Parental Influence on the Academic and Athletic Behaviors of Collegiate Student-Athletes

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Megan Parietti, M.E.

Graduate Program in Kinesiology

The Ohio State University

2015

Dissertation Committee:

Donna Pastore, Advisor

Sarah Schoppe-Sullivan

Sue Sutherland
Copyright by
Megan Lacy Parietti
2015
Abstract

The tie between athletics and academics has grown strong at the collegiate level in the United States, and debate has arisen as to whether this relationship is a good one (Linver et al., 2009; Nusbaum, 2014). Student-athletes make up a unique population because their sport requirements are unlike what the average student must face (Gayles, 2009; Jolly, 2008). They also face conflicting roles of being a student or an athlete (Comeaux, 2010). The way they learn to deal with this conflict may have been influenced by how their parents raised them, and continue to be involved in their lives. Research has shown that parents often have an influence over their child’s athletic and academic behaviors, and it continues as they go to college (Baumrind, 2013; Stewart, 2008). However, little research has examined how parents influence collegiate student-athletes. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine how parents influence their children’s athletic and academic behaviors once that child is a collegiate student-athlete.

This dissertation utilized qualitative methods. The participants in this study included eight student-athletes: three football, two baseball, and three softball. Five academic advisors for athletics who worked with the same teams were also included. Each participant was asked to partake in two in-person
interviews and complete a two-week journal. Thematic analyses were performed on the interview transcripts and journal entries. The themes found in this study were: interactions with parents; parental influence; parental influence factors; parental involvement; and pressure, support, and parenting styles. Triangulation, member checks, thick description, and negative case analysis were all used to provide validity and credibility to this dissertation.

The major findings of this study followed the themes that were discovered. It was found that both the student-athletes and the academic advisors had frequent interactions with parents. The participants felt parents were very influential in regards to the athletic and academic behaviors of the student-athletes through how they raised their children and were currently involved in their lives. Parental influence was impacted by factors that included: age of child, parent gender, child gender, sport, marital status of parents, the education level of parents, and the parent’s aspirations for their child. The participants explained parents were very involved in their child’s life, and the advisors shared that sometimes the parents were overinvolved. The participants felt that as a whole parents were very supportive. The student-athletes thought their parents rarely utilized pressuring techniques. For the most part, the student-athletes indicated that their parents used the authoritative parenting style, and that tied to their feelings of being supported by their parents.

Overall, the findings in the current study supported and added to the previous research on how parents influence their collegiate student-athlete
children. There are practical implications from this study for those who work with student-athletes, student-athletes, and their parents. Advisors and coaches can utilize the knowledge of how parents influence their children during the recruiting process and when they work with student-athletes. Student-athletes and parents can benefit from better understanding their relationship.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Justin for his patience and Olivia for her smiles
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my advisor, Donna Pastore, for all her assistance as I worked through the many stages of this dissertation. Without her guidance, I would not have made it through. I also would like to thank Sue Sutherland for making sure my methods were sound, and Sarah Schoppe-Sullivan for her insights into parenting. Additionally, I would like to thank the faculty at The Ohio State University for adding to my knowledge base so that this dissertation could be possible.
Vita

2007 ........................................... B.S. Education, Bowling Green State University
2007 to 2009 .............................. Graduate Teaching Assistant, Bowling Green
                       State University
2008 to 2009 .............................. Student-Athlete Support Services Intern,
                       Bowling Green State University
2009 ........................................... M.S. Education, Bowling Green State University
2009 to 2010 .............................. Student-Athlete Support Services Intern,
                       University of Alabama at Birmingham
2011 to present ............................ Graduate Teaching Associate, Department of
                       Human Sciences, The Ohio State University

Publications

Parietti, M, Weight, E, & Spencer, N. (2013) The NBA age-limit rule and
academics in Division I men's basketball. International Journal of Sport
Management, 14, 16-42.

Research in Coaching and Athletics Annual, 39(2), 113-134.
Fields of Study

Major Field: Kinesiology
Table of Contents

Abstract ....................................................................................................................................... ii
Dedication ................................................................................................................................. v
Acknowledgments ..................................................................................................................... vi
Vita ............................................................................................................................................... vii
List of Tables ............................................................................................................................... x
Chapter 1: Introduction ............................................................................................................. 1
Chapter 2: Literature Review ................................................................................................. 11
Chapter 3: Methods .................................................................................................................. 51
Chapter 4: Findings .................................................................................................................. 71
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions ................................................................................. 115
References ................................................................................................................................. 155
Appendix A: SASSO Support Letter ...................................................................................... 174
Appendix B: Contact Letters ................................................................................................. 175
Appendix C: Informed Consent ............................................................................................... 178
Appendix D: Demographic Surveys ......................................................................................... 181
Appendix E: Interview Guides ................................................................................................ 184
Appendix F: Journal Prompts ................................................................................................ 186
List of Tables

Table 1. Demographic information about Student-Athletes .........................59
Table 2. Demographic information about Academic Advisors .....................60
Table 3. Themes and sub-themes ..................................................................67
Table 4. Parents’ Preference of Student or Athlete .....................................85
Table 5. Parents’ Education Levels ..............................................................93
Table 6. Percent of Communication about Academics or Athletics .............96
Table 7. Student-Athlete’s Perception of Parenting Style ..........................112
Chapter 1: Introduction

With the new technological age the way individuals interact has changed dramatically. Smart phones, tablets, and computers now give people the option to call, text, or connect through other medias such as FaceTime, Skype, Twitter or Facebook. One relationship that has been impacted greatly through this technological revolution has been that of parents and their college-aged children (Harper, Sax, & Wolf, 2012). Researchers have discovered that in the past 15 to 20 years parents have become increasingly more involved in the lives of their college-aged children (Cullaty, 2011).

Ten years ago, when I was an undergraduate student, my friends and I might talk to our parent(s) once a week. Now students that I interact with share that they have contact with their parent(s) almost every day, if not multiple times a day. Givertz and Segrin (2014) found that half of their college student participants were in contact with their parents at least once a day. This change has impacted how parents and their college-aged children interact and how parents influence their children who have left home.

One relationship that researchers have not examined in the changing technological landscape is that of collegiate student-athletes and their parents. Considering the fact that student-athletes are unique compared to the general student body, and they are also often the face of the university, this is a population that needs to be examined. It is important for anyone who works with this populations, such as academic advisors, coaches, faculty
members, and administrators to have a better understanding of how parents are
influencing their children and how they are involved in their offspring’s life. I have
worked with student-athletes who have told me that their parents were still very
important in their lives even in college. I have also discussed with academic advisors for
athletics the fact that parents are becoming more involved in their child’s decision
making processes and helping them deal with problems. I have heard personal anecdotes
of parents calling coaches because their child was not getting enough playing time or
contacting professors because their child did not receive the grade they needed to be
eligible. There are also reports in the popular press of parents that have interfered in their
adult child’s education (Givertz & Segrin, 2014). These stories all give some insight into
why it is so important to gain more understanding into how parents influence their
college student-athlete’s academic and athletic behaviors. This dissertation attempts to
help give some enlightenment on that topic.

Athletics and Academics

Sports have long been tied to academics in the United States. The first
intercollegiate athletic match took place in 1852 (Flowers, 2009). It was a crew event
between Yale and Harvard and it was quickly followed by other such matches (Flowers,
2009). Flowers (2009) explained that by the 1870s intercollegiate athletics had been
established. In more recent time, it has been suggested that sport serves an educational
function and should be linked to education (Flowers, 2009).

It is important to note that what happens in intercollegiate athletics is often
impacted by what happens in professional sports. Also, trends in intercollegiate athletics
tend to trickle down to high school and youth sports. Researchers have discovered information about this trickle-down effect. Coakley (2015) shared that youth sports are becoming increasingly adult organized, and young athletes are being asked to specialize in one sport from a young age. One of the reasons for this is for adults to “help” their children to become collegiate and/or professional athletes. Several popular press writers have also discussed this topic. Kamp (2014) stated that we live in a “professional sports world that clearly trickles down to our youth” (para. 1). Bornstein (2011) argued that youth sports have become more like professional sports by gaining a win-at-all-costs ethos. He explained that aggression, cheating, and poor sportsmanship have all increased in youth sports because of this ethos. It is important to care about what happens within intercollegiate athletics because it impacts what happens at younger levels of sport, where many of the athletes develop their academic and athletic views and habits.

Proponents of sports in schools suggest that participating in athletics is beneficial (Linver et al., 2009). Possible positives for youth, high school, and college athletes include higher academic performance (Fox, Barr-Anderson, Neumark-Sztainer, & Wall, 2010; Gayles, 2009; Rees & Sabia, 2010) and social skills (e.g. teamwork and leadership; Holt, Kingsley, Tink, & Scherer, 2011). Not everyone is as positive about the benefits of sports in schools. Negatives that have been suggested include: higher levels of risky behavior (Linver et al., 2009). It has also been argued that student-athlete graduation rates are inflated. Student-athletes may be encouraged to choose majors, classes, and/or “friendly” professors who can help boost their GPA, even if it may not align with their future career goals (Benjamin, Cauthen, & Donnelly, 2009). Nusbaum (2014) suggested
that “the NCAA inflates graduation rates by comparing student athletes, who are by
definition full-time students, to a broad student body consisting of both full-time and
part-time students” (para. 11). They examine who graduates in six years, and since many
part-time students take longer, the student-athletes look better than the comparison group.
Nusbaum (2014) went on to cite a College Sport Research Institute study that found
men’s and women’s basketball players and football players graduated at a lower rate than
their peers. There are also many cases where athletics have come before academics in
student’s lives. The best example of this is the numerous athletes who have left college
early in order to play their sport professionally.

The NCAA is the largest governing body for athletics. According to the NCAA
website, the association is made up of three divisions: Division I, Division II, and
Division III (“Divisional differences,” n.d.). The largest difference between the divisions
is the offering of scholarships and the number of sports that the program is required to
offer. Division I schools are required to offer the most financial aid, Division III does not
offer any athletic financial aid, and Division II is in the middle. Division I also has to
offer seven sports for both genders, and Division II and Division III have to offer five for
both genders. Division I football programs are further broken down into the Football
Bowl Subdivision (FBS) and Football Championship Subdivision (FCS). FBS programs
must meet an average attendance of 15,000 at each home game, while there is no
attendance requirement for FCS programs.

Student-athletes have unique demands placed upon them that differentiates them
from their peers. Student-athletes have to devote a large amount of time to their sport
between practice, games, team meetings, and other sport related activities (Comeaux, 2010; Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; Gayles & Hu, 2009; Jolly, 2008; Singer, 2008). Student-athletes are also required to attend study tables, tutoring appointments, and class (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). Athletics can also be very physically and emotionally draining on the student-athletes, and many of them are often dealing with some form of injury (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; Denny & Steiner, 2009).

Division I universities need to care about their athletes because they are often the face of the organization. College athletes make up a very small percentage of the student body at a Division I campus, but they are some of the most well-known people on campus (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). What that percentage is varies at different universities. For example, at the University of Texas, Austin, 2% of the student population is a Division I athlete (“University of Texas,” 2013). On the other hand, at Harvard University about 20 percent of the student body participates in intercollegiate sports (“Harvard athletics,” 2014). Division I athletics are in the media on a regular basis, which contributes to the athletes being well-known. In 2010 the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) signed an agreement for $10.8 billion dollar over ten years with media channels to air their Division I men’s basketball tournament (Staurowsky & Abney, 2011). Furthermore, Universities spend a large amount of money on athletics. According to a study by the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics (2013), FBS programs spent on average $104,638 per athlete in 2012. People also attend collegiate sports in large numbers. In 2011, 49.7 million people went to an NCAA football game (Trail & James, 2012). Another way college athletics draw attention is through the
growing social media phenomenon. For example, in 2013, The Ohio State University athletics had 32,793 Twitter followers and 1,440,740 Facebook Fans (“NCAA rankings,” 2013).

When interviewing athletic academic advisors about the men’s basketball players that they worked with (a sport that historically has poor academic rates), Parietti, Weight, and Spencer (2013) repeatedly heard that it was the culture of the sport that led players to focus on their athletics instead of their academics. These advisors mentioned that the student-athletes had been taught these behaviors at a young age. In other words, they were socialized to put more focus on their athletic performance.

Researchers have found that social influence has a great impact on the behavior of individuals (Bank, Slavings, & Biddle, 1990; Beets, Cardinal, & Alderman, 2010; Bhalla & Weiss, 2010). In regards to both academics and athletics, one of the most influential groups is parents (Bank, et al., 1990; Bhalla & Weiss, 2010; Fass & Tubman, 2002; Hitlin, 2006; Lauer, Gould, Roman, & Pierce, 2010; Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Ommundsen, Roberts, Lemyre, & Miller, 2006). Research has shown that social support from others including parents can help students adapt to college and succeed academically (Fass & Tubman, 2002). Fass and Tubman (2002) found that college students who have low levels of attachment to both parents and peers have a more negative sense of self than those students who have higher levels of attachment. Comeaux and Harrison (2011) developed a conceptual model of the academic success of student-athletes, and they suggested that family background was one of the foundational aspects that impacts how successful a student-athlete will be. Comeaux and Harrison explained that, parental
influence could have an impact on how a student-athlete viewed their sport and institution. These views in turn could influence the student-athlete’s behavior and future academic success. The importance of parents as socializing agents shows that it is important to examine how parents impact their child’s athletic and academic behaviors.

**Conceptual Framework**

What follows is a brief overview of the conceptual framework used in this dissertation. It is more fully explained in chapter 2. For the framework I contend that a parent’s pressuring and supporting behaviors, in both athletics and academics, align with Baumrind’s (1966; 2013) dimensions of demandingness and responsiveness that separate the tripartite parenting styles of authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting. Authoritarian parenting is high on demandingness and does not use responsive behaviors (Baumrind, 2013); this means that it would include pressure but not support. Authoritative parenting aligns with both supporting and pressuring behaviors because it uses both demanding and responsive behaviors (Baumrind, 2013). Baumrind (2013) explained that permissive parents are high on responsiveness and low on demandingness. This means that permissive parents would exhibit supportive and not pressuring behaviors.

**Statement of Problem**

What this introduction has shown is that it is important to study student-athletes and their parents in order to gain a better understanding of the experiences of college athletes and to better understand their athletic and academic behaviors. Previous research on parental influence typically focuses on younger children and teens (Abar & Turrisi,
2008; Agliata & Renk, 2008). Also, through reviewing much of the relevant literature for this dissertation, it was found that research tends to focus on academic influence or athletic influence with overlap being very rare. Little research has examined how parents influence their college student-athlete’s athletic and academic performances. This dissertation attempts to fill that gap in the literature.

**Purpose of Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine how parents influence their children’s athletic and academic behaviors once that child is a college student-athlete. Specifically, this dissertation addresses these research questions: What role do parents play in relationship to their college-aged child’s athletic and academic behaviors? How do fathers differ from mothers in what they emphasize (if the student-athlete has both)? In what ways do parents balance their emphasis on athletics and academics? How involved are parents in the lives of their collegiate student-athletes, and what are the outcomes of that involvement? In what ways do parents of college student-athletes use pressuring and supporting behaviors and to what outcomes? In what way do pressuring and supporting behaviors relate to the parenting style the student-athlete perceives their parents to have? What contextual factors have an impact on the relationship between parents and student-athlete behaviors?

This information can help those who work with student-athletes at any level. Ting (2009) suggested that people who work with student-athletes need to help them develop goals for their education. Having long-term goals was tied to positive academic performance (Ting, 2009). This study could help to give a more complete view of the
influence that parents still have. This information could be used to work with both parents and their children to assist the student-athlete with their collegiate years. Coaches, academic advisors, administrators, and other personnel can all use this information to better work with these populations. Also, because of the trickle-down effect, what is learned about how parents influence their college aged children can help to inform individuals that work with younger student-athletes. They can help prepare parents and children for what to expect when college begins.

**Definition of Terms**

The following are terms and their conceptual definitions as used in this dissertation:

1. **Socialization**- An adult initiated process for how an infant becomes an accepted member of society and forms relationships with others (Anderson & Thomas, 2013; Baumrind, 2013; Harris, 1995; Raj & Raval, 2013)

2. **Pressure**- when the influence is focused on accomplishments and forcing a child to perform a behavior (Turman, 2007)

3. **Support**- tangible (direct) and intangible (indirect) methods of assisting behaviors that focuses on encouragement (Abar & Turrisi, 2008; Turman, 2007)

4. **Parental involvement**- anytime a parent is a part of their child’s life including the provision of tangible and intangible resources (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2013; Ratelle, Larose, Guay, & Senécal, 2005)
5. Overinvolvement- parents who are in frequent contact with their child (at least once a day), provide frequent support to their children (at least once a week), give their child advice and direct their behavior, and occasionally step in to solve issues or make decisions for their child.

6. Authoritarian parenting- focuses on controlling children and forcing them to conform to certain rules of behavior (Baumrind, 1966).

7. Authoritative parenting- directing a child’s behavior using a mixture of warmth and control, and sharing with children the rationale behind decisions (Baumrind, 1966; Steinberg & Silk, 2002).

8. Permissive parenting- when adults focus on satisfying their child’s every impulse and desire and require very little from the child (Baumrind, 1966).

**Overview of remaining chapters**

The rest of this dissertation covers the topic of parental influence on the athletic and academic behaviors of collegiate student-athletes. Chapter two reviews relevant literature on student-athletes, parental influence on athletics and academics, and the conceptual framework. Chapter three explains the methods used for this study, which are qualitative in nature. Chapter four shares the findings of the study. Chapter five includes the discussion of the results and how they relate to previous studies. Chapter six concludes the dissertation by sharing how the results can impact practitioners and future research.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

As was discussed in the introduction, it is important to study collegiate student-athletes and how they are influenced by their parents. This chapter initially gives an overview of the relationship between athletics and academics. It then discusses the struggle between being a student and being an athlete. Parental influence is covered next including information from previous research on how parents impact academics and athletics. Following an overview of parental influence is a description of different methods of influence, parental involvement, and then the importance of perception. Next, the theoretical background is presented which covers parenting styles and the concepts of pressure and support. Finally, the conceptual framework is introduced which proposes a link between Baumrind’s (1966) tri-partite parenting styles and the concepts of pressure and support.

Athletics and Academics

Since the first intercollegiate athletic event occurred in 1852, sports have grown to be closely tied to universities (Flowers, 2009). Flowers (2009) shared that by the late 1800s university officials saw the value of athletics in bringing students to their campuses. Sports are possibly the largest single way a university can gain public attention, positive or negative. By the early 1900s intercollegiate sports were tied to big money (Flowers, 2009). This has continued to be the case. In 2010, the SEC made over
one billion dollars in athletic receipts, and the Big Ten followed closely with $905 million (Branch, 2011). This money came “from a combination of ticket sales, concession sales, merchandise, licensing fees, and other sources—but the bulk of it comes from television contract” (Branch, 2011, para. 6). Television contracts are a very valuable part of athletic department’s income. Through television deals alone, on a per-year average, each school in the Big 12 made $20 million; the Pac-12, $20.8 million; the SEC, $14.6 million, the Big Ten, $20.7 million; and the ACC, $17.1 million (Dosh, 2013). According to Forbes, the top ten football teams are all worth $80 million dollars or more, with the top school, Texas, having a value of $139 million (Smith, 2013).

There are institutional benefits to having athletics at a university; money is one aspect, and there is also a general belief that there are educational benefits (Flowers, 2009). However, the educational benefit of them has been called into question, starting as early as the 1890s (Ferris, Finster & McDonald, 2004). Much concern has been raised as to the academic achievement of student-athletes and how athletics influences the development of collegiate student-athletes (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). There exists a “dumb-jock” stereotype that implies student-athletes are not as intellectually capable as their non-athlete peers (Feltz, Schneider, Hwang, & Skogsberg, 2013). This stereotype is encouraged by the media, who often share when student-athletes do poorly academically, but are not as quick to share when they do well.

One of the reasons it is important to study intercollegiate athletics is because there appears to be a trickle-down effect to high school and youth sports. Youth sports are becoming increasingly adult organized (Coakley, 2015). This trickle-down effect has
been noted by many popular press writers (Bornstein, 2011; Kamp, 2014). There is a claim that it is obvious that what happens on the professional level trickles down to the intercollegiate level and from there to youth sports (Kamp, 2014). Youth sports are taking on a win-at-all costs belief based upon this trickle-down (Bornstein, 2011). Bornstein (2011) explained that aggression, cheating, and poor sportsmanship have all increased in youth sports because of this win-at-all-costs mentality. Youth are also being asked to specialize on one sport only at increasingly younger ages (Coakley, 2015). The belief is that if they do this they will have a better chance of getting a college scholarship and/or playing professionally. What these young athletes learn about the importance of athletics in relationship to academics is something they carry with them as they go to college. That means what happens at the college level trickles down to the youth level and then is compounded as the youth get older and go to college.

Proponents of athletics have cited many positive outcomes of sport participation. Linver et al. (2009) found that youth development was benefited by sport participation over no participation in any organized activity. They also discovered that a combination of participating in sports and other organized activities was the most beneficial for youth ages 10-18. On average, high schoolers who participate in athletics perform better academically than those that do not (Fox et al, 2010; Rees & Sabia, 2010). Rees and Sabia (2010) found that the more frequently an adolescent participates in sports, the better they do academically. Additionally, they discovered that those who participated frequently in sport (5+ days) were more likely to aspire to go to college. Fox et al. (2010) also found that sport participation was correlated with a higher GPA for males and
females at both the middle school and high school level. At the university level student-athletes as a whole have higher graduation rates than the general student population (Gayles, 2009). Other positive aspects include the gaining of social skills (Holt et al., 2011). Holt et al. (2011) found that low-income children in Canada, perceived that they learned about teamwork and leadership through their athletic participation.

The link between athletics and education is not always a positive one. As Flowers (2009) put it, “at their core, sporting enterprises were structured to compete and produce victories” (p. 357). Their main purpose has never been to help with education. Denault, Poulin, and Pedersen (2009) discovered in a longitudinal study of students from 7-10th grade that the more intensely a child participated in sport the faster their alcohol consumption increased. They also discovered, contrary to other studies, no positive association between participating in sports and academic achievement. At the collegiate level the public has questioned the academic value of athletics. This has followed many cases of academic misconduct. Recent college athletic programs impacted by academic scandals include: Fresno State (2003), Georgia (2003), Auburn (2006), Florida (2008), Memphis (2008), Michigan (2008), Florida State (2009), and Stanford (2011; “Incomplete passes,” 2014). The most recent scandals to come to light have been at a university that was known for making sure student-athletes were students first, Notre Dame (Layden, 2014).

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has attempted to address some of the issues that impact the educational experiences of student-athletes (Gayles, 2009; Gayles & Hu, 2009; Johnson, 2013). For example, they have restricted the number
of hours that student-athletes are allowed to spend on athletic activities (Gayles & Hu, 2009). However, researchers have found that many devote more than the approved number of hours on their sport (Johnson, 2013). Student-athletes are also required to meet certain GPA and standardized test criteria before they can be eligible to become collegiate student-athletes (Milton, Freeman, & Williamson, 2012). Furthermore, the NCAA has instituted a measure called the Academic Progress Rate (APR) to examine the academic success of athletic programs. For APR, each student-athlete is able to earn the team two points per semester, one for retention and one for eligibility (“Frequently asked questions,” n.d.). Then the points for all the members of the team are added up and divided by the total possible number of points. This number is then multiplied by 1000 to obtain the team’s APR score. The NCAA has determined that teams that score under 930 could be penalized unless there are extenuating circumstances. Eight Division I basketball teams will be ineligible for postseason play in 2015 based on their poor APR scores: Alabama State, Appalacian State, Florida A & M, Houston Baptist, Lamar, San Jose State, Central Arkansas, and Wiconsin-Milwaukee (Norlander, 2014). The Southwestern Athletic Conference was hit hard with APR sanctions for the 2015-2016 season as six schools had teams barred from postseason play, including Southern which had all of their sports banned (“SWAC fires back,” 2014). It is hoped that these penalties will encourage programs to focus more heavily on keeping student-athletes in school and having them keep on track academically (i.e. eligible).

The NCAA has also required that all Division I institutions have academic support services for their student-athletes (Gayles & Hu, 2009; Gill & Farrington, 2014;
Johnson, 2013). According to Gill and Farrington (2014) these departments “are responsible for helping academically underprepared student-athletes or those who experience difficulty managing their academics” (p. 413). Student-athlete support services departments help student-athletes to manage being both a student and an athlete (Gill & Farrington, 2014). These departments provide tutoring and workshops (Burns, Jasinski, Dunn, & Fletcher, 2013). They also offer academic advisors that are knowledgeable about the eligibility standards required by the NCAA and the academic requirements of the university (Johnson, 2013). Interview participants in a study by Bimper, Harrison, and Clark (2012) explained that the academic center for student-athletes helped to offer inspiration for academic achievement. Their participants also shared that they believed, “that the primary goal and responsibility that the counselors had for all student athletes was to make sure they were at least eligible to play and on course to graduate” (p. 120). Burns et al. (2013) found student-athletes that were more satisfied with the academic support services were more confident with their career development. Gill and Farrington (2014) discovered that interventions available through academic support services helped Black football student-athletes to improve their GPAs.

