“DO I HAVE TO PLAY?” A COMPARISON OF PERCEIVED PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ASSOCIATED WITH ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION IN URBAN AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

by

ERICA L. WILSON

(Under the Direction of David Wright)

ABSTRACT

In response to recent research and media exposure that parents are a source of pressure for children participating in athletics, this study was conducted to compare parental behaviors associated with pressure and support among urban and rural adolescents. Male (n = 5) and female (n = 44) undergraduate students at the University of Georgia completed an online, modified version of the Parental Involvement in Sports Questionnaire (PISQ) designed to assess perceived frequency and desirability of parental directive behaviors, praise and understanding, and active involvement. A series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) revealed no differences in frequency of behaviors between urban and rural groups but significant differences in desirability of behaviors between groups. Perceived resources for extracurricular activities and involvement in activities outside of athletics were also assessed.

INDEX WORDS: Parental involvement, Athletic participation, Rural, Urban, Sports, Adolescents

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ERICA L. WILSON

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ERICA L. WILSON

Major Professor: David Wright

Committee: Diane Bales
Lynda Walters

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2007

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my parents, Gary and Suzette Wilson, and to my future husband, Zane Goldthorp, whose inspiration and love has been my greatest source of support and encouragement during my graduate career.

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I would like to thank my committee for their guidance, my family and friends for their support, and all of the University of Georgia faculty and staff who have been especially helpful and involved in the completion of this research.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to compare parental pressure to participate in athletics in rural and urban communities. It has been widely documented that many parents pressure their children to participate in organized sports. The research interest is to determine if there is a difference in perceived parental pressure among adolescent athletes in urban and rural communities. It is the belief of the author that the findings of this study will provide educators, parents, coaches, community leaders, and policy makers with research-based evidence for improvements in community-level activities for adolescents.

How This Study Is Original

Presently in the parenting literature, the media, educational settings, and families in general, a common focus is on being a "good" parent and producing "successful" children. Although parents may define success for their children in many different ways, often parents believe that having their child participate in various extracurricular activities will lead to the development of well-adjusted, well-rounded individuals. Research supports that adolescents who are involved in various extracurricular activities are much less likely to engage in risky behaviors, have higher test scores and grades, and better interpersonal competence (e.g. Cooper, Valentine, Nye, & Lindsay, 1999; Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003). However, a serious problem arises when parents become overly involved and controlling of their child's extracurricular participation. Excessive parental involvement and pressure to participate is especially problematic in athletic involvement. Research on athletic participation among

children shows that pressure to participate is a significant contributing factor in the estimated 70% of children who quit organized sports by the age of 13 (Engh, 1999).

There have been numerous documented cases in the media in which parental involvement has resulted in negative consequences. For example, a high school basketball referee was body-slammed by a man during a game because his wife was ordered out of the gym after yelling profanity (National Association of Sports Officials, 2006). A five-year-old goalkeeper's mother yelled at her son from the sideline that he was embarrassing her and his father and causing his team to lose the soccer game because he tied his shoe for the first time and ran from the goal to show his mother (Llewellyn, 2003). There are also many cases of now famous athletes who endured extreme pressure from their parents. One such case is that of professional golfer Sean O'Hair. O'Hair's father urged his son to drop out of high school to pursue a professional career (CBS News, 2005) and, as a junior player, was forced to run one mile for every stroke over par (Elling, 2005). Although there are many alarming cases of parents displaying newsworthy behaviors, there are also numerous parents in average urban and rural communities pressuring their children to participate in athletics.

For example, in communities where adolescents have few extracurricular opportunities, such as rural communities, athletics are often the main source of after-school involvement and local entertainment. In communities with small populations, individuals have less anonymity so there is an increased visibility to evaluate successful parenting in terms of the child's personal success. Parents with a stand-out student athlete in a small rural community may be seen as successful parents and enjoy increased status.

However, these conclusions are based on sparse research. Most studies investigating parental pressure and support focus on elite athletes who have achieved the highest status in their

sport. Few studies focus on average children participating in sports and no existing studies consider the child's community, either rural or urban, as a contributing factor to parental pressure to participate in athletics.

The present study deals with undergraduate students at the University of Georgia with a particular age range of 18 to 23 and over. Each of the participants completed a consent form and answered an online survey assessing their perceptions of their parents' behaviors associated with their athletic participation when they were in middle and/or high school. The participants were rewarded for their participation by being given the opportunity to enter a raffle to win a $50 American Express gift card.

Expected Results

This study seeks to determine if there is a difference between urban and rural children's perceived parental involvement associated with athletic participation, with rural children experiencing more pressure to participate. In addition, this study will determine if there is a significant difference between urban and rural children's perceived resources for extracurricular activities and a difference in the number of activities urban and rural children are involved in outside of athletics. It has been documented in previous research that rural children have restricted access to extracurricular activities so this study will determine if rural children perceive fewer resources for extracurricular activities and are involved in fewer activities outside of sports than urban children.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In order to adequately measure parental involvement, it is necessary to examine previous literature in the field on constructive and destructive involvement. In addition to literature on parental involvement, we must also look into why parents get involved and how environment factors into perceived parental involvement. We will also discuss a theoretical framework to investigate this phenomenon.

Parental Involvement

An abundance of literature exists to suggest that parental involvement has a positive influence on many aspects of children's psychological functioning and performance, especially in the educational setting. Parental involvement has been positively linked to indicators of school success including better attendance rates, improved student behavior, improved literacy performance, and higher scores in cognitive, language, and math skills development (Dearing, McCartney, Weiss, Kreider, & Simpkins, 2004; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Children also experience improved self-esteem as a result of parental involvement. Cassidy and Conroy (2006) found that maternal involvement was significantly associated with higher self-esteem.

Parental involvement has also been shown to have positive influences on children's athletic participation. Hoyle and Leff (1997) investigated the role of parental involvement in participation and performance of young tournament tennis players (median age = 13 years). Parents often serve as motivators, facilitators, and coaches for their young athletes. Parents can also provide a great deal of financial, emotional, and physical support. As indicated in prior

research, parental support is also associated with the athlete's greater enjoyment of the sport, positive appraisal of performance, and positive appraisal of self-worth. Results of this study indicated that parental support was positively correlated, statistically speaking, with the athletes' enjoyment of the sport, their state rank, and how they viewed the importance of tennis in their lives.

