

# THE EFFECTS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT, SUPPORT, AND PRESSURE ON ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION

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## Abstract

*This paper examines the influence of parental attachment, support and pressure on athletic participation. An in depth literature review focuses on why an individual will begin and maintain participation in organized sports. Family customs are seen as a primary reason for a child to take part in athletics. Other factors, including socioeconomic status, personality, and peer influence, affect the decision to continue athletic participation throughout college-aged years. Additionally the quality of the relationship between the parents (both mother and father) may influence the child's feelings about sports participation and is an understudied area of research. The importance of understanding why college age students continue or quit athletics is evident.*

Athletic competition is a strong traditional element of today's American society (Smith & Smoll, 2014). Participation in sports and athletics heavily contributes to a child's overall activity level (Timperio et al., 2013). An environment that involves athletics provides a positive space for attaining desired goals, such as fostering relationships, confidence, self-esteem, and health (Smith & Smoll, 2014). Thus, it is important that satisfaction with sports is developed amongst adolescents and children, especially with the declining rates of exercise among adults (McCarthy, Jones & Clark-Carter, 2008). Sixty million youth participate in sports between the ages of 6 to 18 (Smith & Smoll, 2014). However, there is an immense decline in participation during high school. At that point, only 7.5 million students participate in high school athletics (Smith & Smoll, 2014).

Research has shown that a child's family has a significant impact on the decision to participate in sports (Timperio et al., 2013; Toftegaard-Stockel, Nielsen, Ibsen, & Anderson, 2011; Wheeler, 2012). Family customs may be a principal reason a child takes part in athletics (Wheeler, 2012). Additionally, involvement in athletics can be less likely if one or two of the parents are unemployed (Toftegaard-Stockel et al., 2011). Other factors including race, socioeconomic status (SES), religion, and gender may also affect membership in athletics (Schmalz, Kerstetter & Anderson, 2008).

The present literature review attempts to understand how parents can play a positive or negative role in the decision to begin and maintain athletic participation throughout emerging adulthood. This study looks at what constitutes healthy support and pressure. Furthermore, parental attachment and parenting style are discussed; specifically which styles promote a continuation of athletic participation. Due to the overwhelming focus on a mother's relationship with her child in the current literature, this review pays special attention to the father's role in athletics. The different levels of support and pressure regarding athletic participation from the mother and father are examined. This paper proposes that both

the mother's and father's support and pressure greatly influence their children's participation in athletics and their decision to continue athletics beyond high school.

### **The Beginning of Athletic Participation**

Athletic customs and traditions are passed on through the child's family (Wheeler, 2012). A family has the capability of influencing a child in their decision-making concerning participation in sports. The family plays a major role in enhancing the amount of physical activity of the child (Ericksson, Nordqvist, & Rasmussen, 2008). Initially, athletic participants are encouraged to try a variety of sports to find out if they enjoy them or if they have any skill (Keegan, Spray, Harwood, & Lavalley, 2010). Adolescents take part in sports more often if they identify both of their parents as being active in sports or exercise (Ericksson, 2008; Toftegaard-Stockel et al., 2011). Financial and emotional support, parental involvement, and equipment availability are positively correlated with greater than thirty minutes per week of athletic participation as well (Timperio et al., 2013).

Socioeconomic status, demographics, and social pressure significantly predict motivation for adolescent sports involvement (Toftegaard-Stockel et al., 2011). For example, sports participation is shown to have a connection with both parent's employment status (Toftegaard-Stockel et al., 2011). If the mother and father are unemployed, male and female children are less likely to participate in any form of athletic participation (Toftegaard-Stockel et al., 2011). This is likely due to the available finances of the parents. If they do not have extra money to buy adequate groceries, then it is apparent they would not be able to support their children in playing an organized team sport. In families from a low socioeconomic status, parents understand the importance and positive gain that their children receive from participating in athletics. However, there are still financial barriers that restrict their children's continued involvement in organized sports (Holt, Kingsley, Tink, & Scherer, 2011). If a child lives with both parents (and thus has more resources and time), they are more likely to have a higher level of physical activity within the household (Ericksson et al., 2008).