**Student Versus Athlete**

College student-athletes are a very diverse group (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). They can participate in different sports, and the sports can be revenue or non-revenue. The student-athlete body is made up of people of different gender, race, ethnicity, and family background. They also have differing levels of ability. This heterogeneity makes it
difficult to simply classify this population (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). However, in
general, student-athletes have similar demands placed on them.

Student-athletes have a unique college experience when compared to other
college students (Gayles, 2009; Harrison et al., 2009; Jolly, 2008; Ting, 2009). Research
has reported that student-athletes have a more difficult time adjusting to college
(Melendez & Melendez, 2010). These students have a large time commitment required
for their athletics (Comeaux, 2010; Gayles & Hu, 2009; Jolly, 2008; Singer, 2008). Their
schedules are very structured between their athletic and academic demands, and they do
not have much time to integrate into the general college population (Comeaux &
Harrison, 2011; Jolly, 2008). Student-athletes are asked to attend practices, games, team
meetings, study tables, tutoring appointments, press conferences, and other sport related
activities (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). Despite NCAA regulations “student-athletes
often spend more than 40 hours a week on sport-related activities” (Comeaux & Harrison,
2011, p. 236). This means that they can miss out on the informal learning that the average
student encounters by interacting with their peers and being involved in educational
activities outside the classroom (Gayles & Hu, 2009). Gayles and Hu (2009) discovered
that male athletes and athletes in high profile sports were less likely to interact with
students that were not their teammates than female and low profile athletes. Along with a
large time commitment, college sports are very demanding physically and emotionally
(Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; Denny & Steiner, 2009). Athletes often have some form of
injury, whether it is minor or major (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011).
Lally and Kerr (2005) discovered that student-athletes just starting college had very strong athletic identities and “poorly defined career plans” (p. 282). This means they had a strong focus on athletics and few plans for life after sport. Student-athletes attend college in part to participate in their sport and according to NCAA regulations, they can only do so if they perform well in the classroom (Gayles, 2009; Harrison et al., 2009). It can be very difficult for student-athletes to balance their athletic and academic requirements (Gayles, 2009; Martin, Harrison, Stone, & Lawrence, 2010; Singer, 2008). It is possible that student-athletes face role conflict when they realize they cannot fully meet the demands of their athletic and academic roles (Comeaux, 2010).

College student-athletes often have to choose between being an athlete and being a student (Comeaux, 2010; Despres, Brady, & McGowan, 2008). These athletes are asked to dedicate themselves to being the best they can be at their sport (Denny & Steiner, 2009). As mentioned above, this can require a large time commitment, and that can take time away from their academic obligations (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). Lally and Kerr (2005) found that it was less likely for student-athletes to be able to have a strong athletic identity and an academic focus. Beamon & Bell (2006) discovered that African American male student-athletes were often socialized to focus on athletics before academics. They also learned that the larger the emphasis on athletics, the worse the student-athlete did academically. Singer (2008) found that African American athletes did not think the label “student-athlete” was appropriate because they spend more time on their athletics. This duality can also be seen through the fact that athletes are stereotypically considered to be poor at academics while being a student is tied to good academics (Feltz et al., 2013).
Therefore, being a student-athlete brings the dichotomy of negative and positive academic stereotypes.

To add to the complication of choosing to be an athlete or a student, is the recent push for student-athletes to be compensated for the value they bring to their university. In 2014, football players at Northwestern University attempted to unionize saying that they should be treated as employees of the university for the money they brought in and the work that they did (Koba, 2014). Koba (2014) shared data from a survey that was completed by the National College Players Association and Drexel University which “said that the projected fair market value of the average college football player is $178,000 per year from 2011 to 2015, while the projected market value for the average college basketball player for the same time is $375,000” (para. 5). Recently, the NCAA lost a case (which it plans to appeal), that said they violated antitrust laws by limiting the money student-athletes could get to just their scholarships (“NCAA files appeal,” 2014). The ruling stated that NCAA member schools could create a trust fund for student-athletes where they can earn money based on income the schools get from the use of the student-athlete’s name and likeness.

Parents of student-athletes also often choose between promoting their child’s athletics or academics. Beamon (2010) found that parents that pushed for athletic success did not put a similar emphasis on academics. Lauer et al. (2010) suggested that parents can have a “health perspective” on sports and promote balance between sports and academics in their child’s life (p. 493). They also found that parents that push winning and sport accomplishments did not encourage their child as heavily in their academics.
Parental Influence

A large amount of research has been done to examine how parents influence their child’s behavior (Lease & Dahlbeck, 2009; Melendez & Melendez, 2010; O’Bryan, Braddock, & Dawkins, 2008). Most researchers do agree that parents influence their children as they grow up and attain adulthood (Collins et al., 2000; Maccoby, 1992; Melendez & Melendez, 2010; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Usinger (2005) stated “parents play an important and unique contextual role in how young people make meaning of their lives” (p. 235). Bhalla and Weiss (2010) agreed that parents help their child interpret their experiences. This means children learn how they are supposed to behave academically and athletically mostly from their parents. Parents also help children understand their lives and what happens around them. Children often internalize the values they perceive their parents to hold (Abar & Turrisi, 2008). For example, if their parent believes an education is very important, they child will place the same value on education. Pizzolato and Hicklen (2011) suggested that the Millennial Generation (born after 1982) have parents that “are highly involved in their lives and the Millennial college students have not sought to individuate as previous generations have” (p. 671). This means it is possible that the current college students are more heavily influenced by their parents than any previous generation. Researchers have suggested that studying parents’ interaction with their children is necessary to understand the socialization of children because parents are considered one of the largest factors in this process (Collins et al., 2000; Gallager, 2002; Maccoby, 1992).
Socialization refers to how an infant becomes an accepted member of society (Harris, 1995; Raj & Raval, 2013). It can also be defined as the adult initiated process a youth goes through to form relationships with others (Anderson & Thomas, 2013; Baumrind, 2013). Parents impact how a child is socialized by encouraging the behaviors and attitudes of their children that are culturally (socially) acceptable (Raj & Raval, 2013). They do this through “education, training, and imitation” (Baumrind, 2013, p. 21). In other words, children learn how to properly act in society and how to relate to others through reinforcement that they receive from their parents and by emulating their parents’ behaviors.

An aspect of the socialization process that needs to be examined is how parents influence their child’s academic and athletic behaviors, particularly once the child is a college student-athlete. There is very little research that includes the parental influence on this population. The focus tends to be on a younger population. What research does exist rarely compares the influence of parents on both athletics and academics, instead focusing on one or the other aspect. This means that the interaction between parental influence, athletics, and academics is often missed.

**Parental influence on academics.**

Research has consistently shown that parental involvement with academics is positively related to reducing problem behavior, achievement levels, education aspirations, and career aspirations (Bhalla & Weiss, 2010; Hill et al., 2004; O’Bryan et al., 2008; Stewart, 2008). A parent simply discussing academics with their child was found to be positively associated with academic achievement (Stewart, 2008). Stewart
(2008) found that what parents did outside of school with their children had more of an impact than parental involvement in the school. There are many factors that can impact the influence a parent has on their child’s academic achievement. These include: the age of the child; the educational attainment of the parent(s); the socioeconomic status (SES) of the family; the ethnicity of the family; the gender of the parent; the gender of the child; parental style; and the aspirations the parents have for the child (O’Bryan et al., 2008).

There have been studies that have shown that parental involvement with their children’s schooling at home impacts their academic performance (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern & Duchane, 2012; Rogers et al., 2009; Stewart, 2008). DePlanty et al. (2012) suggested that parents should become involved in their child’s academics from a young age to help their child succeed in school. O’Bryan et al. (2008) supported this when they learned that past parental involvement may be as important as current involvement. When parents become involved in their child’s schooling early, their children tend to do better academically their whole lives. Hill et al. (2004) found that parental involvement with academics matters throughout a student’s junior high and high school years. The importance did not diminish as the child got older.

Studies have shown that parents continue to influence their children after they have gone to college (Abar & Turrisi, 2008; Agliata & Renk, 2008; Fass & Tubman, 2002; LaBrie & Call, 2011; Melendez & Melendez, 2010; Pizzolato & Hicklen, 2011; Ratelle et al., 2005). Ratelle et al. (2005) found that parents can promote positive outcomes for their college-aged child’s academics. This may be partially because students are attached to their parents. Melendez and Melendez (2010) defined parental
attachment “as a normative and universal mechanism to assure safety and security from which to explore one’s environment” (p. 420). This attachment can be a challenge as students adjust to college because they are separated from their parents for the first time (Melendez & Melendez, 2010). This may explain why Pizzolato and Hicklen (2011) learned that nearly half of the college students in their study included their parents when making important decisions. They also learned that most of the parental involvement was initiated by the child. Melendez and Melendez (2010) found that college students had an easier transition to college when their parents were perceived to be supportive and understanding no matter what their ethnicity was. That means most students have an easier time adjusting to college when they believe their parents agree with their decision and will be there for them. Agliata and Renk (2008) proposed that college students are very concerned with their parents’ expectations, and that parents need to clearly communicate what their expectations are. Agliata and Renk (2008) found that when there was a large discrepancy between parental expectations and the student’s performance, the students “experienced lower levels of self-worth and college adjustment” (p. 979). This means that college students adjust better to college when they believe they are living up to their parents’ expectations.

Parental education is a significant factor in predicting the educational attainment of a child (DePlanty et al., 2012; Hill et al., 2004; Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, and Perna, 2008; Spera, Wentzel, & Matto, 2009). Rowan-Kenyon, et al. (2008) suggested that parents who did not attend college were not as likely to assist their child with college-planning activities. The parents did not feel that they had the expertise to help their child make a
good decision. DePlanty et al. (2012) proposed the educational attainment of a parent can be a barrier in their child’s schooling. Hill et al. (2004) discovered that parents with lower levels of educational attainment had adolescents that had higher educational aspirations when the parents were involved with their academics, but their behavior and achievement did not change. That means the child wanted to do well academically, but they did not actually perform any better.

Parents from a lower SES are often limited in how involved they can be with their children’s academics (Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008). One limitation is that these parents are less likely to have a college education (Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008). As discussed above, educational attainment can impact how involved a parent becomes with their child’s academics. Another limitation is a lack of financial assistance for their child (Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008). These parents often cannot afford to obtain academic assistance for their children, and then have difficulty paying for a college education. Hitlin (2006) found that a father’s job will directly impact the career aspirations of their child. Usinger (2005) discovered that many parents from a lower SES desired to see their children not make the mistakes that they perceived they did. They wanted their children to do better academically because they did not want their children to end up where they are.

Ethnicity can also impact parental influence (Hill et al., 2004; O’Bryan et al., 2008; Spera et al., 2009). People sometimes tie ethnicity and SES together. However, Hill et al. (2004) pointed out that the effects of ethnicity and SES are unique and should be considered separately. They discovered that “parent academic involvement was more
strongly related to achievement for African Americans than for European Americans” (p. 1504). This means children of African Americans were more likely to improve academically if their parents were involved with their schooling as opposed to European Americans when their SES was the same. O’Bryan et al. (2008) discovered that white parents were less likely to be involved with their son’s academics than African American parents. Spera et al. (2009) suggested that this may be because minority parents believe education can help their child pursue upward mobility. Contrary to this finding Beaumon and Bell (2006) discovered that African-Americans were socialized with less of an emphasis on academics when compared to white respondents.

It is possible that the gender of the parent will impact the influence they have over their child (Lease & Dahlbeck, 2009; Rogers et al., 2009). Lease and Dahlbeck (2009) discovered that a child’s attachment to their parent of the same gender was predictive of the child’s career decision self-efficacy. Rogers et al. (2009) suggested that mothers tended to exhibit more supportive behaviors, while fathers were more pressuring. Lee et al. (2007) found contrary evidence for there being a difference in parental influence based on the parent’s gender. They discovered no significant difference in the academic achievement of adolescents that lived in single-father versus single-mother households. It may be possible that a single-parent home has more of an impact than the gender of the parent.

Research has shown that the gender of the child should be a factor to consider with parental influence (LaBrie & Cail, 2011). Bhalla and Weiss (2010) proposed that parents may influence their daughters and sons differently. They suggested that gender
stereotypes may be reinforced by these influences. For example, a parent may tell their son that he will be good at math and their daughter that she will be good at English because those are the stereotypical stronger classes for their respective gender. Davis et al. (2006) learned that for male students, rewards were correlated with higher positive and greater negative results than for female students. This indicated that male students responded more to reinforcements than females did. Rogers et al. (2009) stated that “boys perceive more academic pressure from their parents, whereas girls perceive more parental management of their learning environments” (p. 49). This means boys felt they had to do well academically and girls felt that their parents were controlling how they learned. Pizzolato and Hicklen (2011) found parents may continue to influence their children differently based on gender as the child goes to college. They found a continuous increase in parental involvement with female college students. On the other hand, they discovered a decrease in parental involvement with male students until their senior year when there was an increase.

Parenting style may also impact parental influence (Lease & Dahlbeck, 2009). Parenting styles can be categorized in several ways, but they usually fall into three categories: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive (Baumrind, 1966; Lease & Dahlbeck, 2009). Authoritarian parents are very demanding, but they do not respond to their children’s behavior. Authoritative parents balance being highly demanding and responsive. Permissive parents are rarely demanding and highly responsive. Children of authoritative parents have higher academic achievement and less behavior problems
(Lease & Dahlbeck, 2009). Lease and Dahlbeck (2009) suggested that parental style would impact the decision-making skills of their child.

A parent’s educational aspirations for their child is an important predictor of their child’s academic performance (Bowne, Hopson, Rose, & Glennie, 2012; Spera et al., 2009). Bowen et al. (2012) found high expectations to be positively related to academic outcomes. Spera et al. (2009) found that Caucasian parents who had lower levels of education had “significantly lower educational aspirations for their children compared to parents of other ethnic backgrounds with similarly low levels of education” (p. 1149). This shows that both educational level and ethnicity can impact the aspirations a parent has for their child. However, most parents have high aspirations for their child’s education regardless of their ethnicity (Spera et al., 2009). It has been found that even though minority parents have high aspirations for their children, minority students still have a lower level of academic achievement (Spera et al., 2009). It is possible that minority parents do not express their aspirations or do not have the educational background or SES to assist their children’s academic achievement.

**Parental influence on athletics.**

It has been shown that there is variation between how parents influence academics and sports (Bhalla & Weiss, 2010). Bhalla and Weiss (2010) found that parents had more of an impact on the sport participation of their daughter than on her academics. They suggested that this was because sport is optional whereas academics are required. It is also possible for athletics and academics to interact. O’Bryan et al. (2008) suggested that parents being involved in their child’s school-based sport might help the parent and
adolescent interact about educational matters. The differences between parental influence on academics and athletics and the possible intersection of the two make it important to consider both aspects.

Parental influence is very important to contemplate when studying the athletic participation of an individual. Parents often are the main reason that children start participating in sports (Keegan, Harwood, Spray, & Lavallee, 2009; Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2004). Knight, et al. (2009) stated that “parents play an integral role in youth sports programs” (p. 377). Parental influence can strongly predict how involved a child will be with a sport (Beets et al., 2010; Turman, 2007). If a parent is supportive or pressuring a child to be involved in a sport, the child most likely will participate in that sport. This is especially true at the youth sport level. Bhalla and Weiss (2010) found that girls participated in sports that their parents showed interest in either by coaching or just expressing positive attitudes. It would be logical to believe the same would be true for boys.

Turman (2007) suggested that it is common for sport to “constitute a central role in parent-child interaction” (p. 152). This means that many conversations and activities between parents and their children are centered around athletics. Many parents spend time and money on their children’s athletic endeavors (Coakley, 2015; Turman, 2007; Wuerth et al., 2004). These parents use their resources to assist their children’s athletic pursuits. Turman (2007) discovered that most youth sport parents believe their role is to be a supporter/encourager and/or a teacher/mentor to their young athlete. This means the parents believe it is their role to help their child learn and enjoy their sport. Holt,
Tamminen, Black, Sehn, and Wall (2008) “suggested that parents’ knowledge and experience influenced their involvement in youth sport” (p. 680). For example, if a parent has experience playing basketball, they are more likely to help teach their child how to play. On the other hand, if they have never played basketball, they may not attempt to do any coaching. Coakley (2015) explained that parents are likely to be invested in their child’s athletics because the parent is often judged based on their child’s athletic success or failure. If a child does very well at their sport, their parent is congratulated.

Parental involvement remains an important factor throughout their child’s athletic career (Beets et al., 2010; Wuerth et al., 2004). That means parents are still influential after their child has gone to college. This was supported when Nuñez, Martin-Albo, Navarro, Sánchez, and Gonález-Cutre (2009) found that family factors need to be taken into consideration when studying the behavior of a collegiate student-athlete. They believed parents had an impact on how the student-athlete behaved with their athletics. Collins and Barber (2005) discovered that collegiate female athletes’ who believed their parents found success in their sport to be important had higher levels of confidence and anxiety than the athletes who perceived their parents placed less importance on success. These athletes thought they were better, and worried more about failing when their parents pushed success. Their attitude toward their sport was impacted by their perception of the value their parents put on winning. Comeaux and Harrison (2011) shared that parental support was one of the most important family characteristics to impact a student-athlete’s success in college. Parents have the ability to impact the
expectations this population holds for their college athletic and academic experiences (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011).

Race appears to have some relationship to how parents socialize their children toward sports. Researchers have found that African American males are more likely to be pushed into athletics by their families as a possible career path (Beamon, 2010; Shakib & Valiz, 2012). Edwards (2000) argued that a major issue of black society is “the blind faith of black youths and their families in sport as a prime vehicle of self-realization and social-economic advancement” (p. 9). Beaumon and Bell (2006) discovered that African-American respondents were more likely to be socialized toward athletics over academics. Shakib and Valiz (2012) found that male and female African American youth were more likely to receive encouragement to participate in sports than White, Hispanic, or Asian youth. They received more encouragement from their families and from non-kin (Shakib & Valiz, 2012). African American parents often see sport as a chance for their child to get a college scholarship and possibly a professional sport career (Beamon, 2010; Shakib & Valiz, 2012).

The gender of the parent and the gender of the child have an impact on the parental influence exhibited. Mothers and fathers are often perceived to have different roles when it comes to interacting with their child’s athletics. These roles tend to follow gender stereotypes (Beets et al., 2010; Wuerth et al., 2004). Mothers are more likely to perceive that they are supporting their child (Wuerth et al., 2004). Fathers tend to exhibit more directive behavior, which means they give more advice and push their kids to train more (Wuerth et al., 2004). Leff and Hoyle (1995) discovered that males felt more
pressure from their fathers than their mothers. Fathers also may be more overt in their use of their own activities to impact their child’s activity levels (Beets et al., 2010). Parents also may treat their child’s sport participation differently based on their child’s gender (Beets et al., 2010). Researchers have found that parents spend more playtime with their sons than their daughters (Beets et al., 2010). Leff and Hoyle (1995) found that females perceived more support from their parents.

**Methods of Influence**

Bank et al. (1990) suggested that social influence can be internalized or direct (also called instrumental or compliance). Internalized influence is when an individual adopts the “norms, preferences, and intentions” of others (Bank et al., 1990, p. 211). An example would be a child rooting for the same sport team as their parent because they have learned from that parent that team is the best (according to the parent). Direct influence is when an individual conforms to others influence in hope of receiving a reward or avoiding punishment (Bank et al., 1990). An example of direct influence from parents was found by Davis, Winsler, and Middleton (2006) when they discovered that close to three-fourths of college students in their study had received rewards from their parents for the grades that had received in elementary through high school. It is possible that these students tried to get good grades because they wanted the reward associated with having them.

Researchers have considered two types of behavior that can be used to influence an individual: pressure and support (Anderson, Funk, Elliott, & Smith, 2003; Lauer et al., 2010; Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams, & Keating, 2009; Turman, 2007). Pressure
behaviors are when the influence is focused on accomplishments, and support behaviors are focused on encouragement (Turman, 2007). For example, a parent may pressure a child to participate in baseball because they tell their child that they need to hit more home runs. On the other hand, a parent may be supportive of their child’s baseball participation by reminding them of when they have done well and telling them that the child is good, win or lose. Anderson et al. (2003) shared that research on parental support is often focused on beginning a sport while parental pressure is observed during participation. They found that both support and pressure impact how a child feels about their sport participation experience.

Parental pressure has been tied to negative outcomes (Bhalla & Weiss, 2010; Rogers et al., 2009). Anderson et al. (2003) discovered that “as parental pressure increased, children’s reported enjoyment decreased” (p. 253). Lauer et al. (2010) found that a child may feel pressured even if their parent does not exhibit pressuring behaviors. These children may feel that they “owe” their parent because they have helped the child participate in their sport. Ommundsen et al. (2006) learned that criticism from parents decreased positive friendship formation between their child and their teammates. They also discovered that this criticism could also lead to perfectionist worries in their child. Their child may become overly critical of themselves because of what they perceive their parents are saying and expect of them.

On the other hand, supportive behaviors have been found to have more positive outcomes for children (Anderson et al., 2003; Bhalla & Weiss, 2010; Keller & Whiston, 2008; Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Rogers et al., 2009). Keller and Whiston (2008) stated that “it
appears that young adolescents need to know their parents are interested in them as individuals, believe in their abilities, trust them to make good decisions, and are proud of them” (p. 211). When parents did this, the children were happier. Bhalla and Weiss (2010) found that girls desired to have at least one of their parents support them. Similarly, Knight, Boden, and Holt (2010) discovered that junior tennis “players wanted parents to be involved in their tennis in a supportive manner” (p. 386). Anderson et al. (2003) learned that children who perceived parental support had lower levels of anxiety. Fingerman et al. (2012) found that parents provide six types of support to their children that were over 18: emotional, practical, socializing, advice, financial support, and listening about their child’s day. The discovered that listening, emotional support, and advice were the most frequently utilized forms of support.

Support can be divided into tangible (direct) and intangible (indirect) influence (Abar & Turrisi, 2008; Bremer, 2012; Beets et al., 2010; Lauer et al, 2010; Rogers et al., 2009). Tangible support can include any instrumental assistance such as paying for equipment and fees or providing transportation (Bremer, 2012; Lauer et al., 2010). Intangible support includes any emotional support (Bremer, 2012; Lauer et al., 2010). Beets et al. (2010) found four dimensions of support commonly used in research: instrumental, conditional, motivational, and information. Instrumental support includes the “provision of tangible aid and services” (Beets et al., 2010, p. 624). An example is a parent paying for their child’s sporting equipment. Conditional support refers to any time parents are present at an activity, but are not directly participating. This would be when parents are sitting in the stands watching their child perform. Motivational support is
when parent provide verbal and/or nonverbal praise or affirmation. For example, a parent may look at their child’s report card and tell them that they have done a great job in their classes. Informational support denotes times when parents provide advice or information about an activity. This would include times when a parent helps their child with their homework by explaining how to do a math problem.

**Parental Involvement**

One way parents are influential in their child’s life is by being involved. Parental involvement is considered anytime a parent is a part of their child’s life including the provision of tangible and intangible resources (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2013; Ratelle et al., 2005). This could include being in communication with their child, giving their child advice, or intervening when their child has a problem (Cullaty, 2011). It could also include spending time and attention on their child (Ratelle et al., 2005). Most researchers agree that parental involvement is beneficial to children (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2013; Cullaty, 2011; Odenweller, Booth-Butterfield, & Weber, 2014). Cullaty (2011) found that when college students felt close to their parents and supported by them, then they also felt that they could act autonomously.

Researchers have found that parents are becoming more involved in the lives of their college-aged children (Cullaty, 2011). Cullaty (2011) shared that there has been a cultural shift in how parents are involved in their child’s life since the year 2000. That was when publications began to document parenting becoming more intense on college campuses (Cullaty, 2011). College student affairs have also been giving more attention to how parents are involved in the lives of their children (Harper et al., 2012). Fingerman et
al. (2012) found that greater than one-fifth of the 592 grown children in their study shared that their parents were intensely involved in their lives. Givertz and Segrin (2014) found that of their 339 college-aged participants, over half of them were in contact with their parents once a day, with one-fourth being in contact multiple times a day. Almost half of the participants in Pizzolato and Hicklen’s (2011) study shared that they involved their parents when they made important decisions, and for the most part the involvement was initiated by the student. They also found that the vast majority of these participants only involved their parent in an important decision once, and involvement included asking their parent for input that they could choose to listen to or ignore.

**Overinvolvement.**

There have been many popular press articles and books that have suggested that parents may be too involved in their child’s life (Brussoni & Olsen, 2012; Schiffrin et al., 2014; Segrin, Woszidlo, Givertz, Bauer, & Murphy, 2012). Brussoni and Olsen (2012) implored researchers to examine the concept of overinvolved parenting because of how popular the idea has become in the public. In the past few years, research has been increasing on this topic, but the line between a healthily involved parent and a too involved parent has not been clear in the literature. This can be seen in the multiple terms that are used to discuss the concept of parents being excessively involved in their child’s lives such as overinvolvement (Givertz & Segrin, 2014), over-parenting (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2013; Segrin et al., 2012), overprotection (Brussoni & Olsen, 2012), high levels of involvement (Cullaty, 2011), helicopter parenting (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Schiffrin et al., 2014) and intense parental support (Fingerman et al.,
This dissertation utilizes the term overinvolvement. Overinvolved parents are colloquially termed either helicopter or bulldozer parents. Helicopter parents are those that hover over their children ready to help or be involved (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2013; Odenweller et al., 2014; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Schiffrin et al., 2014; Segrin et al., 2012). Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012) provided empirical evidence that helicopter parenting is a real phenomenon among college students. Bulldozer parents push any obstacles out of their offspring’s path (Taylor, 2006).