Wuerth, Lee, and Alfermann (2004) argue that parents are often the first sources of socialization for getting their children involved in sports and may act as the child's coach, often teaching them the first skills related to the sport. Many parents are also former athletes themselves and are highly committed to their child's career in the sport. Researchers have found that positive support and encouragement were most important to young athletes. Successful athletes who reached higher career levels reported that their parents were more likely to show them how to improve, pushed them to train harder but praised them for trying hard, listened to their children's problems, and exhibited warmth and understanding (Wuerth, Lee & Alfermann, 2004).

Parental support has also been positively correlated with enjoyment and negatively correlated with anxiety in certain extracurricular activities in a study by Anderson, Funk, Elliott, and Smith (2003). Perceived parental support was positively related to enjoyment in sports, performing arts, and group/club involvement. Parental support was negatively related to sports anxiety and group/club involvement.

Research on parental involvement, for the most part, suggests that parents who actively participate in their children's lives can positively influence development. However, not all parents are supportive. Many exert a great deal of pressure on their children.

Excessive Parental Involvement

Often, parents can become overly involved in their child's athletic participation and exert a great deal of pressure on the child to perform. Left and Hoyle (1995) define parental pressure as "behavior perceived by their child as indicating expectations of unlikely, even unattainable heights of accomplishment." In a society where children are becoming more and more involved in extracurricular activities, like sports, there is a growing concern for the psychological well-being of children who are pressured to participate and perform.

Researchers have found that parental pressure greatly influences a young athlete's stress and anxiety, attitude regarding the sport, and potential burnout. One of the major stressors children face as a result of parental pressure is a fear of failure, and one of the major sources of this fear is the child's parents (Gould, Horn, & Spreeman, 1983). Many young athletes' concern over how their parents will respond to their performance report that they experience pre-competitive anxiety and worry while they are playing that they are being negatively evaluated by adults (Weiss, Wiese, & Klint, 1989; Lewthwaite & Scanlan, 1989). Although a certain amount of pressure may be constructive, excessive pressure and negative performance evaluations have been linked to the development of performance anxiety (Passer, 1984).

In a study involving adolescent ski racers, Hellstedt (1990) found that a majority of racers (72.8%) felt that their parents were a source of moderate to forceful pressure and 26% felt that their parents actually forced them to compete. Many athletes also felt "very unhappy" with their parents' attitudes and there was a strong relationship between parental pressure and the athlete's negative reaction. Approximately 50% of participants indicated that their parents would be upset with if they performed poorly. The athletes in this study also felt that their parents would be disapproving if they gave up the sport and felt pressure to continue racing. Hellstedt (1990) also

found that as parental pressure increased, the athletes felt more pressure to continue the sport and were influenced to train and meet training goals in the off-season.

Hansell (1982) suggests that there is a curvilinear relationship between the child's stress level and parent's involvement, with the highest stress levels located at minimal to no involvement and high involvement. Stein, Raedeke, and Glenn (1999) examined adolescents involved in volleyball, soccer, and football and found that children who perceived their fathers as too involved reported less enjoyment of the sport and greater stress. Researchers found that the child's perceived degree of parental involvement was a better indicator of stress and enjoyment than the level of parental involvement. Children who felt their parent was "way too involved" experienced greater stress and less enjoyment than children who perceived their parent as "highly involved."

Pushing children to specialize and compete in sports well beyond their ability is also linked to athlete burnout from the physical and emotional stress of competition (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2000; Hamstra, Cherubini, & Swanik, 2002). In addition to negative psychological outcomes, there is a concern for the physical well-being of a child who is pressured to compete in athletics. In order to compete at the highest levels, many children endure intense trainings that can compromise their physical health. The American Academy of Pediatrics (2000) warns that children who engage in excessive sports training are at risk for various muscle, tissue, and bone injuries that are a result of repetitive stress on the body. Growing children have an increased risk of damaging joint surfaces and suffering injuries that create growth complications. Anxiety and fear of negative evaluation have been linked to an increase in muscle tension and a decrease in flexibility, contributing to the risk of injury (Anderson & Williams, 1988).

Extreme parental involvement can have serious negative effects on a child's development. In order to fully acknowledge the influence of parental involvement on children, we must also examine the motivation behind why parents become invested in their children's activities.

Why Do Parents Get Involved?

Parental involvement can obviously contribute to both positive and negative outcomes but the common question concerning this issue focuses on why parents become involved in the first place. In the educational literature, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) suggest that parents' motivation to get involved is a result of role construction for involvement and the value placed on helping their child succeed. Parental role construction is based on expectations and beliefs about how children develop, how parents should effectively raise their children, and what should be done in the home to help their children become successful (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) also argues that the expectations associated with parental role construction is strongly influenced by social groups and parents' personal experiences and experiences with others over time. Role construction is subject to change as social conditions change (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

The second motivator of parental involvement is the value placed by parents on involvement or self-efficacy, defined as the belief one has about their abilities to produce a desired outcome (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is also socially constructed and is a significant contributor to the goals one chooses to pursue and persistence in working toward those goals (Bandura, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Parents with high self-efficacy will likely persist in engaging with their child, even in difficult times and situations but parents with low

self-efficacy will likely hold low expectations and low persistence in difficult situations (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

In considering parental role construction and self-efficacy in the educational setting, one can draw a parallel to parents in the area of athletics. Parents often create expectations about their child's athletic ability based on development and form beliefs about how they can effectively raise a successful athlete and what they should do in the home to foster success. The social construction of roles based on personal experiences is highlighted by the fact that many parents are their child's first coach (Hoyle & Leff, 1997; Wuerth, Lee & Alferman, 2004). Many parents played sports as children and desire for their child to play as well. Also, many parents are surrounded by their own peers who have children involved in sports and want their child to play as well. Parents who are high in self-efficacy will likely persist in engaging with their child in sports because they believe in their ability foster success.

Many parents believe that in order to produce happy, successful children, they must provide multiple opportunities for their child's personal growth. In his work in child development, Elkind (2001) argues that parents are hurrying their children to grow up too fast in a fast-paced, stressful, self-centered society. Children are pressured to be involved in many activities, and one activity Elkind highlights is sports. Elkind (2001) argues that parents are pressured to involve their child in sports as a result of the rise in young athletic prodigies like Tiger Woods. Many parents believe that the earlier they start their child in organized sports, the better the child will perform. Also, many parents are influenced by parental peer pressure. When most of the children in the community are involved in sports, parents feel pressure to involve their own child. Parents believe that sports participation will increase their child's self-esteem and they will learn to compete and cooperate with others. Unfortunately, Elkind (2001)

argues that parents are the “worst destroyers in the playfulness of sport” as a result of the pressure they place on their children to compete.