In the United States, women are seen as having equal liberties and status as men, which allows for a variety of female friendly sports. However, Toftegaard-Stockel and colleagues (2011) report that females are half as likely to participate in sports, when compared to males. Women's participation in sports did not begin to receive attention until Title IX was supported in the 1970s (Pickett, Dawkins, & Braddock, 2012). Grappendorf (2013) comments there is still work that needs to be done and progress that needs to be made in regards to Title IX. Although this law prohibits discrimination based on gender, especially in regards to athletics, it does not address the considerable social bias that still exists today between males and females. Along with today's social stereotypes, scholarship dispersal is another area that needs to be restructured and enhanced.

Participation in sports occurs at younger ages and more often in boys (Toftegaard-Stockel et al., 2011). Even though girls have the same opportunities, they are more likely to participate in individual activities. This includes areas such as dance and gymnastics as opposed to organized team sports such as basketball, soccer, and lacrosse. When females do take part in an organized team sport, their forms of the sport are rarely perceived as exciting or intense as the male sport (Allen, 2003). Whether male or female, friends and peers are likely to influence athletic participation.

Social relationships are shown to have an influence on adolescents' interest in participation in athletics as well (Allen, 2003). If an individual's group of friends is involved with sports, and they see athletics as a way to connect with one another, they are more likely to participate. Adolescents have a tendency to feel accomplished when there is a connection with their team, they improve their skills, and

they receive positive attention from the coach and the other players (Allen, 2003). Athletes prefer that their parents support not only them, but their teammates as well (Knight, Neely & Holt, 2010).

Adult figures, role models, the media, and even school situations are also influential social factors, which can impact athletic participation either positively or negatively. If a child or adolescent's idol is a well-known basketball player, they are going to want to be exactly like them, especially in the way they act and dress. On the other hand, if their role model does not condone exercise or athletics, then their focus would not be on participating in an area that simply does not appeal to them. These social factors provide another reason why an individual may begin and also maintain interest in team sports (Allen, 2003).

### **Maintaining Athletic Participation**

Once athletic participation has begun, an individual generally decides upon one or two sports to focus on, learn about, and specialize in. There are three outcomes at this stage that can occur: they can develop into elite athletes, stay at a fun and recreational level, or stop participating altogether (Keegan et al., 2010). After individuals begin participating in sports, it soon becomes a personal decision as to whether or not to continue. Nonetheless, parental influence, socioeconomic status, and social groups all can influence an individual's identity formation and decision to maintain athletic participation (Ackerman, 2013). Family is shown to affect when a child starts sports, and overall family activity can also be a major support system for an individual (Timperio et al., 2013). Mothers and fathers who provide athletic goals for their children help create a sense of achievement for the child (Wheeler, 2012). Parents may continue communicating these goals through their behaviors towards winning, attitude, and competence (Knight et al., 2011). Parents who utilize a specific plan help the child to accomplish such goals. These goals have a tendency to come from the parent's personal activity histories (Wheeler, 2012). For example, some parents want to give their children opportunities and experiences they never had themselves, while others want to teach their children experiences they have also participated in from the past (Wheeler, 2012). Overall, a parent's knowledge has a tendency to affect another family's behaviors and beliefs (Wheeler, 2012). The mother and father also have the ability to present verbal and non-verbal feedback during any competitive event (Knight et al., 2011). This could allow for both negative and positive consequences for their child's feelings regarding athletic participation. For example, constructive feedback from either the mother or father has been perceived as eliciting a positive response from the child (Keegan, et al., 2010). In other words, if the parents tried to help their child improve in one area, this would be more positive than just telling them what they did wrong.