There has also been a lack of clarity in how to conceptualize overinvolvement. Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan (2013) “conceptualized the difference between parental involvement and over-parenting partly in terms of the degree of certain behaviors exhibited and partly in terms of qualitatively different behaviors being exhibited” (p. 316) In other words, overinvolved parents would want to know more about their child’s life than an involved parent. It is also possible that an overinvolved parent might step in to fix their child’s problems instead of just giving them guidance. Brussoni and Olsen (2012) shared that the fathers in their study defined overprotection as “excessive involvement in and restriction of children’s activities that would result in compromised development of the skills and confidence necessary for future independence” (p. 243). Fingerman et al. (2012) conceptualized overinvolvement as “parent providing several types of support (e.g., financial, advice, emotional) many times a week” (p. 880). Odenweller et al. (2014) defined overinvolved parents as those who “constantly communicate with their children, intervene in their children’s affairs, make decisions for their children, personally invest in their children’s goals and remove
obstacles their children encounter” (p. 408). Givertz and Segrin (2012) suggested that overinvolvement “promotes extreme intimacy through frequency of contact and provision of goods and services (i.e. rewards). It also includes a heavy dose of advice giving and other directive behaviors that intrude upon the young adult child’s ability to become self-sufficient.” (p. 1129). Utilizing previous researchers’ conceptualizations, I define overinvolvement as parents who are in frequent contact with their child (at least once a day), provide frequent support to their children (at least once a week), give their child advice and direct their behavior, and occasionally step in to solve issues or make decisions for their child.

Researchers have suggested that there are several negative outcomes of overinvolved parenting to college-aged individuals. Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan (2013) discovered through asking students to choose solutions for hypothetical work-place issues, that overinvolved parenting led to children who chose “solutions that relied on others rather than taking responsibility oneself” (p. 324). Relatedly, Segrin, Woszidlo, Givertz, and Montgomery (2013) discovered that these children have poorer coping skills. Segrin, Givertz, Swaitkowski, and Montgomery (2015) found that children of overinvolved parents responded to social problems by withdrawing, and they had a more challenging time connecting with others. Cullaty (2011) found that college students who felt their parents were too involved also felt that they could not act autonomously because their parents tried to have some control over their decisions. Negatives also included lower levels of: family satisfaction (Givertz & Segrin, 2012), life satisfaction (Schiffrin et al., 2014), self-efficacy (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2013; Givertz & Segrin, 2012).
2012), feelings of autonomy (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Schiffrin et al., 2014), and levels of academic engagement (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). Researchers have also tied other negative outcomes to overinvolved parenting such as higher levels of: interpersonal dependency (Odenweller et al., 2014), neuroticism (Odenweller et al., 2014), depression (Schiffrin et al., 2014), narcissism (Segrin et al., 2013) and entitlement (Givertz & Segrin, 2012; Segrin et al., 2012). An interesting finding by Givertz and Segrin (2012) was that open communication between a child and their parent intensified parental control and was related to lower levels of self-efficacy for the child. Overall, these researchers have suggested that overinvolved parents hinder the development of their child (Odenweller et al., 2014; Segrin et al., 2013).

While many researchers have found negative outcomes for overinvolvement, a few have suggested that there may be positive correlations to highly involved parenting. Fingerman et al. (2012) found that young adults reported higher levels of well-being and a better sense of their goals when their parents were intensely involved in their lives. Harper et al. (2012) discovered that highly involved parents had children that were more socially satisfied with their college experience. Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012) found that children of overinvolved parents saw their relationship as “high in guidance, involvement, and emotional support” (p. 1186).

Whether overinvolvement causes more positive or negative outcomes is unclear. However, most researchers have suggested that parents who are overinvolved typically want the best for their child (Brussoni & Olsen, 2012; Givertz & Segrin, 2014; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Segrin et al., 2012). Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012) shared
that overinvolved parents were often concerned about the well-being of their child. Givertz and Segrin (2014) believed that these parents wanted the best for their children, but they were too enmeshed with their child and projected their own desires onto their child. Segrin et al. (2012) conceptualized that overparenting was “driven by parents’ overzealous desires to ensure the success and happiness of their children” (p. 238). In contrast, Segrin et al. (2015) suggested that overinvolved parenting can be fostered by a family environment where the family members do not highly regard each other.

**Perception**

Research has shown that it is how a child perceives and interprets their parents’ behaviors and beliefs that impacts the child’s behavior (Collins & Barber, 2005; Keller & Whiston, 2008; Segrin et al., 2015). Holt et al. (2008) shared that it is important to consider how a child perceives the feedback they receive from their parent(s). Keller and Whiston (2008) found that how a child perceived their parents’ behavior explained a “substantial portion of the variance” in how much the child believed they would be successful in making career decisions (p. 200). Agliata and Renk (2008) discovered that a college student’s perception of their parents’ expectations mattered more than what their parents actually expected. Melendez and Melendez (2010) found it was how college students perceived their parents support that impacted how they transitioned to college. Likewise, Segrin et al. (2015) shared that it was the child’s perception of overinvolved parenting, not the parent’s perception that predicted child problems.
Theoretical Background

Research on parenting focuses on two main areas, parenting and the parent-child relationship. Parenting refers to an individual “assuming responsibility for the emotional, social, and physical growth and development of a child” (Smith, 1999, p. ix). Parenting is more focused on the activity of raising a child as opposed to who does the activity (Hoghughi, 2004; Smith, 1999). Some examples of parenting include, setting curfews, teaching them to shoot a basketball, or making them eat vegetables. The parent-child relationship is a mutual interaction where both parties are involved. This includes how they talk to each other and their affective behaviors. Different theories on parenting may focus on parenting, the parent-child relationship, or both (Maccoby, 1992).

Parenting styles.

Parenting styles must be distinguished from parenting practices (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Parenting styles are the attitudes a parent communicates with their child and the emotional climate the parent creates (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Parenting practices “are behaviors defined by specific content and socialization goals” (Darling & Steinberg, 1993, p. 492). For example, if a parent has the socialization goal for the child of having their child be a basketball superstar, that parent would likely attend games and help their child practice. Parenting style impacts the specific parenting practices that an individual displays (Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

Baumrind (1966) was the first to introduce the idea of tripartite parenting styles. These “prototypes of adult control” include authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive
parenting styles (Baumrind, 1966, p. 888). Authoritarian parenting is focused on controlling children and forcing them to conform to certain rules of behavior (Baumrind, 1966). Parents who are authoritarians are strict and give their children little freedom. Authoritative parenting refers to adults who direct their child’s behavior using a mixture of warmth and control, and they share with their children the rationale behind their decisions (Baumrind, 1966; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). These parents encourage their children to have some say in what they do. Authoritative parents help their children learn how to behave properly in society, while still giving them some freedoms. Permissive parenting is when adults focus on satisfying their child’s every impulse and desire, and they require very little from their child (Baumrind, 1966). This type of parenting allows the child complete freedom and self-regulation.

It has been shown in the literature on academics and athletics that parenting style may impact parental influence (Lease & Dahlbeck, 2009). Lease and Dahlbeck (2009) suggested that parental style would impact the decision-making skills of their child. According to Baumrind (1966) parenting styles fall into three categories: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. The three parenting styles are based on how responsive and/or demanding a parent is (Criss & Larzelere, 2013). According to Baumrind (2013) “responsiveness refers to parents’ emotional warmth and supportive actions that are attuned to children’s vulnerabilities, cognitions, and inputs and are supportive of children’s individual needs and plans” (p. 26). This could include parenting behaviors such as nurturance (Criss & Larzelere, 2013). Baumrind (2013) defined demandingness as “the claims parents make on their children to become integrated into and contribute to
the family unit” (p. 26). Demandingness considers how controlling a parent is (Baumrind, 2013; Criss & Larzelere, 2013) and how much they monitor their child (Baumrind, 2013).

Authoritarian parents are very demanding, but they do not respond to their children’s behavior (Baumrind, 2013; Criss & Larzelere, 2013; Lease & Dahlbeck, 2009). Authoritarian parenting is focused on controlling children and forcing them to conform to certain rules of behavior (Baumrind, 1966). Parents who are authoritarians are strict and give their children little freedom. They view their own control as a primary concern and their child’s autonomy as secondary (Baumrind, 2013). These parents assert their power by methods “such as verbal hostility, psychological control, severe physical punishment, and arbitrary discipline” (Criss & Larzelere, 2013, p. 5). Baumrind (2013) called this coercive control, and explained it was “intrusive, manipulative, punitive, autonomy undermining, and restrictive” (p. 19). Authoritarian parenting has been tied to less optimal outcomes than authoritative parenting. These include lower GPA’s (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987) and lower family satisfaction (Givertz and Segrin, 2012). Authoritarian parenting has also been tied to helicopter parenting (Odenweller et al., 2014).

Authoritative parents balance being highly demanding and responsive (Baumrind, 2013; Criss & Larzelere, 2013; Lease & Dahlbeck, 2009). Authoritative parenting refers to adults who direct their child’s behavior using a mixture of warmth and control, and they share with their children the rationale behind their decisions (Baumrind, 1966; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). These parents encourage their children to have some say in what they do, especially as they get older (Baumrind, 2013). Authoritative parents help their
children learn how to behave properly in society, while still giving their offspring some freedoms. The demands authoritative parents place on their children are often unlike those of authoritarian parents who use power assertions. Instead, authoritative parents place maturity demands on their children (Criss & Larzelere, 2013). Baumrind (2013) termed their type of control confrontive, saying it is “demanding, firm, and goal directed” (p. 19).

Authoritative parenting has been tied to optimal child outcomes (Criss & Larzelere, 2013). Children of authoritative parents have higher academic achievement (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Lease & Dahlbeck, 2009) and fewer behavior problems (Lease & Dahlbeck, 2009). They also are more emotionally adjusted and less likely to use drugs than children of parents that use other parenting styles (Sorkhabi & Mandara, 2013). Givertz and Segrin (2012) found that children of authoritative parents were more satisfied with their family. Authoritative parenting allows for optimal socialization because it balances fostering autonomous behavior and reasonable compliance with adult directives (Baumrind, 2013). Steinberg and Silk (2002) shared three reasons that authoritative parenting appears to be the best parenting style. First, authoritative parenting is beneficial because it allows children some freedom while still providing needed guidelines. Second, authoritative parents are also likely to engage in discussions with their children that help their intellectual development. Finally, since authoritative parents are still nurturing and involved, their child is more likely to be receptive to their parent’s influence.

Permissive parents are rarely demanding and are highly responsive (Baumrind, 2013; Criss & Larzelere, 2013; Lease & Dahlbeck, 2009). Permissive parenting is when
adults focus on satisfying their child’s every impulse and desire, and they require very little from their child (Baumrind, 1966). People who use this parenting style choose to indulge their children instead of demanding certain behaviors from them (Baumrind, 2013). This type of parenting allows the child complete freedom and self-regulation. The focus of permissive parents is on helping their child to act autonomously, and they see parental control as contradictory to that focus (Baumrind, 2013). Permissive parenting has been tied to more negative outcomes than authoritative parenting. Children who have parents that use this style have lower GPAs (Dornbusch, 1987).

Researchers have found that there are variations in parenting styles based on culture. Steinberg and Silk (2002) explained that researchers have found that European Americans use the authoritative style of parenting more than African American, Latin American, and Latin American families. They also explained that these same ethnic minorities were more likely to use authoritarian parenting. Despite the variations in the parenting styles that are exhibited by families from different ethnicities, it has been found that authoritative parenting results in the most benefits for children across all ethnicities, races, socio-economic backgrounds, and parent marital statuses (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Steinberg and Silk (2002) shared three reasons that authoritative parenting appears to be the best parenting style. First, authoritative parenting is beneficial because it allows children some freedom while still providing needed guidelines. Second, authoritative parents are also likely to engage in discussions with their children that help their intellectual development. Finally, since authoritative parents are still nurturing and involved, their child is more likely to be receptive to their parent’s influence.
Researchers have also found some variation in how children of different sexes are impacted by varying parenting styles (Baumrind, 1966; Maccoby, 1980). Baumrind (1966) stated that some researchers had found that negative results are found if boys receive too little warmth and if females receive too much warmth. However, she cautioned that researchers need to consider the fact that parents may use different styles of parenting based on their child’s sex. Many years later, Maccoby (1980) stated that researchers were still finding some sex differences in regards to how children reacted to parenting styles. For example, it had been discovered that boys were more likely to be harmed by authoritarian parenting than females (Maccoby, 1980).

It should be noted that parents do not use the same parenting style at all times (Maccoby, 1980). A parent that is often authoritative may have times when they are more permissive. For example, if a parent is very busy, they may give their children more freedom than they would if they had more leisure time. Also, children’s behavior varies from one situation to another (Maccoby, 1980). That may mean that the same parenting style will not work as well for that child in every situation. Overall, while research has found that the authoritarian parenting style often has positive outcomes, it may not always be the perfect parenting style. Also, it is possible to have well-socialized children that were raised in authoritative or permissive households.

**Pressure and support.**

Much of the research on how parents’ influence their child’s academic and athletic behaviors does not refer to a specific parenting theory. Instead, they look at behaviors that parents exhibit that act as an influence. Researchers have considered two
types of behavior that can be used to influence an individual: pressure and support (Anderson, Funk, Elliott, & Smith, 2003; Lauer, Gould, Roman, & Pierce, 2010; Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams, & Keating, 2009; Turman, 2007). Pressure behaviors are when the influence is focused on accomplishments and controlling behavior (Anderson, et al., 2003; Turman, 2007). Support behaviors are focused on encouragement and facilitating activities (Anderson et al., 2003; Turman, 2007). For example, a parent may pressure a child to participate in baseball because they tell their child that they need to hit more home runs. On the other hand, a parent may be supportive of their child’s baseball participation by reminding them of when they have done well and telling them that they are good, win or lose. Anderson et al. (2003) shared that research on parental support is often focused on beginning a sport while parental pressure is observed during participation. They found that both support and pressure impact how a child feels about their sport participation experience.

Parental pressure has been tied to negative outcomes (Bhalla & Weiss, 2010; Rogers et al., 2009). Anderson et al. (2003) discovered that “as parental pressure increased, children’s reported enjoyment decreased” (p. 253). Lauer et al. (2010) found that a child may feel pressured even if their parent does not exhibit pressuring behaviors. These children may feel that they “owe” their parent because they have helped the child participate in their sport. Ommundsen et al. (2006) learned that criticism from parents decreased positive friendship formation between the child and their teammates. They also discovered that this criticism could lead to perfectionist worries in their child. Their child
may become overly critical of themselves because of what they perceive their parents are saying and expect of them.

On the other hand, supportive behaviors have been found to have more positive outcomes for children (Anderson et al., 2003; Bhalla & Weiss, 2010; Keller & Whiston, 2008; Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Rogers et al., 2009). Keller and Whiston (2008) stated that “it appears that young adolescents need to know their parents are interested in them as individuals, believe in their abilities, trust them to make good decisions, and are proud of them” (p. 211). When parents did this, the children were happier. Bhalla and Weiss (2010) found that girls desired to have at least one of their parents support them. Similarly, Knight et al. (2010) discovered that junior tennis “players wanted parents to be involved in their tennis in a supportive manner” (p. 386). Anderson et al. (2003) learned that children who perceived parental support had lower levels of anxiety.

Beets et al. (2010) found four dimensions of support commonly used in research: instrumental, conditional, motivational, and information. Instrumental support includes the “provision of tangible aid and services” (Beets et al., 2010, p. 624). An example is a parent paying for their child’s sporting equipment. Conditional support refers to any time parents are present at an activity, but are not directly participating. This would be when parents are sitting in the stands watching their child perform. Motivational support is when parents provide verbal and/or nonverbal praise or affirmation. For example, a parent may look at their child’s report card and tell them that they have done a great job in their classes. Informational support denotes times when parents provide advice or
information about an activity. This would include times when a parent helps their child with their homework by explaining how to do a math problem.

**Tri-partite Parenting, Pressure, and Support (Conceptual Framework)**

As mentioned above, much of the research on how parents influence their child’s academic and athletic behaviors discusses the behaviors that a parent exhibit. The most commonly discussed parenting behaviors are pressuring and supporting. I contend that these behaviors align with Baumrind’s (1966; 2013) dimensions of demandingness and responsiveness that separate the tripartite parenting styles of authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting. In Baumrind’s (2013) definition of responsiveness, she explains that it includes supportive behaviors. Criss and Larzelere (2013) agree that responsiveness is being supportive. Demandingness can be tied to pressuring because it includes a parent requiring a certain behavior or attitude from their child. It should be kept in mind that Baumrind (2013) divided demandingness into coercive and confrontive control, which would include different levels of pressure. Coercive control would be the more pressuring of the two types of control, since it includes manipulating your child to do what you want (Baumrind, 2013). On the other hand, confrontive control would be much less pressuring because it is mostly used to provide limits and organization (Baumrind, 2013).

Authoritarian parenting can be tied to pressuring behaviors because it has a strong focus on demandingness. This type of parenting utilizes both coercive and confrontive control (Baumrind, 2013). Authoritarian parents do not use responsive behaviors, so they would not be considered to be supportive. It would be logical to assume that student-
athletes who have authoritarian parents would believe that they are being pressured to
perform academically and/or athletically. An example would be a parent that forces their
child to keep practicing how to pitch even though the child has shared that they no longer
want to play baseball. It would also include parents that put a strong pressure on their
child to be accepted into a top-tier university, even if this was not what the child wanted.
This would lead to the idea that the student-athlete would have lower academic and
athletic performances and less enjoyment than student-athletes who have parents that use
either authoritative or permissive styles.

Authoritative parenting aligns with both supporting and pressuring behaviors.
This parenting style uses both demanding and responsive behaviors. Baumrind (2013)
shared that authoritative parents use confrontive control and not coercive control to help
their children reach goals. This means that authoritative parents use supporting behaviors,
and they also use some pressure, though not to the extent that authoritarian parents do.
This would include a parent that sits in the stands and cheers for their child no matter
how the child is performing, but also insists that their child finish the season no matter
how they feel about the sport after a few weeks. It would be expected that student-athlete
children of authoritative parents would find more enjoyment and have better
performances from their academics and athletics than those who have authoritarian
parents. However, they may lose enjoyment if they feel that the confrontive control is too
much pressure.

Baumrind (2013) explained that permissive parents are high on responsiveness
and low on demandingness. This means that permissive parenting occurs when a parent is
exhibiting mostly supporting behaviors. They wish to have their children be autonomous, and therefore, they do not work to control their children through any means (Baumrind, 2013). A permissive parent would allow their child to participate in sport or do their academic work when they felt like it. They would also be able to quit at any time. A student-athlete with a permissive parent may find greater enjoyment from their academics and athletics because they do not feel pressured. However, they may also be less likely to continue or improve their performance when they deem the academics or athletics to be challenging or not-fun.

Overall, Baumrind’s tripartite parenting styles align with the pressuring and supporting parenting behaviors that many researchers have observed in regards to academics and athletics. Based on the current literature and this alignment, it can be believed that parenting styles would have an impact on the academic and athletic behaviors that a student-athlete exhibits. Most of the research has suggested that pressuring behaviors usually lead to negative outcomes and supporting behaviors are tied to positive outcomes. However, it may be possible that the type of pressure is important to consider based on the idea that authoritative and authoritarian parents utilize different types of pressure (control), and authoritarian parenting has been closely tied to positive outcomes.
Chapter 3: Methods

A qualitative approach was used for this dissertation. This chapter explains the methods for this study. It first describes what qualitative research is and why it is a good method for studying how parents influence their collegiate student-athlete’s academic and athletic behaviors. Next is shared how the interpretivist paradigm was chosen for this study. Then the participants are described, and the design that was used is explained. After this, the method for data collection and how the data was analyzed is shared. Finally, this chapter explains how validity and credibility was established for this study.

Qualitative Research

There is a lack of research on the topic of parental influence and how it impacts collegiate student-athletes’ athletic and academic behaviors. Therefore, it would be beneficial to obtain comprehensive accounts about this subject from athletes (Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2009). A qualitative, case study method was employed to obtain these accounts and help to uncover the relationship between parental influence and the athletic and academic behaviors of student-athletes. Qualitative research is hard to precisely define because it is most often explained in contrast to quantitative research and both terms can be ambiguous (Schwandt, 2007). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) explain that further issues to definition arise when you consider the fact that qualitative research has had a complex history and throughout time, the meaning of qualitative research has
changed. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) define qualitative research as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (p. 3). In a broad sense, qualitative inquiry has the goal of “understanding the meaning of human action” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 248). Qualitative researchers attempt to study phenomena through the meanings that people ascribe to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This is done with a desire to gain understanding of the social (or natural) world (Pope & Mays, 1995).

As mentioned in the literature review, perception is a very important aspect in regards to how a child is influenced by their parents (Collins & Barber, 2005; Keller & Whiston, 2008). It is how a college student perceives their parents to behave, not the parents’ actual behavior, that impacts how that student behaves (Agliata & Renk, 2008; Melendez & Melendez, 2010). That means to obtain an understanding of how parents influence their children, it is necessary to learn how their children perceive their behavior. Qualitative research is a very useful tool to garner this information.

**Interpretivist Paradigm**

Qualitative researchers approach their work from different paradigms, or lenses. The four main paradigms are positivist, interpretivist (constructivist), critical, and deconstructionalist (poststructural). Each paradigm embraces its own ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Ontology refers to what truth is (the nature of reality) which provides a framework for the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Green & Stinson, 1999; Sparkes, 1998). Epistemology is the way of knowing truth (how the researcher can come to know) or the set of questions that are asked (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Green & Stinson, 1999; Sparkes, 1998). Finally, methodology is the way to gain knowledge or the
chosen way to examine a phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Sparkes, 1998). Qualitative researchers have shared that there is no “one best” paradigm; they all have their positive and negative aspects (Green & Stinson, 1999; Lather, 2006).

The ontology of interpretivism is that reality is constructed by human’s interaction and each person has their own version of reality (Sipe & Constable, 1996). In other words it is socially constructed, and there are multiple realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The interpretivist epistemology is that everyone has a different view of reality, and it is only through talking to them and observing them that we can understand what this view is (Sipe & Constable, 1996). The methodologies that they use include having a more emergent design as they do research where what they do next is impacted by what has happened so far, such as with observations and interviews (Sipe & Constable, 1996). Theories that fall under the interpretivist paradigm include naturalistic and constructivist theories (Lather, 2006). The goal of interpretivists is to understand the world (Sipe & Constable, 1996).

This study works from an interpretivist paradigm. As the researcher, I had the goal of understanding how parents impacted their college-aged student-athletes. While I believe there may be power discourses at play relative to this topic, they were not the focus of this research. Instead, this dissertation focused on a more basic understanding of the experiences of the participants. The aim was to interpret the experiences of the student-athletes and the advisors in a way that increased the knowledge base on the topic.
**Researcher reflexivity**

Unlike positivists, who believe researchers should maintain an objective detachment from their research, postpositivists (interpretivists, criticalists, and deconstructionists) embrace the idea that the researcher is part of the research (Burawoy, 1998; Glesne, 2011). As such, it is important to understand how they are related to the research. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to be reflexive (Green & Stinson, 1999). Reflexivity embraces a researcher being engaged instead of detached (Buroway, 1998). According to Glesne (2011) “reflexivity generally involves critical reflection on how researcher, research participants, setting, and research procedures interact and influence each other” (p. 151). In other words, reflexivity is when the researcher considers how all the pieces of their research influence each other. One very important step to this process is for the researcher to examine their own biases and subjectivities (Glesne, 2011; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). In this section, I hope to do that.

I, as the researcher, have had a lifelong relationship with sports. I started playing at a young age, and continued with organized sports through high school. My early sport experiences were in softball and basketball, and both of these choices were driven by my relationship with my parents and my sister (who also participated in those two sports). Also, in the town I am from, the only option of a summer sport for young females was softball, so I did not have many options. Since high school, I have participated in several community and intramural sport leagues, tournaments, and pick-up sporting events. I still play softball as much as possible, but I have also tried many other sports such as volleyball and soccer. A current favorite is ultimate frisbee.
The knowledge that my parents have influenced my sport participation and my academic success has helped to guide this research. My father was either the head or assistant coach of every softball team I was on from the age of six until I was 13. He would practice with my sister and me at home. I learned most of my softball skills and knowledge from my father. He also taught me some about basketball, though he was not as involved in that sport. My father came to every game I ever had through the end of high school. My mother worked part-time second shift, so she was not able to make every game. She did come to all that she could. Both of my parents were very supportive of my athletic endeavors, though they both were honest with me about the fact that I would be more likely to get into college through my academics than my athletics. When it came to academics, my parents rarely mentioned school unless I asked for help or if my grades slipped at all. I was a very good student, and my parents encouraged me to always do my best. They pushed for me to take the hardest classes I could in order for me to be challenged academically.

