

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH COLLEGE
ATHLETE'S PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL
CONNECTION AND PARENTAL-
PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTONOMY

By

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Bachelor of Science
Oklahoma Christian University
2000

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
May, 2003

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without the encouragement and help of the following individuals I would not be able to finish this project. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Dr. Carolyn Henry for her positivism, patience and kindness. I would like to thank Dr. Linda Robinson for her insightful comments during my proposal and defense meetings. Also, I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Steven Edwards who without hesitating accepted to work with me and became a reliable and essential member of my committee.

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude for the support that my mother Ilis do Rosario Lopes Guimaraes, Martina Hautova, my brother Claudio Luis Lopes Guimaraes Battaglini, and my "American mother" Karin Anderson provided during this undertaking. Their encouraging words strengthened my resolve and their continual understanding was deeply appreciated.

Finally, I would like to thank Anita Cawlfied, Michel Goldstein, Dr. Alexander Poole and Elizabeth Stewart for their insight and editorial help throughout this project.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Given the prominence of athletics in society, from childhood to adulthood, many people play or have played sports during at least one period in their lives. According to Padilla and Baumer (1994), Americans spend hundreds of billions of dollars each year on leisure activities, and much of this vast sum is devoted to sports and sporting activities. In addition, billions of dollars are spent every year in sports organizations at the collegiate level (Naughton, 1997, 1998). Prospective athletes are recruited from all over the world to receive collegiate scholarships that pay for their education while at the same time, having the opportunity to compete at high levels in athletics. Whether or not individuals choose to participate in sports in order to relieve stress, obtain quality leisure time or, compete at high levels, in one way or another, sports play a prominent role in many people's lives.

Since sports participation is so prevalent in society, there is a natural need for social scientists to deepen their understanding in the sport socialization process; in particular, understand the several social factors that may act as mechanisms that differentiate sports participants from non-participants or primary and secondary

athletes within various individual and/or team sports. According to Loy, McPherson, and Kenyon (1978), major questions of interest to both coaches and researchers include why some individuals become involved in sports and why others do not; why individuals are attracted to specific sport roles but not to others; and why some who are involved become primary athletes, while others with apparently similar physical attributes do not.

A major issue related to the sports socialization process centers on the relationship of sports to an individual's well being, as well as to the development of a strong character and personality. According to Taylor (1995), athletic participation has a positive effect on an individual's self-esteem even though this effect is not strong by itself. In other words, the combination of athletic participation and other college activities helps to increase self-esteem in college students. Other studies found support for unique developmental and personality differences between athletes and non-athletes (Craighead, Privette, Vallianos & Byrkit, 1986; Tripathi, 1980; Edwards, 1973). For example, Tripathi (1980) found significant personality differences between college athletes (players) and non-athletes (non-players). Out of 16 personality factors used in her study, 13 factors showed significant differences. More specifically, "players are more outgoing, warm hearted, easy going and participating than non-players" (Tripathi, 64).

In addition, Edwards (1973) compared collegiate athletes and non-athletes and found athletes to be above the norm on measures of outgoingness, trust in others, and emotional self-control; however, they were apt to be less intelligent.

Although research findings suggest a positive relationship between sports participation and the individual's character and personality, sports participation can also bring negative consequences to the physical and emotional well being of an athlete. For example, sport participants may suffer from sport-related injuries that will affect their entire lives (Rotella & Heyman, 1998; Petrie, 1993; 1992). Also, sports injuries may prematurely end an athletic career where dreams and high expectations can no longer be fulfilled. Finally, athletes may experience tremendous amounts of pressure from coaches and parents that can result in negative psychological consequences or burnout (Brustaad, 1988; Pines, Aronson & Kafry, 1981).

During the past decades, several researchers have attempted to explore more in-depth the process through which athletics are part of the broader socialization process for children and adults (Kenyon & McPherson, 1973; Leonard II, 1980). Even though much study is needed in order to better understand the socialization process which occurs within sports, several researches reveal that the support from significant others relates to the participation of children and adults in sports. In particular, the family seems to be the primary agent of socialization in the life of an individual (Peterson & Hann, 1999). It is through the family that we first learn a set of beliefs, norms and cultural values that helps us to behave within adequate social standards. According to Loy et al. (1978), the family as an institution is intimately related to sports in a variety of ways. The family serves as a socializing agent for the learning of athletic roles and it provides a structure from which ascribed and achieved attributes impinge on an individual in a sport system. Moreover, the family uses

sports as an expressive microcosm of the larger society in its attempt to socialize children.

The family, as a fundamental agent of children's socialization, including socialization into sports, may also be important to understanding adolescents and young adults who are involved in collegiate sports. In particular, different types of family support and its varying levels may not only relate to whether this population participates in collegiate sports, but also to whether it may relate to athletic performance. In other words, families may influence individuals' decisions whether or not to participate in sports. In turn, the family is important to understanding an individual's different levels of athletic performance. For example, it is possible that parental support varies for primary and secondary athletes at the collegiate level.

Within the collegiate setting, athletic teams are formed with players of various skill levels and previous athletic accomplishments. The primary athletes are those seen by their coaches as the most skillful athletes and perceived to contribute more to the team by getting more playing time or by scoring more points for their team while the secondary athletes are viewed by their coaches as spending the majority of their time preparing to substitute for the primary athletes if and when necessary. Therefore, coaches view primary players as performing on a higher athletic level than secondary players.

Besides the differences between primary and secondary athletes, some other areas concerning the degree of parental support also deserve discussion. One such area that could significantly affect athletes' perceptions of parental support is whether support varies for athletes in either team or individually oriented sports. Individual

sports are those sports in which one athlete singularly performs an athletic act(s) that is compared to other athletes performing the same act(s) (e.g., 5k runs, pole vaulting, wrestling). Team sports, on the other hand, are athletic acts which cannot be successfully carried out without the involvement of several participants (e.g., football, basketball, baseball). In addition to these intrinsic differences, individual and team sports also have external differences, namely, the attention and funding they get, especially at the college level. Typically, individual sports receive far less funding than team sports (OSU Athletic Department, 2002); and fans flock to team competitions, while individual competitions are attended by few. Thus, one would expect such differences to have an effect on athletes' motivations for entering and continuing a certain sport and the level of support they perceive from family members and their local communities. Given the less popular place women have in many sports (at least as perceived so by the public) and the drastically lower funding and resources they receive (Naughton, 1997, 1998), it is possible female and male athletes vary in their perceptions of support in their families and communities.

Although several researchers have identified factors related to individuals' decision on whether or not to participate in sports, research is not yet available that examines the relationship between athletic performance and parental support in a collegiate setting. Examining the student-athlete/parental relationship may prove to be insightful, especially for coaches that are trying to enhance the performance of their athletes. Even though college coaches spend tremendous amounts of time with their athletes, parents may still be a powerful factor in an athlete's life due to the fact that the parent and child relationship begins much earlier than relationship with coaches.

As a result, by deepening our understanding of athlete-parent relationships, we may generate valuable information that will help coaches to better deal with athletes and their families.

Overall, this study was designed to examine the perceived current parental support (parental connection and autonomy). More specifically, the following research questions were examined in this study: Are there significant differences between primary and secondary athletes in their perceptions of parental connection and autonomy? Are there significant differences between male and female athletes in their perceptions of parental connection and autonomy? Do individual vs. team sports athletes have significantly different perceptions of parental connection and autonomy?

Conceptual Hypotheses

Based on previous research, six hypotheses were proposed in this study:

- I) Primary athletes will report higher levels of parental connection than secondary athletes.
- II) Primary athletes will report higher levels of psychological autonomy than secondary athletes.
- III) Male athletes will report higher levels of parental connection than female athletes.
- IV) Male athletes will report higher levels of psychological autonomy than female athletes.

- V) Individual and team athletes will vary significantly in their perceptions of parental connection.
- VI) Individual and team athletes will vary significantly in their perceptions of psychological autonomy.

Concepts and Definitions for this Study

For the purpose of this study, the concepts of parental support, parental connection, parental-psychological autonomy, primary and secondary athletes, team vs. individual sports and the gender of the respondent were used as variables.

Parental support was defined in this study as “the nurturance provided to the late adolescents that seems to foster a balance between connection within the parent-late adolescent relationship and individuality through the assertion of autonomy” (Peterson & Hann, 1999, p. 337).

Parental connection was defined as “the late adolescents’ perceptions of consistent, positive emotional bonds with significant other such as parents” (Barber & Olsen, 1997, p. 287).