Along with parents, friends have a significant influence on adolescents. Research has shown there are numerous social causes for participating in athletics, particularly the desire to be part of a team or simply to be on a team with close friends (Allen, 2003). On the other hand, it is shown that some children might not continue with athletics due to fear of being stigmatized based on stereotypes stemming from sports. An example of this might be a male who enjoys participating in activities deemed to be more feminine as opposed to masculine. Five sports were shown to be gender specific; cheerleading, ballet, dancing, football, and wrestling (Schmalz et al., 2008). Currently, there are so few boys participating in gender specific activities, such as dance, that there is limited data regarding the effects of a negative stigma. However, this also shows that a gender stigma still exists in today's society because even still, men stick with masculine athletics while women chose to participate in more feminine activities (Schmalz et al., 2008).

When individuals are happy with their sport, it should be obvious they would choose to continue on with the sport of choice throughout emerging adulthood. Participating in individual versus team sports may make a difference in this enjoyment. With team sports, relationships with peers, pleasure regarding competition, optimistic parental involvement, and overall enjoyment are all considered positive aspects of team involvement (McCarthy et al., 2008). More seasoned youth have a tendency to understand and therefore ultimately enjoy the competitive aspect of athletics (McCarthy et al., 2008). Younger children cannot fully comprehend competition or success simply because they are too young and inexperienced; instead they play because it appears to be a fun activity (McCarthy et al., 2008).

### **Parental Support and Athletic Participation**

Both mothers and fathers play a crucial role in the upbringing, growth, and development of their child (Lowenstein, 2010). Parental involvement, specifically how much pressure and support they provide their children, has a strong relationship with whether or not children maintain their athletic participation. Appropriate and positive parental behaviors include support, praise, and understanding (Knight et al., 2011). For example, maternal support by itself has positively predicted the level of athletic participation as well as the positive emotional reactions by children (Anderson, Funk, Elliott, & Smith, 2003; Kanters, Bocarro & Casper, 2008). Females as well as males have felt similar levels of support from mothers and fathers (Leff & Hoyle, 1995). Furthermore, individuals who participate in athletics have perceived medium to strong parental pressure, especially coming from fathers (Hellstedt, 1990).

Both mothers and fathers have a tendency to underestimate the level of pressure they enforce on their children, and have different ideas on what constitutes as pressure or support (Kanters et al., 2008). Inappropriate parental behaviors, whether intentionally or not, include an overemphasis on winning and criticizing all accomplishments (Knight et al., 2011). Another study shows parental demands can have varying consequences depending on the athletic setting (O'Rourke, Smith, Smoll & Cumming, 2011). The "mastery climate" is when the individual is focused on their enjoyment, effort, and improvement (O'Rourke et al., 2011). Mistakes are not punished in this climate but instead they are seen as a way to learn and improve, this is self-orientated and not based on social judgment (O'Rourke et al., 2011). This goal-setting environment has been associated with positive motivational results such as higher levels of encouragement, enjoyment, and support (Keegan et al., 2010). In an "ego climate", the individual's success is compared to their outperformance of others, and mistakes are seen as unacceptable and worthy of punishment (O'Rourke et al., 2011). In comparison with one another, a "mastery climate" is related to more positive mental, emotional, and physical outcomes (O'Rourke et al., 2011). This climate is shown to effectively reduce anxiety the greatest when parental pressure is low (O'Rourke et al., 2011). This is important because performance anxiety is shown to have harmful consequences such as negative emotional effects, decreased satisfaction, susceptibility to injury, and lower motivation (Smith & Smoll, 2014).

Before the competition, athletes want both of their parents to support them by helping them mentally and physically prepare for competition (Knight et al., 2011). For example, the mother or father could comment on something positive in order to help their child relax before the game begins. During the game, athletes mentioned wanting their parents to encourage the whole team, focus on their effort as opposed to whether they won or lost, interact with other athletes positively, and control their extreme emotions whether they were positive or negative (Knight et al., 2011). After the game has come to an end, mothers and fathers should support their children by giving positive and realistic comments (Knight et al., 2011). This includes being honest and supportive while not outright lying about their performance.