I have worked with student-athletes as an assistant coach at both the junior high and high school level. At the junior high level I was an assistant basketball coach under my sister at a private Christian school. I was able to experience firsthand many interactions between parents and their child’s athletics. Parents often came to games, and I was able to witness their behavior. I have also been the assistant coach for two different high school, ultimate frisbee club teams, once at a private Catholic school, and once at a suburban public school. In both cases, parents were rarely at games. When they did attend, they had very little interaction with anyone.
I also have experience working with student-athletes on their academics through two internships at two universities. At both universities I worked with their student-athlete support services office. I have been a tutor and mentor for student-athletes. Through these relationships I have learned about the experiences of collegiate student-athletes. They would talk to me about their school work, home life, relationships, or whatever else came to mind. My official role was to assist them with balancing their academic and athletic lives and helping them to succeed academically, but there were times that I felt more like I was being asked to be a counselor. I enjoyed the chances I had to work with student-athletes, and I gained an appreciation for the challenges that they face. This has increased my interest in learning even more about their experiences and how they can be improved.

I have also worked closely with academic advisors for athletics as they taught me the ropes of their job. They told me stories of their discussions with student-athletes and their parents. I learned that parents were often still involved in their child’s lives after the student-athlete went to college. I also discovered that academic advisors have very interesting insights into the relationship between student-athletes and their parents.

With all of the interviews, I have to remember the fact that my background, beliefs, race/ethnicity, and gender may be different from some of the participants, which may impact the interviews. Glesne (2011) explained that “gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation, age, and all other possible combinations, can make for different interview exchanges” (p. 118). I had to keep in mind that I am a white, straight, Christian, American, female who will be older than the athletes and of a similar age or younger than
the advisors, and how these characteristics had an impact on the research. I needed to keep in mind the idea that how the participants talk to me was influenced by all of these characteristics (Glesne, 2011). Those and my own background with my parents, sports, and academics all had an impact on the conversations that we had and the interpretations that I made of the data that I collected.

Participants

Two major groups were asked to participate in this study, student-athletes and academic advisors for athletics. As mentioned above, the perception student-athletes held of their parents’ views, attitudes, and behaviors impact how they were influenced by their parents. With this in mind, the participants for this study included student-athletes. To best understand the experiences of student-athletes, you need to talk to them.

Academic advisors for athletics were also chosen as participants in this study. Parietti et al. (2013) shared that these advisors act as a link between student-athletes and their academics. These advisors meet with athletes to assist them with keeping their grades up (Holsendolph, 2006; Parietti et al., 2013) and helping them choose a major and classes to take (Brown, 2011). They also work with student-athletes to assist them with the transition to college (Harrison, Comeaux, & Plecha, 2006; Parietti et al., 2013). While interviewing academic advisors for athletics, Parietti et al. (2013) discovered that they saw themselves as mentors for the student-athletes, and they spent the majority of their time at work meeting with student-athletes. This relationship allows academic advisors to have unique insights into the student-athletes experiences.
The sampling procedure for this study was a nonprobability sample. According to Bernard (2011) most narratives have a small number of cases so each one needs to be chosen purposefully because “every case has to count” (p. 143). In this case, a quota sampling design was used when finding student-athletes. Researchers have found that there are many variables that can impact the behaviors of student-athletes, and how they are influenced by their parents. These include gender (Feltz et al., 2013; Gayles & Hu, 2009; Johnson, Wessel, & Pierce, 2012; Milton, et al., 2012), scholarship status (Johnson et al., 2012; Milton et al., 2012), race (Feltz et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2012; Melendez & Melendez, 2010), sport type (Feltz et al., 2013; Gayles & Hu, 2009; Johnson et al., 2012), and winning percentage (Johnson et al., 2012). With this in mind, this study pulled from a variety of student-athletes with the intention of obtaining a more accurate view of how parents influenced student-athletes from different backgrounds. Feltz et al. (2013) suggested that the lack of professional sports for women leads them to identify more with their academic side. It is possible that the chance to be a professional would have an impact on how parents choose to interact with their child’s sports and academics and how that child interprets their parents’ behavior.

This study was done in conjunction with the Student-Athlete Support Services Office at a large Midwestern university (see Appendix A: SASSO Support Letter). I worked with this office to identify potential participants who fit the criteria for this study. The criteria included student-athletes that participated in football, baseball, or softball and spent most of their childhood living with at least one biological parent. These participants were contacted via email. The email included information about the purpose
of the study and what would be asked of the participants (see Appendix B: Contact Letter). All student-athletes that the advisors indicated met the criteria for this study on the football, baseball, and softball teams were contacted. A week after the first email, any non-respondents were emailed a second time. A third email was sent a week after the second email to any non-respondents. A total of three football, two baseball, and three softball players agreed to the study (See Table 1). Interviews started with participants before the full number of participants was reached.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudo</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Years played</th>
<th>College GPA</th>
<th>HS GPA</th>
<th>Lived with</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alec</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>M &amp; F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>M &amp; F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devin</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>M &amp; F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>M &amp; F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brad</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Softball</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>M &amp; F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renee</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Softball</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>M &amp; F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Softball</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>M &amp; F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I used a purposive sampling to find academic advisors for athletics. The advisors that work with the student-athletes that participate in the study were contacted to be interviewed for this study. Five academic advisors were contacted to participate in this study, and they all agreed to be a part of the study. They were the individuals that worked with football, baseball, and softball (see Table 2). In that way, every student-athlete that participates also had their advisor participate, so that I could best compare the views of the two groups. Four of the advisors currently worked directly with student-athletes and
one over-saw two of the other advisors. Two of the advisors requested to not be directly cited in this paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudo</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Team(s)</th>
<th>Length Advise</th>
<th># parent contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>MBB, WSO, SB</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>FB</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>FB</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black/AA</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>FB</td>
<td>FB</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>BA, MSO, WSW, MGY, WGY</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Design

This dissertation utilized a case study method. According to Stake (1995), “two principal uses of case study are to obtain the descriptions and interpretations of others” (p. 64). Individuals often have different ways of seeing the world, and as mentioned before perception is very important when researching parenting. A case study method is a useful way to study the different perceptions. Specifically, it looked through a sociological lens at the relationship between parents and their college student-athletes. Hancock and Algozzine (2011) shared that a case study that uses this lens “examines the structure, development, interaction, and collective behavior of organized groups of individuals” (p. 36). This study can be classified as intrinsic which means that it has a focus on knowing more about one group (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). Because this is a topic that has not been studied, this dissertation used an exploratory design, where the
goal was just to learn more about the topic in hopes of spurring future research (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011).

There are several characteristics that define case study research including: a focus on a particular situation, a study of a phenomenon that has space and time boundaries, the use of multiple information sources, and rich descriptions (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). In regards to this study the particular situation is the relationship between parental influence and student-athlete behavior in the athletic and academic realms. This study was bounded by space; it took place at one large Midwestern university. It also was bounded by time; it took place during the Autumn semester 2014 and Spring semester 2015. Multiple information sources were used including both student-athlete and their academic advisors for athletics. Also, interviews and journals were employed. Finally, this study utilized rich descriptions throughout the results and discussion by including quotes from the participants from both the interviews and the journal entries.

**Data Collection**

The five advisors and eight student-athletes that agreed to participate in this study were recruited via email. They were asked to participate in two interviews and to complete a two-week journal. This section covers how data was collected through the interview set-up, first interview, journal, and second interview.

**Interview set-up.**

Once a participant agreed to participate in the study, they were contacted to decide on a time that worked best for them to conduct an interview. Also, they were able to choose whether they would rather have the interview occur at the Student-Athlete
Support Services Office or my office building. It was important to allow the participants to make these choices (Glesne, 2011). According to Glesne (2011) giving participants this power would make it more likely that they would agree to participate because the interviews can be done at their convenience. Once a place and time was chosen for the interview, the participant was emailed an informed consent (see Appendix C: Informed Consent) and a demographic survey (see Appendix D: Demographic Surveys). Glesne (2011) suggested that using informed consent can help to empower the participants. They were asked to fill them out and bring them to their first interview. Participants were allowed to choose their own pseudonym if they wish, once again giving them some power over the process.

**First interview.**

Once the participant arrived at the interview location, I collected the informed consent and demographic survey. All participants were reminded that participation was voluntary; they could withdraw at any time or choose to not answer any questions they did not wish to answer; and that there were minimal risks to participation (Glesne, 2011). Once this was done, I talked to the participant about areas of commonality or about random items to attempt to build rapport. Glesne (2011) shared that it is important for interviewers to promote a level of trust between themselves and the participant before they begin to ask questions about a topic. This was done by discussing “easy” things for the participant, such as how their most recent game went, how they like the weather, or what they had for lunch before the interview starts. Trust can also be built by starting with interview questions that are easy for the participant to answer (Glesne, 2011). That
is why I chose to start off with some basic questions about their sport participation before I dug deeper into their parent’s influence. Each interview was recorded with the approval of the participant. The participants had very limited time based on their academic and athletic requirements, so I tried to make the interviews a manageable length for them. For example, one athlete informed me that he could only talk to me for 20 minutes because he had to get to his next class. The first interviews lasted an average of 22 minutes.

Interviews are commonly used with case study research (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011; Stake, 1995). For this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants, utilizing open-ended questions (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011; Seidman, 1998). Hancock and Algozzine (2011) explained that this type of interview is “particularly well suited for case study research” (p. 45). This is because this method has some structure while still allowing for variations between interviews (Bernard, 2011; Brod et al., 2009; Glesne, 2011; Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006). This allowed participants to speak freely which helped to meet the goal of this study which was to learn as much as possible about their experiences with how their parents have influenced them. It also helped me to keep the interview on track to obtain the desired information for the study (Bernard, 2011; Brod et al., 2009).

As is the case with all semi-structured interviews, an interview guide was used (see Appendix E: Interview Guides). An interview guide is “a written list of questions and topics that need to be covered” (Bernard, 2011, p. 158). The guide for this study is based partially on questions posed in a study by Bhalla and Weiss (2010). Specifically, student-athletes were asked to share their life histories of both their sport and academic
careers. They were asked for specific details on the influence their parents had, and the participants were asked to make meaning of their experiences with their parents, sports, and academics.

The interview guide was reviewed by two individuals that have experience working with student-athletes through student-athlete services departments, one as an advisor, and one as a tutor and mentor. The input from these experts helped to improve the interview guide and to make sure that it asked questions that assisted with the understanding of the topic. Glesne (2011) terms this action “pre-pilot testing” (p. 110) and shares that doing this testing helps to improve the quality and clarity of the questions.

**Journal data collection.**

Once the interview was completed, I explained the journal that the participants were to complete. Participants were asked to fill out a journal for two weeks. Student-athletes were asked to record when they talked to their parent(s), which parent(s) they talked to, for how long, and a summary of the conversation. It was explained to the student-athletes that they did not need to go into detail on any topic that they felt was too personal to share. For example, they can say they talked to their parents about their girlfriend without adding the specific details. However, they were asked to be more specific about anything they discussed that related to sport and/or academics. Advisors were also asked to keep a journal of any conversation they had with parents. They were asked to record when they talked to parents, for how long, and a summary of the conversation. It was made clear that they did not have to add any detail that could be considered inappropriate to share, but they should include information about any sport or
academic specific information. One student-athlete did not complete the journal because he left the study. He did allow for the data from his first interview to still be used. It is important to note that this did not allow for triangulation of his information or follow-up questions. Follow-up emails were sent to each of the participants with a template for their journal (see Appendix F: Journal Prompts). They were also asked to set up a second interview at least two weeks after their first interview to give them time to complete their journal.

**Second interview.**

When I met with participants for their second interview, we started off with small talk to help continue with building rapport. I would ask about non-interview related information that they shared with me. For example, one student-athlete had a sling when he came to the first interview, so before the second interview I asked how his arm was. We had a quick talk about that. The participants were once again asked for permission to record their interviews, and all agreed. The first interview was transcribed prior to the second interview. The second interview covered questions that were sparked by the reading of the first interview’s transcripts. The participants turned in their journals when they arrived at their second interview, or emailed them soon prior, so the only question from the journal was for the participants to reflect on the journal. Participants were also asked to give feedback about themes that I discovered while going over their first interview. Two student-athletes did not complete a second interview. Both explained that they did not have any time for a second interview because of their sport requirements. The second interviews averaged 14 minutes.
Data Analysis

After interviews were transcribed and journals were collected, thematic analyses was performed. This method was chosen because this study is interpretive, and therefore, is not starting with any hypotheses. That means content analysis is not applicable. Also, this research was focused on finding areas of commonality and difference between the student-athletes experiences and the experiences shared by academic advisors. There was not a focus on how the stories are told or each story as a whole, which precludes narrative analysis. Thematic analysis fit the best with the focus of this research.

Thematic analysis is inductive in nature. This style aligns with the case study method (Sparkes, 1998). Inductive analysis means that the researcher approaches the data with no hypotheses or preconceived explanations (Seidman, 1998). Instead, they use the data to create explanations by finding themes and patterns (Bernard, 2011; Brod, Tesler, & Christensen, 2009). As following the traditional method for thematic analysis, transcripts were read and analyzed. The first step was reducing the data by marking sections of interest (Seidman, 1998). Interview transcripts provide large amounts of data that must be whittled down so they can be interpreted and shared (Seidman, 1998). For this study, I highlighted any passages that related to the research questions, stood out as unique, seemed interesting, or were related to topics that were repeated by several of the participants. These sections were then coded based on what they had in common or what was unique about them. Coding refers to examining the data for patterns; each transcript was compared to the others looking for ideas that are said repeatedly or unique items (Glesne, 2011). The codes were then categorized into themes based on the relationships
that they share (Glesne, 2011; Lofland et al., 2006; Seidman, 1998). The themes found in this study were: interactions with parents; parental influence; parental influence factors; parental involvement; and pressure, support, and parenting styles (see Table 3). These themes helped to give a broad picture of how parents influence their student-athlete’s academic and athletic behaviors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interactions with parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Influence</td>
<td>Academic influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Athletic influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship between academic and athletic influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental influence factors</td>
<td>Age of child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marital status of parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education level of parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent's aspirations for their child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>Types of involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increasing involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overinvolvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outcomes of overinvolvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fine line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure, Support, and Parenting Style</td>
<td>Pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pressure vs. support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parenting style</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
Themes and sub-themes
Validity/Credibility

Social scientists in the 1960s started a movement to legitimize qualitative research as a way to study social life (Schwandt, 2007). Since that period, qualitative research has gone through several periods of conflict and restructuring (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Currently, qualitative researchers face resistance to their work from some who adhere to the positivist paradigm (see below; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). These critiques often suggest that qualitative research is not “real science” or it is “soft science” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). These arguments emphasize the need for qualitative researchers to establish validity and credibility in their studies. Thomas and Magilvy (2011) shared that qualitative researchers need to establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in order for their research to be considered rigorous. Credibility is similar to internal validity, and it shows that the interpretations are representative of the entire data set (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Ways to establish credibility include member checking and peer debriefing (explained below).

Transferability is comparable to external validity in quantitative research, and allows the reader (not the author) to apply the findings to another situation (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Dependability relates to reliability, and it occurs when another researcher can follow the decision trail used by the researcher (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Both transferability and dependability can be achieved through thick description. Finally, confirmability occurs when the other three standards (credibility, transferability, and dependability) are established (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).
This study utilized triangulation, member checks, thick description, and negative case analysis. Triangulation includes the use of multiple data sources, methods, and/or theoretical schemes (Lather, 1986; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Schwandt, 2007; Sparkes, 1998; Stake, 1995). This helps to reduce the possibility that associations discovered were based on chance or that participant selection bias is an issue (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Member checks are efforts to obtain feedback from participants about the themes, interpretations, and conclusions that the researcher discovers to establish the credibility of the data (Glesne, 2011; Schwandt, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Sparkes, 1998; Stake, 1995). This allows participants to elaborate further on themes, suggest new themes, or refute themes that the researcher had suggested. Thick description means the researcher provides enough information about the study’s methods and the participants’ words to help readers transfer this information to other possible contexts (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Negative case analysis involves studying any outliers to the researcher’s emerging themes and interpretations to assist in giving the most complete picture possible (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

Triangulation in the case of this study refers to the use of multiple data sources: student-athletes and academic advisors, and multiple methods: interviews and journals (Schwandt, 2007). Multiple data sources allowed for the examination of parental influence from two viewpoints, the children of the parents themselves, and people who work with the student-athletes and often hear from them about their parents or hear from their parents directly. By interviewing both of these parties I was able to compare what the student-athletes share in the interviews to what they tell their advisors and what the
advisors have directly experienced by interacting with parents. Journals allowed for a comparison between what the participants shared in the interviews and the actual conversations they had with parents.

For this study, member checks were completed by conducting second interviews. These follow-up interviews included questions that arose after examining the first interview, and questions based on the themes and interpretations that I had discovered. These checks allowed me to corroborate the findings with the participants (Schwandt, 2007). It also helped to give the participants more power to have their “voice” heard accurately (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

An attempt at thick description has already been included in this methods section. I have endeavored to be very detailed in what methods were used and for what purpose. I also used direct quotes from the participants within the results section. My goal was to have readers feel that they would have come to the same interpretations that I did, and that they could replicate the study in a context of their own interest (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Sparkes, 1998).

Any negative or unique cases were explored through the analysis phase of this study. There were a few areas where one or two participants disagreed with the others. This information was studied and shared in the results section. This was done to give the most complete, accurate account possible (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).
Chapter 4: Findings

The participants in this study provided many interesting insights into how parents influence their collegiate student-athlete child’s academic and athletic behaviors. This chapter shares the themes discovered through examining the transcripts from the interviews with the academic advisors and student-athletes and the journals that the participants provided. The themes that this findings section includes are: interactions with parents; parental influence; parental influence factors; parental involvement; pressure, support, and parenting styles.

Interactions with Parents

The advisors and student-athletes that participated in this study all had frequent interactions with parents. The majority of the student-athletes indicated that they were in contact with their parents at least once a day. Only two, Ron and Alec, said that they did not talk to their parents every day. For his first interview Ron shared that he thought he only talked to his parents twice a week. However, during his second interview (I2) he explained that journaling about his interactions with his parents made him realize that he actually talked to them almost every day. Ron explained “an average week, I talk to my mom 4-5 times” (I2). At the other end of the spectrum was Paul who shared that he talked to his dad up to fifteen times a day because he helps his dad with their family business.
All of the advisors explained that they talked to the parents of student-athletes. They communicated that these interactions often began when the student-athlete was being recruited. Joe stated that, in his role as the person who oversees academics for the football program, “the only time I really have any interaction or have any talks about parents is during the recruiting process” (interview 1; I1). He added that in his previous role as an advisor at a different institution, he had more interactions with parents. Frank elaborated that “if a kid’s being recruited, 10th grade say, and that’s kind of late sometimes, I’ll start meeting them [student-athletes] and their parents at that time” (I1).

The interactions between the advisors and the parents of the student-athletes occurred in different formats including phone calls, texts, emails, and face-to-face conversations. Anna indicated that she would:

- probably talk to anywhere from 5 to 10 parents a week. Whether it’s through text or whether it’s through phone calls…There’s probably about 20 parents of the 50 guys I work with that I’ve reached out to at some point in the semester about things. (I1).

She also recognized that the majority of her contact with parents was over the phone.

The job of the advisors who participated in this study was to assist student-athletes with their academic life in ways their college advisors could not. In alignment with this, the advisors communicated that the majority of their contact with the parents of student-athletes was related to academics. When discussing the interactions she had with parents between our two interviews, Anna shared that “probably 80% has been regarding academics” (I2). Frank believed that the majority of the contact he had with parents had
to do with the major of their child. Parents would also contact the advisors about other topics. For example, Anna said that “a mom called because her son needed to do community service, and she wasn’t exactly sure how to get that process rolling” (I1). Frank disclosed that at times “you get caught in the middle…sometimes kids put you in the middle because I think they want you to be in the middle. You know, they want a buffer” (I2). Overall, the advisors had the most contact with parents in regards to academics, but other topics related to their child’s life might lead parents to contact the advisors.

The advisors also revealed that the student-athletes they worked with would sometimes talk about their parents. Anna explained that how student-athletes talked to her about their parents was often influenced by “the role their parents played in their life before they got to college” and “the relationship I have with the kid” (I1). She shared that when the parents were more involved with their child while they were growing up, then the student-athlete was more likely to talk about their parents. Anna also explained that she was closer to some of the student-athletes which led them to open up to her more about their parents. Frank specified that there were “four or five [softball players] that I talk regularly to about their parents” (I1). Their discussions covered many topics with the parents, but he shared that most of them were just overview conversations of what the student-athletes felt their parents were saying to them, their emotional relationship, and what their parents wanted them to do.
Parental Influence

The participants of this study all agreed that parents do have an influence over the lives of their collegiate student-athletes, and this influence could be seen in different ways. This section covers the academic influence parents have as well as the athletic influence. It also discusses the relationship between academic and athletic influence. Finally parental influence factors are discussed which share what factors have an impact on how parents influence their student-athlete.

One advisor, Frank, thought that student-athletes come into college with a certain view of athletics and academics that they have learned from their earlier experiences and their parents. Paul, a student-athlete, agreed that the values that his parents had instilled in him when he was young have impacted his behavior throughout his life. He said “most of the things that my mom kind of instilled in me when I was younger, my dad enforced, kind of just stayed with me throughout my life” (I1). The participants felt that influence parents had over their student-athlete children when they were young impacted how they behaved once they entered college.

The student-athletes all indicated that their parents currently had a very large influence over their lives. Alec eloquently shared how his parents were influential:

They influence heavily on my faith, heavily on my college career, heavily on academics, heavily on athletics. It’s just a matter of what order they really have a giant influence in, and I mean like I said, I would not be the person I am if it wasn’t for my mom and my dad, my family. They’ve shaped me into the person I
am. They’ve shaped me into the pathway I’m taking, and they couldn’t be anymore behind, behind me for everything I do. (I1)

April revealed that her parents “influence me still to this day. They will tomorrow. They will ten years from now” (I1). All of the student-athlete participants felt strongly that their parents were still an influence in their lives, and that they wanted them to continue to be.

**Academic influence.**

In regards to how parents influence academics, the participants specified that while the type of influence or goal of the influence varied, parents did impact the academic behaviors of student-athletes. “I would say they have a pretty high impact on it [academics]” (Anna, advisor, I1). Anna detailed that she “never had a parent say… ‘I don’t care about his academics’” (I1). She added that “95% of parents want their son to have a degree at some point” (I1). Each of the participants indicated that that parents were a very important part of student-athletes’ academics.

The influence parents have over the student-athletes started when they were young. Each of the student-athletes indicated that their parents encouraged them to succeed academically prior to college. “Definitely through elementary school and middle school, they’re going to obviously have some high standards because I mean, there’s no excuse why you’re doing bad in school” (Alec, I1). Ron said, “my parents were pretty strict about academics, you know. They set a high level of expectation” (I1). April explained that “they always push me to remember that I’m a student first, no matter, since I was little, I’ve always been taught to come home from school, sit down, do my
homework, and then I can go outside and play” (II). What the student-athletes learned from their parents about academics when they were young was carried into their collegiate careers.

In many cases, the student-athletes agreed that their parents had some impact on where they went to school, but they all believed the final choice was their own. “I mean obviously they were, they really had a big, big time influence on my choice, but in the end, it was always going to be my choice” (Alec, II). Ron elaborated, they gave me feedback on what they thought of a school, what they thought of coaches, but pretty much it was my decision to make, and they let me have full reign to make that decision, but they were always there to give advice if I asked for it. (II)

April had originally committed to another university, but when the coaches changed to a different university, they asked her to switch with them. She divulged that:

I like talked to my parents about that, and they’re like “April, you’ve always wanted to play for [university], you’ve always wanted to wear the [university name] across your chest.” I was like “yeah, you’re right.” And they were like… “it’s a no brainer here, like really.” I was like “yeah, you’re right.” (II)

When asked about her parent’s involvement in her school choice, Renee recognized that “they definitely were there and talked me through it and asked me questions to make sure it was the right choice for me, but they weren’t like you can’t go to that school” (II). She added that they “asked me questions to like steer me in the right direction overall for a good college” (II). When asked how she chose her university Denise answered:

76
It’s actually a cool story just because when I was little, my dad would always bring me to [university] football games, and we would always talk about how cool it would be to play here, and like it was kind of like our dream…I say our because I feel like we both shared it since like the moment we talked about it…when they offered it was like a no brainer for me. (I1)

For Brad his “mom was a huge, huge part of that [choosing a university]” (I1). One athlete, Devin, shared that he actually went against his father’s preference; “He would have wanted me to stay closer to home…but I’m like, ‘no, it’s my decision’” (I1).