As previously mentioned, the media coverage of young sports stars like Tiger Woods, Venus and Serena Williams and Michele Wie often focus on the parents of the athlete and what they did to produce such a prodigy (Coakley, 2005). The focus on parents as the source of a child’s success is a statement of the parents’ ability to raise children. Marano (2005) argues that many parents view their children as trophies and symbols of social class. Highly accomplished children are social markers of the job mothers and fathers are doing of parenting. Parents are increasingly emotionally invested in their child’s accomplishments and average isn’t good enough (Marano, 2005). Although many parents have their child’s best interest at heart, often times they are strongly motivated to become involved as a result of their own selfish needs. This selfish motivation to become involved may be worse in rural communities.

Social Culture of Rural Communities

In order to address the role of context in parental involvement, an analysis of rural communities is helpful. Unfortunately, rural populations are typically difficult to reach populations, so there is a lack of published research in this area, especially related to sports. Literature on rural mental health and rural youth development lends some insight into the role of the community in parental involvement associated with athletic participation.

In typical small towns, there exists the sense that everyone knows everyone (Elder & Conger, 2000) and the social hierarchy is often very close-knit and rigid (Duncan, 1999). In the mental health literature, Campbell, Kearns, & Patchin (2006) indicate that rural residents are often very skeptical of mental health practitioners and have a strong belief in self-reliance to

solve their own problems. In small, rural communities people have less anonymity and a greater chance of others knowing that they are seeking mental health.

Zaveruha (2005) gives several pieces of advice for new surgeons in rural communities. He advises that everything said or done by a new practitioner will be known by everyone very quickly, so a surgeon should be on their best behavior at all times. In order to gain trust, doctors are advised to volunteer in the community and get to know their patients on a personal level. Mistrust and skepticism of health care professionals highlights the notion that rural communities are very close-knit and residents are aware that other members of the community are likely to know all about their personal lives.

Considering the attitudes toward seeking mental health in a rural community aids in understanding the culture of the community. The close-knit, everyone knows everyone mentality sheds light on the social pressure on parents to have successful children. In small towns, people's actions and behaviors are more visible to the wider community

Rural Youth Development

MacTavish and Salamon's (2006) work on rural trailer parks identifies how various factors influence youth development. Children growing up in rural communities have access to significantly fewer social and educational resources as compared to urban children. In small towns, families are challenged by longer commutes to reach resources and less mobility than in larger, urban towns. Parents often have randomly changing work schedules that make getting places more difficult. In urban communities, parents do a better job of linking their children to resources outside of the immediate neighborhood and finding ways to get them to the activities (MacTavish & Salamon, 2006).

Positive developmental pathways, as defined by MacTavish and Salamon (2006), include the presence of guidance-providing peers and adult role models, and opportunities to participate in activities that increase a sense of achievement and personal competency (Elder & Conger, 2000). Children who are isolated from resources and opportunities are on a riskier developmental path because they lack accessibility to positive developmental influences (MacTavish & Salamon, 2006). In rural communities, children have fewer resources and opportunities to participate in activities that promote positive development. Although in urban communities, youth are more likely to be exposed to illegal drugs, violence, and gang activity (MacTavish & Salamon, 2006); there are more positive activities in which to participate. Children also have higher mobility in urban communities and must travel shorter distances to reach facilities.

Rural Youth and Sports Participation

Examining the culture of rural towns in the United States aids in understanding the connection between the environment and parental involvement associated with athletics. By identifying the everyone knows everyone, close-knit mentality present in many small towns (MacTavish & Salamon, 2006), one could infer that parents would be much more concerned about their child's athletic performance than parents in urban communities. In small towns where there are very few opportunities for children to engage in a variety of activities, there are usually sports teams available through school or community recreation programs. Many parents want their children to be successful because they view their children as a reflection of their ability to parent (Marano, 2005; Elkind, 2001) so performing well on athletic teams is a good reflection on the parent. In small towns, parents and children are usually well-known by the members of the community so there are more people to judge a person's ability to parent.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis for this study has been informed by several theories on human and family development [refer to Figure 1 for a conceptual model]. The conceptual model supporting the present study focuses on the relationships between athletic participation, parental investment, and parental involvement. The model also considers the developmental implications of parental behaviors and the role of the environment and perceived resources on children's perceptions of parental involvement.

Developmental Contextualism

Developmental contextualism posits that changing, reciprocal relationships between the individual and their environment facilitate human development (Lerner, 2002). Contextualist theory also suggests that the effect of parental behavior on a child is influenced by the child and the greater social context (Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2005). The bidirectional influence between athletic participation and parental investment can be explained with two different interactions. A child may become interested in sports, which then leads to investment in the child's opportunity to participate. On the other hand, the parent may introduce the child to a sport and become invested because they desire that their child participate. As previously noted, parents are often the primary socializing agents who initially get their children involved in athletics. In this case, the parent's influence on the child would be affecting the child's desire to participate.

There is also a bidirectional relationship between athletic participation and parental involvement in the form of support, non-involvement, and pressure. Many parents who initiate athletic participation have a strong desire for their children to perform well. This desire may manifest into support or pressure depending on the individual. Contextualism maintains that interactions are so complex that the same behaviors can have differing effects on individuals

depending on the context of the interaction (Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2005). Children who become interested in sports and then influence their parents to become invested may perceive support, non-involvement, or pressure from their parents. Most likely, non-involvement would be most consistent with a child initiating involvement rather than the parent.

Parental involvement in the form of support, non-involvement, and pressure may also reciprocally influence athletic participation. Children who perceive pressure or non-involvement may be more likely to stop participating. Those who continue to participate under a great deal of pressure may experience negative developmental outcomes. Parental support or even non-involvement may further reinforce participation and result in positive developmental outcomes.

Developmental contextualism also considers the broader social context, such as the child's neighborhood, as a factor contributing to parental influence on development (Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2005). In different social contexts, like rural and urban communities, parents may exert different behaviors toward their children. As indicated in the research on rural communities, parental pressure to participate in sports may be greater for children in small towns because the social context values athletic participation more than in urban communities. Parents may be more invested in their child's athletic participation in rural environments because there is a larger demand for participation and more implications for parents. Athletic participation may also be influenced by the amount of available resources in the community.

Parenting Patterns

Parents' differing investment levels in their child's athletic participation leads to a variation in the form of parental involvement. The three different forms of parental involvement, supportive or authoritative, excessively involved or authoritarian, and non-involved or permissive, can be mapped onto three models of parenting patterns (Baumrind, 1973).

Authoritative parents are very warm and supportive but also firm. These parents would be encouraging and not overly critical even when their child did not perform well. Authoritative parents would, at the appropriate time, suggest that their child practice to improve their performance and maybe even work with the child as a coach.