Parental-psychological autonomy was defined as “the late adolescents’ perceptions of their ability to experience, value, and express their own thoughts and emotions, leading to the development of a stable sense of self and identity” (Barber & Olsen, 1997, p. 288).

Primary athletes were defined as each individual head coach’s reports of their most productive, talented, consistent and athletic individuals on their team.

Secondary athletes were defined as each individual head coach's reports of their players who are not the most productive, talented, consistent and athletic individuals on their team.

Team sports were defined as those sports which, by nature, depend on more than one individual in order for them to function. Even though sports such as tennis and track and field do have events in which more than one person is participating (e.g., doubles in tennis and relay races in track and field), such events do not represent the primary nature of the sports in question. In addition, they do not depend on more than one individual in and of themselves to function as sports. Sports such as football, soccer, and baseball by nature, in contrast, cannot be sports with only one player.

Individual sports were defined as those sports that can and often do function with the participation of only one individual.

Gender, for purposes of this study, was referred to as male or female.

Theoretical Framework

Several theoretical orientations are used to study the sport socialization process including: psychoanalysis; psychoanalytically oriented social anthropology; the normative-maturational approach; the developmental-cognitive approach; the genetic and constitutional approach; and the various learning theory approaches, the social learning orientation have become the most prominent in understanding the

acquisition of sport roles (Clausen, 1968; Brim & Wheeler, 1966; Bandura & Walters, 1963).

Of the array of socializing stimuli (which includes the family, peers, school, community, and mass media), an individual will selectively experience a few, and the significance and influence of these will vary from one person to another and from one time period to another. The select few who have the most telling impact upon the individual are termed significant others. Significant others refer to those individuals and groups whose attitudes, values, and/or behaviors are decisive in the formation of one's own attitudes, values, and behavior. Regardless of these specific significant others (parents, peers, siblings, relatives, coaches and teachers) the social learning mechanisms operate similarly (Leonard II, 1980).

In order to understand how individuals acquire and perform social behaviors, the social learning model is useful for comprehending the learning of sport roles. More specifically, the family as a primary agent of socialization and/or significant other can use on a daily basis principles such as reinforcement, coaching, and observational learning in order to influence children and adolescents to participate in sports. These principles which is derived from social learning theory, facilitates the understanding of how the family serves as a primary agent of sport socialization and impacts the decision of an individual to participate or not in sports.

One social learning approach widely used in the sports socialization literature is provided by Leonard (1980) who proposes that family is an important part of the sports socialization process. More specifically, from a social learning perspective,

parents socialize their children towards sports participation through reinforcement, coaching, and observational learning.

Reinforcement

Reinforcement highlights the role of reward and punishment in the acquisition and performance of social roles. The initial socializing agents for most infants are their parents. Later on in their life cycle siblings, peers, and coaches become increasingly important. These agents of socialization dispense and/or withhold rewards and punishments. Furthermore, behavior positively reinforced (i.e., rewarded) tends to reoccur, while behavior negatively reinforced (i.e., punished) tends to be inhibited (Skinner, 1969).

According to Leonard (1980), parents, as primary agents of socialization, can pressure children, sometimes subtly, unknowingly, and selectively in the acquisition of “appropriate” sex role behavior. More specifically, young boys are given footballs, baseballs and tennis rackets, while girls are given dolls and toy kitchens. Therefore, some of the basic differences in the acquisition and performance of sport roles can be traced to the differential and selective social experiences and social expectations of boys and girls. It is obvious that direct rewards and punishments will influence the kinds of behavior learned and performed. In addition to controlling reinforcement contingencies, parents can also provide verbal and nonverbal “hints” about what they think is appropriate.

Coaching

“Coaching” is a deliberate teaching or exposure of the socializee by the socializer. Parents who are fond of a sport frequently coach their offspring in the behaviors required in performing specific athletic skills. This direct support has at least three effects on the socializee: new knowledge about the range of behaviors the “coach” thinks appropriate is acquired; new skills and responses are learned; and greater motivation often results from the rewards extended to the learner.

Observational Learning

“Observational learning” refers to the learning and performance of a task resulting from observing the behavior of another and then acting similarly. The basic notion is that exposure to some behavior produces a disposition by the observer to behave similarly. Bandura (1977) proposes two different effects of exposure to models: novel response patterns may be acquired, and existing responses may be strengthened or weakened by attending to the act resulting from that behavior. In summary, exposure to models can provide new behavioral skills, information about the probable outcome of engaging in a certain act, and knowledge about various situations. Parents that are involved in sporting events may provide their children and adolescents with many opportunities for observational learning to occur.

Parents participate in social learning processes of reinforcement, coaching, and observational learning as they interact with their offspring. A parent, for example,

who encourages his son to play football by giving him a ball or spending time throwing the football, reinforces the son's interest in the sport of football. In turn, reinforcing the son's participation in a sport of interest shows parental support for the son. In a similar manner, a mother who provides guidance in the mechanics or techniques of a sport to her daughter (e.g., showing the daughter a proper forehand in tennis) is being supportive of her daughter's efforts to develop tennis skill. Further, parents who engage in sports with their children also give them the opportunity to learn about sports through observational learning. By direct involvement in sports with children, parents have the opportunity to model athletic participation for their children.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review relevant literature pertaining to factors that relate to children's participation in sports. More specifically, the literature review will focus on the parents' possible influences on children's participation in sports; the relationship between parental support and positive outcomes in children; and demographic factors that may be relevant in the sport socialization process.

Over the years, the parent-child research has explored the extent to which parental styles, behaviors, and characteristics contribute to various social and psychological qualities in children (Steinberg & Morris, 2001; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Grotevant, 1998). Many contemporary U.S. parents who value social competence in children are more likely to use childrearing behaviors such as firm, rational control combined with nurturance, while de-emphasizing arbitrary, punitive, rejecting, and neglectful strategies (Peterson & Hann, 1999). According to Baumrind (1978, 1980), this style of childrearing, named as authoritative style, fosters a particular kind of youthful social competence that is associated with a balance between connectedness and independence in the parent-child relationship. When the

authoritative style is used consistently, children are likely to show greater competence, autonomy, and self-esteem, with less deviance and a more well-rounded peer orientation (Baumrind, 1991). In addition, when student-athletes perceive that their parents promote connectedness while providing psychological autonomy, great benefits can be produced when the child is participating in sports. For example, high levels of parental support have already been associated with children's greater enjoyment of the practice of sport (Brustaad, 1988), higher athletic performance (Scanlan, & Lewthwaite, 1985), and quicker recovery from injuries (Petrie, 1993; 1992).

Parents and Children's Participation in Sports

For the past several decades, much attention has been given to specific factors that influence children's participation in sports. From a macrosystemic perspective, whether or not children participate in sports depends on the environment in which they are growing up. More specifically, Leonard (1980) and Rarick (1973) pointed out that environmental factors such as the family, peers, school, community and the mass media serve as critical agents of sport socialization. Although the sport socialization process is attributed to many environmental factors acting upon children, the parents may still be one of the most powerful agents of sport socialization, due to the fact that parent-child relationships typically begin earlier than children's relationship with other environments.

Besides acting as an important agent of sport socialization, the family is also the most important influence in an athlete's life (Hellstedt, 1995). Within the family environment, the young athlete develops the life skills and coping mechanisms to meet the demands of competitive sport. The family provides the primary social environment where the athlete can develop an identity, self-esteem, and the motivation for athletic success. In addition, it is through the family that athletes first learn a set of beliefs, norms and cultural values that helps them to behave within adequate social standards. According to Loy, McPherson, and Kenyon (1978), the family as an institution is intimately related to sports in a variety of ways. The family serves as a socializing agent for the learning of athletic roles, and it provides a structure from which ascribed and achieved attributes impinge on an individual in a sport system. Moreover, families often use sports as an expressive microcosm of the larger society in its attempt to socialize children.

The research on athletes' families underscores the major role of the family on the developing athlete. Studies conducted by Sage (1980) and Lewko (1978) indicated that parents are the major influence on introducing a youngster to youth sports. In both studies, the unique role of the parents (especially the father) seems to be critical since it appears to be the major influence on sport participation of both male and female children. More specifically, when comparing male versus female collegiate athletes, Sage (1980) found that parents from male athletes were more involved in a variety of ways than parents from female athletes. In addition, fathers tended to be more supportive of their sons than of their daughters, while mothers showed little difference in the support accorded to sons and daughters. As a result,

Sage concluded that many of the cultural sex-role stereotypes are found in sports. For instance, male athletes were encouraged by their parents to be more active than female athletes who were encouraged to be more sedentary.