One big factor for a lot of the student-athletes in choosing this particular university was its proximity to their parents. “I love being close to home” (Ron, I1). April said she initially wanted to go to a college far from her parents, but after spending a weekend away from them she realized:

I haven’t talked to my parents, I haven’t seen my parents in four days, what am I going to do when I go to college? So I was like, ok, let’s be real, let’s pick my choices within a three hour limit because if need be I could go home and see them one night if I needed to. (I1)

April later reiterated that she didn’t “want to go anywhere that I can’t drive that night and see them and then drive back and be back for an 8 am class the next morning” (I1). Paul stated that there were several reasons that he chose this university, and one of them was “it was 20 minutes from home so it was close” (I1). Paul acknowledged, “it’s close to home, you know, you think you’re big and bad and tough when your 18, you still need mom” (I2).
The participants agreed that for the most part, parents just check in on their child’s academics once they are in college. One advisor, Anna, communicated that parents call them “fly bys” when they just check in quickly with her to see how their child is doing. Alec said:

They check up on me every now and then, just to make sure I’m doing well…Don’t get me wrong, like they want me to do well of course, but they’re not like nosy and on my academics as they were in the younger stages of education. (I1)

Renee believed that her parents were “not as involved as they used to be, but they’re still concerned about it” (I1). She elaborated “they will always call me and be like, well how’s the semester going” (I1).

Some parents were more involved in their child’s academics. Paul explained that his mother was available to help him if he needed it. “My mom…if I ever needed someone to read over a paper, someone to review it after I write it up…she can help me with that” (I1). April shared:

my dad calls every day, and the first thing he asks is ‘how is class?’ Like he wants to know what my professors are like, when my big projects are due, and my mom, she loves to know like my test scores. (I1)

Brad’s mother “was there when I applied for the business school, and I showed her the course layout of what I’m going to have to be taking…she’s involved” (I1). Denise also thought that:
even now, they always check in like ‘how are your classes going?’ You know, ‘do you need help with anything?’ If I write a paper, I send it to my sister or my dad and they proofread it, and I’ve even sent it to my mom once or twice. (II)

Devin added, “I talk to my mom every night and we go over syllabus, make sure all my assignments are turned in incase I missed something” (II). In these cases, one or both parents were heavily involved in their child’s academics, which also meant that they had a large influence on their child’s academic behaviors.

**Athletic influence.**

Parents also had a strong influence over the athletic behaviors of their child. For many of the student-athletes, it was their parent that first got them involved in sports. Renee felt that it was “ingrained in us [her siblings and her] to play sports and be active” (II). Ron clarified that he started baseball because his “parents just thought it would be a good sport for me to try out. I played pretty much everything when I was that age [four], so that was just another one on the list” (II). April supposed that her “parents had pushed me to play softball,” (II) but she included that they also gave her the chance to try other sports. Paul revealed that he wanted to play football because his father and his brothers played football. His father had played football in college. Brad disclosed that his father “wanted me to play football” (II). Devin agreed that “I was a very like rough child, and I liked hitting people, so my mom and dad put me in football, and I loved it” (II). Only one student-athlete identified that his parents were not involved in his choice to play baseball. Alec did not play organized sports until he was 12, and it was a friend that introduced him to baseball.

79
As the student-athletes were growing up their parents were still influential in regards to their athletics. A few of them had parents that acted as their coach when they were in youth sports. “He [her father] coached me until I was thirteen, fourteen, and that was one of the hardest things knowing he wasn’t going to be my coach and be by my side” (April, I1). Ron divulged that his father was his tee-ball, soccer, and basketball coach when he was “really young” (I1). Devin’s dad was an assistant coach. Denise indicated that her “mom and dad both coached me when I was younger, but then my dad kind of stuck with the like coaching aspect of it. So I was with him like coaching-wise through high school” (I1). Denise was the only student-athlete whose parent did not stop coaching their child by the time they were in high school. Even when the parents were not coaching, they sometimes would help with their child’s training. Paul said, “my dad, he always helped me out football-wise, training, stuff like that. My mom…helped me kinda with baseball stuff cause she was a softball player” (I1). Parents also found other ways to be involved. Devin detailed that his “mom was like the head team mom, and my dad would always cook for the team. Like we had team dinners on Thursday nights” (I1). On the opposite end of the spectrum, two of the student-athletes said they were glad their parents did not coach. Brad stated that “parents being coaches is bad for them, in my opinion, is bad for the relationship…my dad was never ever my coach, which was good for me” (I1). I told Renee that my father had been my softball coach, and her response was “I couldn’t do that. My parents, no” (I1). Parents find different ways to be involved in their child’s athletics, and their children seem to want them to be involved in varying capacities.
At the college level, parents were still involved with their child’s athletics. “I believe that I wouldn’t be here…if it weren’t for them guiding me through my baseball career” (Alec, I1). April shared that her father still plays catch with her. She added:

What’s nice is like, playing in college, we have a summer packet that we have to do in the summer, and running is something I struggle, I have to motivate myself for. So, we do this thing that he [her father] hops on his bike, and I run, and he pedals, and when he pedals faster, I have to keep up with him. (I1)

While for many of the student-athletes, their parents were no longer involved in the physical side of their sport, they were there to discuss their athletics, especially if they had issues. “I go to them if I have, you know, issues with coaches or anything like that” (Ron, I1). Renee explained that after practices she would call her parents, and these conversations often went “they’ll be like, ‘oh, how’d practice go?’ and I was like it either went really good or it went pretty bad, but they just talk me through it” (I1). For Brad, he would “keep her [his mother] updated on how I’m feeling, what I’m feeling. I’m looking into this week and where my mind’s at and what I think about the team” (I1). Devin explained that his parents tried to be as involved as they could still be with his college athletics. “My mom’s still the head freshman mom” (Devin, I1).

The advisors saw that parents were still a part of their child’s athletics. The advisors did not work directly with the athletic side of the student-athletes but they heard things from the coaches with whom they worked. Anna shared some of the things coaches had told her about their interactions with parents. “What I hear a lot in terms of the athletic side is ‘it’s the coach’s fault’” (Anna, I1). In this case Anna heard of parents
contacting coaches to find out why their child was not getting playing time. Joe had also “heard where there has been parents that have called the coaches to question why their son is not paying, and then if they don’t get the response they like, the threat of okay, my son is leaving your school” (I1).

The majority of the student-athletes in this study indicated that their parents did not talk to their college coaches about their sport. For example, Alec explained that his parents would “talk to the coaches, like have a casual conversation” (I1). Ron agreed that his parents were “social” with his coaches. April explained, “my mom, she is good friends with the coach now…My dad, he talks to the coaches like every now and then, just to give them a call” (I1). Renee also shared that “my parents will talk to them, but it isn’t talking about softball” (I1). Only one athlete, Brad, shared that his parent had talked to his coaches about his sport. He explained that:

There was a difference in coaching styles that I wasn’t adapting to and that wasn’t very positive for me. You know, to the point where I didn’t want to play anymore…She met him for lunch. Kind of talked to him and kind of really gave him some insight to how to approach me and not scream at me. (I1)

His mother had stepped in to help his coach understand how to coach him so that he would still want to play.

Two of the student-athletes said that they had asked their parents to not talk to their coaches. Alec shared that in regards to discussing his playing time with coaches his parents “will never step in, and that’s just the pure fact that I would tell them never to do that” (I1). “That was kinda like my rule for my parents. I didn’t want them involved with
the coaches” (Renee, I1). These student-athletes indicated that it was their choice for their parents to not talk to their coaches.

**Relationship between academic and athletic influence.**

The participants varied in their discussion of the value parents placed on academics and athletics. In some instances participants thought parents were more interested in athletics than academics. “I think that academics is for some of these players a necessary evil…I think that’s a big thing for football is a lot of these parents see the end of the road and see their son making it to the NFL” (Anna, advisor, I1). She added that parents “want them [their child] to play so they want to make sure they’re doing well academically.” In the cases shared by Anna, the only focus on academics was making sure the student-athlete was eligible to play football. Alec shared that his first semester in college had been rough academically, and his parents “were just happy that I didn’t fail anything, that I was still eligible” (I1).

In other instances participants shared that parents focused more on academics than athletics. Renee shared that her parents “always stress that academics are more important than sports” (I2). Anna shared that during recruitment many parents say “he will get his college degree. That is going to happen” (I1). Anna explained that parents:

- feel that they have more of a hand in academics than they do in athletics…I think they stress academics more because I think that they feel that their son has more control over his academics than his athletics…You control how much time you put into academics…they’ve [parents have] always felt like they’ve been having a

83
more active role in academics than athletics. So I think that they just, they can push academics a bit more. (I2)

Many of the participants realized that athletics has helped them to be able to be at the college where they were. “I wouldn’t be at [university] right now if it weren’t for my athletics” (Alec, student-athlete, I1).

Each of the student-athletes were asked if their parents had to choose for them to either be a student or an athlete, which they thought their parent would choose (see Table 4). A few of the student-athletes were very confident in what they thought their parents would choose. Brad was the most confident; he said “[for mom] student. Any day of the week…[for dad] athlete. Definitely” (I1). When discussing her mother, April said “she would probably say student because she wants me to see, she doesn’t know what it’s like to have an education through college and she wants me to live my life like everybody else” (I1). Renee shared that “they know that like softball is just a part of my growing up experience and not going to define my life. So they would rather me get a good degree and get a good job coming out of college” (I1). Paul believed “my dad, I would say, he would choose sports because he grew up, you know, he played football and everything else so I would say he would be sports” (I1). Devin agreed that “my dad’s a huge sports fan, he would definitely choose football” (I1) Some of the student-athletes were more unsure. When asked about his parents Alec answered very quickly that they both would want him to be an athlete, but on further prompting he was not as sure about his father:

Definitely athletics…He’s very supportive on the field and he knows I wouldn’t be on the field if it wasn’t for my athletics, I mean education, and he’s more
supportive toward that kind of side because he knows a lot about it… he thinks that in the classroom’s where it’s all going to matter… he definitely gears more toward the side of the student than the athlete” (Alec, I1).

April talked about her dad, and said, “he wants me to live my life and not worry about sports, but he knows my life is sports, and he knows that I want to be around sports so that one’s a tough one” (I1). When asked why he hesitated answering the question about his mother, Ron responded that “she knows I love baseball, and if I were to choose to pursue that as a career, I think she would support me, but I think that if she had to choose one way or the other, student would probably be the number one” (I1). In regards to his mom Paul shared, “that’s a tough one, I mean she definitely thinks academics are important, but I know she enjoys the sport side. I don’t know if I can give you an answer on that one” (I1). These student-athletes struggled to make a choice about their parent’s preference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S-A</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alec</td>
<td>Athlete</td>
<td>Athlete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devin</td>
<td>Athlete</td>
<td>Athlete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Athlete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brad</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Athlete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renee</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For many of the student-athletes their parents used sporting opportunities as an incentive to perform academically. “Take care of your business in school, and then, then you can play sports, and if you’re not taking care of your business, well, then you’re not going to play sports” (Ron, I1). Devin’s parents said, “if you don’t have school, you can’t play football” (I1). The athletes shared that the threat of losing their sport often drove them to perform academically. April explained:

My mom has threatened me so many times through middle school all the way through high school, if I didn’t have a certain GPA that she wasn’t going to let me play. That it wasn’t going to hurt just me, it was going to hurt the team…so she would always harp me to do that, and it’s came all the way through college…just the threat that she had made has made me always want to do my academics first before softball. (I1)

Renee had a similar story. She shared:

I always had to get good grades so, it was either you get good grades or you cannot hang out with your friends, or they would take practice away from me or games if I did not get good grades, so that was a good push for me to get good grades because I mean, when I was younger softball was life. (I1)

Denise also shared that her parents “would threaten my practices for my homework. So if I didn’t get my homework done, I wasn’t going to practice” (I1). Some parents use sport participation as an incentive for academic performance.
Parental Influence Factors

The participants in this study presented several factors that have an impact on how parents influence their collegiate student-athlete’s athletic and academic behaviors. These include: age of child, parent gender, child gender, sport, marital status of parents, the education level of parents, and the parent’s aspirations for their child. The factors discovered do not work independently, but they intersect to make each parent/child relationship unique.

Age of child.

Participants explained that parental influence often changed from the pre-college to the college years. The advisors shared that often the parents were more involved prior to their child to starting college. Frank said that he talked “more directly to the parent about that [applications] as opposed to possibly the student, until they get here on campus” (I1). A few advisors shared that they saw parents several times throughout the recruiting process, and then might not see them again once the student-athlete was on the college campus.

The student-athletes stated that their parents gave them more freedom and trusted them more to make their own decisions as they progressed into college. For example, April shared that “they know now, since I’m older, that I’m able to go to them, to the coaches, and tell them myself [about issues]” (I1). Paul said, “growing up they were kind of…tough on me…Now that I’m kinda out of the house, they’ll still talk to me and guide me, but usually kinda let me do my own thing now” (I1). Many of the student-athletes
felt that their parents would help them pick between choices, but would ultimately trust
their child to make their own decision.

One advisor, Anna, suggested that even during the college years, age mattered in
parental influence. She shared that the freshmen she worked with would discuss their
parents more often than the other student-athletes with whom she worked. She said,
“when they come in, they’re home sick…whereas the juniors, and seniors, and
sophomores…I feel they’re a little more independent” (I1). She had witnessed younger
student-athletes talking more about their parents, while the older ones did it less.

**Parent gender.**

Many of the student-athletes indicated that parents differed in their influence
based on their gender. The majority indicated that mothers were more interested in
academics and the personal wellbeing of their child while fathers were more involved in
the athletic aspects of their child’s life. April shared, “with my dad, it’s more about the
softball aspect, but with my mom, it’s more about like how I’m doing as a person, how’s
school treating me, but with dad, it’s definitely the sport side of my life” (I2). Alec had a
similar experience; “I talk to my dad basically about baseball…if I’m having a big exam
week, my mom will always say good luck” (I1). Paul explained, “my dad and I will talk a
little something football with him, but my mom usually knows that I don’t really, like
when I’m out of football, I just kinda like to relax and don’t like talking about it” (I2).
Brad’s parents were polar opposites:

My mom hates football…my dad on the other hand, he wants to know everything,
the scouting report, the 40 yard dashes, the statistical data…mom wants to know
how many bruises do you have, you didn’t hurt yourself, you look like you limped on this play, are you okay?...he’s more of an athlete kind of guy. Athletics, sports, all the time, all the time, all the time. (I1)

Renee had a different experience; she shared that it was her mom that “was always a little hard on me about softball” (I1). Overall, four of the student-athlete believed that their fathers would rather them be an athlete than a student, while only two believed the same of their mothers.

The student-athletes also shared that they often talked to one parent more often than the other. In most cases it was their mother that they talked to more often. “I talk to my mom a heck of a lot more than I talk to my dad” (Alec, I1). “I talk to my mom more, just because she’s home” (Renee, I1). A few did talk to their father more often. “I still talk to my dad more than my mom. It’s just something we’ve always had” (April, I1). “I talk to my dad a lot more” (Paul, I2). Whether it was their mother or their father, each of the student-athletes shared that they talked to one parent more than the other.

**Child gender.**

The gender of the child also appears to make an impression on the influence parents have. One advisor that worked with multiple sports shared that male student-athletes often talk about how their parents have pushed them while female student-athletes discussed the emotional aspect of their relationship with their parents. However, all the student-athlete participants in this study talked about the emotional relationship that they had with their parents and where they thought their parents had pushed them and/or supported them.
The gender of the student-athletes did appear to have an influence on whether their parents had more of an athletic or an academic focus with them. Four of the five males thought their fathers and two of the five thought their mothers would prefer for them to be an athlete over a student. Each of the females in this study believed both of their parents would prefer them to be a student. It should be noted that all of the student-athletes indicated that they believed their parents wanted them to succeed academically.

**Sport.**

The sport that the student-athlete’s played had an effect on how their parents influenced their athletic and academic behaviors. For this study, only three sports were examined (i.e. softball, baseball, and football), but two of the advisors worked with other sports as well. They were able to give additional insight into the differences between sports. Frank shared that each team has a different culture with different values placed on athletics and academics. He believed that “the views on education by the kids [in revenue sports] sometimes and also by the parents are way different than they are from non-revenue sports.” He thought that specifically basketball and football players and their parents might not be as focused on education as were student-athletes in other sports. This is supported by the fact that all three football players in this study believed that their fathers would choose for them to be athletes over students if that choice had to be made.

The baseball player, Alec, who believed both of his parents would choose for him to be an athlete had the goal of being a professional player.

In regards to softball there appeared to be a special relationship between daughters and their fathers. Frank, an advisor, shared:
I think that sport is usually coached by men, and lots of times, it’s coached by fathers. So some of them have a different bond with dad then they do with mom. I can sense it, like it’s more of an athletic bond with dad, and it’s more of a personal bond with mom…A lot of them have a strong affinity for their dad because that’s who they grew up doing something they love, softball, so they associate a lot of that with their father. (I1)

Frank added that he only saw this specific relationship between fathers and their daughters in regards to softball. For this study, April had been coached by her father, Renee had been coached by her mother, and Denise had not been coached by either of her parents. Similar to what Frank shared, April indicated that she did have a special relationship with her father based on his being her coach. “He coached me until I was about thirteen, and that was one of the hardest things like knowing he wasn’t going to be by my coach and be by my side…my dad’s always been the softball side of me” (April, I1). April talked to her father more than her mother, while the other two softball players talked to their mother more.

Football and baseball seemed to have an opposite relationship from softball in that the sons often had a special relationship with their mother. An advisor, Anna, explained that for many of the players their mom “was very involved in order to get them here” (I1). She added that the players were often concerned with how their mothers would react if they were not doing well in school. The other advisors that worked with football also indicated that football players talked more about their mothers than their fathers. The
advisor that worked with baseball indicated that players talked more often about their mothers than their fathers.

**Marital status of parents.**

Another possible factor that can impact how a parent influences their child is the marital status of the parents. Joe shared that many of the student-athletes he worked with came “from single parent households, and so I think if there’s a male or father figure in their life, I think they’re fearful of their father and what could happen, where I think the mother is more of the motherly figure who they run to” (I1). He believed that the marital status of the parents impacted how the student-athlete related to their mother or father. Anna, an advisor, also shared that the children of single parents had a unique relationship with their parents that impacted their behavior in college. For example, she shared that the children of single mothers were easier for her to connect with because “I’m like the mom in [city]” (I1). She explained that these student-athletes often had a very close relationship with their mother. This was true for the one student-athlete participant in this study who had divorced parents. Most of the interview he discussed how his mother had influenced his life. “I apologize this interview is really, really biased toward my mom because she’s really had a huge influence on me” (Brad, I1). Brad did talk about his father as well, but to a lesser extent. All of the other participants in this study discussed their parents for a similar amount of time or just referred to their parents as one entity.

**Education level of parents.**

There were some differences in how parents were influential in their child’s life based on the education level of the parents. The student-athletes in this study had parents
who reached different levels of education (see Table 5). Several of the athlete’s whose parents had not attended college were described as being interested in their child’s academics. For example, April shared that her parents wanted to know about her professors and grades. Parents who did not attend college did not have as much of an ability to assist their children with their academics. Brad explained this his father “could help me with things [when he was young], but as you get more intricate and complicated, like he doesn’t, calculus he cannot” (I1). Denise explained that her mother would choose for her to be “a student, just because she didn’t go to college, and she has experiences, you know, the backlash of that” (I1). April explained that her father wanted her to go to college so she could be “the difference maker in the family,” as the only one with a college degree (I2). It also appeared that parents that did not go to college were more accepting of lower academic performances. April shared that if she decided to quit college her dad would “be understanding. He didn’t go to college, so he’d be like, I get it, school’s hard” (I2). Parents who did go to college were more able to help their child with

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S-A</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alec</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devin</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brad</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renee</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Undisclosed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
academics and with understanding the academic system. Brad explained that his mother “kind of understands what we do. Obviously, she’s done it” (I2). The parent’s educational experiences impacted how they could relate to their child.

**Parents aspirations for their child.**

Another factor that impacted how parents influenced their children was the parents’ aspirations for their child. As discussed earlier, the student-athletes perceived their parents to have a preference for them to be athletes or students. This perception appeared to have an impact on how some of the student-athletes viewed athletics and academics. For example, April shared that her mother wanted her to succeed academically “because at the end of the day, she’s like if you have a career ending injury, you’re going to need your academics, not your sport. I’m like, yeah, you’re right” (I2). Renee’s father thought she would be great as a wildlife officer, and Renee agreed and was pursuing that as a career. Overall, the highest reported GPA’s among the student-athlete participants in this study were from the individuals who felt that at least one of their parents would chose for them to be a student over an athlete. The two student-athletes who thought that their parents wanted them to be athletes, Devin and Alec, shared that they wanted to go professional in their respective sports, and they also had the lowest GPAs.

**Parental Involvement**

How parents are involved in their child’s life can have a large impact on how they influence their children. Overall, the participants indicated that parents are often involved in the lives of the student-athlete child. As the advisors described it, parents wanted to be
informed of what was going on in their child’s life. Joe explained that from his “previous experience with parents, they just want to be informed and in the know” (I). The student-athletes talked about how their parents were always there in some capacity in their lives, even once they entered college. “She’s involved,” Brad said of his mother in reference to his current academic life (I1). April said, “I’m glad they’re still around and to be old, to be involved still as I’m in college” (I2). Parental involvement may take different forms and levels. This section covers types of involvement, increasing involvement, overinvolvement, outcomes of overinvolvement, and the fine line between healthy involvement and overinvolvement.

**Types of involvement.**

The student-athletes indicated that since they started college, their parents were still very involved in their lives. They also shared that their parents were involved in their lives in different ways. This includes the ways that they influence their children, which was discussed above, and their use of pressuring and supporting techniques, which is discussed later. The ways parents are involved in their children’s lives as described by the participants in this study can be categorized as passive or active involvement.

Passive involvement included any time parents talked to their child. As mentioned previously, all of the student-athletes in this study had frequent contact with their parents. They each talked to their parents almost every day, and most had contact with their parents multiple times a day. Each of the student-athletes were asked what they typically talked to their parents about. A lot of their communication was about their general lives. “I feel like just life” (Renee, I2). “What’s going on with my day, how things went, what
else I have going on” (Paul, I2). “Where I’m at and who I’m with” (Brad, I2). “Just pretty much how our days are going” (April, I2). The student-athletes gave rough percentages to how much of their conversations were about academics and athletics (see Table 6). They all shared that academics and athletics came up in their conversations, though to differing amounts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S–A</th>
<th>Mom Aca</th>
<th>Father Aca</th>
<th>Mother Ath</th>
<th>Father Ath</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alec</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>30-35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>30-35%</td>
<td>30-35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devin</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>30-35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10-15%</td>
<td>10-15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brad</td>
<td>60-70%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renee</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Alec and Devin did not answer this question because they did not participate in a second interview when this question was asked.

A specific form of passive involvement was the giving of advice. In these cases parents were involved by talking to their child about a decision, problem, etc. Many times these conversations were driven by the students. “I definitely look to them for advice. I trust them a lot to lead me in the right direction” (Alec, I1). Ron shared that he would “go to them if I have you know, issues with coaches or anything like that” (I1) His parents never talked to the coaches, but they would help him deal with the issues himself. He also shared that his parents would help him “put the pros and cons on the table and make the best decision.” If Devin had a problem he would “call my mom and dad and figure out a solution together as we always do if something happens” (I1). Paul explained that he would only involve his parents if a problem “was really big and something that I would
say could be really either beneficial or detrimental” (I1). Other times the conversations were started by the parents. “He [her father] finds things to give me advice about” (Denise, I2). April shared that “they still give me advice every day of how to interact with people, how to drive my car, to be careful for black ice, to just keep in contact with people” (I1). All of the student-athletes said they received some sort of advice from their parents since they had started college.

In some cases, parents helped to steer their children toward certain decisions. April shared that her mother encouraged her to take classes to help her interact with people. She said, “I had never thought that to be something I want to minor in.” She chose to minor in it after her mother suggested it. April later said “at the end of the day, they know what’s best for me” (I1). Renee said:

My dad is probably the biggest influence, like for my job/career because were’ always talking about this wildlife officer thing, and he’s the one who brought it up to me, like made me actually think about it. Then we’ve talked about it, and he’s like “I think it would be such a great experience, and like you’d love it,” and I’m like “you’re really right.” (I1)

In this way, they were very involved in their child’s choices.

Active involvement included anytime parents stepped in and did work for the child or talked to others in order to assist their child. This could include helping their child deal with a problem such as was shared when talking about athletic influence. That was when Brad’s mother spoke to his coach when Brad had an issue with the coach’s approach. He shared that this was “the only situation that’s ever been really, my parent
who stepped in for me personally” (I1). Parents found other ways to be actively involved.
Paul’s mother talked to his coach and discovered that he could possibly get some benefit
for his academics. How he told it was:

So she like pushed me and stuff like that with I don’t even know what it was
yesterday. She was talking about something that I need, that some coach told her I
should do about, I don’t even know, like help, I’m not even sure, to help put me in
some position or something like that. (I2)

The parents that proofread papers such as Denise’s or Paul’s took a more actively
involved role in their child’s academics.

**Increasing involvement.**

The advisors that participated in this study shared that they have seen an increase
in how involved parents are in the lives of their student-athlete children. Joe shared that
“I don’t think parents were that involved when I first started in this industry…I probably
started seeing this maybe about five, six years ago” (I1). Frank agreed by saying “they’re
way more involved now than they’ve ever been, it seems like in the last five years,
they’re more involved than they were five years ago” (I1). While Joe and Frank shared
that there was an increase five years ago, Anna had found that parents are continuing to
be more involved. She said that “compared to when I got in this field four years
ago…now you have parents come in more” (I2). All the advisors agreed that they had
seen an increase in the involvement of parents over their career.