Authoritarian parents value obedience and conformity and use very punitive, restricting measures to discourage independent behavior. These parents would be very critical of their child's athletic performance, regardless of how good or bad the performance may be. Children would be held to an unreasonably high standard and possibly forced to train and practice their sport. Authoritarian parents would be excessively involved with their child and have unrealistic expectations for their child's performance.

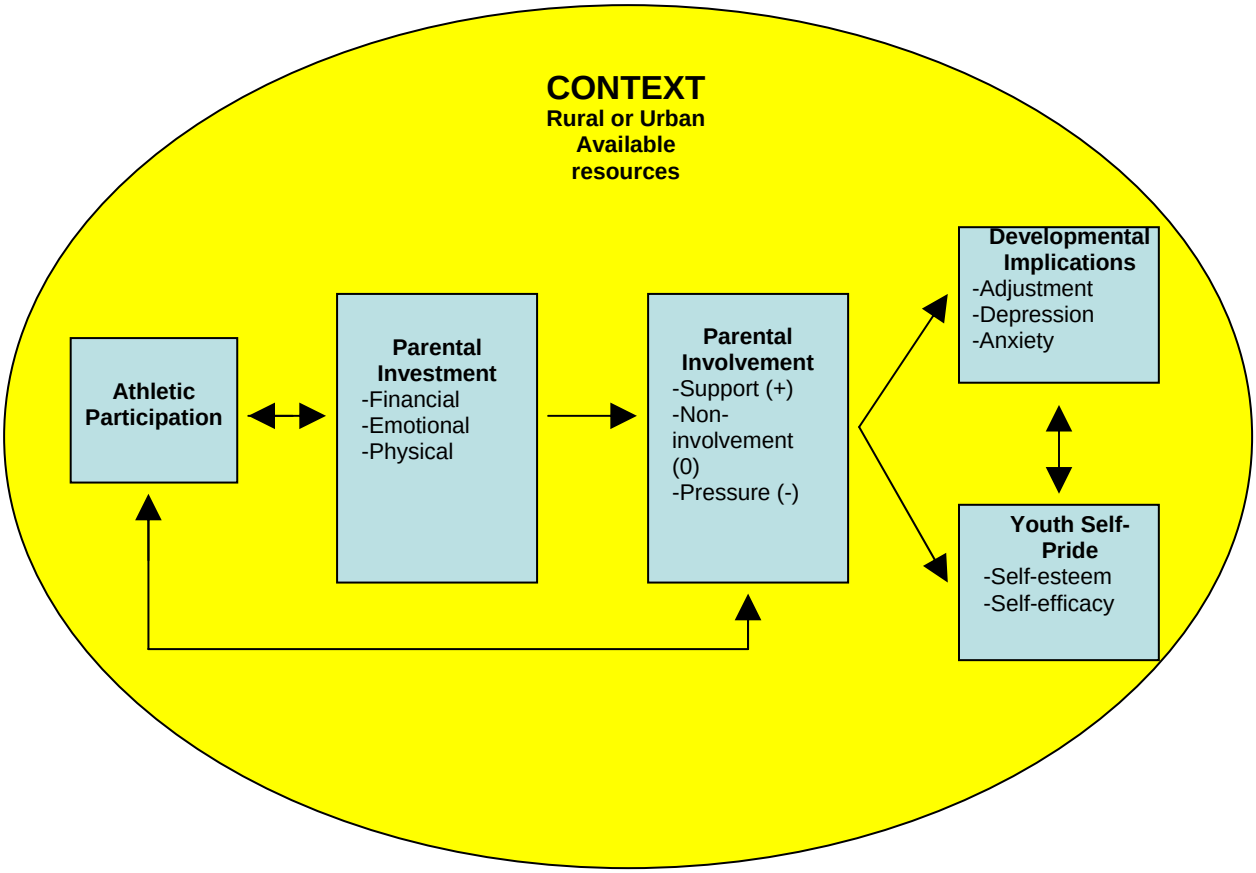
Indifferent or uninvolved parents spend minimal time and energy interacting with their child and know little about their child's activities. These parents are not likely to attend games, practices, or matches and would not care if their child was even involved in sports. In extreme cases, indifferent or uninvolved parents may be very neglectful of their children.

Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory

The parental acceptance-rejection theory (PARTheory) predicts and explains major consequences and correlations of parental acceptance and rejection through the socialization process and across life span development (Rohner, 2005). One subtheory is the personality subtheory that attempts to predict and explain psychological consequences of perceived parental acceptance and rejection in childhood and adulthood. This subtheory posits that humans have a biological need for support, comfort, and nurturance from people who are close to them, namely parents. Children who perceive their parents to be rejecting are likely to feel anxious, insecure, have impaired self-esteem, impaired self-competency, and emotionally unstable (Rohner, 2005).

The negative consequences of rejection highlighted in the personality subtheory of PARTheory are all characteristics of children who have been heavily pressured to participate and perform well in athletics. Parents who are highly critical of their child's athletic performance are often perceived to be rejecting. Parents who place a great deal of value on their child's performance may contribute to their child feeling very anxious during a game or match and believe that they are incapable of meeting their parents' standards. The previous review of the literature on parental involvement associated with athletics indicates that extreme involvement can have detrimental effects on children resulting in depression, anxiety, lowered self-esteem, decreased self-efficacy, fear or failure and increased stress.

Figure 1. Theoretical Model



Theoretical Summary

As depicted in the model, there is a bidirectional relationship between both athletic participation and parental investment as well as athletic participation and parental involvement. Parental involvement leads to a variation in positive and negative developmental outcomes in the form of youth development and youth self-pride. The process depicted in the conceptual model all occurs within the context of urban or rural environments. Based on the review of the literature and the proposed model, we can infer that supportive parental involvement has a positive impact on two aspects of child development. Previous research also highlights the notion that extreme parental involvement may lead to serious negative consequences in development. A careful consideration of the child's context, specifically rural and urban environments, may also lend a great deal of insight into understanding parental pressure and support in youth athletics.

Research Questions

Given the time frame for completion and the feasibility of the present study, parental involvement and context will be the only variables from the theoretical model that will be examined.

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Do children living in rural communities perceive greater parental pressure to participate in athletics through frequent and undesirable parental behaviors than children living in urban communities?
2. Do children in rural communities perceive fewer available resources, in terms of extracurricular activities, outside of sports than children in urban communities?

3. Are children in urban communities involved in more extracurricular activities outside of sports than children in rural communities?