Other studies also reveal the major influence of parents on children's participation in sport and athletic events. For example, Melnick, Dunkelman and Mashiach (1981) examined the relationship between family sports environment and a child's selection for and participation in a sports program designed for gifted young athletes in Israel. In their study, a sample of gifted athletes representing the following sports - track and field, gymnastics and swimming - were compared with a control group of non-athletes. Statistical findings indicated that primary sports involvement of the parents of the track and field athletes were significantly higher than that of the parents of the control group. However, no statistical significance was found between the three athletic groups. In addition, significant statistical findings indicated that the secondary sports involvement of the parents of the gifted swimmers was significantly higher than that of the parents of the control group but no difference was found between the three athletic groups. Finally, when comparing the level of parental expectations/athletic aspirations and parental encouragement for sport participation between the gifted young Israeli athletes and the control group composed of non-athletes, the results from post-hoc analysis (Tukey test) revealed that the parental expectations/aspirations and encouragement for sports participation of the track and field, gymnastic and swimming groups were significantly higher than that of the parents of the control group. Based on the findings from Melnick et al., a positive

relationship between parental expectations and children's participation in sport seems to exist.

On the other hand, several studies have shown that parental expectations can become a source of pressure and stress that can interfere with their children's participation in sport (e.g. Brustad, 1988; Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1991; Weiss, Weise, & Klint, 1989). For example, in a study conducted by Brustad (1988), 207 players from a youth basketball league completed self-report measures where levels of competitive trait anxiety (CTA) and enjoyment experienced by these young athletes during the course of their basketball season served as the dependent variable. Self-esteem, perceived basketball competence, intrinsic/extrinsic motivational orientation, perceived parental pressure, and frequency of performance and evaluative worries served as the six independent variables. For parental pressure, those boys who perceived more parental pressure to participate and excel in basketball experienced less enjoyment over the course of the season. In addition, the young athletes with high CTA levels experienced more frequent performance-related and evaluation-related worries than their peers with lower CTA. These results suggested that high CTA children may perceive failure or negative evaluation from others in the competitive sport setting as being potentially very emotionally averse to them.

These findings are consistent with a study conducted by Scanlan and Lewthwaites (1986), in which young wrestlers with lower generalized expectancies (defined as participants' overall expectancies for successful performance) were those who perceived their parents and coaches to be displeased with their performance for the season.

Although parental expectation may serve as a source of stress to the young athlete, most often than not parents who provide support and have a positive attitude toward their child become primary agents of the sport socialization process. If one were to view the social learning model in light of the sport socialization process, parents could help their child to acquire and perform social behaviors by providing reinforcement, coaching and observational learning. The three basic premises from social learning theory can be used by parents as mechanisms of support that not only trigger the interest of the child in sports, but also help to maintain their motivation throughout several years.

Parental Connection

The research on parent-child relations has long recognized that supportive, sensitive, warm, and responsive childrearing is associated with the development of social competence in children (Peterson & Hann, 1999; Barber & Thomas, 1986). During the past decade, most of the parent-child research was derived from the parental typologies developed by Baumrind's seminal studies of parental influences on the development of competence in childhood (Baumrind, 1991, 1980, 1978). According to this typology, children whose parents were "authoritative"-warm and firm- showed higher levels of competence and psychosocial maturity than their peers who had been raised by parent who were permissive, authoritarian, or indifferent. Several other studies conducted in the past decade using different methods, measures, and samples have reached the same conclusion; namely, that authoritative parenting is

associated with a wide range of psychological and social advantages in adolescence, just as it is in early and middle childhood.

Although parental supportive behavior is beneficial to the development of the child and young adolescent, past research has described parental support in a broader concept and as a multidimensional construct. For example, Rollins and Thomas (1979) found several different labels for supportive behavior that were used in at least five or more studies. Although this broader use is evident in the literature, parental supportive behavior is generally operationalized as the summation of frequencies of such parental behaviors toward a child as praising, approving, encouraging, helping, cooperating, expressing terms of endearment and physical affection. Despite this variety of operationalizations of support, Rollins and Thomas (1979) urge that the possibility of multiple dimensions of support be further investigated. In a study conducted by Barber and Thomas (1986), factor analysis of 527 college students revealed four separate dimensions of parental support: general support, physical affection, companionship, and sustained contact.

Regardless of how support is defined, it is noteworthy to notice that nurturance is an aspect of childrearing that seems to foster a balance between connectedness within the parent-child relationship and individuality through the assertion of sufficient autonomy. Several studies have reported that supportive childrearing behavior is predictive of children's connectedness to parents in several ways. According to Rollins and Thomas, (1979), parental support communicates that children are valued and accepted; and, as a result, the young often seek to increase the frequency of this behavior by conforming to parents' expectations.

Besides eliciting continued responsiveness to parents, parental support paradoxically provides the basis for a seemingly opposite development, or the progress of children toward autonomy. More specifically, nurturing parent-child relationships appear to provide a secure base from which children can explore and meet challenges that exist beyond family boundaries. For most children, parental support contributes to a balance between continued ties with parents and gradual progress toward autonomy. In contrast, low levels of support detract from social competence since children experience feelings of separation, hostility and aggression, diminished self-confidence, emotional unresponsiveness, and disturbed peer relations (Rohner, 1986; Rollins & Thomas, 1979).

As already stated, parental supportive behavior is a multidimensional construct that influences child and adolescent development in many different ways. When children or adolescents are provided with parental support that is characterized by high levels of connection and autonomy, positive outcomes in development tend to occur. A great deal of research has explored the relationship between different dimensions of parental supportive behavior and competence in children; however, little research has attempted to examine this relationship within the context of sports. More specifically, parental connection and parental-psychological autonomy have already been described as parental behaviors that may play an important role in the normal process of adolescent development. However, how these parental behaviors may influence the athletic performance of the children when they are young adults is a question that yet remains unanswered. One way social competence may be viewed in college-aged athletes is through their athletic performance. Therefore, if social

competence is influenced by the different types of parental behavior, including levels of connection and autonomy, then one might expect to see a relationship between the type of parental support athletes receive and their particular athletic performance.

Past research has been consistent in defining basic associations between the family environment and children's development (Grotevant, 1998; Barber, Olsen & Shagle, 1994). Research designs and methodologies have converged in demonstrating that children fare better when they experience consistent, positive emotional bonds with significant others such as parents. Such bonds can be described as parental connection.

Psychological Autonomy

Despite the importance of parental support, parental control also relates to child social competence. The research investigating the nature and effects of parental control, which is the opposite term for parental-psychological autonomy, has been broad, complex and somewhat negative. To date, this construct contains numerous different conceptualizations and findings that are often inconsistent (Barber, 1992; Rollins & Thomas, 1979). However, extended research has distinguished parental control in two main dimensions: psychological control and behavioral control. Psychological control refers to control attempts that intrude into the psychological and emotional development of the child (e.g., thinking process, self-expression, emotions, and attachment to parents). On the other hand, behavioral control refers to parental behaviors that attempt to control or manage children's behavior (Barber,

1996). Distinguishing between psychological and behavioral control facilitates an important shift in understanding the nature of control and its effect on development. In addition, separating psychological control from behavioral control emphasizes where the control is located or focused. As a result, attempting to understand how much control is good or bad for a child becomes less important than trying to explore what areas of a child's life is control facilitating or inhibiting. For the purpose of this study, the focus will be centered in the psychological control construct.

While some forms of psychological intervention by parents appear to be positive, as in the use of reasoning to encourage awareness and sensitivity to consequences, psychological control as a parenting dimension has almost exclusively been conceptualized as a negative form of control. Psychological control potentially inhibits or intrudes upon children's psychological development through manipulation and exploitation of the parent-child bond (e.g., love-withdrawal), negative, affect-laden expressions and criticisms (e.g., disappointment and shame), and excessive personal control (e.g., possessiveness, protectiveness). Psychological control uniquely affects aspects of child functioning or development. For example, psychological control involves socialization processes that are nonresponsive to the child's emotional and psychological needs, that stifle independent expression and autonomy, and that does not encourage interaction with others (Baumrind, 1978). Such an environment makes it difficult for a child to develop a healthy awareness and perception of the self. In addition, psychological control has consistently been found to be correlated with patterns marked by feelings of guilt, self-responsibility, confession, and indirect or nonexpression of aggression (Becker, 1964), dependency,

alienation and social withdrawal (Baumrind, 1978). Furthermore, parental psychological control can serve as an obstacle to the achievement of children and adolescents' social competence.