### **Parental Pressure and Athletic Participation**

Parental pressure can have both positive and negative effects on athletes of all ages, especially regarding sports anxiety (O'Rourke et al., 2011). Adolescents who believed both of their parents had high expectations were shown to have higher confidence levels (Collins & Barber, 2005). However, high pressure is associated with negative emotional responses from the child (Hellstedt, 1990). This excessive pressure can produce a fear of failure and anxiety (Knight et al., 2011). Negative parental pressure can lead to a more threatening and therefore more anxiety-producing environment (O'Rourke et al., 2011). Parental pressure from the mother or father, even during a low level of competition has led to elevated levels of nervousness (O'Rourke et al., 2011). During high-pressure situations, adolescents have experienced increased anxiety during the whole season of athletics, even in other situations, such as school (O'Rourke et al., 2011). In connection with competitions, supporting parents are advised to not draw attention to the child due to embarrassment, to not coach the team, and to not argue with the officials (Knight et al., 2011).

On the other hand, other researchers have demonstrated positive emotional responses from the participants among low-pressure situations (Hellstedt, 1990). Instead of providing technical advice towards the game, it was shown that children prefer their parents to comment on their effort, provide practical advice, respect the rules of the game, and maintain equality between the verbal and nonverbal behaviors (Knight et al., 2011). High parental pressure can be seen as reducing anxiety as long as maximum effort and self-improvement are the areas being focused on and not ego and comparison to others (O'Rourke et al., 2011).

During adolescence, both parents should show an interest in their teenagers' athletic participation. It is no surprise that children primarily look towards their parents for their responses and eventually they learn to understand their parents' behaviors (Knight et al., 2011). For females, they find emotional fulfillment when both of their parents are involved in their athletics in a positive manner (Knight et al., 2011). Understanding both parental support and pressure is fundamental in knowing how to best encourage extracurricular participation (Anderson et al., 2003). Support and pressure are common predictors of a child's emotional response to athletics (Anderson et al., 2003; Lagace-Seguin & Case, 2010). It is possible that children prefer different types of pressure and support depending on the time periods of before, during, and after the game (Knight et al., 2011). If the parents know what the athlete would prefer before, during, and after the game, their positive emotions and reactions towards the game will be greatly enhanced (Knight et al., 2010).

If both parents and the child agree on the sport, a positive emotional outcome will most likely to occur, which increases the child's happiness, comfort, and general academic competence (Lagace-Seguin & Case, 2010; Kanters et al., 2008). More specifically, even a sense of perceived support and less pressure by both mothers and fathers are connected with higher overall athletic enjoyment and greater self-esteem (Leff & Hoyle, 1995). Females believe support occurs from both mother and father while males are judged as feeling more total pressure from their fathers (Leff & Hoyle, 1995). Peers tend to influence an individual through competition, collaboration, communication, and relationships (Keegan et al., 2010). Men tend to feel higher levels of competition between one another to be the best, causing more emotional pressure coming from friends. In one study when compared to girls, boys performed more vigorous and moderate physical activity (Ericksson et al., 2008). In a sense, boys were expected to be more involved with their sport and maintain a higher level of competency and expertise throughout the years (Ericksson et al., 2008).

Levels of fun and enjoyment were imperative variables in determining who maintains athletic participation over time (Atkins, Johnson, Force, & Petrie, 2013). Knight and colleagues (2010) have



proposed that female athletes want their parents to most often focus on effort and positive encouragement instead of what the outcome happened to be. A female's mother or father was the principal influence on their positive emotional and mental experiences in regards to athletic participation (Atkins et al., 2013). Both male and female athletes commented that unconditional praise from both of their parents before and after the game had a positive impact on their motivation levels (Keegan et al., 2010). If the athlete and both of their parents are close, the mother and father are going to be proud of how well their child does, regardless of the outcome, and the child will be pleased their parents were there to support them. The encouraging support the athlete feels from their parents helps to establish a positive attachment between parent and child.