Chapter 3

Method

Participants

Participants in this study were 49 male and female undergraduate students at the University of Georgia who had participated on at least one organized athletic team when they were in middle and/or high school. Five participants were male and 44 were female. They ranged in age from 18 to 23 and over. Eighty-two percent were Caucasian in addition to 10% Asian, 6% African American, and 2% mixed. Forty participants reported that they had primarily resided with both parents during middle or high school while six resided with their mother only, two resided with a parent and step-parent, and one resided only with their father. Thirty-two participants were from urban communities and 17 were from rural communities.

Design and Procedure

Participants were recruited through classroom visits, at which time, they were informed of the scope and nature of the study and were asked to sign consent forms. After completing consent forms in the classroom, participants were emailed a link to access the survey online through a secure internet website at their convenience. The survey took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete and after finishing the survey, participants were asked to email the primary investigator with their name and phone number to be entered into a raffle to win one of two $50 American Express gift cards.

Materials

Participants first answered a series of demographic questions including age, gender, race/ethnicity, who they primarily resided with during middle and/or high school, and whether they considered their hometown to be urban or rural. Urban was operationally defined as having

at least 2500 people in suburban areas and at least 50,000 in city areas. Rural was operationally defined as less than 50,000 people in city areas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005).

Parental involvement was measured using an adapted Parental Involvement in Sports Questionnaire (PISQ) (Lee & MacLean, 1997). The PISQ was developed from Wood and Abernethy (1991) and Power and Woolger's (1994) questionnaires assessing parental behaviors and attitudes towards their children's swimming. Because these measures were originally designed for parents, they were adapted in previous studies to be suitable for children. Lee and MacLean (1997) used a factor analysis and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test to assess the appropriateness and suitability of the questions. This process resulted in the selection of 30 items that assesses frequency and desirability of parental behaviors. The PISQ has been translated to German and replicated in a study by Wuerth, Lee, and Alfermann (2002). Since the PISQ was originally designed for children involved in swimming, the language was modified to a more generic form for relevance to a variety of sports.

The PISQ measures frequency and desirability of both parental support and pressure in the form of directive behaviors (i.e. "do your parents push you to practice or train harder"), praise and understanding (i.e. "after a game, do your parents praise you for trying hard , and active involvement (i.e. "do your parents discuss your progress with your coach") (refer to Appendix for a copy of the measure). Participants rated frequency and desirability on a 0 (infrequent/undesirable) to 4 (very frequent/very desirable) scale.

Perceived available resources and involvement in activities outside of sports was assessed with two open-ended questions. Participants were asked to list all perceived activities available outside of sports, regardless of whether or not they had been involved in them, in addition to the activities they had participated in outside of sports. They were also asked to name the top five

activities they were interested in during middle and/or high school. For each activity, participants rated the importance of the activity to them (0 = not important, 4 = very important) and whether or not they had support from their parents for the activity. Activities were assigned to 13 different categories: religious/church sponsored, school clubs, community service, arts/performance, assisting athletic teams, part-time job, civic clubs, computer/video games/tv, nature/agriculture, athletic, hang out with friends, academic, and music.

Chapter 4

Results

The data for frequency and desirability were submitted to a series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs). Participants were divided into two groups based on their type of community (urban or rural) and each item of the PISQ was analyzed separately for differences in perceived frequency and desirability of parental behaviors.

Frequency of Behaviors

The results of the reported frequency of parental behaviors revealed no differences between the urban and rural groups that were statistically significant [refer to Table 1 for results]. Both groups consistently ranked directive behaviors as occurring with low frequency, praise and understanding as occurring very frequently, and active involvement as occurring with a moderate frequency. These results indicate that parents in both urban and rural communities are primarily supportive of their adolescent's athletic participation.

Desirability of Behaviors

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the desirability of parental behaviors revealed significant differences between the urban and rural groups in relation to several indicators of directive behaviors and active involvement [refer to Table 2 for results]. Differences in desirability between urban and rural groups were significant for the following items under directive behaviors: "After a sporting event, your parents tell you what they think you need to work on", F (1,46) = 4.87, $p<.05$ (*Range* = 4), "Your parents tell you how they think you can improve your technique", F (1,45) = 6.68, $p<.05$ (*Range* = 4), "During practice, your parents tell or signal what you should do", F (1,43) = 4.19, $p<.05$ (*Range* = 4), "Your parents push you to practice or train harder", F (1,45) = 5.00, $p<.05$ (*Range* = 4), "Your parents

Table 1
Frequency of Parental Behaviors

	Urban		Rural			
Item	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*Sig.**
After a sporting event, did your parents tell you what they thought you needed to work on?	3.06	1.16	3.06	1.48	.00	.99
Did your parents tell you how they thought you could improve your technique?	3.00	1.14	3.06	1.29	.03	.86
After a poor performance, did your parents point out what they thought you did badly?	2.25	1.16	2.31	1.14	.03	.86
Before a game, did your parents tell you what things you needed to work on to do well?	2.56	1.13	2.53	1.41	.01	.94
Before a game, did your parents tell you how to perform?	2.00	1.16	2.25	1.24	.47	.50
Did your parents yell and cheer during a game?	4.12	1.21	4.31	.95	.29	.59
During practice, did your parents tell or signal what you should do?	1.34	.70	1.75	1.06	2.51	.12
Did your parents push you to practice or train harder?	2.12	1.12	2.75	1.39	2.80	.10
Did your parents get upset with you if they thought your performance was not going as well as it should be?	1.40	.83	1.87	1.15	2.60	.11
After a game, did your parents tell you that you didn't try hard enough?	1.47	.76	1.37	.81	.16	.70
Even after a poor performance, did your parents praise you for the good things you did?	4.38	.87	4.38	.89	.00	1.00
After a game, did your parents praise you for trying hard?	4.41	.71	4.50	.82	.17	.68
Did your parents show they understood how you were feeling about your performance?	4.12	.98	4.06	1.06	.04	.84

After a championship game, did your parents praise you for where you placed?	4.40	.71	4.31	.87	.16	.69
Did your parents take an active role in running your team?	2.71	1.30	3.07	1.10	.80	.38
Did your parents volunteer to help at games as officials, scorekeepers, volunteers, etc?	3.15	1.42	3.63	1.15	1.32	.26
Did your parents discuss your progress with your coach?	1.93	1.27	2.31	1.30	.92	.34
Did your parents encourage you to talk to them about any problems or worries you may have had about your performance?	3.68	1.38	3.67	1.35	.00	.98
Did your parents change mealtimes so that you could practice and go to games?	3.78	1.45	4.00	.90	.30	.59