Barber and Olsen (1997) reconceptualized parental-psychological control as the opposite of parental psychological autonomy. Thus, parents who guide their offspring to take increasingly greater responsibility for themselves are seen as high in parental psychological autonomy.

Demographic Factors

When considering athletes' perceptions of parental connection and autonomy, it is important to recognize that variation may occur according to demographic characteristics of the athletes. Specifically, it is possible that factors such as the gender of the athlete, type of team participation (individual vs. team sports), and whether the athletes are primary or secondary players may influence their perceptions of parental connection and autonomy.

Gender of Athlete

Cultural influences and societal expectations influence boys and girls' decision to become athletes. It is not surprising that society primarily views sports as a "masculine" type of activity even though this perspective is slowly changing. Historically, participation in sports is often part of a boy's identity and transition into

“manhood.” This labeling has been a deterrent for many girls and women who fear participation in sports diminishes their femininity. Cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity, as well as the relationship between gender roles and socially acceptable behavior, play an important part in the choices that girls and women make in deciding whether to participate in sports and in which sports to participate (Stevens, Osborne & Robbins, 2002).

Families are identified as one of the most important influences regarding gender roles (Sage, 1980; Bohren, 1977). During the early process of socialization, parents already choose the toys with which their children play. They reward their children for appropriate behavior and punish them for inappropriate behavior. Parents often treat their sons and daughters differently, engaging in physical play with their sons and cuddling in a more sedentary way with their daughters. In an attempt to explore the sport socialization process between the genders, Sage (1980) concluded that both groups of athletes, male and female, received considerable parental support for becoming involved in organized sports, but there were differences in parental expectations and encouragement by gender. More specifically, fathers' expectations for their sons were significantly different than for their daughters, with fathers tending to have higher expectations for their sons.

Team vs. Individual Sports

In addition to the gender of the athlete, variations in perceptions of parenting may occur depending upon whether the athlete participates in team or individual

sports. Collegiate athletes that participate in team sports such as football and basketball and baseball receive far more attention from their public, community and media than athletes that participate in events such as tennis and track and field. During the regular season, football and basketball events are the main form of entertainment for which thousands of people buy tickets in order to give support to their favorite collegiate team. In addition, fans from those sports not only support their team in their hometown, but also travel long distances in order to support their team when they have away games. On the other hand, individual sports such as tennis and track and field are performed with the minimal support from the community, media and the student body. It is not uncommon to see empty bleachers when watching a tennis dual or track event.

Therefore, possible perceptions of parenting between “team athletes” and “individual athletes” may differ due to the different levels of visibility and pressure that these athletes have to face. While research is not yet available that investigates differences in perceptions of parental support between athletes from individual versus team sports, this study will attempt to investigate this phenomenon.

Primary vs. Secondary Athletes

In addition to gender of athlete and/or whether the athlete participates in a team or individual sports, variations of perception of parenting may also occur depending upon whether the athlete is primary or secondary. The primary athletes are those seen by their coaches as the most skillful athletes and perceived to contribute

more to the team by getting more playing time or by scoring more points to their team, whereas the secondary athletes are viewed by their coaches as spending the majority of their time preparing to substitute for the primary athletes if and when necessary.

Since substantial differences exist between primary and secondary athletes, it is possible that their perceptions of parental support may also differ. Primary athletes are exposed to more pressure and are the athletes that are more visible to the public. These athletes are usually the one's who decide games and are the "heroes" of their universities. On the other hand, primary athletes are also the first ones to be criticized when being defeated in athletic events.

With considerable differences between primary and secondary athletes, their perception of parental support merits further consideration.

Summary

This chapter reviews scholarship on the role of parents in socializing children into sports, the relationship between parental support and positive developmental outcomes in youth, parental connection and psychological autonomy as dimensions of parental support, and selected demographic factors that may relate to college student-athletes' perceptions of parental support. Based upon this literature review and social learning theory, the present study examines how selected demographic factors (gender, team vs. individual sports, primary vs. secondary players) relate to college student-athletes' perceptions of parental connection and psychological autonomy.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of the following chapter is to describe in depth the design, participants, procedure, measures, operational hypotheses, and statistical analyses that were used to conduct the present study.

Design

In this study, the primary method for gathering of data was through the use of a survey design method. Surveys are the most widely used technique in education and behavioral sciences for the collection of data (Isaac & Michael, 1982). By adopting the survey design method, it was possible to describe and quantify possible differences between primary and secondary collegiate athletes and their relationship with their parents.

Participants

A self-report survey was administered to a convenience sample of 92 male and female student-athletes at Oklahoma State University. The student-athletes from

the following collegiate teams were recruited from their respective coaches upon my request: women's soccer, men's and women's tennis, men's and women's track and field and women's softball. In addition, each coach provided a roster that identified the primary and secondary athletes from their respective teams.

The student-athlete survey consisted of a set of demographic and social class items and two parent behavior scales (answered twice for each parent). The demographic and social class items included age; which sport the participant represented at the university; gender; academic classification; race; father/mother education; father/mother current marital status; father/mother marital status while the participant was living at home; the participant's primary male/female parent or guardian; number of siblings; and religious preference.

Procedure

Before the study was conducted, each head coach from the different collegiate sports gave the researcher permission to conduct the study as well as the permission for their athletes to participate in the study and provided rosters of primary and secondary athletes on their team. Data collection with the athletes was conducted in classrooms located in the offices of the particular sport before the team's regular practice schedule. During the day of the study, the primary and secondary athletes were asked to participate on a voluntary basis with no monetary compensation or other benefit. Each athlete received a packet containing: a) an informed consent form (see Appendix A); b) the combined background information, parental connection and

parental-psychological autonomy questionnaires; and c) one pencil. The questionnaires were marked in black pen in the top right-corner with one of two letters, A or B. Those individuals whose coaches perceived them to be primary athletes received questionnaires A. Those individuals whose coaches perceived them to be secondary athletes received questionnaires B. In content, the questionnaires were identical. Coaches then handed in the roster of athletes, identifying primary and secondary athletes. When participants picked up their questionnaire, they were asked their names and were given either A or B questionnaire depending of their status. In order to keep the questionnaires confidential, the participants were told to not write their names anywhere. The researcher read out loud the informed consent and asked the athletes if they had any questions. In addition, the researcher informed all participants that the completion of all questionnaires would take approximately 20 minutes. The athletes were asked to return the informed consents in a separate folder than the questionnaires to maintain confidentiality. Two folders, one labeled as informed consent and one labeled as questionnaire were located on a desk in front of the classroom. After the completion of the questionnaire, the athletes were asked to go to the front of the classroom and drop their material in the appropriate folders.

Measurement

A standard fact sheet, two existing self report questionnaire measures and the coaches' rating of their athletes as primary or secondary were used as assessment tools for the present study. The standard fact sheet included specific demographic

questions that will help to support the data obtained from the existing self-report questionnaire. The existing self-report questionnaires measured two main dimensions between the parental-late adolescent relationship: parental connection and parental psychological autonomy.

Measure of Primary vs. Secondary Athletes Statuses

The primary and secondary athletes statuses were developed for the purpose of the present study. Primary and secondary athletes statuses were assessed in two steps. First, each collegiate coach was asked to verbally define each athlete on their team participating in the study as primary or secondary based on the productivity, consistency, athleticism and talent of each athlete. Second, each coach provided a roster identifying each athlete as primary or secondary.

Measures of Parental Variables

For this study, the existing self-report questionnaire that measured parental connection and parental psychological autonomy were primarily derived from Schaefer's (1965) original Children's Report of Parental Behavior Inventory (CRPBI) with the inclusion of the most current version adopted by Barber and Olsen (1997) and Barber (1996). Therefore, an overview of Schaefer's original scales followed by the adaptation created by Barber and Olsen were provided for the study.

Overview of the Original Children's Reports of Parental Behavior Inventory (CRPBI; Schaefer, 1965).

Schaefer's original instrument included twenty-six scales that were hypothesized to sample all sectors of a conceptual model for parental behavior. For each scale, a 10-behavior item was developed in an attempt to describe specific observable parental behaviors from the children's and late adolescents' perception. Schaefer (1965), factor analyzed the original CRPBI, using principal components factor analyses and found the following factors: Love vs. Hostility, Autonomy vs. Control and Lax Discipline vs. Extreme autonomy. Later, the primary factors were respectively relabeled as: Acceptance vs. Rejection, Psychological Autonomy vs. Psychological Control, and Firm Control vs. Lax Control (Schaefer, 1965). For the scope of this study, the primary focuses were on the Acceptance vs. Rejection and Psychological Autonomy vs. Psychological Control Factors.