### **Parental Attachment and Athletic Participation**

The relationship with the mother and father in terms of attachment may also influence the child's participation in athletics. John Bowlby theorized that newborn infants have an inborn capacity for forming a strong relationship and bond with their primary caregiver, which has been termed attachment (Reuther, 2013). This attachment is generally seen as occurring between the infant and the mother. This intense bond becomes imperative to the continuous development of the child (Dykas & Cassidy, 2011; Lopez, Siffert, Thorne, Schoenecker, Castleberry, & Chaliman, 2013; Reuther, 2013). Ainsworth's first empirically supported study on infant-mother attachment became a key feature in defining the different types of attachment style (Bretherton, 1992).

### ***Different Styles of Attachment***

Attachment theory asserts every human being has an internal and personal need for support, belonging, and protection (Lopez et al., 2013; Reuther, 2013). If such needs remain unmet in the beginning, the individual subsequently internalizes the difficult experience and this eventually affects future self-esteem (Lopez, et al., 2013). This may, in turn, hinder the progression of maturity and autonomy throughout adulthood (Lopez et al., 2013). The family plays the greatest role in the development of attachment for the child. However, the mother is the most studied individual that can positively or negatively affect a child. There are four separate attachment styles; secure, avoidant, ambivalent, and disorganized. All of these have defining characteristics that potentially could affect an individual's personality and lifestyle.

Securely attached infants have a positively based attachment outlook (Dykas & Cassidy, 1992). This means the child approaches situations in a constructive and optimistic way; they do not act apprehensively or protectively. The child is easily calmed by the caretaker, most often the mother, and does not demonstrate difficult behavioral patterns. A major keyword when discussing securely attached individuals would be trust. Infants show a sense of safety and calmness, even when left alone (Dykas & Cassidy, 1992). On the other hand, avoidant infants do not believe they can trust any person. Their emotions are confusing, showing unhappiness when the caregiver leaves but not showing happiness when they return. In fact, they tend to not even acknowledge the individual when they return to the infant. The child has learned they cannot rely on anyone else for security beside themselves (Dykas & Cassidy, 1992).

Infants labeled as ambivalent, are simply just that, exceedingly unsure and hesitant about anything that comes their way. These children never appear to be happy and content; instead they show feelings of misery and difficulty. This stems from inconsistent comfort by the mother, which could be due to the mother not being stable and secure herself (Dykas & Cassidy, 1992). Disorganized infants show no common patterns of reactions as well as fluctuating emotional responses towards the caretakers. The

child does in fact demonstrate a sense of want and need from the parent. However, they are generally shown to be frightened and anxious of the caregiver (Dykas & Cassidy, 1992).

### ***Father attachment***

In Bowlby's original attachment theory there was no mention of the father as being the primary attachment figure for the child (Bretherton, 2010). However, fathers were seen as essential to the development of attachment (Newland & Coyl, 2010). The motherly bond with the infant has been historically studied but the father's role in parenting has recently been highlighted. Attachment with the father has the capability of constructively improving the emotional and behavioral development of the child (Lowenstein, 2010). The father's role as an attachment figure has the potential to be harmonizing and balancing with the attachment of the mother and child (Bretherton, 2010).

### **Father Attachment and Athletics**

More recently, fathers have taken on the role of parenting and housework, instead of primarily making an income (Coakley, 2006). In this respect, fathers can choose to assist in youth athletics by being a coach, an administrator, or an official. Research mentions that fathers tend to spend more time with their sons and are more involved than with their daughters (Coakley, 2006). When a child is given credit as being an extraordinary athlete, the father will more likely be the parent who makes the determination about training and competition (Coakley, 2006). If the father is involved with their children, he will select the team and coach, as well as plan strategies and help select proper equipment (Coakley, 2006). Added to this, fathers generally fund the athletics, so if his child is successful then he is seen as a respectable and supportive father because he has allowed his child the ability to succeed by paying for the experiences.