The student-athletes all shared that their parents were very involved in their lives.
“They’re involved a ton” (April, I1). They were asked how they would react if they could
not talk to their parents for one week, and the majority shared that it would be an extreme hardship. Denise said, “I don’t think I’ve ever done that, so I’d probably feel maybe a little lost because they’re like who I go to to talk about most things” (I2). April answered, “I would be devastated” (I2). Renee explained, “it would suck, but I would survive” (I2). For Brad, not talking to his parents for a week would make him feel, “terrible…their kind of my support system. I really depend on them for a lot of emotional and mental support” (I2). The student-athletes wanted to be able to talk to their parents whenever they wanted to talk to them.

**Need for involvement.**

The advisors and the student-athletes believed that parental involvement was needed, even at the college level. Frank explained that he “always have been under the belief that more kids that had success here have been the ones who have gotten support from their mom and dad” (I1). Anna also believed parental involvement was important; she shared that “there’s those parents who right when…their son gets on campus, they’re involved kinda right away. Typically, what I’ve found is students are pretty well prepared for college” (I1). All of the student-athletes talked about how they appreciate their parents being involved in their lives.

**Overinvolvement.**

The advisors shared that while parental involvement is important, there are times when parents take it too far. The advisors used the terms helicopter and bulldozer to describe some of the experiences they had with parents. For example, Joe explained that he:
had experiences with helicopter parents. The new term is the bulldozer parent. My son cannot do wrong and you know, basically if he failed the exam, you know, it’s not their son’s fault, it’s whatever support was given to that son. (I1)

Each of the advisors at some point mentioned either helicopter or bulldozer parents, without any prompting. It was a topic that they all felt was important.

Some of the advisors gave examples of times that parents were highly involved in their child’s life, to the point of possible overinvolvement. Anna shared a story of a student-athlete whose mom had called her about a problem the student-athlete was having with his class schedule. She explained that:

The student never reached out and said, “hey, I don’t like this class,” or “hey I want to talk about it.” His mom reached out first. So he obviously went to his mom and then his mom came to me…it’s kinda that, almost what we’ve started to call not even helicopter parents anymore but bulldozer parents…I get that sometimes it’s uncomfortable to talk to people…I felt that she kind of did the hard work for him. (I2)

Anna believed that the student should have come to her to discuss any issues with his class schedule instead of his mother. Frank told of a transfer student with whom he had been working and how he had talked more with her mother than he had with her. He shared that it was “like the kid just runs to mom and then mom and dad try to take care of everything…I think she’s used to having her parents do more things for her” (I2). In other cases, the advisors shared stories of parents that wanted to keep track of their child without their child knowing. Anna told of a father who wanted weekly updates about his
son. She said “he doesn’t really want his son to really know, but he just wants to make sure there is kind of a pulse there and his son’s ok” (I1). These were all examples of very involved parents.

The advisors did share that the majority of the parents that they worked with were not overinvolved. Anna said “rarely do I see, at least, oftentimes, the kind of bulldozer parent that’s clearing the way” (I2). She added “for the most part, the parents kind of keep themselves in check” (I2). All the advisors said that they only dealt with a handful of parents that they would label as overinvolved each year.

While the advisors had seen parents that were overinvolved in their college student-athlete’s lives, the student-athletes that participated in this study all believed that their parents were involved just the right amount. When asked how she felt about her parent’s involvement in her life, Denise responded, “I love it…I wouldn’t have it any other way how they are now” (I1). To the same question April replied, “they’re involved a ton. I love how involved they are” (I1). The student-athletes did not appear to think that their parents were overinvolved.

**Outcomes of overinvolvement.**

All of the advisors believed that they had encountered parents that were overinvolved, and they all shared that this type of involvement was detrimental to the student-athletes. There were two main areas that they believed were negatively impacted when parents were overinvolved: the preparedness of the student athletes and the student-athlete’s development.
The advisors shared that student-athletes whose parents were overinvolved came to college less prepared. “I personally think the students are just less and less prepared because mom and dad are doing more and more” (Frank, I1). “What concerns me is they come in with these habits almost of their parents doing it for them from high school” (Anna, I2). Both of these advisors believed that when parents did work for the students when they were younger, the students did not know how to do work for themselves once they went to college. The other advisors agreed that student-athletes were less prepared to face a lot of the administrative parts of being in college because they were used to other people doing the work for them.

Along with being less prepared to start college, the advisors believed that student-athletes with overinvolved parents were inhibited in their development. This was especially true when parents stepped in to fix problems for their child. Frank shared that “they [parents] try to be supportive, but I think it becomes more detrimental to the kids, it doesn’t allow them to grow, it doesn’t allow them to just face the consequences of a bad decision” (I1). Joe explained that:

“I’ve seen where if a child or person stubs their toe, a player stubs their toe, you know, mom or dad fix the problem and I think that’s kind of been enabling these students where again, they haven’t learned the proper life skills of how to deal with adversity. (I1)

Joe also said that overall he thought, “we’re starting to see a generation of kids that have been enabled all their life and not ever really had to learn how to be independent or learn
how to advocate for themselves” (I1). These advisors felt that student-athletes’
development was inhibited if their parents were too involved.

**Fine line.**

Overall, the advisors believed that parents should be involved in their student-
athlete’s life, but they should not be too involved. There is a fine line between helping
and hurting their child. “What worries me is that they don’t know how, when to pull
back…It’s definitely important to have a role in it [academics], but I think that they
[parents] need to almost know their place a bit” (Anna, I2). Joe shared that “parents need
to let their students face adversity and learn how to deal with the coping skills to learn
how to deal with that” (I1). An example of a parent doing this was Brad’s mother, who he
shared would give him advice and was very involved in his life. However, she also told
him to, “make your own decision, develop your own leadership abilities and character
traits, but you’re going to have to also deal with the consequences” (I1). The implication
was that parents need to be careful with how involved they are in their child’s life.

The advisors shared that they believed the overinvolved parents wanted to help
their child:

The scary part of it for me is…I think both parties think they’re actually helping,
but I think in my mind, it’s actually hurting. I don’t think the parents are doing it
to stifle their kid’s growth, and I don’t think the kids doing it to take advantage of
their mom and dad. It’s just that’s the nature they’ve been raised and to try and
help them break through of that, we’re doing more at the college level now then
we’ve ever had to do. (Frank, I2)
Overall, the advisors believed that parents wanted to be helpful, but they sometimes went too far, and that only hurt their children.

**Pressure, Support, and Parenting Style**

**Pressure**

Throughout the interviews, the student-athletes mentioned times when their parents offered support or were more pressuring. Some examples of times the student-athletes may have felt some pressure include when Brad talked about how his mother:

Went to three different universities, was a full, no part-time student, full-time employee, raising three kids, 3.98 [GPA], and she asks me why I got a B all the time. “Why’d you do that? Why didn’t you get an A? What are you doing?” Like she’s a badass. (I2)

Devin shared that what his parents did for him made him feel that he needed “to work harder to make them proud” (J).

In regards to pressuring techniques from parents, many of the student-athletes used the term “push.” For example, “my mom every once in a while will…call me up and push me to do something, but that’s kind of out of the norm” (Paul, I2).

April gave the example that:

Dad, he would always be like “do you want to go take reps,” and if I said no, he was like, “okay, well I think you should consider it. Like peoples are going to pass you up.” He would always say that to me; “peoples are going to pass you if you don’t keep working…My dad, he would just always push me, and he still does today. (I1)
Many of the student-athletes felt that their parents had pushed them at one point or another in their lives.

Most of the time when the student-athletes mentioned feeling pressured it was in regards to before they were in college. For example, Paul shared:

they would be pretty tough on me. Like trying to get me to do some things, but I mean, they never forced me into anything…They don’t really push me like I said. They did when I was younger, but now they just kind of let me do my own thing.

(I1)

Paul shared, “habits of mine that they wanted to build, they would use like pressuring, so like are you getting homework done or whatever, school, things like that. They would kind of pressure me into it” (I1). There were a few times when the participants shared that they still felt pressure. “My parents are still pushing me academically…they’re still pushing, pushing hard” (April, I2). The student-athletes avoided saying pressure very often, but many did feel that their parents pushed them in different ways.

Support

One of the most common words in all the interviews was support. The participants thought support was important, and that most parents provide a good amount of support. “If I had to grade them one to ten on how they have supported me so far, definitely a 20” (Alec, I1). Brad shared that in regards to going to games his mother “likes being there for support” (I1). April explained that “my parents have always wanted to support me” (I1). The advisors indicated that overall the majority of parents were supportive of academics. The student-athletes in this study all believed that their parents
were very supportive of them. The participants in this study shared that there were different ways that parents supported their children. The types of support included financial, travel attendance at games, emotional, guidance, academic and other.

One major source of support that the student-athletes discussed was financial. Many of them acknowledged that their sporting participation had been expensive, and their parents had been there to pay for what they needed:

One hundred dollar gym membership, $500 private training sessions at one of the top sports reform places in the city or in Illinois, long trip, long like expensive recruiting trips. All the best gear, all the best equipment. Gloves, cleats, Nike camps, flew me out to Oregon for a national camp. (Devin, II)

Paul talked about how his parents would provide “anything equipment-wise” (II). April added that if she wanted to “go to hitting lessons, he’ll take me, he’ll pay for it.” Parents also offered money to help with other aspects of the student-athletes’ lives. Alec explained that his parents “give me money every semester. They give me money every month” (II). He also shared that his parents “knew what they were going to have to sacrifice money-wise and time-wise in their lives” when he chose what university he would attend.

Many of the student-athletes discussed the fact that their parents supported them by traveling with them. For one, Ron shared that his parents took him “to all my practices and everything” (II). Alec also mentioned that he “was on a travel baseball team for five years, every tournament I went to, they drove me, or I would drive and they would be right behind me” (II). Paul talked about how his parents were “always traveling with me”
One advisor, Frank, said “some families that really can’t afford to go to Palm Springs to watch their kids play, but I think they’re invested enough in the moment…we’ll worry about paying it off later” (I1). Frank had seen parents that would spend money that they might not be able to afford in order to watch their children play wherever they went.

Tied to traveling with their child, the student-athletes shared that their parents supported them by being at their games. “My mom and dad have never missed a single, in thirteen years, that includes this year too, they haven’t missed one of my games” (Devin, I1). “They’ve been at every game so far already [that season], and we’re what 20 games in?” (April, I2). Renee explained that even though her parents lived across the country from her university, “they come to a lot of the games, more than you would like expect” (I1). Denise shared that her parents “would come to every single game.” Frank (advisor) explained that “if we’ve got 600 people there for a game, I’d say 100 of them are some kind of relation to the student-athlete. Whether it’s parent, mom, dad, cousin, nephew, there is a strong component of support in that regard” (I1). Attendance at games was one of the most cited ways that the participants shared parents were supportive.

Parents offered emotional support in regards to supporting their child’s decisions. For example, Ron explained that his parents let him know “I trust you to make your decision, whatever you think is best, you know, go ahead and do that and we’ll support you” (I1). Alec shared that, “I decided to go up here, and they were behind me every step of the way” (I1). Paul talked about how he had “a goal, and they [his parents] know what
that goal is, and they support me along the way” (I2). Many of the student-athletes felt that their parents trusted them to make their own decisions.

Parents also offered emotional support by letting their child know that they were behind them, even when they struggled. Alec shared that he had struggled academically his first semester, but his parents “were supportive through the whole process. They knew I would get my grades up, and I eventually did” (I1). Renee felt that her parents were “really supportive, either way, if I’m doing really well, or if I’m not doing well. They’re going to support me no matter what” (I1). April said that they would talk about games “after in the car, always a moment, like good or bad, it’s always the good with my parents. They’re like ‘so what, you struck out three times. Who cares?’” (I1). She added that in regards to academics, “as long as I’m trying my hardest, and if the hardest I try is only a C, then that’s good enough for them” (I1). Denise’s parents also said that she would have her “mom tell me that you know, you have to look at the positives, and my dad just tells me things happen so move on to the next time.”

Many of the student-athletes shared that their parents helped to support them by giving them guidance in their choices. Ron shared:

They are very supportive of me, and when I need advice, I go to them for it and they give it to me, but it’s not like “okay, you need to make this decision,” or, you know, “you need to do this, don’t do this.” It’s always, “hey, you know, you’re mature enough to make your own decision. Here’s what I think.” (I1)

Other parents offered academic support to their child. Paul’s mother would help read over his papers and “still help me out if I need help with little things like that” (I1). Brad said
for “college courses and stuff like that, I’ll get my mom for a lot of things. If she can help me with that” (I1). Renee shared that her father “made my assignment easier because he explained the details to me in a different way” (J). Whether in academics or with general decisions, the parents were supportive by giving guidance.

The student-athletes also mentioned a few other ways that their parents supported them. Alec shared that his parents had supported his athletics by sacrificing their time. He explained that:

They had a big influence on playing summer ball…I mean as a family that’s a sacrifice in the summer. You don’t get to do as much, you don’t get to go to the beach, have a family vacation, but I mean in the end you’ve got to think as a mom and where you want to be in five years…I feel like when we made the decision to play summer ball when I was about 14, we were ultimately trying to get my name out there, get to the next level. I just feel like they’ve been supportive of my baseball career my whole life. (I1)

Paul shared that another way his parents supported him was by bringing “up food sometimes and little things like that, and meet me up for dinner” (I1). Devin shared that his father was “probably my biggest fan. He loves cheering me on all the time. So he likes being able to tell everybody that, ‘that’s my son, I’m like so proud of him’” (I1).

There were many ways that that parents were supportive, and the student-athletes in this study appreciated that.
**Pressure vs. support.**

When asked directly about pressuring and supporting behaviors, most of the student-athletes shared that they believed their parents were always supportive and never pressuring. “They didn’t use the pressuring technique so much growing up, I mean they were strict, but it was always okay like this is something you want to do, you need to do it well” (Ron, I1). Alec shared, “they’d never pressure me into doing anything. It’s always been a supportive thing” (I1). April repeatedly mentioned that her parents pushed her both in her athletics and her academics. However, she said it:

> was more, not that much pressure they put on me because they know what it’s like, their parents pressured them as students, so they know what it’s like to have pressure and that’s the last thing they wanted to do for me or my sister. (I1)

The advisors also shared that they felt the parents they worked with were very supportive, and they had not seen much pressure put on the student-athletes with whom they worked.

In answering the question about supporting and pressuring techniques, a few of the student-athletes mentioned that their parents used both pressuring and supporting techniques, and it often depended on the situation. In regards to athletics, Renee shared that with her mom she “felt like it was a pressure to me. Just cause like, she was always hard on me about softball, and this was just like when I was younger because I had a conversation with her telling her like, to like back off” (I1). She felt her father was more supportive toward her softball. However, in regards to academics she shared “they really pressured me to get the good grades so that I could get into any school I wanted to when it came down to that, but now that I’m in college, it’s more like of a supporting role.”
Brad talked about the situation dictating whether he was more pressured or supported. “Like I have to go to school…but there were other situations where it’s like alright, if you don’t do well, then you have to do better on a test and then to pull your grade up so it’s your decision kind of thing. So really, they were always really supportive” (I1). Sometimes the parents put pressure on some areas that they may have seen as more valuable.

**Parenting style.**

On the demographic survey student-athletes were asked to indicate which of three descriptions described the typical behavior of their mother and father (they were asked separately; see Table 7). The descriptions aligned with the authoritarian (s/he tells me what I should do without giving me any explanation as to why. It is her/his way or the highway), authoritative (s/he discusses choices with me and help me make decisions. When s/he does tell me what to do, she explains why I should do that), and permissive parenting styles (s/he lets me make my own choices with very little interference). Seven student-athletes believed that their mothers were authoritative, while five of them thought their fathers were authoritative. The others indicated that their parent was more permissive. None believed their parents were authoritarian. One student-athlete, Denise, indicated that her parents were authoritative when she was young, but they became permissive once she was in college, so she was counted as indicating them as permissive.
Table 7

**Student-Athlete perception of parenting style**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S-A</th>
<th>M Style</th>
<th>F Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alec</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devin</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brad</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>Permissive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renee</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>Permissive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise</td>
<td>Permissive</td>
<td>Permissive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the interviews, the description that most of the student-athletes had of their parents aligned with the authoritative parenting style. They shared that their parents would help talk them through decisions, but they felt the final decision was their own. Brad shared that his parents “tell me how they feel, but their influence is, again, it’s totally and entirely my decision” (I2). Denise explained that her parents were always “wanting me to make my own choices…it was never them like pushing me to do it [play softball], it was always them pretty much guiding me into a decision that I wanted to make” (I1). Paul added “now that I’m kinda out of the house, they’ll still talk to me and guide me, but usually kinda let me do my own thing now” (I1). Ron thought his parents would tell him, “I trust you to make your decision. Whatever you think is the best, you know, go ahead and do that, and we’ll support you” (I1). The student-athletes felt that their parents would give them guidance and be involved, but they would also allow their child to have a say in their own lives.

The student-athletes also shared some other information that would indicate that their parents were more authoritative. One was that when their parents did tell them what
to do, they also shared why they should do it. Devin shared that his mother said, “you need to do this. It’s for the best. I know you hate tutoring. I know it’s time consuming, but it’s obviously working because your grades are up” (I1). Renee said her parents would now “explain to me why I need to get the good grades because, I mean, I need to get good grades to get my degree and to move on and get a good job out of college” (I1). Another way the student-athletes indicated that their parents were more authoritative was that their parents were willing to give them some freedom while remaining available to assist them. Renee said “they’re there when I need them, and then like, when they know I need my personal space, they understand that also” (I1). All the student-athletes indicated that their parents allowed them to make their own decisions, while still giving some advice.

Summary

Overall, the findings showed that all of the participants interacted with parents. This ranged from one advisor who rarely talked to parents once recruiting was over (i.e. when the student-athletes started college) to a student-athlete who talked to his father 15 times a day. The participants also believed that parents were very influential in the lives of their student-athlete children. The student-athletes shared that their parents had an influence over both their athletics and academics. There were several factors that had an impact on how parents influenced their children. These included: age of child, parent gender, child gender, sport, marital status of parents, the education level of parents, and the parent’s aspirations for their child. The student-athlete participants explained that they were very happy that their parents were involved in their lives. The advisors shared that it
was important for parents to be involved in their child’s lives when that child was in college. However, the advisors shared that it was possible for parents to be too involved, and that overinvolved parents can be a detriment to their child’s preparedness for college and their development. All the participants indicated that parents overall were very supportive. The student-athletes explained that their parents might push them, but they did not feel that they were pressuring. Also, the majority of the student-athletes believed that their parents were authoritative. These findings will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

Previous researchers have indicated that a child’s perception of their parents’ behaviors and beliefs impacts that child’s behavior (Agliata & Renk, 2008; Collins & Barber, 2005; Holt et al., 2008; Keller & Whiston, 2008). That is why this study focused on what student-athletes had to say about their parents both to me and to their academic advisors for athletics. The academic advisors also added the additional dimension of having direct contact with the parents of student-athletes. Each of the participants had frequent contact with parents, and they all offered valuable insights into the relationship between parental influence and college student-athlete behavior. This chapter works to answer the original research questions using the information that the participants shared through their interviews and journals. It discusses parental influence; mothers vs. fathers; athletics vs. academics; parental involvement; pressure and support; pressure, support, and tripartite parenting; and factors that impact parental influence. This chapter concludes by discussing practical implications for this study, limitations, and areas for future research.

Parental Influence

The first research question was: what role do parents play in relationship to their college-aged child’s athletic and academic behaviors? Previous research had indicated that parents were influential in their child’s athletic and academic lives (Collins et al.,
All of the participants in this study agreed with this. The advisors indicated that how a student-athlete was raised by their parents influenced how they behaved once they got to college. Bhalla and Weiss (2010) would agree that children learn how they should behave from their parents, and that impacts them their entire lives. The student-athletes in the current study shared that their parents had an influence on almost every part of their lives. For example, Alec said his parents influenced his faith, college career, academics, and athletics. Other student-athletes explained that the values and habits instilled by their parents when they were younger have stuck with them as they went to college. This follows the findings of Abar and Turrisi (2008) who suggested that children internalize their parents’ values. This shows that overall parents can have a large influence over their college student-athlete’s behaviors. Much of this influence was based in how the parents raised their children, but their continued presence in their child’s life also had an impact.

The student-athletes indicated that how they currently view academics was influenced by how their parents behaved in regards to academics while they were growing up. All of the student-athletes shared that their parents encouraged them to succeed academically when they were younger. O’Bryan et al. (2008) discovered that a parent’s past involvement with their child’s academics can be as important as their current involvement in helping that child succeed. That means that if parents are involved in their child’s academics when they are younger, then they are more likely to be successful when they are older. The current study supports this idea. The student-athletes shared that their parents would encourage them to get their homework done and have
high grades, and all but one of them shared that they had at least a 3.0 GPA through high school. This is also in line with other research that has found that parents who are involved in their child’s academics positively influence their child’s academic performance (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern & Duchane, 2012; Rogers et al., 2009; Stewart, 2008). The one student-athlete with a lower GPA shared during his interviews that academics were necessary for him to participate in football. This may mean that he only did the minimum necessary to remain eligible.

In regards to athletics the student-athletes shared that their parents were a big reason that they started their sport and continued to participate, which many other researchers have also found (Keegan et al., 2009; Wuerth et al., 2004). All but one of the student-athletes in this study indicated that their parents got them started in the sport that they still played in college. The one student-athlete, Alec, who shared that his parents were not integral in his sport choice, did not start playing sports until he was 12. It is possible that parents have more influence over their child’s sport choice when their child is younger. When they wait to start participation, other influences, such as a friend in Alec’s case, may have more of an impact on sport choice. This aligned with previous research that said parents were often an integral part of their child’s sport when they were young (Beets et al., 2010; Keegan et al., 2009; Turman, 2007; Wuerth et al., 2004).

Previous research also shared that children would often participate in sports that their parents showed interested in by coaching, saying positive things about the sport, and/or having previously played the sport (Bhalla & Weiss, 2010; Holt et al., 2008). Many of the student-athletes indicated that they had a parent coach their sport at some
point during their childhood and/or a parent that had played the same sport. Most of the student-athletes who had a parent as a coach at some point enjoyed that relationship. Bhalla and Weiss (2010) also found that a large portion of their participants had a parent that was also their coach. All of the parents in Holt et al.’s (2006) study had coached their child at some point, and they shared that this was common in North America. Two of the participants in the current study were glad their parents had not been their coaches. Renee’s mother had only coached her t-ball team, and Renee still felt that her mom was too pressuring toward softball. However, she did continue to play. Brad felt that parents should never be their child’s coach. His father coached football, but never was Brad’s coach. It is possible that his being a football coach still had an impact on Brad’s sport choice even though he was not Brad’s coach.

Researchers have also shared that parental influence continued after the child had gone to college (Abar & Turrisi, 2008; Agliata & Renk, 2008; Fass & Tubman, 2002; LaBrie & Call, 2011; Melendez & Melendez, 2010; Pizzolato & Hicklen, 2011). The findings from this study were in alignment with previous research. All of the student-athletes shared that they were often in contact with their parents, and their parents continued to be influential in their lives. Pizzolato and Hiclen (2011) found that almost half of their participants included their parents when they made important decisions. All of the student-athletes in the current study indicated that they talked to their parents when they were making major decisions. It is possible that the individuals that chose to participate in this study were closer to their parents than the general student-athlete. It also may be an indication that student-athletes are more likely to include their parents in
their decision making as opposed to the general student population that were included in Pizzolato and Hiclen’s study did.

One piece of the continued influence parents have is that the student-athletes continued to perform habits they learned from their parents when they were younger. Previous research has found that children learn how to make meaning of their lives and how to behave from their parents when they are young, and this follows the child as they get older (Abar & Turrisi, 2008; Bhalla & Weiss, 2010; O’Bryan et al., 2008; Usinger, 2005). Several of the student-athletes shared that how they approach academics in college is based on how they learned to approach it when they were younger. For example, April shared that she still tries to get her homework done before she does anything else because that was how her parents made her behave when she lived with them. Bhalla and Weiss (2010) also found that children learn how to behave from their parents. The student-athletes were for the most part still successful academically in college, and they attributed that in part to the values they had learned from their parents. A few of the student-athletes indicated that they had some struggles transitioning to college academics which lowered their GPA’s. Abar and Turrisi (2008) also found that children portray many of the values they felt their parents had. The student-athletes in this study also indicated that the habits instilled by parents were also influential over their child’s athletics. In most cases they had helped their child to decide to specialize in the sport that they continued to play. For example, Alec shared that his parents had guided him through his baseball career, and that was why he was where he was.
Another piece of the continued influence parents have is their involvement in their student-athlete child’s life while they were in college. One way they were still involved was by talking to their children about both their academics and athletics. Turman (2007) had suggested that athletics were often important in parent-child interactions. The student-athletes in this study indicated that had been true for them throughout their lives including college. All of the student-athletes continued to talk to the parents about their athletics on a regular basis. Researchers had indicated that parents’ attitudes towards athletics and academics influenced college students’ expectations and attitudes (Collins & Barber, 2005; Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). This appeared to be true with the participants in this study. All of the student-athletes shared that their parents had encouraged them to succeed academically, and they all indicated that they personally believed that academics were important. Also, they all shared that they were invested in their sports, and their parents were interested in their athletics.