Internal-consistency reliabilities that were computed with Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 for each of the 26 scales, for both parents, and for the three groups (normal boys, normal girls, and delinquent boys) was .76 with a range from .38 to .93. In addition, the median reliabilities of groups of scales that were chosen to sample the primary factors are: acceptance, .84; rejection, .78; psychological autonomy, .69; and control, .66.

Schuldermann and Schuldermann (1970) obtained a shortened version of the CRPBI (18 scales) and attempted to replicate the factors of the CRPBI to two independent samples of first year college students. Results indicated that the factor

structure of the shortened version was very similar to that of Schaefer's original version. This observed high replicability suggested that parental behavior could be described more economically by factor scores rather than scale scores.

Out of the twenty-six scales developed by Schaefer, the present study used two scales that represent parental acceptance (described as parental connection) and parental-psychological autonomy from the athlete's perspective.

Measure of Parental Connection

A 10-item Acceptance subscale was obtained from the Children's Reports of Parental Behavior Inventory (Schaefer, 1965). Barber and Olsen (1997) used this subscale as an indicator of family connection. Instructions on the parental connection questionnaire requested participants to think about their relationship with their mother/stepmother (or female guardian) and or father/stepfather (or male guardian). Participants were asked to respond about the mother/stepmother/female guardian and the father/stepfather/male guardian they considered their primary parent during the past 10 years. For each question, participants were asked to mark the appropriate choice that reflected their perception of parental connection with their mother and father. Therefore, the parental connection questionnaire consisted of a total of 20 items. Participants were asked to indicate how likely or unlikely they perceived their father and mother on several different dimensions of connection. For each item, a Likert type scale with the following response choices: 1("Not like her/him"), 2("Somewhat like her/him") and 3("A lot like her/him") assessed the participants'

perception for each parent. For each participant, the scores obtained from the 20 items were summed and a total score was given. Therefore, higher scores indicated greater perceived connection. Sample items from the parental connection measure included: “makes me feel better after talking over my worries with her/him” and “makes me feel like the most important person in her/his life.”

Factor analyses of the original CRPBI items revealed that several items loaded on the acceptance vs. rejection subscale. As a result, construct validity appears to exist. In addition, Barber and Olsen (1997) conducted a study with 900 fifth and eight-grade youth and found internal consistency reliability coefficient (Cronbach’s alpha) of .91 for the family connection measure. Using the current data, the reliability coefficient (Cronbach’s alpha) for student-athletes’ reports of maternal connection was .92 and .91 for paternal connection.

Measure of Parental-Psychological Autonomy

A 10-item psychological autonomy-psychological control subscale was obtained from the Children’s Reports of Parental Behavior Inventory (Schaefer, 1965; Schludermann & Schludermann, personal communication, 1988). However, Barber (1996) used an 8-item revision of Schaefer’s original 10-item psychological autonomy-psychological control subscale of the CRPBI to measure perceptions of psychological autonomy. The revision of the original psychological autonomy-psychological control subscale was based upon factor analysis that resulted in 8 items loading on the psychological control factor and two items that loaded on a guilt

induction factor. Since the measurement of guilt induction was not be the main focus of this study, the two items that loaded on this factor were removed from the psychological autonomy-psychological control subscale.

Instructions on the parental-psychological autonomy-psychological control questionnaire requested participants to think about their relationship with their mother/stepmother (or female guardian) and or father/stepfather (or male guardian). Participants were asked to respond about the mother/stepmother/female guardian and the father/stepfather/male guardian they considered their primary parent during the past 10 years. For each question, participants were asked to mark the appropriate choice that reflected their perception of parental-psychological autonomy-psychological control. Therefore, the parental-psychological autonomy-psychological control questionnaire consisted of a total of 16 items. Participants were asked to indicate how likely or unlikely they perceived their father and mother on several different dimensions of autonomy-control. Sample items from the parental-psychological autonomy measure included: “blames me for other family members’ problems” and “will avoid looking at me when I have disappointed her/him.” For each item, a Likert type scale with the following response choices: 1 (“Not like her/him”), 2 (“Somewhat like her/him”) and 3 (“A lot like her/him”) assessed the participants’ perception for each parent.

In the original instrument, higher scores indicated greater perceived control while lower scores indicated greater perceived autonomy. However, since psychological autonomy was the main variable in this study, each item was reverse-coded to reflect higher scores for autonomy (lower psychological control). In other

words, higher scores represented greater autonomy, and lower scores represented greater perceived control; thus, the response was 1 (“A lot like her/him”), 2 (“Somewhat like her/him”), and 3 (“Not like her/him”). After reverse coding, the scores regarding were summed for the eight items and a total score was given. Separate scores were obtained regarding the responses about the mother/stepmother (or female guardian) and father/stepfather (or male guardian).

In addition, Barber (1996) conducted a study of 875 fifth, eighth, and tenth-grade students and found internal consistency reliability coefficient (Cronbach’s alpha) ranging from .69 for fifth grade females to .82 for tenth grade males. Using the current data, the reliability coefficient (Cronbach’s alpha) for student-athletes’ reports of maternal autonomy was .73 and .79 for paternal autonomy.

Operational Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were used to operationalize the conceptual hypotheses.

- I) Primary athletes will report higher scores on the parental connection scale than secondary athletes.
- II) Primary athletes will report higher scores on the parental-psychological autonomy scale than secondary athletes.
- III) Male athletes will report higher scores on the parental connection scale than female athletes.

- IV) Male athletes will report higher scores on the parental-psychological autonomy than female athletes.
- V) Individual and team athletes will vary significantly in their scores on the parental connection scale.
- VI) Individual and team athletes will vary significantly in their scores of the parental-psychological autonomy scale.

Statistical Analyses

The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS for Windows Release 11.0-2001) was used for all statistical analyses in the present study. Frequency distributions were used to determine basic demographic/social class information such as gender, age, educational level, and parents' marital status. For all hypotheses in this study, a t-test analyses with three independent variables, namely, primary versus secondary athletes, team versus individual sports, and males versus females were utilized using a .05 alpha significance level. The dependent variables were the athletes' perception of fathers' and mothers' parental connection and parental-psychological autonomy.

For hypothesis I, athletes statuses (primary and secondary) were used as the independent variable while the items or sum scores of the parental connection scale were used as the dependent variable. Mean differences between primary and secondary athletes on the parental connection scale were examined.

For hypothesis II, athletes' statuses (primary and secondary) were used as the independent variable while the items or sum scores of the parental psychological autonomy scale were used as the dependent variable. Mean differences between primary and secondary athletes on the parental psychological autonomy scale were examined.

For hypothesis III, the gender of the participants (male versus female) were used as the independent variable while the items or sum scores of the parental connection scale were used as the dependent variable. Mean differences between male versus female athletes on the parental connection scale were examined.

For hypothesis IV, the gender of the participants (male versus female) were used as the independent variable while the items or sum scores of the parental psychological autonomy scale were used as the dependent variable. Mean differences between male versus female athletes on the parental psychological autonomy scale were examined.

For hypothesis V, individual vs. team athletes were used as the independent variable while the items or sum scores of the parental connection scale were used as the dependent variable. Mean differences between individual versus team athletes were examined.

For hypothesis VI, individual versus team athletes were used as the independent variable while the items or sum scores of the parental psychological autonomy scale were used as the dependent variable. Mean differences between individual versus team athletes were examined.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Introduction

Overall, this study was designed to examine the perceived current parental support (parental connection and autonomy) of student-athletes at Oklahoma State University. More specifically, the following research questions were examined in this study: Are there significant differences between primary and secondary athletes in their perceptions of parental connection and autonomy? Are there significant differences between male and female athletes in their perceptions of parental connection and autonomy? Do individual vs. team sports athletes have significantly different perceptions of parental connection and autonomy?

Participants in the study were ninety-two student-athletes from the following sports: men's and women's tennis, men's and women's track and field, women's soccer, and women's softball. In order to measure the athlete's perception of parental connection, a 10-item scale was obtained from the Children's Reports of Parental Behavior Inventory (Schaefer, 1965). In order to measure the athlete's perception of psychological autonomy, an 8-item scale (revised by Barber, 1996) was obtained

from the Children's Reports of Parental Behavior Inventory (Schaefer, 1965).