* $p<.05$

Table 2

Desirability of Parental Behaviors

	Urban		Rural			
Item	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*Sig.**
After a sporting event, did your parents tell you what they thought you needed to work on?	2.90	.87	3.50	.89	4.87	.03**
Did your parents tell you how they thought you could improve your technique?	2.71	.97	3.50	1.03	6.68	.01**
After a poor performance, did your parents point out what they thought you did badly?	2.10	1.04	2.68	.95	3.59	.07
Before a game, did your parents tell you what things you needed to work on to do well?	2.90	1.11	3.00	1.10	.08	.78
Before a game, did your parents tell you how to perform?	2.16	1.19	2.56	1.09	1.27	.27
Did your parents yell and cheer during a game?	4.16	1.00	4.38	1.02	.47	.50
During practice, did your parents tell or signal what you should do?	1.90	.96	2.60	1.30	4.19	.05**
Did your parents push you to practice or train harder?	2.58	.99	3.25	.93	5.00	.03**
Did your parents get upset with you if they thought your performance was not going as well as it should be?	1.50	.73	2.38	1.26	8.96	.01**
After a game, did your parents tell you that you didn’t try hard enough?	1.27	.64	2.00	1.10	8.27	.01**
Even after a poor performance, did your parents praise you for the good things you did?	4.50	.84	4.68	.48	.68	.41
After a game, did your parents praise you for trying hard?	4.40	.80	4.75	.45	2.55	.12

Did your parents show they understood how you were feeling about your performance?	4.53	.71	4.68	.60	.56	.46
After a championship game, did your parents praise you for where you placed?	4.38	.75	4.62	.62	1.32	.26
Did your parents take an active role in running your team?	3.44	1.01	3.94	1.18	2.32	.13
Did your parents volunteer to help at games as officials, scorekeepers, volunteers, etc?	3.50	1.24	4.25	1.00	4.38	.04**
Did your parents discuss your progress with your coach?	2.38	1.15	2.69	1.40	.62	.43
Did your parents encourage you to talk to them about any problems or worries you may have had about your performance?	3.75	1.14	3.87	1.36	.11	.74
Did your parents change mealtimes so that you could practice and go to games?	4.13	1.07	4.13	1.03	.00	1.00

* $p<.05$
** significant at $p<.05$

get upset with you if they think your performance is not going as well as it should be", F (1,44) = 8.96, $p<.05$ (*Range* = 4), and "After a game, your parents tell you that you didn't try hard enough", F (1,44) = 8.27, $p<.05$ (*Range* = 4). Desirability ratings also varied as a result of community for one item under active involvement: "Your parents volunteer to help at games as officials, scorekeepers, volunteers, etc.", F (1, 46) = 4.38, $p<.05$ (*Range* = 4). The rural group consistently rated the desirability of these behaviors higher than the urban group. All indicators of praise and understanding and three of the four indicators of active involvement were ranked as desirable traits.

Perceived Resources

The participants in the rural group listed that they were involved in more activities, on average, outside of sports than participants in the urban group. Of the activities listed by the rural group, 60.8% of those activities were related to church or school. The urban group listed a wider variety of activities and 30% of those activities were related to arts or performance [refer to Figures 2 and 3].

An analysis of perceived activities available outside of sports revealed no differences between urban and rural groups. Interestingly, some participants in both groups provided comments regarding the availability of activities instead of listing activities. Participants from the urban group entered comments such as "there were a bunch", "everything – I'm from a huge metro area", "there were tons", and "I lived in a big city so pretty much anything I wanted to do was already available for me to do." Participants from the rural group entered comments such as "sports were pretty much all available, I lived in a pretty small town" and "All school clubs, most sports though. If they weren't your basic recreation department sports, then you had to go out of town to get to them."

Interest in Extracurricular Activities

Participants from both groups rated athletics as the most enjoyable activity, comprising 58% of activities listed by the urban group and 56% for the rural group however, there was no significant difference between groups. Both groups reported having parental support for these activities and rated the activity as very important. The same trend was true for the second listed activity. The third listed activity was evenly dispersed for both groups and was comprised of religious, athletic, and art/performance activities. Both groups reported having parental support for these activities and rated the activity as being important but not most important. Activities four and five were more widely dispersed for both groups, although both reported having parental support. The importance of the activities was also rated as being less important.

Figure 2. Rural participants' involvement in activities outside of athletics.