When asked if their parent would choose for them to be an athlete or a student, the participant’s responses tended to indicate that their parents had a preference. This preference was often reflected in how the student-athlete felt. For example, Renee thought both of her parents would choose for her to be a student, and she shared that she also thought it was more important to work on her degree than play softball. Sometimes when a student-athlete shared that they thought their parent would choose for them to be an athlete, they shared that it was because their parent knew how important their child’s sport was to them. For example, Devin shared his mother would choose for him to be a football player because he was not content to be just a student. It is possible that when the
student-athlete highly identifies with their athletic self, that they also believe their parent would choose for them to be an athlete. At other times, when the student-athlete thought their parents might choose for them to be an athlete, or when they had trouble deciding what their parent would choose, their reasoning was that their relationship with that parent revolved around sport. For example, April struggled with what her father would choose because he had always been with her for everything softball related. Brad thought his dad wanted him to be a football player because he liked his son being an athlete. It appeared that the more the parent-child relationship involved sports, the more the student-athlete felt that their parent(s) wanted them to be an athlete.

Another way parents were still involved was by assisting their child with their academics and athletics. Some of the athletes had parents that would help them proofread their papers. Others had parents that would talk to them about when work was due to make sure that they were getting their work done. On the athletic side, April’s father would still practice with her and play catch. By still being of assistance, the parents were still actively involved in their child’s life. The previous research examined for this dissertation did not discuss how parents were still actively involved in their child’s academics and athletics. It is possible that this is a new phenomenon, or something that is more unique to student-athletes as previous research has not examined this population.

**Mothers vs. Fathers**

The second research question was: how do fathers differ from mothers in what they emphasize (if the student-athlete has both)? The current study would suggest that fathers were more likely to emphasize athletics and mothers were more likely to
emphasize academics. Researchers have indicated that fathers may put more athletic pressure on their child (Leff & Hoyle, 1995). Wuerth et al. (2004) found that fathers were more likely to give sport related advice and push their child to succeed athletically. The participants in this study agreed that often it was the father that was more involved with athletics. There was one student-athlete, Renee, who felt that she received athletic pressure from her mother. She also said that it was her mother that had been her coach for one season when she was young. It is possible that it was her mother that had more knowledge about softball, so it was she that was more active with her child’s sport. Overall, the student-athletes were more likely to believe that their father would want them to be an athlete over a student than their mother as four believed their father would choose athlete and only two said their mother would do the same. The student-athletes also indicated that for the most part they talked to their fathers more about athletics and their mothers more about academics. These findings show that some sport parents continue to follow typical gender roles, where fathers are expected to be involved more with a child’s athletics outside the home and mothers more with academics inside the home.

Beets et al. (2010) found that fathers might use their own participation in activities to encourage their child’s activity level. This appeared to be true with many of the student-athlete participants in this study. Several of them had one of their parents act as their coach at some point in their athletic career, and of those, only one had their mother be a coach. That one mother only helped one year with t-ball. Previous research does not share much information about how parents choose what sport for their child to
play. In this study, many of the athletes played several sports growing up, but they stuck with a sport that one of their parents had played. When it came to participating in similar activities as their parents, the student-athletes in this study followed both of the parents. All of them indicated that both of their parents participated in sports at some level. Three of the student-athletes chose sports that their father had played: Brad, Paul, and April (her father played baseball). Three of the student-athletes participated in the same sport as their mother: April, Denise, and Ron (his mom played softball). Alec and Devin played sports that their parents had never played. It appears that in the case of the student-athlete participants in this study, both their mother and father’s previous sport participation had some impact on their own participation. It is also likely that parents who participated in sports are more likely to encourage their child to participate in sports (often the ones they played), and this encouragement leads their child to wish to succeed athletically.

**Athletics vs. Academics**

The third research question was: in what ways do parents balance their emphasis on athletics and academics? This is an area that very little previous research has examined. The student-athlete participants in this study varied in how their parents balanced their emphasis on academics and athletics. Some felt that their parent had a very clear choice as to what was more important. This was seen when they answered whether their parent would want them to be a student or an athlete. Some of the participants were very sure of which their parent would choose. For example, Renee felt that her parents put more value on her success academically. On the other side, Paul and Devin both felt that their father would choose for them to be an athlete, no question. In other instances,
the student-athletes were less sure of which choice their parent would make. For instance, Ron and Paul both thought their mother found both aspects important. It is possible that when the student-athlete struggled to determine whether their parent would choose for them to be an athlete or a student, that parent promoted a more even balance between the two. This was as Lauer et al. (2010) suggested that is possible for parents to promote a healthy balance between athletics and academics. This balance appeared to be beneficial as Ron and Paul had the highest college GPAs among the participants.

Previous researchers have found that when parents push for athletic success, they did not emphasize academic success (Beamon, 2010; Lauer et al., 2010). The advisors in the present study shared that they had interacted with parents that would fit that description. These were parents who saw academics as a necessary evil that their child had to perform in order to reach the ultimate goal of becoming a professional athlete. The advisors pointed out that this typically happened when the child was in a sport with a major professional league in the United States, especially football and basketball. However, other sports with professional options appeared to have some parents who pushed more for athletics. One of the student-athletes in this study, Alec, wanted to become a professional baseball player, and he shared his parents were not worried that his grades had been low because he was still eligible. Academics was a step-stool to help these student-athletes reach their athletic goals. Two of the student-athlete in this study, Alec and Devin, thought both of their parents would want them to be an athlete over being a student. Those two athletes also had the two lowest college GPAs of the participants in this study. It is possible that these student-athletes’ perceptions of their
parents preference for athletics influenced them to put less of an effort into their academics.

While previous research had suggested that parents that focused on athletic success were less likely to push for academic success, there was no information about the opposite view (academics over athletics). However, several participants in this study discussed the fact that their parents put more of a focus on academics. Some, such as Renee and April, who shared that their parents were very clear that academics were more important than sports. For these parents and their children, athletics were seen as a way to get a scholarship so that academic goals could be reached. The majority of student-athletes who felt that their parents would choose for them to focus on academics were successful academically. All but one had over a 3.0 GPA in college.

One interesting finding was how often parents used athletics as a motivator for academic performance. Several of the student-athletes shared that while growing up, they worked at their academics because they did not want their parents to prevent them from going to practices and games. They shared that their parents told them if they did not get their work done and/or if their grades were too low, then they would have to miss practices, games, or quite sports entirely. This method appeared to be effective because all of the student-athletes shared that they loved their sport and they would do whatever they had to in order to continue to participate. In this case, that meant succeeding academically. Previous research has not discussed this phenomenon.
Parental Involvement

The fourth research question was: how involved are parents in the lives of their collegiate student-athletes, and what are the outcomes of that involvement? The academic advisors explained that most of the student-athletes that they worked with had parents that were involved. It appeared with this study that the student-athletes wanted their parents to be involved in their lives. They all felt that their parents were very involved in their lives, and they all loved how involved their parents were. This was similar to the findings of Fingerman et al. (2012) and Cullaty (2011) who found that the majority of their participants felt that their parents provided just the right amount of support. Six of the student-athletes in this study had chosen their university in part because it was close to their parents. They shared that they liked the fact that they could easily go home. Being close to their parents made it easier for their parents to be involved in their lives.

Overall, the participants felt that parental involvement was a good thing. This follows what previous researchers have found (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2013; Cullaty, 2011; Odenweller, Booth-Butterfield, & Weber, 2014). The advisors explained that they felt student-athletes were more prepared for college and were better able to handle the transition when their parents were involved. Cullaty (2011) found that students felt more autonomous and able to make their own decisions when they felt close to their parents. The student-athletes in the current study also felt that they could make important decisions, and that their parents would support whatever those decisions were.

Researchers have suggested that parental involvement on college campuses has been increasing since the early 2000s (Cullaty, 2011). The academic advisors that
participated in this study all shared that they had seen an increase in involvement since they began their careers. Two cited the past five years as being when the biggest changes had happened in parental involvement. The advisors also shared that parental involvement was continuing to increase. This was supported by the student-athletes who shared that they were in frequent communication with their parents. All of them talked to their parents almost every day, if not multiple times a day. This was similar to the participants that Givertz and Segrin (2014) had where over half of them talked to their parents daily. The fact that a higher percentage of participants in this study talked to their parents daily is most likely because this was a small sample of individuals who wanted to talk about their parents. Givertz and Segrin utilized a survey method and had many more participants (n = 339).

The student-athletes in this study shared that one of their reasons for communicating with their parents was to receive advice. Pizzolato and Hicklen (2011) found that almost half of their participants involved their parents when making important decisions, but most of them only chose to do that once. The participants in this study indicated that they chose to include their parents more often. This disparity could be because the current study had a small sample of students who all indicated they were very close to their parents. It is possible that Pizzolato and Hicklen’s larger population included many individuals who were not as close with their parents. One area of agreement between the student-athletes in this study and the participants in Pizzolato and Hicklen’s study was that it was usually the student that reached out to their parents, and they felt that they could choose to follow or not follow their parent’s advice.
It should be noted that according for the participants in this study, parents were involved in their child’s lives to in different ways and to different levels. Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan (2013) shared that it is important to consider the quantity and quality of parental involvement. In this study, four of the student-athletes indicated that they talked to their parents about how they were doing academically, but it did not go much further than that. The other four shared that their parents wanted more information about their academics, such as when projects were due or if they were turning in their homework. Their parents would also help them with some of their work, such as proofreading papers. The student-athletes indicated that the majority of their parent’s involvement was through communication. This was similar to the findings of Fingerman et al. (2012) who shared that most of the support their participants received from their parents was in the form of listening, emotional support, and advice. This could be considered passive involvement because the parents are not taking an active role in doing things for their child. The participants in this study also received more active involvement from their parents in the form of helping to solve problems and assisting with academic work.

**Overinvolvement.**

Researchers have found little consensus on how to conceptualize overinvolvement. This study utilized a definition that combined some of the different conceptualizations; overinvolvement is when parents are in frequent contact with their child (at least once a day), provide frequent support to their children (at least once a week), and occasionally step in to solve issues or make decisions for their child. The
advisors indicated that they had interacted with parents that would fit that definition. They shared that they would term some of these parents helicopter or bulldozer parents, which are the colloquial terms used in the popular press to identify overinvolved parents (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2013; Odenweller et al., 2014; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Schiffrin et al., 2014; Segrin et al., 2012).

The definition of overinvolvement used in this dissertation requires parents to meet four criteria: frequent contact, frequent support, advice giving/directing behavior, and occasionally stepping in. Following this definition none of the student-athletes in this study had over-involved parents. However, they all had parents that met three of the four areas. Each of the student-athletes were in frequent contact with their parents. All of them also shared that they received frequent support in many forms such as: food, attendance at games, and assistance with homework. Most of the student-athletes also shared that they received advice from their parents. Two of the student-athletes, April and Renee, indicated that their parents had directed their behavior by leading them toward a minor or major. Only one student-athlete shared that his parent had stepped in to solve an issue for him while he was in college. Brad’s mother had talked to a coach about how his coaching style was not conducive to Brad’s success. His mother might be considered the most involved because of this, but Brad did not indicate that he received support at least every week from his mother, so she does not fit this dissertation’s definition of overinvolvement.

While the student-athletes in this study indicated that they had at least one parent that was very involved in their life, Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan (2013) suggested
that the quality of involvement was also important when considering whether a parent was too involved. All of the student-athletes indicated that they discuss their academics with their parents. However, a few shared that their discussions with their parents about academics were more intense. Devin shared that he talked to his mother every night to go over his syllabi to make sure he was getting his work done. April said her father called every day and asked about class, her professors, and when big projects were due. According to Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan, Devin’s and April’s parents would be closer to being overinvolved because their involvement was more intense.

The advisors in this study had strong feelings against overinvolved parenting. They felt that when parents were too involved they hurt their child’s preparedness for college and their overall development. One of the reasons they said this happened was because the student-athletes felt entitled in that they believed other people should do their work for them because their parents had done so. Similar negative outcomes when parents were overinvolved were presented in previous research. Givertz and Segrin (2012) and Segrin et al. (2012) both shared that children of overinvolved parents had a greater sense of entitlement than those who did not have overinvolved parents. Odenweller et al. (2014) also discovered that when parents were overinvolved the children often displayed greater dependence on others. Some researchers, such as Fingerman et al. (2012), Harper et al. (2012), and Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012) all found some positive correlates to overinvolved parents. While the advisors in this study did not see any positives, the fact that the student-athletes in this study all had very
involved parents and they felt it was a good thing suggests that parents being heavily involved might not be bad.

Researchers have found that overinvolved parenting often happens because parents are concerned about their children and want to protect them (Brussoni & Olsen, 2012; Givertz & Segrin, 2014; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Segrin et al., 2012). Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012) and Segrin et al. (2015) both suggested that overinvolved parents were worried about their child’s wellbeing. The advisors in this study also suggested that the parents that they had encountered wanted to do the best for their children.

The line between a parent being involved and being overinvolved is blurry. Some might consider the parents of the student-athletes in this study to be too involved because they were in frequent contact, and their parents provided large amounts of advice and support. However, when examining what previous research has discovered about the outcomes of overinvolved parenting, there is evidence that the student-athletes in this study did not have overinvolved parents. First, the student-athletes indicated that none of their parents were authoritarian. Helicopter parenting has been tied to the authoritarian parenting style (Odenweller et al., 2014). Since none of the parents were perceived to be authoritarian, it follows that they were also not perceived to be helicopter parents. Second, the majority of the student-athletes in this study were successful both athletically and academically. This would indicate that their parents’ involvement in their life was beneficial in those areas. This was unlike the findings of Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012) who found lower levels of academic engagement when parents were
overinvolved. Third, the student-athletes in this study also shared that they believed that they had the autonomy to make their own decisions, and that their parents would support their decisions. Again, this was unlike what previous researchers suggested happened when overinvolved parenting existed (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Schiffrin et al., 2014). These signs are indicative that the student-athletes in this study did not have parents that were overinvolved. Though, it is possible that other areas of their lives were more negatively impacted by how involved their parents were. This study did not examine areas such as self-efficacy, dependency, neuroticism, depression, narcissism, and entitlement that other researchers had discovered as issues with overinvolved parenting (Givertz & Segrin, 2012; Schiffrin et al., 2014; Segrin et al., 2013; &Odenweller et al., 2014)

**Pressure and Support**

The fifth research question was: in what ways do parents of college student-athletes use pressuring and supporting behaviors and to what outcomes? Researchers have suggested that both pressuring and supporting behaviors have been used by parents to influence their children (Anderson et al., 2003; Lauer et al., 2010; Rogers et al., 2009; Turman, 2007). The student-athlete participants in this study agreed that they had seen some of both behaviors from their parents. However, they also shared that they felt their parents were more supporting than pressuring.

Pressuring behaviors are focused on accomplishments (Turman, 2007). These behaviors were seen by a few of the student-athletes. Many of the student-athletes felt that they had received some pressure to perform academically. For example, when Brad
shared that his mother would question any time he did not get an A in class he was feeling pressured. Previous research has suggested that parental pressure is tied to negative outcomes (Anderson et al., 2003; Bhalla & Weiss, 2010; Ommundsen et al., 2006; Rogers et al., 2009). However, the majority of the athletes in this study were successful academically in high school and college. Since these student-athletes had to maintain minimum GPAs to continue in their sport, they may have performed academically so that they could continue with their athletics despite feeling pressure from their parents. This could also be seen when parents threatened the student-athlete’s ability to participate in sports if they did not perform academically. It has been suggested that it is possible for student-athletes to feel pressure because they “owe” their parents for all they have done to help them (Lauer et al., 2010). While none of the student-athletes in this study shared that they felt pressured to play their sport, many of them did point out all that their parents had done for them so that they could play. It is possible that they did not realize that they felt some pressure to perform athletically because of what their parents had done.

When asked directly, the majority of the student-athletes in this study shared that they believed their parents rarely used pressuring techniques if they used them at all. However, throughout all of the interviews the participants discussed how parents “pushed” their child. For example, April said her parents “pushed” her to play softball, and Paul said his mother would “push” him to do some things. The term pressure holds some negative connotations, and it is likely that the student-athletes did not want to make
those ties to their parents. All of the student-athletes shared that they felt they had great relationships with their parents, and that might lead them to say nicer things about them.

Supportive behaviors are focused on encouragement (Turman, 2007). They are often tied to positive outcomes (Anderson et al., 2003; Bhalla & Weiss, 2010; Keller & Whiston, 2008; Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Rogers et al., 2009). The student-athletes in this study all felt that their parents were supportive. The advisors also shared that most of the parents that they interacted with were supportive. The student-athletes in this study were all very successful athletically, which can be seen by the athletic scholarships they had received to play at a major sport university. Most of them were also very successful academically. This backs up what previous researchers have discovered about positive outcomes.

Researchers have shared that support can be divided into tangible and intangible influence (Abar & Turrisi, 2008; Bremer, 2012; Beets et al., 2010; Lauer et al., 2010; Rogers et al., 2009). Researchers have shared that tangible support can include any instrumental assistance (Bremer, 2012; Lauer et al., 2010). Several of the student-athletes shared that their parents had provided financial support for their sport participation which included equipment, gym memberships, lessons, and travel. A few also shared that their parents gave them some money and/or food while they were in college. It takes quite a bit of money for student-athletes to play for travel teams and be noticed by colleges.

Intangible support includes any type of support that does not have a tangible aspect (Bremer, 2012; Lauer et al., 2010). This includes conditional support when parents are present at an activity (Beets et al., 2010). Many of the student-athletes mentioned that
they felt supported by their parents because they came to most, if not all, of their games. It also comprises motivational support when parents offer verbal and/or nonverbal praise or affirmation (Beets et al., 2010). Several of the student-athletes talked about how they appreciated their parents cheering for them. Intangible support includes informational support as well. This is when a parent offers advice or information about an activity (Beets et al., 2010). Many of the student-athletes had one or both of their parents assist them with their academics and/or coach them in their athletics. They felt that their parents would help guide them whenever they had important choices to make. The student-athletes also talked about receiving emotional support from their parents. This included feeling that their parents trust them to make decisions and would be there for them even when they struggled academically or athletically.

Intangible support was mentioned more often than tangible support by the participants in this study. Fingerman et al. (2012) found that parents most frequently utilized listening, emotional support, and advice as methods of supporting their child. These were also some of the most frequently cited methods of support in this study. The student-athletes shared that most of their conversations with their parents were just talking about their days. They also said that they appreciated the emotional support they received from their parents, which most often took the form of backing the decisions that the student-athletes made. The student-athletes explained that they were often in contact with their parents seeking advice. Unlike the findings of Fingerman et al. (2012), the participants in this study frequently talked about conditional support and how their parents attended most if not all of their games. Since Fingerman et al. (2012) were
examining adult children in general, not student-athletes, it is logical that they would not ask about attendance at sporting events. Most individuals over 18 are not competing in athletics in which fans are present. This method of support may be unique for this population.

**Pressure, Support, Tripartite Parenting**

The sixth research question was: in what way do pressuring and supporting behaviors relate to the parenting style the student-athlete perceives their parents to have? The proposed conceptual framework of this study tied pressuring and supporting behaviors to Baumrind’s tri-partite parenting. This framework indicated that authoritarian parents would use pressuring behaviors. These pressuring behaviors would include coercive control that is manipulative and confrontive control that is mostly used for the provision of limits and organization (Baumrind, 2013). The framework specified that authoritative parents would also use pressuring behaviors, but only those that would be considered confrontive control. They would also use supportive behaviors. Finally, the framework shared that permissive parents would use supportive techniques, but no pressuring ones.

The current study offers support for the conceptual framework. The student-athletes in this study felt for the most part that their parents were authoritative. Another sign that the student-athletes believed that their parents were authoritative was that they all thought their parents would give them advice, but would ultimately trust them to make their own decisions. Three perceived their fathers to be permissive, and one felt her mother was permissive. The one student-athlete who felt that both of her parents were
permissive shared that they had been authoritative until she went to college, and then they became permissive. The student-athletes shared that they felt like their parents utilized supporting behaviors most of the time. The student-athletes also shared that their parents sometimes used pressuring behaviors, or that their parents would “push” them towards certain behaviors. However, they felt that it was more of a confrontive control. They felt that their parents pressured them to succeed academically and/or athletically to help them prosper in life. Previous research had suggested that pressuring behaviors were always tied to negative outcomes; however, the student-athletes in this study displayed positive outcomes from their relationships with their parents. This supports the idea that there may be different types of pressure, and they might not all be bad.

In regards to parenting styles, previous research has indicated that the children of authoritative parents are more successful academically (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Lease & Dahlbeck, 2009). This was mostly supported by the student-athletes in this study who had relatively high GPAs. It appears authoritative parents can also have children who are successful academically. Each of the student-athletes could be considered very successful at their sport since they had all received scholarships to participate in sport at a university with a major sport program. The student-athletes who felt that their fathers were permissive had GPAs that fell in the middle of the participants for this study. It is possible that the fact their mother was authoritative helped them to still be more successful academically. They were as successful athletically as the other participants.

None of the participants felt that their parents were authoritarian. That could show some support for the idea that authoritarian parenting is tied to more negative outcomes
It is possible that individuals with authoritarian parents are less likely to become collegiate student-athlete at a major NCAA Division I university. This is because they are not as successful because they felt more pressured in a negative way.

**Factors that Impact Parental Influence**

The final research question was: what contextual factors have an impact on the relationship between parents and student-athlete behaviors? It was found in this study that the age of the child, parent gender, child gender, sport, marital status of parents, and the education level of parents could all impact how parents influence their children. These factors are discussed below.

The age of the child appears to have an impact on how they are influenced by their parents. Researchers have shared that parents are influential in the academic and athletic lives of their children as they grown and when they are in college (Abar & Turrisi, 2008; Agliata & Renk, 2008; Beets et al., 2010; DePlanty et al., 2012; Fass & Tubman, 2002; LaBrie & Call, 2011; Melendez & Melendez, 2010; Pizzolato & Hicklen, 2011; Wuerth et al., 2004). However, much of the research has looked at the parents influence either at the youth level or the college level instead of comparing the two. The student-athletes in this study indicated that their parents were more heavily involved and directly influential before they went to college. Once they were in college their parents influence was more indirect, and they felt their parents allowed them more freedom and trusted them more. The advisors agreed that their interactions with parents were more frequent prior to the child coming to college, and for much of this interaction, the parents
were helping their child through the recruiting process. Once the child was in college, the
advisors had less contact with the majority of parents. This follows what Melendez and
Melendez (2010) shared that as children enter college they have to renegotiate their
attachment to their parents, which often means less direct influence. Previous research
has typically looked at youth sports. The current study gives insight into how parents
continue to impact their child’s athletic behaviors after they have gone to college.

It was also suggested by Anna that the parents of freshmen were more influential
than the parents of seniors. It is possible that as student-athletes progress through college,
their parents trust them more and give them more freedom. However, six of the student-
athletes in this study were upper-classmen (juniors and seniors), and they had as much
contact with their parents as the two freshmen in the study. Maybe the student-athletes
just discussed their parents less with Anna as they aged, or parents chose to talk to
advisors less as their child got older. It is also possible as Pizzolato and Hicklen (2011)
found, that seniors involve their parents more often in their decision making because that
is a year that they have to make many major choices. Yet, Pizzolato and Hicklen found
the increase only in the senior year for males, which does not explain the current study
where students from every year indicated frequent contact with their parents. A reason for
this difference may be because Pizzolato and Hicklen only examined when students
consult with their parent. The student-athletes in the current study discussed any time
they talked with their parents, even when not asking for advice.