Demographic data is listed in Table 1.

Table 1
Sample Demographics

Category	n	%
Athletic status		
Primary athletes	51	55.4
Secondary athletes	41	44.6
Gender		
Males	23	25
Females	69	75
Sport type		
Team sport	36	39.1
Individual sport	56	60.9
Athlete's age		
18	8	8.7
19	25	27.2
20	23	25
21	21	22.8
22	8	8.7
23	5	5.4
24	2	2.2
Sport at OSU		
Softball	17	18.5
Soccer	19	20.7
Tennis	17	18.5
Track & Field	39	42.4
Academic classification		
Freshman	18	19.6
Sophomore	29	31.5
Junior	22	23.9
Senior	18	19.6
Other	5	5.4
Race		
White/Caucasian	76	82.6
Black/African-American	10	10.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	1.1
Native American	2	2.2
Hispanic/Latino	3	3.3

Table 1: Sample Demographics (continued)

Category	n	%
Parent's current marital status		
Married	73	79.3
Divorced	14	15.2
Separated	2	2.2
Widowed	2	2.2
Other	1	1.1
Primary female parent/guardian		
Natural/Biological mother	89	96.7
Stepmother	1	1.1
Other	2	2.2
Primary male parent/guardian		
Natural/Biological father	84	91.3
Father by adoption	1	1.1
Stepfather	2	2.2
Grandfather	2	2.2
Other	3	3.3
Education level of female parent		
Completed high school/GED	14	15.2
Completed high school and also had other training, but not college	12	13.0
Some college	17	18.5
Completed college	25	27.2
Some graduate work	4	4.3
Graduate degree	20	21.7
Education level of male parent		
Some grade school	1	1.1
Some high school	2	2.2
Completed high school/GED	10	10.9
Completed high school and also had other training, but not college	9	9.8
Some college	17	18.5
Completed college	27	29.3
Some graduate work	7	7.6
Graduate degree	19	20.7
Number of siblings		
No siblings	10	10.9
1	39	42.4
2	19	20.7
3	13	14.1
4	8	8.7
5	3	3.3

Primary and Secondary Athletes

Hypothesis I predicted that athletes that were perceived by their coaches as the most productive, talented, consistent, and the most athletic (primary athletes) would report higher levels of parental connection than secondary athletes. To test this hypothesis, a t-test analysis was conducted between primary and secondary athletes' scores on the parental connection scale. As can be seen in Table 2, no significant difference ($p \leq .05$) was indicated in the perceived levels of parental connection between primary and secondary athletes ($t = .649$; $df = 90$).

Hypothesis II predicted that athletes that were perceived by their coaches as the most productive, talented, consistent, and the most athletic (primary athletes) would report higher levels of parental-psychological autonomy than secondary athletes. To test this hypothesis, a t-test analysis between primary and secondary athletes' scores on the parental-psychological autonomy scale was conducted. As can be seen in Table 2, no significant difference ($p \leq .05$) was indicated in the perceived levels of parental-psychological autonomy between primary and secondary athletes ($t = -.032$; $df = 90$).

Male and Female Athletes

Hypothesis III predicted that male athletes would report higher levels of parental connection than female athletes. To test this hypothesis, a t-test analysis between male and female athletes' scores on the parental connection scale was

conducted. As can be seen in Table 2, no significant difference ($p \leq .05$) was indicated in the perceived levels of parental connection between male and female athletes, ($t = -1.79$; $df = 90$).

Hypothesis IV predicted that male athletes would report higher levels of parental-psychological autonomy than female athletes. To test this hypothesis, a t-test analysis between male and female athlete's scores on the parental-psychological autonomy scale was conducted. Contrary to the hypothesis, significant difference was indicated in the perceived levels of parental-psychological autonomy between male and female athletes (Table 2), with female athletes scoring significantly higher on the parental-psychological autonomy scale than male athletes ($t = -2.94$; $df = 90$; $p = .004$).

Table 2
Parental Psychological-Autonomy and Parental Connection Means and Standard Deviations ($df=90$)

	Connection		Autonomy	
	$t(p)$	$M(SD)$	$t(p)$	$M(SD)$
Hypotheses 1 & 2				
Primary versus secondary	.649 (.518)		-.032 (.974)	
Primary		52.59 (8.55)		41.25 (5.64)
Secondary		51.49 (7.45)		41.30 (5.54)
Hypotheses 3 & 4				
Male versus Female	-1.793 (.076)		-2.940 (.004)	
Male		49.52 (9.76)		38.43 (6.91)
Female		52.96 (7.28)		42.22 (4.72)

Table 2 (continued)

Hypotheses 5 & 6			
Team versus Individual	3.002 (.003)		2.839 (.006)
Team sports		55.11 (4.91)	43.25 (3.52)
Individual sports		50.16 (9.06)	40.00 (6.26)

Individual and Team Athletes

Hypothesis V predicted that individual and team athletes would vary significantly in their perceptions of parental connection. To test this hypothesis, a t-test analysis between individual and team athletes' scores on the parental connection scale was conducted. As can be seen in Table 2, significant difference between individual and team athletes' scores on the parental connection scale was indicated ($t = 3.00$; $df = 90$; $p = .003$). Athletes from team sports scored significantly higher on the parental connection scale than athletes from individual sports.

Hypothesis VI predicted that individual and team athletes would vary significantly in their perceptions of parental-psychological autonomy. To test this hypothesis, a t-test analysis between individual and team athletes' scores on the parental-psychological autonomy was conducted. As can be seen in Table 2, significant difference between individual and team athletes' scores on the parental-psychological autonomy was indicated ($t = 2.84$; $df = 90$; $p = .006$). Athletes from team sports scored significantly higher on the parental-psychological autonomy scale than athletes from individual sports.

Summary

The results provide partial support for the hypotheses. Specifically, team sports athletes have reported significantly higher scores on both parental connection and psychological autonomy scales than individual sports athletes. In addition, female athletes reported contrary to direction of hypotheses significantly higher scores on the psychological autonomy scale than male athletes. However, no significant differences were found between the gender of the athlete and their perception of parental connection. Finally, no significant differences were found between primary and secondary athletes and their perception of parental connection and psychological autonomy.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

From the several theoretical models that have been used to investigate the sports socialization process, the social learning model has become the most prominent in understanding the acquisition of sport roles. Within this theoretical framework, several agents of sports socialization including the family, peers, school, community, and mass media seem to contribute and/or influence individuals to participate or not in sports. This study attempted to focus on family factors that may serve as primary agents of sports socialization in a collegiate setting. More specifically, this study focused on the student-athletes' perception of parental connection and parental psychological autonomy.

Ninety-two student-athletes representing men's and women's tennis, men's and women's track and field, women's soccer and women's softball volunteered for the study. A standard fact sheet (including demographic questions), two existing self report questionnaires (parental connection and parental psychological autonomy) and the coaches' rating of their athletes as primary or secondary were used as assessment tools for the present study. Reliabilities (Cronbach's alphas) were established for the two scales using the present data.

By using t-test analysis as the primary statistical tool in this research, it was possible to quantify significant differences between female and male athletes' perception of psychological autonomy and individual sports athletes' and team sports athletes' perception of parental connection and parental psychological autonomy. This chapter discusses the findings for each operational hypothesis as well as implications for future research and practice.

Primary and Secondary Athletes

Hypotheses I and II predicted that primary athletes would report higher levels of parental connection and parental-psychological autonomy than secondary athletes. This was not supported. In fact, when examining the means for perceived levels of parental connection and parental psychological autonomy between primary and secondary athletes, they were almost identical (see Table 2 in the results section).

Although this study was a preliminary attempt to explore the relationship between primary and secondary athletes perceptions of parental connection and parental psychological autonomy, possible explanations may help to clarify the present findings. First, variations in athletic abilities (primary vs. secondary) within a collegiate setting may not be large enough to be influenced by family factors. For example, in several collegiate sports, the difference between primary and secondary athletes is not clearly established. Although athletes are classified by coaches as primary or secondary, it is not uncommon to see secondary players changing to primary positions and primary players changing to secondary positions throughout the

season. Second, the measurement used for this study may not be specific enough to measure the influence of parental support on athletic performance. Although the parental connection and parental-psychological scales obtained from the Children's Reports of Parental Behavior Inventory (Schaefer, 1965) are highly valid and reliable, these instruments have only been used with non-athletic populations.

