertheless, some individuals have embraced lifestyles devoted to physically active leisure through sport participation and travel often through events. To conceptualize how individuals participate in and travel to sport events over the course of their life Buning and Gibson (2015), building off Getz and McConnell (2011), developed the idea of the Active Sport Event Travel Career (ASETC). The ASETC is defined as “a career-like pattern of involvement and commitment to event-related travel and participation in physically active sport events, which leads to progression through time with regard to motivations, preferences, and modified behavior” (Buning & Gibson, 2015, p. 555). However, focused research to examine why and how individuals initially partake in a sport is scarce. The current study seeks to address this issue by investigating the initiation process of active sport participation and travel (Buning & Gibson, 2015).

A person’s behavior is guided by their internal drive, or motivation, and that drive comes from the need to fulfill one’s basic, psychological, and self-fulfillment needs (Iso-Ahola, 1982; Maslow, 1954; Roberts, 1992). Researchers who have examined leisure (such as sport) motivations have found four general motivational factors: intellectual, social, competence-mastery, and stimulus avoidance (Beard & Ragheb, 1980, 1983; Iso-Ahola, 1982). The importance of each motive varies by the type of leisure one engages in and individual preferences (e.g., Filo, Funk & O’Brien, 2008; Kim & Chalip, 2004; Snelgrove & Wood, 2010). Getz and McConnell (2011) suggested that these motivations can even change over one’s sport career, and work by Buning and Gibson (2014, 2015) supports the evolution of sport participant motives over a lifetime.

But desire to participate is not the only indication as to who will participate; barriers and constraints may prevent an interested individual from actually participating. There are three types of constraints that have been examined in a leisure context: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Godbey, Crawford & Shen, 2010). Constraints that exist within the individual such as shyness are intrapersonal, constraints such as family responsibilities that are related to social interactions are interpersonal, and issues that come between an individual’s sport preference and their participation like costs are known as structural constraints (e.g. Hudson, 2000, Wood & Danylchuk, 2015). Further, active sport event travel has been found to be constrained by interrelated and cyclical competing priorities that interfere with daily life and the athletic pursuit (Lamont, Kennelly, & Wilson, 2012). The perceived combination of these constraints can lead to low levels of sport involvement (Alexandris, 2013). However, little research has been conducted that examines the relationship between constraints and sport involvement for interested potential participants and beginning participants. Despite this lack of research, scholars have shown that even those who are more involved encounter these same constraints, but have developed mechanisms for negotiating them (Kennelly, Moyle, & Lamont, 2013; Jackson, Crawford, & Godbey, 1993). Although, the level of involvement may not be the same as it would be without the constraints, negotiation does allow for continued participation. Examples of negotiation strategies include time management, learning the necessary skills, improving finances or fitness, and shifting interpersonal relationships (Beggs, et al., 2005; Elkin, Beggs & Choutka, 2007; Jackson & Rucks, 1995; Wood & Danylchuk, 2015). Individuals use these negotiation strategies to address their own constraints in order to participate at a level of involvement (with regards to the different facets of involvement) that is satisfying to them for the moment (Wood & Danylchuk, 2015).

Thus, the purpose of the current study is to examine the motivations and constraints of individuals who indicate interest in a sport but do not participate and those that are beginning their sport involvement. The following research questions are guiding the study:

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Welcome to the Club! An Examination of the Initiation Phase of the Active Sport Event Travel Career

Amy Rundio, East Carolina University
Richard Buning, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

Abstract 2016-171  Friday, June 3, 2016  20-minute oral presentation (including questions)
Abstract 2016-171  1:40 PM  (Forum East 2)
• How are individuals initially stimulated and motivated to participate and travel to a sport of interest?
• What constraints hinder or reduce sport participation and the related travel for new sport participants?
• How do constraints, motivations, and preferences change over time for new sport participants?
• How do collegiate sport clubs recruit individuals to join?

To answer these questions, interviews are being conducted with potential and beginning collegiate club sport athletes. Collegiate sports clubs offer a key entry point into a new sport and these individuals represent a population that undergoes changing motivations, constraints, and preferences throughout their involvement (Buning & Gibson, 2015). Participants are undergoing hour long semi-structured interviews developed from previous literature (Alexandris & Carroll, 1997; Beard & Ragheb, 1983, Buning & Gibson, 2015). Data collection is on-going and will be completed in January 2016.

Once all interviews have been conducted, they will be transcribed verbatim and coded. First, the transcripts will be read by both researchers and coded line-by-line using in vivo coding. Each researcher will then conduct a second round of coding, looking for patterns among the first-order codes related to motivations, constraints, participation, and links between the constructs. Then the researchers will discuss, compare, and contrast their findings and insights until a consensus on the definitions and relationships between the constructs has been reached (Creswell, 2007).

The expected results will provide an understanding of how motivations and constraints change participation and involvement for new sport participants. This understanding will aid sport organizations in developing programs that reduce or address constraints and meet the needs of potential and beginning participants. In particular, the discussion will focus on implications that help sport clubs recruit and retain members, develop strategies to grow sport participation generally, and assist event and club organizers in catering to beginning and new participants.