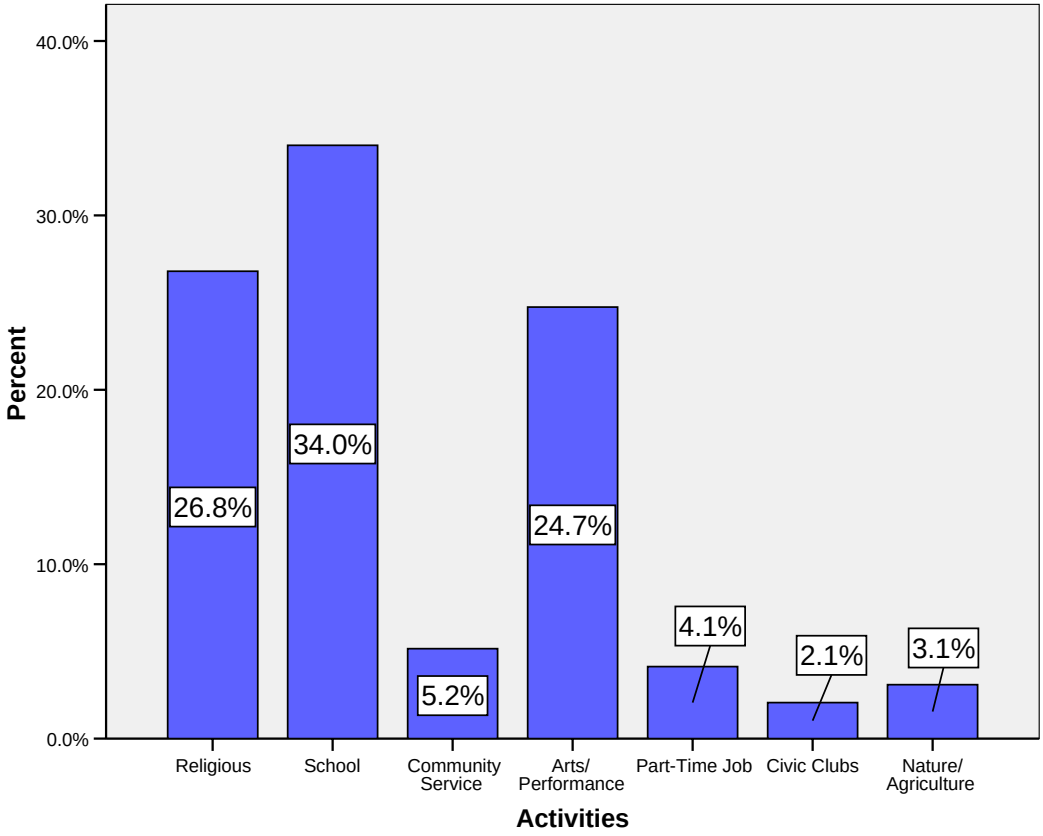
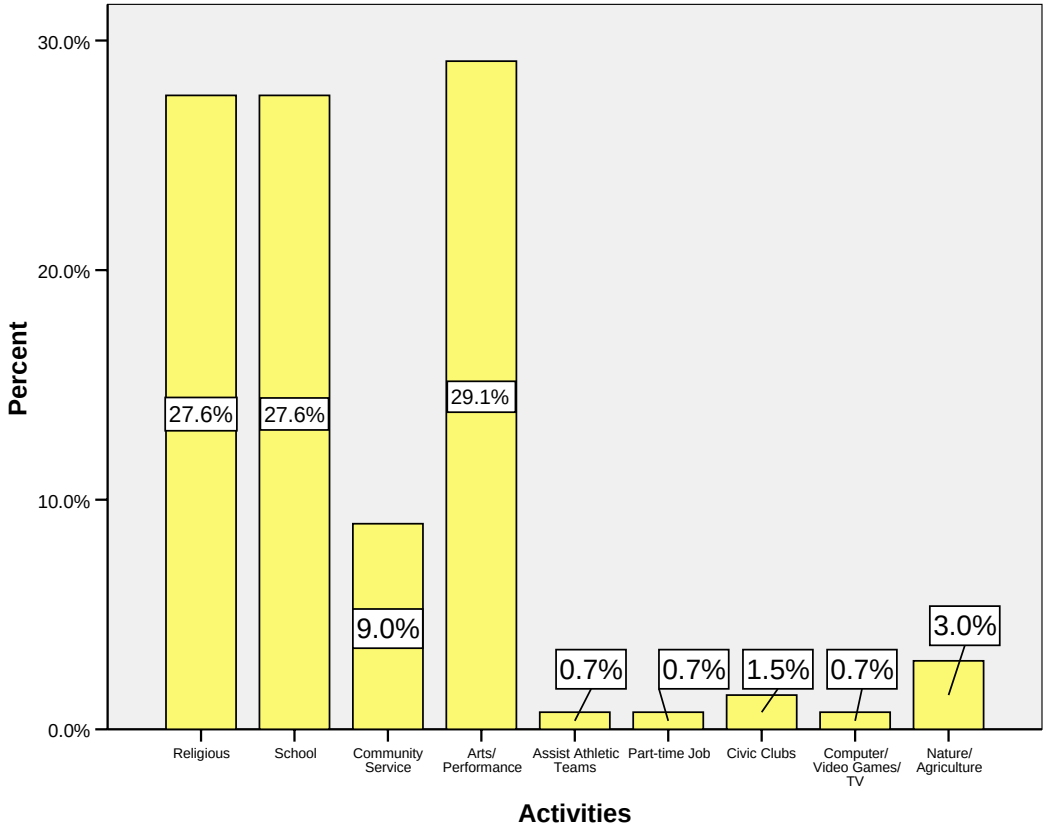


Figure 3. Urban participants' involvement in activities outside of sports.



Chapter 5

Discussion

The present study sought to determine if there was a difference between perceived parental pressure to participate in athletics among urban and rural children. In addition, the present study was conducted to assess a difference among urban and rural groups in the number of perceived extracurricular activities available outside of sports and the type of activities in which children in urban and rural environments are involved.

Results of this study indicate that adolescents in both urban and rural communities perceived their parents to be supportive of their athletic participation. However, rural adolescents view certain directive parental behaviors, defined as pressuring behaviors, as desirable. This may be indicative of the close-knit, rigid social context (Duncan, 1999) in which it may be normative for parents to exhibit certain directive behaviors. In urban communities, children may experience heightened levels of anonymity where it is not normative for parents to be highly involved in their child's activities, therefore, children find certain directive behaviors as undesirable. It is likely that a lack of activities in rural environments outside the home leads to more contact with the family and shared family activities. The close-knit structure of rural communities may contribute to children expecting parents to be highly involved and present at sporting events. These behaviors are assumed to be normative and highly desirable for rural youth. In fact, it may be considered more negatively than in rural rather than urban communities for a parent to fail to attend their child's sporting event.

A lack of significant results may be due to the absence of an indicator for the amount of time the participant was involved in an athletic activity. Parents of adolescents who are involved in an athletic activity for an extended period of time, and have shown signs of success, may be

more likely to exhibit pressuring behaviors than parents whose adolescent participants one time. Essentially, there may be a threshold for the amount of time an adolescent participates in an athletic activity, at which point, parents are emotionally and financially invested and may be more likely to pressure their child to participate. Level of parental investment was not measured in the present study but may lend more insight into the topic in future research.

Additionally, the types of behaviors measured in the PISQ are all behaviors that would be exhibited at a sporting event and fails to measure parental behaviors that might be exhibited in a private environment. Parents may be more likely to berate and criticize their child's performance in the privacy of their own homes than in public. It is also important in future research to compare levels of parental involvement across different types of activities. This would provide a greater perspective on differing levels of support and pressure in a variety of activities.

Rural participants reported involvement in more activities outside of athletics than urban participants. Although, these results were unexpected, further attention should be focused on the types of activities reported by rural participants. The activities reported by rural participants were mostly categorized as religious/church sponsored and affiliated with school clubs whereas urban participants reported a wider variety of activities. Religious activities are likely to be shared by families, and could contribute to the desirability of rural adolescents to have their parents involved in their activities.

These results provide evidence for important implications for community-based programming in rural communities. As shown in MacTavish and Salamon's (2006) research on rural youth development, children in these communities are at a higher risk for negative influences on development because they have less access to activities. In addition, the social

context of a rural community may be a source of stress, in that there is a sense that everyone knows everyone, and adolescents are under more scrutiny for their actions (Elder & Conger, 2000). Involvement in primarily religious and school related activities means that rural children are not being exposed to a variety of people, ideas, and experiences that can positively influence development.

The heavily biased female sample may provide evidence for a gender effect in parental involvement associated with athletic participation. It is possible that females experience less parental pressure overall to participate in athletic activities than males. Athletics tend to be stereotypically male activities, whereas arts and performing activities are stereotypically female. Future research on this subject should include a more diverse and balanced sample and also include perceived parental behaviors toward other types of activities, such as academic or arts/performance.