Male and Female Athletes

Hypotheses III and IV predicted that male athletes would report higher levels of parental connection and parental-psychological autonomy than female athletes. These hypotheses were partially supported. While no significant difference was found between the gender of the athletes and their perception of parental connection, contrary to the hypothesis, female athletes scored significantly higher than male athletes on the parental-psychological autonomy scale. These findings are somewhat surprising, since a considerable amount of research supports the idea that parents of male athletes are more supportive and provide them with more autonomy than parents of female athletes. For example, Sage (1980) found that fathers tended to be more supportive of their athletic sons than of their athletic daughters, while mothers showed little difference in the support accorded to sons and daughters. In addition, Sage concluded that many of the cultural sex-role stereotypes are found in sports. For instance, male athletes were encouraged by their parents to be more active than female athletes who were encouraged to be more sedentary.

Individual Sports Athletes and Team Sports Athletes

Hypotheses V and VI predicted that individual and team athletes would vary significantly in their perceptions of parental connection and parental-psychological autonomy. Team sports athletes scored significantly higher in both parental connection and parental-psychological scales than individual sports athletes.

One possible explanation for the present finding may be attributed to the different nature of individual and team sports at the collegial level. In this study, team sports were represented by more highly visible sports such as soccer and softball while individual sports were represented by much less visible sports such as tennis and track and field. Although more research is needed in **this** area, it is possible to argue that parents may be more supportive and involved in sports that receive more attention and publicity.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is that the results are not generalizable to all sports on the collegiate level. Because the sample consisted of a limited number of sports such as men's and women's tennis, men's and women's track, women's soccer, and women's softball, athletes from major sports such as basketball and football are not represented. Therefore, their perception of parental connection and parental-psychological autonomy may be different than athletes from minor sports.

A second limitation of this study is that the assessment tool used to measure the athletes' perceptions of parental connection and parental psychological autonomy may not be particularly suited to athletic populations. Although both scales have found to be helpful to better understand the parent-child relationship, the scales do not appear to be effective when exploring the influence of family factors on different levels of athletic abilities. In addition, the scoring procedure and statistical analysis obtained from each scale does not allow the research to interpret the results with clarity. For example, scores on the parental connection scale may vary from 20 to 60 points, and scores on the parental-psychological autonomy scale may vary from 16 to 48 points. Although significant differences were found between female athletes and male athletes on the parental-psychological autonomy scale (see Table 2), the mean scores from both female and male athletes (42.22 and 38.43) do not tell us exactly how much of autonomy is positive or negative or what this gap really means. For example, these scales do not provide a high, medium, or low figure for autonomy or connection that would help explain what the quantitative difference means. Therefore, although statistical significance exists, the findings have to be reported with caution.

A third limitation is the unequal number of gender and sport types that were included in the analysis. When comparing male versus female athletes, 23 participants were male and 69 were female, which is almost three times more than the number of male participants. Also, track and field athletes composed 42.4 percent of the total number of participants. Therefore, this sport may be over represented in the analysis.

A fourth limitation is that more variability exists in the scores on parental connection and parental-psychological autonomy for athletes in individual sports when compared to athletes from team sports. Further research is needed to explore whether individual sports athletes are more heterogeneous than team sports athletes.

Finally, when comparing team sports versus individual sports, team sports were composed of women's soccer and women's softball, which is entirely composed of female athletes while individual sports like tennis and track and field included both male and female athletes.

Implications

The current findings provide partial support for Hellstedt's (1995) theoretical work on families and sport socialization that proposes the family is the most important influence in an athlete's life. The results of this study indicate that athletes from team sports have higher perceptions of parental connection and parental-psychological autonomy than athletes from individual sports. It is possible that parents that have children participating in individual collegiate sports with low visibility and publicity may not provide the same type of support or autonomy than parents who have their children participating in team collegiate sports that are more visible and glamorous. If this is the case, then, universities should spend more time trying to market individual sports so that they can become more visible and popular to the public and to the parents. If individual sports start to become more popular events on a college campus, then parents may become more motivated and may provide their

children with more support and autonomy, which ultimately may help to enhance their performances.

Another implication of this study is that perceptions of parental-psychological autonomy may be differentiated depending upon the gender of the athlete. Although female athletes scored significantly higher on the parental-psychological scale when compared to male athletes, it is not clear whether this difference can be primarily attributed to gender differences or to confounding effects such as type of sport.

Future Research

In order to expand the knowledge of possible family factors that may influence athletic performance, additional research should include major collegiate sports such as basketball and football as well as minor sports. This would help to create a representative sample that could be generalizable to all collegiate sports. In addition, it would be helpful to examine differences in pressure perceived among athletes from major and minor sports. If it can be empirically supported that athletes from major sports feel more pressure to perform and to deal with the public and media than athletes from minor sports, then, it would be possible to examine differences in family environments between minor and major sports. In addition, research could also explore what types of family environments may be “ideal” to help athletes cope with such pressures.

Another possibility for future research includes constructing specific assessment tools that measure the quality of parental support between NCAA

Division I and NCAA Division II collegiate athletes. When the athlete plays for a Division I school, he or she may have to face enormous pressure to perform at high levels, and will have to deal with the media and fans. At the Division II level the athlete will not experience the same amount of pressure and publicity. Therefore, a new assessment tool may investigate how the family helps the athlete from the different divisions deal with such issues.

Another possibility for future research includes comparing the quality of parental support between different athletic sports. For example, it would be interesting to compare perceptions of parental connection and/or parental-psychological autonomy between football and basketball players (major sports), or between football and tennis (major vs. minor sports) or between tennis and track and field (minor sports). This would help to specifically explore the quality of parental support between athletes from different sports.

Finally, additional research could focus on one gender and how perceptions of parental support may vary depending on sport type. For example, it may be interesting to compare women's basketball vs. women's soccer and their perception of family support. In addition, several other sports could be included in the analysis but holding gender as a control variable.

Further studies involving family variables and their relationship on athletic performance are important to conduct. If researchers look at the sporting world as a macrosystemic unit, they can expand their knowledge of factors that influence athletic performance by shifting their primary attention from individual factors and devoting more attention to larger systems such as the family, peers, and the media.

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Appendix A
Informed Consent Form and Scripts

INFORMED CONSENT

A. AUTHORIZATION

I, _____, hereby authorize Luciano Battaglini to perform the following procedure.

B. DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH AND ASSOCIATED RISKS/BENEFITS

Parental Support

- This research study is part of Luciano Battaglini's master's thesis project through the Department of Human Development and Family Science at Oklahoma State University.
- The purpose of this research is to examine factors that relate to variation in parental support for college athletes.
- The results are expected to give sports researchers and coaches a better understanding of the role of family factors in the experiences of athletes in a collegiate setting.
- You will be asked to complete a questionnaire, which will take approximately 20 minutes. You will be asked to return the informed consent forms to a separate pile than the questionnaires.
- All results will be kept confidential and individuals will not be identified by name. Questionnaires will be kept in locked filing cabinets in my office at Oklahoma State University. After the project is complete, all questionnaires will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or comments please contact me: Luciano Battaglini, at Athletics Center, Stillwater, OK 74078. Phone: 405-744-7343. In addition, you may contact my thesis advisor, Dr. Carolyn S. Henry, at Oklahoma State University, 340 Human Environmental Sciences, Stillwater, OK 74078. Phone: 405-744-8357; or Sharon Bacher, IRB Executive Secretary, Oklahoma State University, 203 Whitehurst, Stillwater, OK 74078. Phone: 405-744-5700.

C. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

I understand that participation is voluntary and that I will not be penalized if I choose not to participate. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and end my participation in this project at any time without penalty. I understand that I can leave a question blank if I choose.

D. CONSENT DOCUMENTATION FOR WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Signature

Date

Script for Coaches

Coach (insert coaches' name here),

My name is Luciano Battaglini and I am a masters student majoring in family science. I am also the assistant tennis coach for women's team. I am here today to ask your permission to conduct a study with your student-athletes. In my study, I will be looking at the role of parental support in athletic performance.

I believe that findings from this study could be beneficial to sport researchers and coaches because a better understanding of the relationships athletes have with their parents may help researchers and coaches better understand family factors that may affect performance.

The completion of the questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes. I would like to schedule this just before practice. In addition, because I am looking at athletic performance, I would like to ask you if you could identify your primary and secondary athletes and help me deliver the questionnaires to your athletes. Specifically, I would like for you to give questionnaire A to your primary athletes and questionnaire B to your secondary athletes. The questionnaires will be the same except for the letters. Once the athletes are done with the questionnaires I will ask them to return the questionnaires to envelopes placed in the front of the classroom.