Research suggests girls who are encouraged to partake in competitive athletics by their securely attached fathers have a higher level of self-esteem (Kellar-De Mers, 2001). Today, fathers spend more time with their daughters in athletics because there are a greater number of athletic opportunities available (Coakley, 2006). Girls, who compete in sports and are securely attached with their fathers, also maintain friendly relations with others (Kellar-De Mers, 2001). In addition, these girls overall have higher levels of self-confidence and self-esteem (Kellar-De Mers, 2001). Secure attachments with fathers appear to have a positive outcome for daughters and competitive athletics.

### **Parenting Styles and Athletic Participation**

In addition to the quality of the relationship between the parent and child (i.e. attachment) research suggests certain parenting styles may predict an adolescent's diet, physical activity, and weight (Wen & Hui, 2012). Differing parenting styles have also been shown to impact an adolescent's outlook on academic achievement (Ishak, Low & Lau, 2012). Not only can the parents influence the adolescent, but also the adolescent is capable of changing the style of their parents (Kerr, Stattin & Ozdemir, 2012). A mother or father simply need to provide positive, unconditional, and collaborative support in order to produce a positive response (Keegan et al, 2010).

Baumrind indicates that even though all parents have their own reasons for parenting a certain way, generally, there are three major categories, which separate the diverse actions and reactions of the parents. Mothers and fathers might have differing parenting styles so it is deemed essential for the parents to agreeably blend the different styles together (Baumrind, 1991). The three types of parenting styles are authoritative, authoritarian, and neglectful/ permissive.

### ***Description of Three Styles***

Authoritative is portrayed as the parenting style most individuals should strive to achieve. This style is described as the most democratic and supportive (Baumrind, 1991). These mothers and fathers have the maturity and capability of establishing rules for their child to follow. If the child falls short of these specific guidelines, the parent would not choose to punish the child, but instead would be inclined to forgive them (Baumrind, 1991). Support is demonstrated when the parent listens and shows an interest in the sport, as well as allows for the child to make decisions as often as the parents does (Keegan et al, 2010). Authoritative mothers and fathers are responsive to their child when needs arise as well as prepared to listen when concerns come about (Baumrind, 1991). Feelings of invasion or limitation from their parents are low, however the parental standards are clear (Baumrind, 1991). This is a helpful, comforting, and collaborative approach to parenting, which is why this is seen as such a successful method.

Authoritarian parenting is much stricter and certainly does not have the same level of democracy as authoritative parenting. These parents have incredibly strict procedures and if the child does not meet these standards, the result tends to be a form of direct punishment (Baumrind, 1991). Commonly, there is no explanation from the parents about the basis of the rules; they are seen as rules 'just because' (Baumrind, 1991). Controls occur when the mother and father make autocratic decisions, and force an immense amount of control and threat onto their child (Keegan et al, 2010). The parents do not seem to be approachable according to their child, nor do they help when their child needs something (Baumrind, 1991). In other words, authoritative parents assume all guidelines should precisely be followed and an explanation should not be necessary.

Neglectful and permissive parenting styles are at opposing ends of the spectrum. The permissive parents are referred to as being too lenient and too generous to their child (Baumrind, 1991). They provide little rules and principles and infrequently discipline their child (Baumrind, 1991). Confrontation is entirely avoided and in turn the parent may come across as being more of a friend than a supportive adult (Baumrind, 1991). On the other end, neglectful parents are entirely disconnected from their child's life. Nevertheless, the mother or father still manages to carry out the basic necessities for the child (Baumrind, 1991). There is low communication, minimal awareness, and even fewer demands (Baumrind, 1991). Both neglectful and permissive parenting styles are not ideal and may consequently lead to a troubled child.

### **Parenting Styles and Athletic Participation**

The most desirable relationship between a mother or father and their child appears to be authoritative (Keshavarz & Baharudin, 2013). Both the parent and the athlete have a say in decisions, and there is never any threatening or angry comments that develop. If an athlete positively connects with both of their parents, they will be happier and want to perform better to show their parents their skills (Keegan et al., 2010). With any positive remarks from the parents, the athlete will want to further participate in sports in order to make their family proud and have something to connect over. The authoritative parents are involved in the competitions, the finances, and the emotional support from the sidelines (Keegan et al., 2010). There is a sense of pride from children when their parents are always present, willing to give financially, and positively encouraging (Keegan et al., 2010). Nonetheless, most if not all research focuses on mother; the next step is to more closely examine the father.



### **Father Parenting Style and Athletic Participation**

The father has a critical influence on the child's wellbeing. Sport participation is a common area of bond between fathers and their children. The time fathers spend with their children has increased only slightly over the past 30 years (Coakley, 2006). Sports have created a path for them to be involved with their children without affecting their dominant gender beliefs (Coakley, 2006). Fathers are able to organize and maintain control of sports, while in most other areas such as schooling and childcare, they may feel more out of place (Coakley, 2006). The father's authoritative style leads to lower levels of depression and antisocial behavior in their children (Karre & Mounts, 2012). Adolescents brought up in an authoritative household have been shown to demonstrate behaviors such as self-control, being creative, as well as engaging in self-instruction (Keshavarz & Baharudin, 2013). Sports involvement and motivation are connected with positive attachment styles and parenting styles of the father (Bildén, 2012; Kellar-De Mers, 2001). A father can aid in the success of their son by discussing with their coaches, scouting opponents, giving advice, and evaluate the games that are played (Coakley, 2006).

### **Concluding remarks**

This literature review investigated factors that influence athletic participation, paying special attention to the parents' role. The parents' own history with athletics, their financial stability, and the time they can devote to bringing their child to practice and games all impact whether or not a child initiates involvement with athletics (Timperio, et al., 2013; Toftegaard Stockel et al., 2011; Wheeler, 2012). As the child grows older, other factors come into play such as their interest in the game, their ability level and their friends' involvement in and perception of the sport (Ackerman, 2013; Allen, 2003). Gender also influences the choice of sport. Overall, girls are much less likely to continue with athletics (Toftegaard Stockel et al., 2011). However, mothers and fathers can continue to influence how an adolescent feels about a sport through the amount of pressure and/or support they provide (Coakley, 2006; Timperio et al., 2013; Wheeler, 2012). Low levels of parental pressure have a positive effect on athletes (Hellstedt, 1990), while high levels of parental support establish positive self-esteem (Leff & Hoyle, 1995).

An understudied area of interest is how the quality of parental attachment and parenting style influences the child's athletic involvement. It appears that secure attachment with the father positively impacts the daughter's involvement in athletics (Kellar-De Mers, 2001). More research is needed on the effects a father has as a primary caregiver. Additionally, an authoritative parenting style might also encourage children and adolescents to continue their involvement with sports (Keshavarz & Baharudin, 2013). McArdle (2004) shows how setting goals can encourage constructive accomplishment.

Both mothers and fathers play a fundamental role in the education, growth, and upbringing of their children (Lowenstein, 2010). A sport is an activity in which achievement is identifiable and can easily be measured (Coakley, 2006). Positive parental involvement affects the child's overall welfare and self-value (Lagace-Seguin & Case, 2010). Authoritative parenting style is what both mothers and fathers should attempt to accomplish. This is the most equal, encouraging, and reassuring of the styles (Baumrind, 1991). These parents will establish rules to follow and will accommodate any needs that might arise after listening to concerns (Baumrind, 1991). Parents should strive to provide reinforcement, support, encouragement, understanding, and minimal negative pressure when influencing children to participate in athletics. ■

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