The gender of the parent was related to how they influenced their child. Mothers
were more likely to talk to their child about their academics while fathers talked more
about athletics. Previous research suggested that parents also differed in how they showed support and pressure based on their gender. It was suggested that fathers were more likely to exhibit pressuring behaviors while mothers would be more supportive (Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Rogers et al., 2009; Wuerth et al., 2004). The student-athletes in this study indicated that they felt both of their parents were supportive overall. However, six of them shared that they talked to their mother more often than their father. It is possible that while they saw their father as supportive, it was their mother that they chose to go to when they wanted support. Two of the student-athletes talked to their fathers more often. April shared that she had a special relationship with her father because of their bond over softball, which was why she went to him. Paul talked to his father more often because he helped his father run their family business. Contrarily, Lee et al. (2007) suggested that there was no difference in parental influence based on the parent’s gender. They examined single-father and single-mother households. All of the student-athletes in this study grew up in two-parent homes. Brad’s parents were divorced, but his mother had remarried, so he had spent very little time in a single-mother household. It is possible that when a child grows up in a single-parent household, that parent feels they need to act as both parents, so there is less of a gender impact. In contrast, children who grow up in two parent households may be more likely to be influenced differently by different gendered parents. Overall, the participants in this study would suggest that parents follow gender stereotypical roles in how they influence their children, which follows what previous researchers such as Beets et al. (2010) and Wuerth et al. (2004) had found.
Participants in this study indicated that the child’s gender appeared to impact parental influence. This was in accordance with previous research that has found that parents may influence their sons and daughters in different ways (Bhalla and Weiss, 2010). Researchers had found that parents play more often with their sons than their daughters (Beets et al, 2010). Leff and Hoyle (1995) discovered that daughters were more likely to feel supported. The findings of this study would argue with that. Both the males and the females felt like they had received a large amount of support from their parents. It is possible that in the 20 years since Leff and Hoyle did their research that parents have become more overt in their support of their sons. This would follow with the idea that parents are now more involved in their children’s lives no matter what the child’s gender is. In regards to academics, previous researchers have found that males were more likely to feel that they had to succeed academically while females felt more like their parents were controlling their academics (Rogers et al., 2009). Both males and females in this study shared that they felt that they needed to do well academically. The child’s gender also appeared to impact whether they perceived their parent to want them to be a student or an athlete. All of the females felt that both of their parents wanted them to be a student, while four of the male athletes felt that at least one of their parents would want them to be an athlete. This may be related to the fact that both football and baseball have major professional leagues in the United States while softball does not. It would be possible that female basketball players may share that one or both of their parents would want them to be an athlete since that sport does have a major professional league.
The participants in this study indicated that the sport a student-athlete participates in may impact how they are influenced by their parents. This possibility has not been examined in previous literature. The advisors shared that parents of student-athletes in revenue sports (i.e. men’s basketball and football) were more likely to push their child in athletics instead of academics. This was supported by the fact that all of the football players believed at least one of their parents would choose for them to be an athlete. The chance of being a professional athlete may influence how parents view athletics and academics. While Alec was a baseball player, he still thought both of his parents would want him to be an athlete. He had the goal of being a professional athlete, which again ties to the idea of professional sports. It also appeared that the athlete’s sport could impact which parent they were close to. The advisor that worked with softball, Frank, shared that he thought softball players had special relationships with their fathers. Only one of the student-athletes indicated that they talked to their father more than their mother about something other than business, and that was a softball player. Both football and baseball players appeared to talk to the mothers more, and their advisors shared that they talked more about their mothers.

The marital status of student-athletes’ parents appears to have an impact on how the parents influence their children. The football advisors shared that many of the student-athletes they worked with came from single parent households. When that was true, the student-athletes tended to fear their father (if he was in the picture) and run to their mother. This was in contrast to the findings of Lee et al. (2007) who found that parents’ gender did not impact the child differently if they grew up in single-parent
homes. However, they only examined the parent that the child lived with, which may be the difference between what they found and what the advisors in this study had experienced. The only student-athlete participant in this study who had not grown up with both of his biological parents was Brad. His parents were divorced, and he had lived with his mother who had remarried. He talked a lot more about his mother than his father. It is logical that a child who grows up living with one parent and not the other would be more influenced by the parent with whom they lived.

The education level of parents impacted how they influenced their child. Previous research indicated that parents who did not attend college were less likely to assist their child with planning for college and their child’s college academics (Rowan-Kenyon et al. (2008). This was partially supported by the participants in this study. The student-athletes whose parents had not attending college shared that their parents did not have the ability to assist them with their college-level work, while those whose parents did go to college indicated that they received more assistance in that area. However, they also shared that their parents were involved in their choice of colleges which is a large part of college planning. DePlanty et al. (2012) had suggested that parents that did not attend college could act as a detriment for their child’s academic achievement. That was not the experience of the student-athletes in this study. They were all able to find some measure of success in college whether their parents had gone or not. It is possible that their athletics helped to cancel out issues that may have arisen from their parents’ lack of education. A finding in this study that previous researchers have not discussed was the fact that the parents who had not gone to college were often very interested in their
child’s academics. For example, April’s father wanted to know all about her professors and how they behaved. It is possible that these parents are attempting to live vicariously through their child to have the college experience.

Previous research has suggested that a parent’s aspirations for their child has an impact on how they influence their child. Agliata and Renk (2008) suggested that college students cared about their parents’ expectations, and they adjusted better to college when they felt they were meeting those expectations. The student-athletes in the current study all showed signs of positive college adjustment, and they also felt that they were meeting their parents’ expectations. This gives some credence to the findings of Agliata and Renk. Researchers have also found that high academic aspirations were often tied to positive academic outcomes (Bowen et al., 2012). These findings were supported by the participants in this study. The student-athletes who felt that at least one of their parents would choose for them to be a student over an athlete had higher GPAs than the two who thought both of their parents would choose for them to be an athlete. The current study would add to Bowen et al.’s (2012) findings that when student-athletes feel that their parents have high athletic aspirations for them, they are more likely to have high athletic goals for themselves. Also, the student-athletes in this study all shared that athletics were an important part of their relationship with their parents, and they were all successful athletically. This would give some support to the idea that high athletic aspirations could be tied to positive athletic outcomes.

There were two other factors suggested in previous research suggested would impact parental influence that did not come up in this study, race and SES. One factor
that was found to impact parental influence in previous research, but not directly in this study was race. Researchers had shared that African American youth were more likely to be encouraged to participate in sports than individuals of other races (Shakib & Valiz, 2012). This study only included white student-athlete participants, so it was impossible to compare races. However, each of the student-athletes in this study felt that they were encouraged to participate in sports. It is possible that since the student-athletes participated in sports at a major Division I program that they had experienced encouragement in their athletics more than other white athletes. Another aspect previous researchers shared tied to race was that sports were often seen as an avenue for scholarships and a future career for black athletes (Beamon, 2010; Shakib & Valiz, 2012). Some of the student-athletes in the current study indicated that sports were valuable to them because they were the reason that they were at the university they were. Two of the athletes also believed they would become a professional in their respective sports. They would not have been able to attend that school without their athletic scholarship. This give some indication that white athletes may also see sport as an avenue for scholarships and a future career. However, this study cannot compare a black athlete and a white athletes experiences with these topics because there were no non-white student-athlete participants.

Another factor that previous research indicated could impact parental influence that was not found in this study was SES. Researchers had indicated that parents from lower SES were less likely to be involved in their child’s academics and had fewer financial resources to assist their child’s athletics (Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008). The
student-athletes in this study were not asked to share their family’s SES. However, they all did share that their parents were involved in their academics. They also said that their parents spent a large amount of money on their sports, which is a common thing for sport parents to do as shared by previous researchers (Coakley, 2015; Turman, 2007; Wuerth et al., 2004). According to previous research, this would implicate that none of them were from a lower SES. However, it is also possible that if their parents were from a lower SES, that they had a desire for their child to make their way to a higher SES through athletics and academics, and they therefore did all they could to support their child in both.

**Implications**

This study has many implications both for the research field and for practitioners. Very little research has examined the influence parents have over their student-athlete children once they are in college, and none have examined this area utilizing academic advisors for athletics. Both student-athletes and their academic advisors have important insights into the parent-child dynamic. This study has shown that there are student-athletes who are influenced by their parents, and that more research will be required to better understand this influence. It also shows that not all parent-child relationship are the same, and that there are many factors that can impact the relationship. Quite a bit of research has examined parental involvement, and this study showed that it is also an important topic in regards to collegiate student-athletes. Overall, this study helps to lay groundwork on the study of parental influence over college student-athletes.
The current study also offers a new conceptual framework from which parenting can be examined. This framework allows for research in family studies to be compared to research in sport studies. Collaboration between these two areas can help to give a more well-rounded view of parental influence over athletes of all ages. The framework also can help researchers to better understand the parent-child relationship by allowing them to look at both parenting styles and pressure and support behaviors.

The qualitative method utilized for this study has not been commonly used to study the parent-child relationship in sports, especially at the college level. This study was able to give more insight into what student-athletes and their academic advisors believe about parental influence by allowing them to use their own words. Quantitative studies can help to give a general view of relationships, but this study has shown that it is also important to dig deeper into individual’s experiences.

There are many practical implications that can be taken away from this study. The insights shared by both the student-athletes and the academic advisors for athletics in this study have helped to give a greater understanding of how parents influence their college student-athlete’s academic and athletic behaviors. This knowledge can assist anyone who works with student-athletes, especially since parents are becoming more involved in these individual’s lives. It can also help student-athletes and their parents to better understand the relationship that they have.

First, those who work with student-athletes can benefit by understanding that for many student-athletes, their parents are very influential in their lives. This includes frequent contact with their parents. The academic advisors in this study appeared to not
fully realize just how often student-athletes talk to their parents. It would benefit academic advisors and coaches to know that student-athlete talk to their parents almost every day, and much of their conversation is about academics and athletics, and that includes giving advice about both. Those who work with student-athletes can work to be in better contact with parents to try to make sure they are giving the student-athletes similar messages. Another thing they can work on is discussing with the student-athletes what their parents are saying to them so that a better understanding can be had as to why student-athletes think and behave as they do.

Second, along with the knowledge that parents have an influence on their children, those who work with student-athletes can benefit from the knowledge that mothers and fathers influence their children in different ways. Most of the student-athletes in this study talked to their mother far more than their father. That may mean that mothers are the preferred parent to contact if there is an issue with a student-athlete. Also, this study showed that mothers were more involved with academics, so if there is an academic issue, the mother may be the best to talk to. On the other hand, fathers tended to be more involved with athletics, so it might be best to involve the father when there is an athletic consideration. Overall, the student-athletes in this study did talk to both of their parents, so it would be best to try to keep both parents in the loop when working with their child.

Third, this study has suggested that when student-athletes feel that both their parents want them to be an athlete, then they are not quite as successful academically. This is something that could be discussed during recruitment. Student-athletes can be
asked directly if they think their parent(s) would choose for them to be a student or an athlete, and if they clearly believe that both parents want them to be an athlete, then recruiters should consider the fact that this student-athlete might not put much emphasis on their academics. Parents can also learn that their child is making a decision about what they think their parents want them to be, and that decision impacts how they behave academically and athletically. It would appear from the participants in this study that when they are unsure what their parent would choose, they tend to do well at both academics and athletics. Parents can learn that it is possible to emphasize the importance of both, and that may help their child to be successful in both.

Fourth, this study has shared that there is a fine line between a healthy involvement level and a parent being overinvolved in their child’s life. It is possible that the parents and the student-athletes do not even realize that the parents are overinvolved. All of the student-athletes in this study thought their parents were involved just the right amount, but some of them indicated that their parents were involved to the point that could be considered overinvolved. It might benefit those who work with student-athletes to sit down with parents and have a discussion about the benefits of giving their child more freedom to make mistakes and fix their own problems. The advisors shared that they had seen children who were inhibited by their parents’ involvement, and it might benefit parents to hear what their actions are doing to their children. Hopefully, this would encourage some parents to allow their children more freedom to make their own decisions and live with the consequences. Children might also benefit from knowing if
their parent is overinvolved so that they can work with their parent to find a more healthy balance of involvement.

Fifth, it is important for student-athletes, their parents, and anyone who works with them to understand that parents use pressuring and supporting techniques, and how those techniques impact children. This study showed how important it is for student-athletes to feel that they are supported by their parents. The student-athletes in this study all explained that they loved their parents’ support, whether it was attending games, giving advice, providing resources, or just listening to them. These student-athletes also showed positive outcomes both academically and athletically, which would give credence to the proposal that when children feel supported by their parents, then they are more successful. Those who work with student-athletes can discuss with them whether they feel more pressured or supported and use this knowledge to better help the student-athletes. Parents can learn that they can benefit their child by being supportive.

Sixth, this study showed support for the claim that authoritative parenting provides the most positive outcomes. With this also shows that some pressure, if it is explained to the child and is only used to help guide the child, can be beneficial. The student-athletes in this study indicated that their parents would push them sometimes, but they believed that was a good thing. Parents can benefit from understanding that they need to give their child some guidance and some freedom. Those who recruit student-athletes should observe the parent-child interaction, and ask questions to help ascertain what type of parenting style is typically used. That knowledge can help them to know how successful that student-athlete will be at the collegiate level both athletically and
academically. It can also help those who work with student-athletes to better understand what the student-athlete is used to. For example, if a student-athlete is used to permissive parents, then they might react negatively to an academic advisor who tries to tell them what to do all the time with no explanation for why they should do it. A student-athlete from an authoritarian family might react well to the same treatment. Coaches can especially learn from parenting styles since they are often seen as a parental figure by student-athletes.

Finally, it is important for all involved to understand the different factors that can impact how parents influence their children. Those who work with student-athletes can benefit from knowing these factors because it can help them to better understand the parent-child relationship and how they can best work with both parties. Recruiters can take this information and use it to make more informed choices as to who might be successful with their program. Parents can profit from knowing how they influence their child based on these factors, and student-athletes can gain a better understanding of their relationship with their parents by looking at these factors.

**Limitations**

This was an exploratory, qualitative study, and as such, it was not meant to be generalizable. This was a case study that only focused on a few athletes from one university. It is possible that their experiences do not reflect those of student-athletes as a whole. The views of academic advisors were shared which helped to give a larger picture of the student-athlete body with whom they worked, and that gave some credence to the view that what the student-athlete participants in this study shared was not unique solely...
to them. However, they were all still at the same university, and that university might have a unique culture.

The individuals that participated in this study could act as a limitation. This study was restricted to only three sports. It is possible that participants in football, baseball, and softball are not representative of all student-athletes. Within those sports only athletes that chose to participate were included. There is a chance that only student-athletes who had a good relationship with their parents chose to participate. Each of the participants did share that they loved their parents’ involvement in their lives. Other student-athletes may not have as good of a relationship with their parents or they might not like their involvement. That may have an impact on how influential the parents are.

Another limitation was the choice to use only student-athletes and academic advisors to examine how parents influence their children. The student-athletes had the best view of parental influence because it was their perception of their parents that has the biggest influence. However, academic advisors may have a limited view on parental influence because they typically deal with academics. That means they do not hear as much about the athletic side of student-athletes. Also, there are student-athletes and parents that do not talk to academic advisors.

**Future research**

This study sparks several other possible areas of research. These include examining student-athletes from other sports to see how their perceptions of parental influence relate to the participants in this study. That would also mean including academic advisors that work with other sports. It was suggested in this study that what
sport a student-athlete participates in may have an impact on how their parents influence them. Including more sports in future research will help to examine that further. Another area to examine would be including more athletes from football, baseball, and softball. This might offer a more complete view of how parents influence their children in these sports.

Future research could also include examining student athletes from other universities. The participants in this study shared that their parents had some influence over what university they chose, which means that individuals that chose to go to other universities may be influenced differently by their parents. It would also be important to examine student-athletes from individuals that went to universities with athletic programs that would be considered smaller NCAA Division I schools, Division II, or Division III. It is possible that student-athletes choose different divisions or reach different levels of athletic success when their parents influence them in a different manner.

Another area that future research could examine is interviewing student-athletes at different times. It is possible that younger athletes would have a different perception of how their parents influence them. Also, it would be interesting to examine the views of former collegiate student-athletes who may have had more time to consider how their parents were influential in their lives. Finally, a longitudinal study would give more insight into how parental influence may change over time.

A final area that future research could consider based on this study is doing a quantitative study that would examine more individuals. This study sparked many questions that could be used on a survey. Surveying a larger number of student-athletes
over more sports and in more universities would allow for more generalizability. This method might also be more likely to encourage student-athletes who did not have as good of relationships with their parents to participate.
References


Retrieved from http://gocrimson.com/information/recruiting/index


Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics (2013). Athletic & academic spending
database for NCAA Division I. Retrieved from
http://spendingdatabase.knightcommission.org/fbs.
Retrieved from http://www.nbcnews.com/business/careers/pay-play-some-
college-players-could-score-big-bucks-n79871.
LaBrie, J. W., & Cail, J. (2011) Parental interaction with college students: The
moderating effect of parental contact on the influence of perceived peer norms on
drinking during the transition to college. Journal of College Student Development,
52, 610-621.
identity of intercollegiate student athletes. Research Quarterly for Exercise and
Sport, 76, 275-285.
perspectives: Science “after truth.” In K. deMarrais & S. D. Lapan (Eds.)
Foundations for research: Methods of inquiry in education and social science
Lather, P. (2006). Paradigm proliferation as a good thing to think with: Teaching research
in education as a wild profusion. International Journal of Qualitative Studies in


Appendix A: SASSO Support Letter

Interview Guides

September 4, 2014

Dear Institutional Review Board,

I give Megan Parietti permission to work with SASSO and the athletic department for her dissertation. She is allowed to interview student-athletes and have them complete journals in order to learn more about how their parents influence their athletic and academic behaviors.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

David Graham
Assistant Provost for Student Athlete Success
Appendix B: Contact Letters

Student-Athlete

Dear ___________________,

I am a Doctoral student conducting dissertation research on what influence parents may have on their child’s athletic and academic behaviors.

As a student-athlete you have invaluable insight into the experiences student-athletes have. I would like to interview you face-to-face for my study. The interview can be scheduled at your convenience, and it should last around an hour. The interview will focus on your background in athletics and academics and how your parent(s) have been involved. Only researchers will have access to the information from the interview, and any reference to you will be anonymous.

For this study you would also be asked to keep a two week journal about the times you talk to your parents.

This is a great opportunity for you to have your voice heard on this topic. Also, with the completion of this study we hope to have a better understanding of how parents influence their children. With this understanding we can help student-athletes to better navigate their time in college and their relationship with their parents.

If you decide that you would like to participate, please email me back at Parietti.2@osu.edu. Thank you for considering participation in this study. I look forward to working with you.

- For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Thank you,

Megan Parietti

If you have any questions feel free to contact my advisor or myself at any time. Email will work the best.

Investigator: Megan Parietti
Email: Parietti.2@osu.edu
Phone: 614-517-0137
Advisor: Dr. Donna Pastore
Email: Pastore.3@osu.edu
Academic Advisors

Dear ________________,

I am a Doctoral student conducting dissertation research on what influence parents may have on their child’s athletic and academic behaviors.

As an academic advisor for athletics you have invaluable insight into the experiences student-athletes have. I would like to interview you face-to-face for my study. The interview can be scheduled at your convenience, and it should last around an hour. The interview will focus on your background in athletics and academics and how your parent(s) have been involved. Only researchers will have access to the information from the interview, and any reference to you will be anonymous.

For this study you would also be asked to keep a two week journal about the times you talk to the parents of student-athletes.

This is a great opportunity for you to have your voice heard on this topic. Also, with the completion of this study we hope to have a better understanding of how parents influence their children. With this understanding we can help student-athletes to better navigate their time in college and their relationship with their parents.

If you decide that you would like to participate, please email me back at Parietti.2@osu.edu. Thank you for considering participation in this study. I look forward to working with you.

- For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Thank you,

Megan Parietti

If you have any questions feel free to contact my advisor or myself at any time. Email will work the best.

Investigator: Megan Parietti
Email: Parietti.2@osu.edu
Phone: 614-517-0137

Advisor: Dr. Donna Pastore
Email: Pastore.3@osu.edu
Phone: 614-247-8400
Appendix C: Informed Consent

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent

Title of Project: Parental Influence on the Academic and Athletic Behaviors of Collegiate Student-Athletes

Investigator: Megan Parietti

Subject Rights: This activity involves research. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide not to participate in this study at any time, your decision will not affect your relations with the athletics department or any individual involved with the research. If you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand that you may withdraw your consent at any time without any affect on your relationship with the investigators.

Purpose: You are being asked to participate in this research study because of your unique insights into the experiences of student-athletes. The purpose of this study is to examine how parents influence their children’s athletic and academic behaviors once that child is a college student-athlete.

Procedure: You will be asked to fill out a short demographic survey. Once you finish the survey, the interview will be conducted. The interview will include questions on... If you consent, the interviews will be tape-recorded. Any recordings will be deleted once the research is completed. A transcript of your interview will be sent to you for clarification purposes. You will also be sent follow-up questions through email. You will also be asked to keep a journal for two weeks that records your conversations with parents.

Duration of Participation: The demographic survey should take 10 minutes. The entire interview should take about an hour. Follow-up questions via email should take 10 to 30 minutes. The journal will be for two weeks, and each entry should take about five minutes.

Confidentiality: Your participation in this study is confidential. Only the investigators will have access to the tape recordings, transcripts, surveys, and any other data. No one in
your athletic department will ever see any of the information without your permission. Also, your institution’s name will not be identified in any of the results that are published.

**Questions:** Before signing this form, please feel free to ask any questions on any aspect of this study. If you have any questions about the study after you leave here, you may contact the investigator or her advisor.

**Investigator:** Megan Parietti  
Email: Parietti.2@osu.edu  
Phone: 614-517-0137

**Advisor:** Donna Pastore  
Email: Pastore.3@osu.edu  
Phone: 614-247-8400

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

- I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without prejudice. I also understand that I can ask questions about any of the procedures.
- Finally, I have been informed that the information about me obtained during the course of this study will be kept confidential unless I consent to its release.
- I have read the informed consent document, and all of my questions have been answered at this time. I agree to participate in this study.

Printed Name of Participant ____________________________

Signature of Participant ____________________________ Date: _____________

Please initial an option:

_____ You may quote me unconditionally, if you use a pseudonym

Pseudonym: ____________________________

179
_____ You may quote me unconditionally after I have reviewed the transcript

_____ You may not quote me

For the Investigator

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

Printed Name of Investigator ________________________________________________

Signature of Investigator ___________________________________________ Date: __________
Appendix D: Demographic Surveys

Student-Athletes

Directions: Please do not put your name on this survey. Answer each of the questions to the best of your ability.

Please answer each of the following:

Do you identify as: □ Male □ Female

Is your ethnicity:
□ Hispanic □ Non-Hispanic

With what race do you identify yourself?
□ White □ Black or African American □ American Indian or Alaska Native
□ Asian □ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander □ Two or more races
□ Race and/or ethnicity unknown, or I would prefer to not answer

What is your age in years? __________

What sport team(s) are you on? ___________________________________________________________________

How long (in years) have you played your sport? ______________________

What is your current college GPA? __________

What was your high school GPA? __________

Growing up who did you live with the most often?
□ Mother □ Father □ Mother and Father □ Same-Sex parents
□ Other : Please Specify ______________________

Please check the box that most accurately describes the typical behavior of your mother:

□ She tells me what I should do without giving me any explanation as to why. It is her way or the highway.

□ She discusses choices with me and help me make decisions. When she does tell me what to do, she explains why I should do that.

□ She lets me make my own choices with very little interference.

□ N/A

Please check the box that most accurately describes the typical behavior of your father:

□ He tells me what I should do without giving me any explanation as to why. It is his way or the highway.

□ He discusses choices with me and help me make decisions. When he does tell me what to do, he explains why I should do that.

□ He lets me make my own choices with very little interference.

□ N/A
Academic Advisors

Directions: Please do not put your name on this survey. Answer each of the questions to the best of your ability

Please answer each of the following:

Do you identify as: □ Male □ Female

Is your ethnicity: □ Hispanic □ Non-Hispanic

With what race do you identify yourself?
□ White □ Black or African American □ American Indian or Alaska Native
□ Asian □ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander □ Two or more races
□ Race and/or ethnicity unknown, or I would prefer to not answer

What is your age in years? ____________

What sport team(s) do you work with? _________________________________

How long (in years) have you been an advisor? _________________

How many times a month would you say you are in direct contact with a student-athletes parent?
________________________

How many times a month would you say the student-athletes you work with mention their parents? _________________________________
Appendix E: Interview Guides

Student-Athlete

Athletics

When did you start to participate in (sport)?

Why did you choose to participate in (sport)?

How involved was (were) your parent(s) with your sporting participation when you were growing up?

How is(are) your parent(s) involved in your athletics currently?

Academics

How did your parent(s) talk to you about academics while you were growing up?

How did you choose (university)?

How is(are) your parent(s) involved in your academics currently?

Intersection

If your mother had to choose for you to be an athlete or a student, which would she choose? Why do you say that?

If your father had to choose for you to be an athlete or a student, which would he choose?

Why do you say that?

Pressure/Support

What did your parent(s) do to encourage (or not) your sport participation?
Probe: expand on pressure/support behaviors

What did your parent(s) do to encourage (or not) your academic performance?

Probe: expand on pressure/support behaviors

**Advisor**

- How do the student-athletes you work with talk about their parents?
  - What kind of things do you hear?
    - Do you see any patterns in who talks to you about their parents?
- How often do you hear from the parents of student-athletes?
  - what do they talk to you about?
    - Are there any commonalities between those who contact you?
      - Those who don’t?
- Overall, how involved do you think parents are with their child’s athletics? In what ways?
- Overall, how involved do you think parents are with their child academics? In what ways?
- (Define pressuring and supporting to the advisors).
  - Have you seen/heard of parents use either of these techniques with their child’s athletics? In what way?
  - Have you seen/heard of parents use either of these techniques with their child’s academics? In what way?
- Do you have any other comments about how you see parents influencing their child?
Appendix F: Journal Prompts

Student-Athlete

Please use the following as a guide to fill out your journal.

Date:

Parent(s) talked to: mother, father

Method of communication: face-to-face, phone, email, skype, text, other (please specify)

Time communication began: \hspace{1cm} Ended:

Summary of conversation (a general overview, specifics are not needed):

Reflection on conversation: How did the conversation make you feel? If applicable, discuss how the conversation impacted your view of academics. If applicable, discuss how the conversation impacted your view of athletics.
Academic Advisor

Please use the following as a guide to fill out your journal.

Date:

Parent(s) talked to: mother, father

Method of communication: face-to-face, phone, email, skype, text, other (please specify)

Time communication began: Ended:

Summary of conversation (a general overview, specifics are not needed):

Reflection on conversation: How did the conversation make you feel? Talk about how you believe the conversation relates to student-athletes athletic and academic behaviors.