The present study employed no controls for socioeconomic status and included participants from predominantly two-parent households. Previous research on rural communities has shown that children not only have restricted availability of activities but also limited mobility to access activities in larger, urban towns (MacTavish & Salamon, 2006). The participants in the present study, including both urban and rural groups, were likely to have economic resources in addition to two parents who could transport them to activities, especially out-of-town activities for rural participants. Rural participants may not have been at the same disadvantage as other rural adolescents documented in the literature that did not have access to transportation and economic resources.

Concerns with internet research also raise several issues that could be attributed to unexpected results. Although identical studies have found similar results via online and

laboratory settings, validity of data is always a concern for online research (Whitley, 2002). Also, in addition to having the opportunity to enter into a raffle, several university professors offered extra credit or publicized the study as a method of fulfilling a research participation requirement. This may have also attracted unqualified participants whose data negatively impacted the results of the present study.

Retrospective data also introduces a possible limitation of the present study. Participants were asked to reflect on experiences from middle and/or high school that could have occurred more than 10 years ago. Participants may not have accurately recalled experiences from several years ago which lead to inaccurate reports of parental behaviors. However, a majority of participants were 19 or 20 years old, so they were not far removed from high school and should have been able to accurately recall experiences.

Implications for Future Research

This research provides important implications for previously mentioned community-based programming in addition to parenting education. Although this study found a lack of parental pressure to participate in athletic activities, many previous studies have documented issues concerning parents and their children's athletic participation. The results of this study could be used to develop positive parenting education classes tailored to urban and rural parents, to inform parents of highly desired behaviors that may influence children and adolescents to stay involved in athletics beyond early adolescents (Engh, 1999). Many parenting classes focus on behaviors and actions parents should not exhibit towards their children. The results of this research can add a positive spin on parenting education that is less threatening to parents.

Since this was the first study of its kind to compare perceived parental behaviors in urban and rural communities, future studies should continue to refine methodology to measure these behaviors in a population that has been neglected thus far in the literature.

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Appendix

Please complete the following information.

What is your age?
○ 18 ○ 19 ○ 20 ○ 21
○ 22 ○ 23 and over

What is your gender?
○ Male ○ Female

Do you consider your hometown to be urban or rural (urban = ? 2500 people in suburban areas and at least 50,000 in city areas; rural = less than 50,000 people in city areas)?
○ Urban
○ Rural

What is your race/ethnicity?
○ White/Caucasian
○ African American
○ Native American
○ Hispanic
○ Asian
○ Mixed
○ Other _____

Who did you live with when you were in middle or high school?
○ Both Parents
○ Mother
○ Father
○ Parent and Step-parent
○ Grandparent(s)
○ Other _____

Please answer the following questions about how often your parents showed certain behaviors regarding you sports involvement when you were in middle and/or high school.

	Never				Always
After a sporting event, did your parents tell you what they thought you needed to work on?	**○ 0**	**○ 1**	**○ 2**	**○ 3**	**○ 4**
Did your parents tell you how they thought you could improve your technique?	**○ 0**	**○ 1**	**○ 2**	**○ 3**	**○ 4**

After a poor performance, did your parents point out what they thought you did badly?	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
Before a game, did your parents tell you what things you needed to work on to do well?	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
Before a game, did your parents tell you how to perform?	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
Did your parents yell and cheer during a game?	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
During practice, did your parents tell or signal what you should do?	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
Did your parents push you to practice or train harder?	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
Did your parents get upset with you if they thought your performance was not going as well as it should be?	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
After a game, did your parents tell you that you didn't try hard enough?	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
Even after a poor performance, did your parents praise you for the good things you did?	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
After a game, did your parents praise you for trying hard?	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**

Did your parents show they understood how you were feeling about your performance?	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
After a championship game, did your parents praise you for where you placed?	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
Did your parents take an active role in running your team?	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
Did your parents volunteer to help at games as officials, scorekeepers, volunteers, etc?	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
Did your parents discuss your progress with your coach?	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
Did your parents encourage you to talk to them about any problems or worries you may have had about your performance?	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
Did your parents change mealtimes so that you could practice and go to games?	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**

You have been ranking how often your parents showed certain behaviors. Please answer the following questions about how much you liked your parents' behaviors.

	Did Not Like At All				Liked Very Much
After a sporting event, your parents told you what they thought you needed to work on.	○ 0	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4
Your parents told you how they thought you could improve your technique.	○ 0	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4
After a poor performance, your parents pointed out what they thought you did badly.	○ 0	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4
Before a game, your parents told you what things you needed to work on to do well.	○ 0	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4
Before a game, your parents told you how to perform.	○ 0	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4
Your parents yelled and cheered during a game.	○ 0	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4
During practice, your parents told or signaled what you should do.	○ 0	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4
Your parents pushed you to practice or train harder.	○ 0	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4

Your parents got upset with you if they thought your performance was not going as well as it should have.	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
After a game, your parents told you that you didn't try hard enough.	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
Even after a poor performance, your parents praised you for the good things you did.	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
After a game, your parents praised you for trying hard.	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
Your parents showed they understood how you were feeling about your performance.	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
After a championship game, your parents praised you for where you placed.	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
Your parents took an active role in running your team.	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
Your parents volunteered to help at games as officials, scorekeepers, volunteers, etc.	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**
Your parents discussed your progress with your coach.	**○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4**

Your parents encouraged you to talk to them about any problems or worries you may have had about your performance. ○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4

Your parents changed mealtimes so that you could practice and go to games. ○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4

Please answer the following questions about the opportunities available to you in your hometown.

Besides sports, what other activities were you involved in? Please list as many as you can think of. (Examples: Dance, church youth group, FFA, 4H)

Besides sports, what activities were available to you in your hometown? Please list as many as you can think of. These may or may not be activities than you participated in.

When you were in middle and high school what activities did you enjoy doing most? Please list the top five activities. Please check whether or not you had your parents' support for the activity. Also rank how important the activity was to you.

	Parental Support		Not Important				Very Important
1._____	○ **Yes**	○ **No**	○ **0**	○ **1**	○ **2**	○ **3**	○ **4**
2._____	○ **Yes**	○ **No**	○ **0**	○ **1**	○ **2**	○ **3**	○ **4**
3._____	○ **Yes**	○ **No**	○ **0**	○ **1**	○ **2**	○ **3**	○ **4**
4._____	○ **Yes**	○ **No**	○ **0**	○ **1**	○ **2**	○ **3**	○ **4**
5._____	○ **Yes**	○ **No**	○ **0**	○ **1**	○ **2**	○ **3**	○ **4**