Finally, the questionnaire will be anonymous, all data will be kept confidential and the procedures for data collection were approved by the Institutional Review Board.

Thank you for your time

Script for Athletes

My name is Luciano Battaglini and I am a masters student majoring in family science. I am also the assistant tennis coach for women's team.

I am conducting a study that explores the role of parental support in athletic performance. Your participation is voluntary and you will be not penalized in any way if you choose not to participate. In addition, the questionnaires are anonymous, and all data will be kept confidential.

This questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

I will call your name and give you an informed consent form. Please read it carefully and feel free to ask me if you have any additional questions. Once you have signed the informed consent form, I will give you the questionnaire. If, after reading the informed consent, you choose not to participate in the study, simply return the unsigned informed consent form and feel free to leave.

Your participation in the study would be greatly appreciated and it may help sport psychologists to more effectively understand the relationship between parental support of athletes and their level of athletic performance.

Thank you for your time.

Appendix B

Parental-Psychological Autonomy and Parental Connection Questionnaires

Student-Athlete QuestionnaireBackground information

1. How old are you? _____
(please write your age)

Please circle the best answer for each question below.

2. What sport do you represent at Oklahoma State University?
- | | |
|---------------|------------------|
| 1. Football | 6. Wrestling |
| 2. Basketball | 7. Tennis |
| 3. Baseball | 8. Track & Field |
| 4. Softball | 9. Equestrian |
| 5. Soccer | 10. Golf |
3. Are you male or female?
- | |
|-----------|
| 1. Male |
| 2. Female |
4. What year are you in school?
- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Freshman(1 st) | 4. Senior(4 th) |
| 2. Sophomore(2 nd) | 5. Other (please specify) _____ |
| 3. Junior(3 rd) | |
5. Which race do you identify the most with?
- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. White or Caucasian | 6. Two or more races (please specify)
_____ |
| 2. Black or African American | |
| 3. Asian/Pacific Islander | |
| 4. Native American | 7. Other _____
(please specify) |
| 5. Hispanic or Latino | |
6. During the past 10 years who did you consider your PRIMARY female parent/guardian?
- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. your natural or biological mother | 4. your grandmother |
| 2. your mother by adoption | 5. other (please specify) _____ |
| 3. your stepmother | |
7. What is the highest educational level of the PRIMARY female parent/guardian identified above?
- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. some grade school | 8. some college |
| 2. completed grade school | 9. completed college |
| 3. some middle or junior high school | 10. some graduate work |
| 4. completed middle or junior high school | 11. graduate degree
(M.S., M.D., Ph.D., etc.) |
| 5. some high school | |
| 6. completed high school or GED | |
| 7. completed high school and also had other training, but <u>not</u>
college (e.g., technical training, business school) | |

8. During the past 10 years who did you consider your PRIMARY male parent/guardian?
1. your natural or biological father
 2. your father by adoption
 3. your stepfather
 4. your grandfather
 5. other (please specify) _____

9. What is the highest educational level of the PRIMARY male parent/guardian identified above?

1. some grade school
2. completed grade school
3. some middle or junior high school
4. completed middle or junior high school
5. some high school
6. completed high school or GED
7. completed high school and also had other training, but not college (e.g., technical training, business school)
8. some college
9. completed college
10. some graduate work
11. graduate degree (M.S., M.D., Ph.D., etc.)

10. Your biological parents marital status while you were living at home:

1. married
2. divorced
3. separated
4. widowed
5. never been married
6. other (please specify) _____

11. Your biological parents CURRENT marital status is:

1. married
2. divorced
3. separated
4. widowed
5. never been married
6. other (please specify) _____

If you marked 2, 3, 4, or 6 for question # 11, how old were you when that event happened? _____

(please write your age)

12. If your parents divorced:

- a. Indicate with whom you lived most of the time during your last 10 years before college: Mother ___ Father ___ Other ___
- b. Indicate how often you saw the parent you did not live with:
 1. At least once a week
 2. At least once a month
 3. At least once every six months
 4. At least once a year
 5. Almost never

13. How many siblings are there in your family of origin? (Both at home and living away)

Please indicate each child by age in number of years and gender as M= male or F=female.

Child 1 age ()	gender ()	Child 5 age ()	gender ()
Child 2 age ()	gender ()	Child 6 age ()	gender ()
Child 3 age ()	gender ()	Child 7 age ()	gender ()
Child 4 age ()	gender ()	Child 8 age ()	gender ()

14. What is your religious preference?

1. Catholic
2. Protestant
3. Latter-day Saint (Mormon)
4. Jewish
5. Muslim
6. Other (please specify) _____

15. What is your most important career goal after you complete your athletic eligibility and your academic degree at Oklahoma State University?

Parental Questionnaire: Think about your relationship with your mother/stepmother (or female guardian) and or father/stepfather (or male guardian). Respond about the mother/stepmother/female guardian and the father/stepfather/male guardian you considered your PRIMARY parents during the past 10 years. Using the scale below, circle the answer that best describes your thoughts and feelings about each parent/stepparent (or guardian).

1 "Not like her/him" 2 "Somewhat like her/him" 3 "A lot like her/him"

- | | | | | | |
|-----|--|--------|---|---|---|
| 1. | This parent makes me feel better after talking over my worries. | Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Father | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. | This parent is always trying to change how I feel or think about things. | Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Father | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. | This parent smiles at me very often. | Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Father | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. | This parent changes the subject whenever I have something to say. | Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Father | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. | This parent is able to make me feel better when I am upset. | Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Father | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. | This parent often interrupts me. | Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Father | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. | This parent enjoys doing things with me. | Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Father | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. | This parent blames me for other family member's problems. | Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Father | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 9. | This parent cheers me up when I am sad. | Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Father | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 10. | This parent brings up past mistakes when she/he criticizes me. | Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Father | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 11. | This parent gives me a lot of care and attention. | Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Father | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 12. | This parent is less friendly with me if I do not see things her/his way. | Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Father | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 13. | This parent makes me feel the most important person in her/his life. | Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Father | 1 | 2 | 3 |

- | | | | | | |
|-----|--|--------|---|---|---|
| 14. | This parent will avoid looking at me when I have disappointed her/him. | Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Father | 1 | 2 | 3 |
-
- | | | | | | |
|-----|--|--------|---|---|---|
| 15. | This parent believes in showing her/his love for me. | Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Father | 1 | 2 | 3 |
-
- | | | | | | |
|-----|--|--------|---|---|---|
| 16. | If I have hurt her/his feelings, this parent stops talking to me until I please her/him again. | Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Father | 1 | 2 | 3 |
-
- | | | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|--------|---|---|---|
| 17. | This parent often praises me. | Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Father | 1 | 2 | 3 |
-
- | | | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|--------|---|---|---|
| 18. | This parent is easy to talk to. | Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Father | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Appendix C
Institutional Review Board Approval
Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 2/23/2004

Date: Monday, February 24, 2003

IRB Application No HE0352

Proposal Title: **FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH COLLEGE ATHLETE'S PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL CONNECTION AND PARENTAL PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTONOMY**

Principal Investigator(s):

Luciano Battanlini
324 South West #5
Stillwater, OK 74078

Carolyn Henry
340 HES
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Dear PI

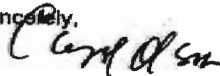
Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Sharon Bacher, the Executive Secretary to the IRB, in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, sbacher@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Carol Olson, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Luciano Henrique Lopes Guimaraes Battaglini

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH COLLEGE ATHLETE'S PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL CONNECTION AND PARENTAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTONOMY

Major Field: Family Relations and Child Development Specialization: Family Science

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Brasilia, Federal District, Brazil on March 07, 1978, the son of Renato Battaglini Junior and Ilis do Rosario Lopes Guimaraes.

Education: Graduated from Muskogee High School, Muskogee, Oklahoma in May 1996; received Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from Oklahoma Christian University, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma in May 2000. Completed the requirements for the Master of Science degree with a major in Family Relations and Child Development with a specialization in Family Science at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 2003.

Experience: Employed by Oklahoma State University, Athletic Department as a Graduate Assistant for Women's Tennis team. Employed by Oklahoma State University, Department of Family Relations and Child Development as a Graduate Assistant and Research Assistant. Marriage and Family Therapy Intern at the Center for Family Services, Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Professional Memberships: American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy.