People say I pushed my kids too hard, that I nearly destroyed them. And you know what? They're right. I was too hard on them. I made them feel like what they did was never good enough… However, misguided I may have been, I pushed my kids because I loved them.

(Mike Agassi [Andre's Father], The Agassi Story, 2004, p.7)

I never questioned my father's love. I just wish it were softer, with more listening and less rage. In fact, I sometimes wish my father loved me less. Maybe then he'd back off, let me make my own choices…having no choice, having no say about what I do or who I am, makes me crazy.

(Andre Agassi, Open: An Autobiography, 2009, p.65)

University of Alberta

Enhancing Parental Involvement in Junior Tennis

by

Camilla Jane Knight

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation

Spring 2012
Edmonton, Alberta

ABSTRACT

The ultimate goal of this Dissertation was to identify ways to enhance parental involvement in junior tennis. Three distinct, but related, studies were conducted. The purpose of the first study was to develop a grounded theory of optimal parental involvement in junior tennis. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with 90 tennis players, ex-junior players, parents, and coaches from the United Kingdom. Data analysis led to a grounded theory built around the core category of 'understanding and enhancing your child's tennis journey.' The core category was underpinned by three categories: Shared and communicated goals; developing an understanding emotional climate; and engaging in enhancing parenting practices for competitive tennis. The theory predicts that consistency between goals, emotional climate, and parenting practices will optimize parenting in junior tennis.

It became apparent that parents sometimes struggled to help their children. Hence, the second study aimed to identify the strategies parents used to support their children's tennis involvement and obtain parents' views regarding additional help they required. Interviews were conducted with 41 parents of junior players in the United States. Data analysis led to the identification of four strategies parents used to provide support to their children and five issues they wanted additional help with. These findings indicated that parents 'surrounded themselves with support' to facilitate their children's involvement in tennis, but required additional information regarding specific aspects of tennis parenting.

The final study was designed to focus on tournaments, seeking to examine parents' experiences of watching their children compete. Interviews were conducted with 40 parents of junior players competing in tournaments in Western Australia. Parents' experiences at tournaments appeared to be primarily influenced by four factors and participants provided four recommendations to enhance their experiences. Overall, these results indicated that a variety of factors, ranging from their children's performance to tournament organization, influenced parents' tournament experiences. The identification of these factors, along with participants' suggested changes, has a number of implications for parent education initiatives that may enhance parenting in junior tennis in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Over the course of my PhD I have been fortunate enough to meet many people who have inspired and supported me. It is a great pleasure to have the opportunity to acknowledge the people whose help and guidance was invaluable in allowing me to complete my Dissertation.

First and foremost, my sincerest thanks go to the players, parents, and coaches who were willing to give up their time to answer my questions and share their experiences. It really was a privilege to meet you all and hear your stories.

I also extend my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Nick Holt, for his ongoing guidance and understanding. Thank-you for always trusting me to achieve and helping me to reach far beyond anything I could have imagined. Thank-you also to Dr John Dunn, Dr Tara-Leigh McHugh, Dr Wendy Rogers, and Dr Maria Mayan for your insight and encouragement and for being such excellent role models. Special thanks to Dr Dan Gould not only for agreeing to be my external examiner but also for igniting my interest in this area and producing much of the work that stimulated my thinking and questions.

This Dissertation would not have been possible without the funding I received from a range of sources. Thank-you to the University of Alberta for awarding me the FS Chia Doctoral Scholarship and the Andrew Stewart Memorial Graduate Prize. Thank-you also to the Killam Trust for funding the Izaak Walton Killam Memorial Scholarship and the Dorothy J Killam Memorial Graduate Prize, which were awarded to me by the University of Alberta. Finally, thank-you to the International Tennis Federation for supporting my Dissertation research through a research grant.

Thanks must also go to all my friends in the U.K and Canada for believing in me and helping me through the good times and the bad. Thank-you for inspiring me, challenging me, and most importantly sharing a coffee with me.

Finally, many many thanks to my family for their continual support, reassurance, and understanding. Thank-you mum for teaching me that I can achieve anything I set my mind to and believing in me even when I did not necessarily believe in myself. You truly are my inspiration and my role model. Thank-you dad for instilling in me my love for sport and determination to succeed. Who knew the hours we spent at tennis tournaments would become the foundation of my PhD? And, Ben and Hannah, thank-you for letting your “little sis” travel the world in pursuit of her dreams, while continually reminding me that one day I would have to get a ‘proper’ job!

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Throughout the western world between 50 and 70% of youth engage in sport (e.g., Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002; Department of Health, 2002; Sabo & Veiz, 2008). This is mirrored in Canada with 51% of children regularly engaging in organized sport (Clark, 2008). Through their involvement in sport, children have the potential to gain a range of physical, social, and psychological benefits (Holt, 2008). Further, for some children, their involvement in youth sport may lead to their future careers, either as coaches or elite athletes. Children's opportunities to partake in sport, gain some of the benefits associated with youth sport participation, or become elite athletes are largely dependent upon the involvement and support they receive from their parents (Côté, 1999; Horn & Horn, 2007).

Parental Influence in Youth Sport

It is widely accepted, and consistently confirmed, that parents are a key agent in initiating children's involvement in sport and encouraging children's long-term participation (e.g., Bloom, 1985; Côté, 1999; Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993). Based upon child socialization literature, Fredricks and Eccles (2004) posited that parents influence children's sporting participation and performance in three ways: As providers, interpreters, and role models. That is, parents *provide* children with the opportunity to participate in sport, help children *interpret* their sporting experiences, and act as *role models* for sport participation and behaviors.

Parents provide sporting opportunities by selecting sports programs in which their children can participate, organizing practices, and transporting children to training and competitions (Côté, 1999; Green & Chalip, 1998). In fact, Kirk, O'Connor et al. (1997) identified that parents in Australia commit such extensive amounts of time to their children's sport it can result in parents experiencing difficulty scheduling their family, work, and social life. Parents also make a substantial financial commitment to their children's sport by paying for training, competition, and trips (Baxter-Jones & Maffuli, 2003; Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes, & Pennisi, 2006, 2008; Kirk, Carlson et al., 1997). To provide such support to their children parents might make sacrifices in other areas of their life, such as reducing their expenditure on their children's schooling or their own social life (Kirk, Carlson et al., 1997; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). Parents also provide emotional support when their children are competing, giving feedback and comfort following children's matches and competitions (Hoyle & Leff, 1997; VanYperen, 1998). If parents are unable or unwilling to support their children's sporting endeavors, children are unlikely to be able to participate or perform (cf. Baxter-Jones & Maffuli, 2003; Côté, 1999; Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2004).

Through their provision of sporting opportunities, support, and feedback, parents also help children to interpret their sporting experiences. That is, through their behaviors and involvement, parents can communicate their beliefs and values regarding sport development, performance, and success. It is against these beliefs and values that children are likely to evaluate their own performances and make decisions regarding their competence, the value of winning, and the

importance of participating in sport (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). For example, when parents purchase equipment, commit time to take their children to training, and attend their competitions, they communicate the importance they place upon their children's sporting participation and their perceptions of their children's competence (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005). Parents' perceptions of children's competence is then mirrored by their children. That is, parents who express high perceptions of their children's sporting competence have children with high levels of perceived competence (independent of children's actual competence) (Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Bois, Sarrazin, Brustad, Trouilloud, & Cury, 2002; Eccles & Harold, 1991). As such, whether intentionally or unintentionally, parents consistently provide the backdrop against which children can interpret their sporting experience.

Finally, parents also act as role models for their children and may influence children's sporting experiences through the behaviors they display (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). It is widely accepted that children learn through observation and if children observe their parents behaving in a certain manner they are likely to replicate these behaviors (Bandura, 1986). Thus, if parents engage in sporting activities and through these activities illustrate the importance of hard work and sportspersonship, their children may replicate such behaviors when they are training and competing. If parents do not participate in physical activity or sport, their children are less likely to participate in sport because they will not see their parents participating (and their parents are less likely to encourage participation) (e.g., Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Bloom, 1985; Power &

Woolger, 1994). Therefore, as role models, parents influence whether children participate in sport and, if they do participate, what behaviors they display.

Consequences of Parental Involvement. Through their roles as providers, interpreters, and role models, parents have the potential to positively or negatively influence children's participation and performance in sport. For example, positive parental involvement (i.e., support) has been identified as an important factor in creating positive sporting experiences (Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2009) and is one of the main sources of enjoyment for child-athletes (Leff & Hoyle, 1995; McCarthy & Jones, 2007; McCarthy, Jones, & Clark-Carter, 2008). Parental support has been identified as a contributing factor in the development of children's perceived competence, confidence, and intrinsic motivation to play sport (Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Collins & Barber, 2005). Parental praise has been associated with successful development and longevity of sporting engagement (Wuerth et al., 2004) and athletes' positive perceptions of the quality of their relationship with their parents have been shown to enhance self-determined motivation (Ullrich-French & Smith, 2006). Finally, parental support and guidance has been associated with the development of psychological and coping skills (MacNamara, Button, & Collins, 2010; Tamminen & Holt, 2011) and individuals' achieving an elite status in sport (Côté, 1999; Gould et al., 2006; 2008; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005).

On the other hand, negative parental involvement has been recognized as a source of stress and anxiety for children (Gould, Tuffey, Udry, & Loehr, 1996; Nicholls & Polman, 2007; Reeves, Nicholls, & McKenna, 2009). Athletes who

perceive parental pressure and excessive parental expectations have reported heightened pre-competitive anxiety, lower self-esteem, and lower self-confidence compared to athletes who perceive their parents to be supportive (Collins & Barber, 2005; Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Norton, Burns, Hope, & Bauer, 2000). Parental pressure has also been associated with children being excessively focused upon winning, leading to displays of poor sportspersonship and fear of failure (Casper, 2006; LaVoi & Babkes Stellino, 2008; Sager & Lavallee, 2010). Overall, it has been recognized that inappropriate parental behaviors may interfere with children's training and long-term sporting development (Gould et al., 2008; Knight & Harwood, 2009) and such behaviors have also been associated with children burning out or dropping out of sport (Butcher, Linder, & Johns, 2002; Dale & Weinberg, 1990; Gould et al., 1996).

Quantity and Types of Parental Involvement

Recognizing that some parents have positive influences on their children's sporting experiences while others can have a negative influence, researchers have sought to identify the types of parental behaviors and involvement that are associated with positive and negative outcomes. As Gould et al. (2006) acknowledged, it is little wonder that parents might interfere in their children's sporting development "given the fact that sport parents receive little or no training about how to help their child develop and are exposed to a youth sports environment that is increasingly professional" (p. 635). Examining and identifying appropriate and inappropriate parental involvement is the first step in

generating information to educate parents and enhance their influence on children's participation and performance in sport.

Quantity of Parental Involvement. Initial research in this area focused upon the quantity of parental involvement and associated consequences within the parent-coach-athlete relationship. Based upon his work with youth ski racers and their parents, Hellstedt (1987) proposed that parental involvement ranged on a continuum from underinvolvement to overinvolvement, with optimal parental involvement being situated between these two extremes. Underinvolved parents were characterized as those who displayed little interest in their children's sport and provided limited emotional, financial, or tangible support for their children's sporting endeavors. Consequently, children with underinvolved parents were likely to lack the support necessary to achieve or remain in sport.

Overinvolved parents were characterized by an excessive interest in their children's sporting endeavors. Such parents were perceived to have an underlying motive for their child to gain a career from sport. Hellstedt (1987) proposed that overinvolved parents attended too many practices, criticized children and coaches, and tried to coach their child. Consequently, overinvolved parents were often associated with problems for coaches and children because they were seen to be overprotective, meddling, and to disrupt the coach-athlete relationship. To avoid the negative consequences of under- or overinvolvement, Hellstedt recommended that parents display a moderate amount of involvement. A moderate amount of involvement was characterized by parents being firm but flexible in their

involvement, and providing children with opportunities to be involved in decisions about their sport.

Hellstedt's (1987) work drew researchers' attention towards the differences in parental involvement in youth sport and the potential consequences associated with different amounts of parental involvement. More recently, researchers have highlighted that the quality or type of involvement, rather than the amount of involvement, are more important issues to examine in youth sport (e.g., Knight, Boden, & Holt, 2010; Lauer, Gould, Rolo, & Pennisi, 2010a; Stein, Raedeke, & Glenn, 1999). For example, if one considers the characteristics of over- and underinvolved parents, it appears that such parents might differ in terms of the pressure they place on children and the support they provide. As such, it might be that children's sporting participation and performance is not so much influenced by the amount their parents are involved, but whether parents display pressure or support.

Types of Parental Involvement. The most basic distinction between types of parental involvement has been made between parental support and parental pressure. Leff and Hoyle (1995) defined parental support as "athlete's perception of his or her parents' behavior aimed at facilitating his or her involvement and participation" (p. 190). Researchers have recognized that parental support includes the provision of tangible support (e.g., transportation, money, and time), informational support (e.g., advice regarding nutrition, training, and competitions), and emotional support (e.g., guidance and understanding after matches and during performance slumps) (e.g., Côté, 1999; Holt & Dunn, 2004;

Morgan & Giacobbi, 2006; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). A robust finding is that parental support, in varying forms, is critical to children's sport participation and performance (e.g., Côté, 1999; Gould et al., 2008; Power & Woolger, 1994; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005).

On the other hand, parental pressure has been defined as "behavior exhibited by parents that is perceived by their children as indicating high, unlikely, or possibly even unattainable expectations" (Leff & Hoyle, 1995, p. 190). Parental pressure has been assessed by examining specific behaviors, such as children's perceptions of parents' expectations, how critical parents are following competitions, and punitive behaviors such as punishment and withdrawal of love (Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Sagar & Lavallee, 2010). Parental pressure is consistently associated with negative aspects of children's sporting experiences, such as fear of failure, pre-competitive anxiety, and burnout (e.g., Bois, Lalanne, & Delforge, 2009; Gould et al., 1996; Sagar & Lavallee, 2010)

Seeking to further tease out the parental behaviors that positively or negatively influence children's sporting development, Gould and colleagues (Gould et al., 2006, 2008; Lauer et al., 2010a; Lauer, Gould, Roman, & Pierce, 2010b) conducted a series of studies examining the role of parents in the development of junior tennis players. Through interviews, focus groups, and surveys with coaches, elite players, and parents, these studies highlighted a range of positive and negative parental behaviors that could influence children's tennis development. Negative behaviors included parents overemphasizing winning, criticizing their child, and lacking emotional control. In contrast, parental

behaviors perceived to most positively influence players' development were the provision of unconditional love and support, logistical and financial support, and parents holding children accountable for their on-court behavior. It appeared the behaviors parents displayed varied across their children's tennis careers and the extent to which parents displayed different behaviors dictated the type of relationships they developed with their children.

Overall, this body of research provides a clear indication of parental behaviors that may have positive or negative consequences for children's participation and performance in sport. Nevertheless, as Lauer et al. (2010a) stated, "More research is needed to examine the specific behaviors that facilitate a healthy tennis experience in elite and non-elite players" (p. 493). Such research will allow sport scientists to "better educate parents based on parent research that is providing insight into positive and negative parental practices" (Gould et al., 2008, p. 34).

Parenting Styles in Youth Sport. In addition to examining the specific behaviors parents display in relation to youth sport, researchers have recently recognized that the broader parenting style parents adopt may influence children's participation and performance in sport. Parenting style is a characteristic of the parent and is defined as, "a constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child and that, taken together, create an emotional climate in which the parent's behaviors are expressed" (Darling & Steinberg, 1993, p. 488).

Although youth sport research in this area is relatively limited, the general consensus is that more autonomy-supportive/authoritative types of parenting are

associated with more positive outcomes. For example, a study of parenting in ice-hockey showed that children from authoritative families reported enhanced satisfaction with hockey, which was displayed through obeying rules, team cohesion, and continued engagement in hockey (Juntumaa, Keskivaara, & Punamäki, 2005). Authoritative parenting has also been associated with healthy (rather than unhealthy) perfectionism in youth soccer players (Sapieja, Dunn, & Holt, 2011) and open communication between children and their parents (Holt, Tamminen, Black, Mandigo, & Fox, 2009).

These studies of parenting styles further illustrate the complexities of parenting children in sport and the possible influence parents can have upon children's participation and performance. Further, the results of these studies highlight the need to examine broader aspects and perceptions of parenting in addition to specific parenting practices. As Holt et al. (2009) concluded in their parenting styles study, "[The] findings supported the complexity of youth sport parenting and the need to be sensitive to a range of perceptions and behaviors rather than single variables in isolation" (p. 55).

Children's Perspectives on Parental Involvement

Given the importance of acknowledging a range of perceptions regarding youth sport parenting, another approach to studying parental involvement in youth sport has been to examine children's perspectives regarding their parents' involvement. I recently conducted two studies (that are not part of this Dissertation) to identify athletes' preferences for parental behaviors at competitions. The first study was conducted to identify junior tennis players'

preferences for parental involvement at tournaments (Knight, Boden, & Holt, 2010). Eleven focus groups were conducted with 42 high-performance adolescent tennis players in Canada. Through these focus groups participants identified the behaviors they did and did not like their parents to display at tennis tournaments. Five primary preferences were identified and grouped under a broader theme of athletes' views of supportive behaviors. The five preferred behaviors were: (a) Do not provide technical or tactical advice (unless parents had the appropriate knowledge due to being a coach or having played at a high level); (b) Ensure comments focus on players' effort and attitude rather than their performance or match outcome; (c) Provide practical advice to help players prepare and recover from matches, but do not become too repetitive; (d) Respect the etiquette of tennis by not becoming involved in matches or excessively supportive of children during one-sided matches, and; (e) Match nonverbal behaviors (such as facial expressions and body position) with supportive comments and keep these consistent throughout the match.

The second study examined the parental behaviors female adolescent athletes participating in team sports preferred at competitions (Knight, Neely, & Holt, 2011). Individual interviews were conducted with 36 athletes from a range of team sports and data analysis led to the identification of specific preferences before, during, and after competitions. Before competitions athletes preferred their parents to help them physically and mentally prepare, which required parents to understand their child's needs prior to games (e.g., whether or not the child preferred talking to parents before a match). During competition children

specified that they preferred parents to encourage the entire team not just their child, focus on effort rather than outcome, interact positively with athletes throughout the game, and maintain control of emotions. Children also preferred parents not to draw attention to themselves or their child, not to coach, and not to argue with officials. Following competitions, children wanted their parents to provide positive yet realistic feedback regarding their performance.

These studies indicated that children have specific views regarding their parents involvement at tournaments and, as Knight et al. (2011) recognized, this information has "the potential to inform practice and the development of educational materials for parents" (p. 88). However, these studies were limited to the behaviors parents' displayed at competitions and did not consider how to enhance parental involvement in relation to children's overall experiences, nor did they examine parents' perspectives regarding their involvement. The series of studies conducted in this Dissertation moves beyond these studies and my previous work in parenting (described below).

Parents' Perspectives on Youth Sport

The body of literature examining parenting in youth sport is increasingly accounting for the views of practitioners, coaches, and children regarding appropriate and inappropriate parental involvement. However, one voice that is consistently quiet in the literature is that of parents (Harwood & Knight, in press). Considering parents' perspectives regarding their involvement and the experience of parenting children in sport is important because supporting children's sporting involvement can be a difficult task for parents (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008) and the

inappropriate behaviors that some parents display may occur as a result of the negative emotions or stressors they encounter (Gould et al., 2008; Knight, Holt, & Tamminen, 2009). Further, parents' behaviors, particularly with regard to how they interact with others and their emotional investment in their child's sport, appear to be influenced by prolonged engagement in organized youth sport programs (Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2009). As such, the extent to which parent education initiatives are successful is likely to be largely dependent upon the extent to which parents can display the behaviors that are required from them within the social-contextual constraints of the sporting environment. As Wiersma and Fifer (2008) argued, "Future research in this area is essential in efforts to promote long-lasting involvement in youth sport and physical activity" (p. 527).

In an attempt to understand the perspectives of parents in youth sport, Harwood and colleagues conducted a series of three studies examining the stressors parents of junior tennis players (Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b) and youth soccer players (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010) experienced. These studies highlighted a range of stressors parents encounter when they support their children in sport. Concluding on their findings, Harwood et al. (2010) recognized that "the intense journey of the young academy player is paralleled by a similarly demanding journey for their parents" (p.54). As such, future research accounting for and aiming to enhance the experiences of parents is required to ensure the role of parents in youth sport can be optimized (Harwood et al., 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b).

Summary

As the aforementioned literature indicates, parental involvement is extremely important in youth sport and through their involvement parents can influence children's participation and performance (e.g., Côté, 1999; Fredricks & Eccles, 2004; Gould et al., 2008). At the current time, there is an understanding of the different parental behaviors that can positively and negatively influence children's sporting development (e.g., Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Lauer et al., 2010a; 2010b) and research has recently begun to examine the influence of parents' broader parenting style within youth sport (e.g., Holt et al., 2009; Sapieja et al., 2011). Some research focusing specifically upon these behaviors at youth sport competitions and children's preferences for their children's involvement has been conducted (e.g., Knight et al., 2010; 2011). Finally, research examining youth sport parenting from parents' perspectives has started to appear (e.g., Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b; Wiersma & Fifer, 2008).

Nevertheless, given the relative infancy of parental involvement as a field of investigation and the complexities and consequences of parental involvement, there is a need to further unpack and examine parental involvement in youth sport (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). Specifically, there is a need to examine how parental involvement in youth sport can be enhanced, accounting for the social context in which parents are behaving, recognizing the perspectives of children, and considering the experiences of parents (Harwood et al., 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b; Holt et al., 2009; Knight, et al., 2010; 2011).

Overview of Dissertation

The ultimate goal of this Dissertation was to identify ways to enhance parental involvement in junior tennis. Tennis provides an ideal environment in which to study parents' involvement, not least because it is often synonymous with problem parents (Gould et al., 2008). Parents are required to commit extensive amounts of time, money, and energy to their children's tennis, which can be stressful and challenging for parents (Gould et al., 2006, 2008; Harwood & Knight, 2009b). The individual nature of tennis - - and the fact that children's coaches are often not in attendence - - necessitates parents' attendance at matches (Harwood & Knight, 2009a). This means parents are highly visible at tournaments. As such, children's successes and failures are witnessed by their parents and they can provide relatively immediate feedback regarding their children's perfomance (Harwood & Swain, 2002). Children involved in tennis are heavily dependent upon and influenced by the feedback they receive from their parents (Leff & Hoyle 1995).

This Dissertation contains a series of three studies, which collectively seek to provide information for researchers, practitioners, organizations, coaches, and parents regarding how to enhance parental involvement in junior tennis. Over the three studies a total of 171 children, parents, and coaches from three different countries (the United Kingdom, United States, and Australia) were interviewed either individually or in focus groups. Data were collected from three different countries because there has been a recent call for studies of tennis parents from different countries and cultures (Gould et al., 2008). As such, this Dissertation

provides an opportunity for practitioners and organizations to understand, examine, and learn from other countries.

The purpose of the first study was to develop a grounded theory of optimal parental involvement in junior tennis. That is, this study aimed to identify how parents could best be involved in their children's tennis. The study was conducted in the United Kingdom and comprised interviews and focus groups with adolescent tennis players, ex-junior tennis players, parents, and coaches. The study resulted in the generation of a grounded theory of optimal parental involvement in junior tennis that was focused around the core category of 'understanding and enhancing your child's tennis journey.'

It became apparent that parents themselves sometimes struggled to help their children. Hence, the second study aimed to identify the strategies used by parents to be able to support their children in tennis. Further, this second study aimed to identify any additional help parents required to be able to support their children in tennis (and thus be involved in the most appropriate ways). Individual interviews were conducted with the parents of junior tennis players at two regional training centres in the United States. Analysis of the data indicated four strategies parents used to support their children in tennis and an additional five areas where they would benefit from additional help.

The final study was designed to focus more specifically on tournaments. This study was conducted during a fieldwork trip to Australia and aimed to examine parents' experiences of watching their children compete at tournaments. Interviews were conducted with the parents of junior tennis players at three tennis

tournaments in Western Australia. Participants in this study identified four factors that influenced their experiences at tournaments and four recommendations to enhance parents' tournament experiences. Taken together, the three studies illustrate different directions from which parental involvement in tennis can be examined and enhanced.

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2009). *Sports and physical activity: A statistical overview, Australia*. Retrieved from http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4156.02009?OpenDocument

Babkes, M. L., & Weiss, M. R. (1999). Parental influence on cognitive and affective responses in children's competitive soccer participation. *Pediatric Exercise Science, 11,* 44-62.

Bandura, A. (Ed.). (1986b). *Observational learning*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Baxter-Jones, A. D., & Maffuli, N. (2003). Parental influence on sport participation in elite young athletes. *The Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness, 43*, 250-255.

Bloom, B. (1985). *Developing talent in young people*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Bois, J. E., Lalanne, J., & Delforge C. (2009). The influence of parenting practices and parental presence on children's and adolescents' pre-competitive anxiety. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 27,* 995-1005. doi:10.1080/02640410903062001.

Bois, J. E., Sarrazin, P. G., Brustad, R. J., Trouilloud, D. O., & Cury, F. (2002). Mothers' expectancies and young adolescents perceived physical competence: A year-long study. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 22,* 384-406. doi:10.1177/027243102237189.

Butcher, J., Linder, K. J., & Johns, D. P. (2002). Withdrawal from competitive youth sport: A retrospective ten-year study. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 25*, 145-163.

Casper, J. (2006). You can't be serious, that ball was IN: An investigation of junior tennis cheating behavior. *The Qualitative Report, 11*, 20-36.

Clark, W. (2008). *Kids' sport*. Retrieved from http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2008001/article/10573-eng.pdf

Collins, K., & Barber, H. (2005). Female athletes' perceptions of parental influences. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 28*, 295-314.

Côté, J. (1999). The influence of the family in the development of talent in sport. *The Sport Psychologist, 13*, 395- 417.

Csikszentmihalyi, M., Rathunde, K., & Whalen, S. (1993). *Talented teenagers: The roots of success and failure.* New York: Cambridge.

Dale, J., & Weinberg, R. (1990). Burnout in sport: A review and critique. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 2*, 67-83. doi:10.1080/10413209008406421.

Darling, N., & Steinberg, L. (1993). Parenting style in context: An integrative model. *Psychological Bulletin, 113,* 487-496. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.113.3.487.

Department of Health. (2002). *Health survey for England 2002*. Retrieved from http:www.archive2.official_documents.co.uk/document/doh /survey02 /hcyp/tables/hcypt74.

Dorsch, T. E., Smith, A. L., & McDonough, M. H. (2009). Parents' perceptions of child-to-parent socialization in organized youth sport. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 31,* 444-468.

Eccles, J. S., & Harold, R. D. (1991). Gender differences in sport involvement: Applying the Eccles' expectancy model. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 3,* 7-35. doi:10.1080/10413209108406432.

Fraser-Thomas, J., & Côté, J. (2009). Understanding adolescents' positive and negative developmental experiences in sport. *The Sport Psychologist, 23,* 3-23.

Fredricks, J. A., & Eccles, J. S. (2004). Parental influences on youth involvement in sports. In M. R Weiss (Ed.), *Developmental sport and exercise psychology: A lifespan perspective* (pp. 145-164). Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology.

Fredricks, J. A., & Eccles, J. S. (2005). Family socialization, gender, and sport motivation and involvement. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 27,* 3- 31.

Gould, D., Lauer, L., Rolo, C., Jannes, C., & Pennisi, N. (2006). Understanding the role parents play in tennis success: A national survey of junior tennis coaches. *British Journal of Sports Medicine, 40,* 632-636. doi:10.1136 /bjsm.2005.024927.

Gould, D., Lauer, L., Rolo, C., Jannes, C., & Pennisi, N. (2008). The role of parents in tennis success: Focus group interviews with junior coaches. *The Sport Psychologist, 22,* 18-37.

Gould, D., Tuffey, S., Udry, E., & Loehr, J. (1996). Burnout in competitive junior tennis players: II. Qualitative analysis. *The Sport Psychologist, 10*, 341-366.

Green, C. B., & Chalip, L. (1998). Antecedents and consequences of parental purchase involvement in youth sport. *Leisure Sciences, 20*, 95-109. doi:10.1080/01490409809512268.

Harwood, C., Drew., A., Knight., C. J. (2010). Parental stressors in professional youth football academies: A qualitative investigation of specialising stage parents. *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise. 2*, 39–55. doi:10.1080/19398440903510152.

Harwood, C., & Knight, C. (2009a). Understanding parental stressors: An investigation of British tennis parents. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 27*, 339-351. doi:10.1080/02640410802603871.

Harwood, C., & Knight, C. (2009b). Stress in youth sport: A developmental investigation of tennis parents. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 10*, 447-456. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2009.01.005.

Harwood, C., & Knight, C. J. (in press). The role of parents in the development of tennis players: The past, the present and the future. *Journal of Medicine and Science in Tennis.*

Harwood, C., & Swain, A. (2002). The development and activation of achievement goals within tennis: II. A player, parent and coach intervention. *The Sport Psychologist, 16*, 111-137.

Hellstedt, J. C. (1987). The coach/parent/athlete relationship. *The Sport Psychologist, 1,* 151-160.

Holt, N. L. (2008). *Positive youth development through sport*. London: Routledge

Holt, N. L., & Dunn, J. G. H. (2004). Toward a grounded theory of the psychosocial competencies and environmental conditions associated with soccer success. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 16,* 199-219. doi:10.1080/10413200490437949.

Holt, N. L., Tamminen, K. A., Black, D. E., Mandigo, J. L., & Fox, K. R. (2009). Youth sport parenting styles and practices. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 31,* 37-59.

Horn, T. S., & Horn, J. L. (2007). Family influences on children's sport and physical activity participation, behavior, and psychosocial responses. In G. Tenenbaum & R. C. Eklund (Eds.), *Handbook of sport psychology* (3rd ed, pp. 685-711). New York: Wiley.

Hoyle, R. H., & Leff, S. S. (1997). The role of parental involvement in sport participation and performance. *Adolescence, 32,* 233-243.

Juntumaa, B., Keskivaara, P., & Punamäki, R. L. (2005). Parenting, achievement practices and satisfaction in ice hockey. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 46,* 411-420. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9450.2005.00472.x.

Kirk, D., Carlson, T., O'Connor, A., Burke, P., Davis, K., & Glover, S. (1997). The economic impact on families of children's participation in junior sport. *Australian Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport, 29,* 27-33. doi:10.1080/1740898970020105.

Kirk, D. K., O'Connor, A., Carlson, T., Burke, P., Davis, K., & Glover, S. (1997). Time commitments in junior sport: Social consequences for participants and their families. *European Journal of Physical Education, 2,* 51-73. doi:10.1080/1740898970020105.

Knight, C. J., Boden, C. M., & Holt, N. L. (2010). Junior tennis players' preferences for parental behaviors at tournaments. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 22,* 377-391. doi:10.1080/10413200.2010.495324.

Knight, C. J., & Harwood, C. G. (2009). Parent-initiated coaching stress: A developmental study. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching, 4,* 545-565. doi:10.1260/174795409790291448.

Knight, C. J., Holt, N. L., & Tamminen, K. A. (2009). Stress and coping among youth sport parents. In. C. H. Chang (Ed.), *Handbook of sports psychology* (pp.347-359). Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science.

Knight, C. J., Neely, K. C., & Holt, N. L. (2011). Parental behaviors in team sports: How do female athletes want parents to behave? *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 23,* 76-92. doi:10.1080/10413200.2010.525589.

Lauer, L., Gould, D., Roman, N., & Pierce, M. (2010a). Parental behaviors that affect junior tennis player development. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 11,* 487-496. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2010.06.008.

Lauer, L., Gould, D., Roman, N., & Pierce, M. (2010b). How parents influence junior tennis players' development: Qualitative narratives. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 4,* 69-92.

LaVoi, N. M., & Babkes Stellino, M. (2008). The relation between perceived parent-created sport climate and competitive male youth hockey players' good and poor behavior. *The Journal of Psychology, 142,* 471-495. doi:10.3200/JRLP.142.5.471-496.

Leff, S. S., & Hoyle, R. H. (1995). Young athlete's perceptions of parental support and pressure. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 24*, 187-203. doi:10.1007/BF01537149.

MacNamara, A., Button, A., & Collins, D. (2010). The role of psychological characteristics in facilitating the pathway to elite performance part 2: Examining environmental and stage-related differences in skills and behaviors. *The Sport Psychologist, 24*, 74-96.

McCarthy, P. J., & Jones, M. V. (2007). A qualitative study of sport enjoyment in the sampling years. *The Sport Psychologist, 21*, 400-416.

McCarthy, P. J., Jones, M. V., & Clark-Carter, D. (2008). Understanding enjoyment in youth sport: A developmental perspective. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 9,* 142-156. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2007.01.005.

Morgan, T. K., & Giacobbi, J. P. R. (2006). Toward two grounded theories of the talent development and social support process of highly successful collegiate athletes. *The Sport Psychologist, 20,* 295-313.

Nicholls, A. R., & Polman, R. C. J. (2007). Stressors, coping, and coping effectiveness among players from the England under-18 rugby union teams. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 30,* 119-218.

Norton, P. J., Burns, J. A., Hope, D. A., & Bauer, B. K. (2000). Generalization of social anxiety to sporting and athletic situations: Gender, sports involvement, and parental pressure. *Depression and Anxiety, 12*, 193-202. doi:10.1002/1520-6394(2000)12:4<193::AID-DA2>3.0.CO;2-X.

Power, T. G., & Woolger, C. (1994). Parenting practice and age-group swimming. A correlational study. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 65*, 59-66.

Reeves, C. W., Nicholls, A. R., & McKenna, J. (2009). Stressors and coping strategies among early and middle adolescent premier league academy soccer players: Differences according to age. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 21*, 31-48. doi:10.1080/10413200802443768.

Sabo, D., & Veliz, P. (2008). *Go out and play: Youth sports in America*. (Report for the Women's Sports Foundation). Retrieved from http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/~/media/Files/Research%20Reports/Go%20Out%20and%20Play%20report%209%2018%2008.pdf

Sagar, S. S., & Lavallee, D. (2010). The developmental origins of fear of failure in adolescent athletes: Examining parental practices. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 11*, 177-187. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2010.01.004.

Sapieja, K. M., Dunn, J. G. H., & Holt, N. L. (2011). Perfectionism and perceptions of parenting styles in male youth soccer. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 33*, 20-39.

Stein, G. L., Raedeke, T. D., & Glenn, S. D. (1999). Children's perceptions of parent sport involvement: It's not how much, but to what degree that's important. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 22*, 1-8.

Tamminen, K. A., & Holt, N. L. (2011). Adolescent athletes' learning about coping and the roles of parents and coaches. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 13*, 69-79. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2011.07.006.

Ullrich-French, S., & Smith, A. L. (2006). Social and motivational predictors of continued youth sport participation. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 10*, 87-95. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2008.06.007.

VanYperen, N. W. (1998). Being a sportparent: Buffering the effect of your talented child's poor performance on his or her subjective well-being. *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 29*, 45-56.

Wiersma, L. D., & Fifer, A. M. (2008). "The schedule has been tough but we think it's worth it": The joys, challenges, and recommendations of youth sport parents. *Journal of Leisure Research, 40*, 505-530.

Wolfenden, L. E., & Holt, N. L. (2005). Talent development in elite junior tennis: Perceptions of players, parents, and coaches. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 17*, 108-126. doi:10.1080/10413200590932416.

Wuerth, S., Lee. M. J., & Alfermann, D. (2004). Parental involvement and athletes' career in youth sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 5*, 21-33. doi:10.1016/S1469-0292(02)00047-X.

CHAPTER TWO

Parenting in Competitive Tennis: Understanding and Enhancing Children's Experiences

Parenting is an important contributor to children's psychological, social, and academic development (Kotchick & Forehand, 2002). Within sport, parenting has a substantial influence on children's development and experiences. For example, parents influence their children's talent development (Côté, 1999), enjoyment of sport participation (McCarthy & Jones, 2007), perceptions of sporting competence (Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2004), experiences of competitive anxiety and stress (Gould, Tuffey, Udry, & Loehr, 1996), and the development of psychological skills (MacNamara, Button, & Collins, 2010). Given the influence of parents in sport, it is critical to understand parental behaviors and involvement that enhance rather than hinder children's sporting participation and performance (Knight, Boden, & Holt, 2010).

Recognizing the potential for parents to either positively or negatively influence children's participation and performance in sport, researchers have begun to examine a range of factors associated with parental involvement. For example, research with parents, coaches, and elite athletes (Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes, & Pennisi, 2006; 2008; Lauer, Gould, Roman, & Pierce, 2010a; 2010b). has identified the positive and negative parenting practices that are displayed (whereby parenting practices can be defined as "specific, goal-directed behaviors through which parents perform their parental duties" Darling & Steinberg, 1993, p. 488). Positive parenting practices include the provision of unconditional love, emotional and tangible support, and providing opportunities for children to play sport. In contrast, reported negative parental practices include parents interfering

with training, being overly involved in their children's sport, and focusing too much on performance outcomes.

Researchers have also specifically examined parenting practices at youth sport competitions. Observational studies have revealed the types of positive and negative comments parents make during competitions, and shown that positive comments tend to outweigh negative comments (Bowker et al., 2009; Holt, Tamminen, Black, Sehn, & Wall, 2008). In particular, these studies have shown parents' verbal comments during competitions include (infrequent) criticisms to a range of (more frequent) types of apparently supportive comments.

Researchers have also asked children about their preferences for parental involvement at competitions. In studies with junior tennis players aged 12-15 years (Knight et al., 2010) and female team-sport athletes aged 12-15 years (Knight, Neely, & Holt, 2011) participants identified specific practices they preferred their parents to display at competitions (i.e., show respect, positive body language, and provide practical support) and certain practices they disliked (i.e., parents being overly loud or embarrassing, attempting to coach, and making negative comments). Athletes also identified specific times when they preferred certain types of parental practices. For example, prior to competitions athletes preferred parental practices to be related to game-preparation. During competitions athletes wanted their parents to focus on effort rather than outcome. After competitions, athletes preferred parents to provide positive and realistic feedback about their performance.

Overall, the studies reported above have revealed important information about positive and negative parenting practices (and children's preferences for parenting practices) in youth sport. However, researchers have recognized that to develop a more complete understanding of parental involvement in sport, it is necessary to examine the broader context of parenting in conjunction with more specific parenting practices (Horn & Horn, 2007). That is, rather than focusing research only on discrete practices that parents display (e.g., criticising athletes, clapping shots, driving them to tournaments), it is necessary to also consider broader aspects of parenting in youth sport (Holt, Tamminen, Black, Mandigo, & Fox, 2009).

One way of defining the context of parenting and studying broader aspects of parenting is by using the concept of parenting style. Parenting style refers to a "constellation of attitudes" communicated toward the child that, "taken together create an emotional climate in which the parent's behaviors are expressed" (Darling & Steinberg, 1993, p. 488). It is within a general parenting style that parents display more specific parenting practices. The general emotional climate (i.e., parenting style) created by parents will influence children's perceptions of parenting practices, in turn altering the consequences of the parenting practices. For example, two children may experience the same parenting practice (e.g., receiving feedback after a match), but depending on the general emotional climate in which it occurs (e.g., a harsh climate in which love is conditional upon winning versus a warm and open climate), the children's perceptions of these practices

may be very different. Thus, parenting style can be considered as a global parenting characteristic that provides context to specific parenting practices.

Very few studies have examined parenting styles in sport (Juntumaa, Keskivaara, & Punamäki, 2005; Holt et al., 2009; Sapieja, Dunn, & Holt, 2011). For example, Holt et al. (2009) identified different parenting styles and practices among parents of young female soccer players (*M* age = 13 years). They found that parents who had an autonomy-supportive style provided appropriate structure for their children and allowed them to be involved in decision-making. Parenting practices associated with this style were that parents were able to read their children's mood and reported open bidirectional communication. On the other hand, parents who had a more controlling style did not support their children's autonomy, were not sensitive to their children's mood, and tended to report more closed modes of communication. Discussing the findings of this study, Holt and colleagues stated that, "findings supported the complexity of youth sport parenting and the need to be sensitive to a range of perceptions and behaviors rather than single variables in isolation" (P. 54).

Although an understanding of appropriate and inappropriate parenting practices and styles in youth sport has begun to develop (e.g., Gould et al., 2006; 2008; Holt et al., 2009; Knight et al., 2010; 2011; Sapieja et al., 2011), there continues to be a need to understand types of parenting that children find supportive (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005; Stein, Raedeke, & Glenn, 1999) and further unpack the construct of parental involvement in youth sport (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). More specifically, research which examines parenting

practices within the context of parenting styles will help advance the youth sport literature (Horn & Horn, 2007). The current study aimed to address these needs by examining parenting practices and the broader context of parenting within junior tennis.

Furthermore, the current study was designed to advance understandings of parental involvement in sport by examining ways in which parents could be *optimally* involved (which was broadly defined, *a priori*, as 'parental involvement that enhances children's subjective experiences of sport') in their children's sporting lives. Research examining parenting styles and parenting practices in youth sport has generally *described* the parenting styles and parenting practices that are associated with positive or negative outcomes in youth sport. However, to learn more about effective parenting in youth sport and enhance parents involvement, it might be beneficial to identify the *best* ways parents can be involved in their children's sporting lives.

Presumably, optimal parenting is not limited to the practices parents engage in at training and competition, but extends to the overall emotional climate that parents create surrounding competitive sport. As such, this study aimed to answer the following research questions: (1) What (broad) types of parental involvement do adolescents, parents, and coaches think are most appropriate in youth sport?; (2) What (specific) types of parenting practices do adolescents, parents, and coaches think are most appropriate in youth sport?; (3) What do children, parents, and coaches think can be done to optimize parental involvement? The overall purpose of this study was to develop a grounded theory

of optimal parental involvement in tennis by considering both the broader parenting context along with more specific parenting practices.

Method

Grounded Theory Methodology

The Straussian version of grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998) was used for this study. Grounded theory was selected because it allows researchers to develop explanatory theories about common social life patterns or social processes, while recognizing the complexities of the social world (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Given that the purpose of this study was to develop an explanation of optimal parental involvement in tennis (a social process) grounded theory was deemed appropriate.

Consistent with Straussian grounded theory, this study was approached from a pragmatic philosophical perspective (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Pragmatism is concerned with the idea that individuals' knowledge is meaningful in relation to their actions and interactions (Dewey, 1922). Interactions are influenced by individuals' past memories and experiences and through these interactions individuals learn about themselves and others. Ideas arising from interactions are perceived as a product of collective knowledge and the environment in which individuals are socialized. Thus, the collective knowledge generated in this study is a result of the multiple individuals' experiences and the decision to sample players, coaches, and parents in order to gain insight into optimal parenting in tennis was consistent with these philosophical assumptions.

Sampling

A core methodological feature of grounded theory is the continual interplay between data collection, sampling, and analysis during the research process to produce a (usually) substantive theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This iterative process is driven by theoretical sampling, which enables the researchers to identify important aspects within the data and then conduct further data collection to refine emerging concepts. The principle of theoretical sampling was adhered to throughout this study as opportunities to develop concepts in different situations and with different participants were sought to help ensure concepts were adequately saturated (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Theoretical sampling can also involve obtaining reinforcing, negative, and unusual participants or examples to develop the emerging concepts and theory. In the current study, negative cases (e.g., instances and/or parents who felt they had not been optimally involved in their children's tennis, or players who had disliked their parents' involvement) were sought to consider wider dimensions of parental involvement. Such negative cases/examples actually reinforced the emerging patterns rather than contradicted the theory, because - - in the case of the current study - - it was often as a result of negative experiences that participants had identified more appropriate types of parental involvement.

Participants

In total, the sample was comprised of 90 participants (33 mid-adolescent players, 10 older-adolescent players, 10 ex-tennis players, 17 parents, and 20 coaches from the United Kingdom (see Table 2.1 for demographic information).

Table 2.1

Participant demographics

Population	n	Player age (years)			Gender		Player standard				Years of experience		
		M	*SD*	Range	Male	Female	Club	County	National	International	*M*	*SD.*	Range
Current players	33	13.29	1.21	12-15	15	18	7	10	10	6	5.78	1.72	3.5-9
Older players	10	17	0.67	16-18	8	2	0	1	7	2	8.8	2.25	4-12
Ex-junior players	10	21.3	2	19-24	5	5	0	5	3	2	10.8	3.5	5-15

Population	n	Age of children	Gender		Player standard				Years of experience		
			Male	Female	Club	County	National	International	*M*	*SD*	Range
Tennis parents	15	11-16	7	8	0	1	7	7	9.12	4.91	5-25
Ex-tennis parents	2	25	1	1	0	1	1	0	14.5	2.12	13-16
National coaches	10	All ages	9	1	0	0	0	10	12	5.83	6-20
Performance coaches	5	All ages	5	0	0	0	5	0	19.6	9.61	10-34
Development coaches	5	All ages	4	1	0	5	0	0	12.2	5.07	5-17

Initially, county and national junior tennis players aged between 12 and 15 years were recruited. These participants were selected because they were regularly competing in competitions and committed to tennis. Thus, they were perceived to be information-rich cases (Patton, 2002). Parents and coaches of these players were also sampled, which builds on suggestions from previous research to examine multiple perspectives on parental involvement (e.g., Côté, 1999; Holt et al., 2009; Lauer et al., 2010; 2011; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). This was important for the current study because multiple perspectives from different social agents can help to provide more complete explanations of the complexities of the social processes being examined (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

As the study progressed the theoretical sampling strategy broadened to a wider population to explore the emerging concepts. In particular, the need to sample a range of players became apparent because, as identified via the iterative process of data collection and analysis, older players, ex-junior players, and players at different competitive standards were needed to provide different perspectives about parenting in tennis (e.g., by reflecting on their experiences during adolescence). The progression of theoretical sampling during the study included: (1) Adding older players aged 16 to 18 years old who could reflect on their past and current playing experiences; (2) Including club and international level players to examine parental involvement at different standards; (3) Interviewing ex-junior tennis players (still involved in tennis in a coaching or recreational capacity) to gain their reflections on their parents' involvement in the junior tennis system; and, (4) Adding coaches of club and international players.

Data Collection

Prior to data collection, Institutional Research Ethics Board approval was obtained. All participants were provided with a written explanation of the study and a consent form. All adult participants (aged 18 years and older) provided written informed consent and parents of participants aged under-18 years provided written consent for their child. At the outset of the interview, participants were provided with a verbal explanation of the study, they were informed their participation was voluntary, and reminded of issues of confidentiality. For participants aged younger than 18 years, assent was assumed if they chose to continue with the interview at this point.

Data collection took place through interviews and focus groups conducted at eight locations in the United Kingdom: Two Satellite Tennis Clubs (feeder clubs for high performance centers), three High Performance Tennis Centers (HPCs), two International High Performance Centers (IHPCs - HPCs and IHPCs are centers designed to meet the needs of the highest-level performance players), the National Tennis Center, and one tournament. Data were collected during a fieldwork trip to the United Kingdom (the author was based in Canada and visited the United Kingdom to collect data for this study, similar to the procedure used in a grounded theory study conducted by Holt and Dunn, 2004).

Individual Interviews. Seventy-two individual semi-structured interviews were conducted (27 junior players, 4 older players, 10 ex-junior players, 17 parents, and 14 coaches). Interviews ranged from 30 to 64 minutes, lasting on average 44 minutes. Initial interview guides were based on previous studies

examining athletes' preferences for parental behaviors in youth sport (Knight et al., 2010; 2011) and broader aspects of parenting styles (Holt et al., 2009).

Pilot individual interviews were conducted with two junior players, one parent, and one developmental coach in the United Kingdom. The data from the pilot interviews were not included in the study, rather the pilot interviews were conducted to help establish the relevance of the initial interview guide and allow the interviewer to become familiar with the interview procedure. As a result of the pilot interviews, a number of questions were refined and probes were added. For example, more information regarding the participants' tennis history was included and some questions regarding optimal involvement were rephrased.

The interview guide followed the structure recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2005) starting with introductory questions, then main questions, before ending with summary questions. Across all participants, the introductory questions provided an opportunity to build rapport and focused upon collecting demographic information and an understanding of the participant's tennis history. The main questions then examined perceptions of parenting in general and within tennis. For example, players were asked to describe the role their parents played in their life, their involvement in tennis, and the consequences of this involvement. Parents were asked to comment on their tennis involvement and coaches discussed the involvement of parents with the players they coached. Summary questions asked participants to specify types of parental involvement they perceived to be most and least helpful in junior tennis and the consequences

of this involvement. Participants were also asked to identify how they thought parents could best be involved in junior tennis.

In addition to these general topics, questions specific to each population were also included. For example, ex-players were asked to identify, in hindsight, if there were any aspects of their parents' involvement they would have liked to change. Parents were asked to specify any changes they had made to their involvement and reasons for any changes. Coaches were asked to specify differences they had seen between parents' involvement and the consequences they had witnessed of the different types of involvement. The questions produced data that provided 'positive' and 'negative' instances which were useful for providing a precise analysis of factors associated with optimal types of parenting.

The interview guides were continually revised during the iterative process of data collection and analysis, which (in addition to theoretical sampling) helped ensure new concepts and relationships were fully explored (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For example, during the initial interviews, many participants commented on the importance of parents adapting their involvement to different situations. Thus, a question asking participants about the importance of parents changing their involvement in different situations was added to the interview guides. Examples of the initial and final interview guides for each population (parents, coaches, players, and ex-junior players) are provided in the appendix at the end of the chapter.

Focus Groups. Three focus groups were conducted with a total of 18 participants (6 current players, 6 older players, and 6 coaches). Focus groups were

used to supplement the interview data and evaluate the emerging theory because they provided an opportunity for multiple individuals to discuss the concepts and provide information from a range of perspectives (Kreuger & Casey, 2000). As such, the focus groups were also used as a member-checking tool, whereby experts in the field (i.e., players and coaches) could assess the applicability of the emerging theory to their experiences and comment on its coherence (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These data further exhausted the exploration of concepts and the relationships therein.

Data Analysis

Analysis began after the first interview was conducted and continued during and following data collection (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Due to the fact that interviews were conducted during a fieldwork trip it was not possible to transcribe each interview and analyze the transcript prior to the next interview in the traditional manner associated with grounded theory. Five steps were taken to address this issue. First, immediately after each interview the researcher made notes about her initial thoughts on important concepts reported by participants and possible relationships between these concepts. Second, as many interviews were transcribed as possible (n = 42) and the researcher engaged in as much 'traditional' analysis of transcripts as was feasible during the fieldwork trip. Third, for the interviews that had not yet been transcribed, the researcher listened back to each audio file and made notes about the important ideas, concepts, and relationships. Fourth, the researcher wrote memos after each session of traditional and 'audio' analysis. Finally, weekly summaries were written. These

weekly summaries were reflections on the analysis and memos written during each week. Completing these weekly summaries provided an opportunity to draw links between the different concepts identified. By employing these techniques the researcher was able to remain faithful to the principles of grounded theory (e.g., the techniques enabled the researcher to identify the need for additional participants consistent with the tenet of theoretical sampling). Transcription and further analysis of the remaining interviews continued after the fieldwork.

Coding. Transcription produced 1278 pages of single-spaced data, which were subjected to formal analysis procedures recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1998; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Through a process of open, axial, and theoretical integration, data analysis moved from a descriptive to a theoretical level. Although described in a linear format here, these techniques were applied throughout the study in an iterative and cyclical manner during and following the fieldwork.

Open coding is the process of "breaking data apart and delineating concepts to stand for blocks of raw data. At the same time, one is qualifying those concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 195). Thus, open coding was conducted during audio and written analysis of the data to identify the smallest individual units of data (concepts), their properties, and dimensions relating to parental involvement. Descriptive labels, such as 'wants to be a professional' or 'plays tennis for fun,' were allocated to each concept.

While open coding fractured the data into pieces, axial coding allowed data to be reconstructed. That is, through axial coding, relationships between concepts were identified and some individual concepts were grouped together. As with open coding, axial coding commenced during audio analysis and continued following the completion of data collection. Concepts were compared and links (relationships) between the concepts were identified. For instance, descriptive codes relating to players' long-term goals and reasons for involvement were grouped under the category of goals. Properties such as 'communicated and shared' were also identified.

The final stage of coding involved theoretical integration (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Theoretical integration began once initial concepts and relationships were identified and continued throughout the data collection period. Through theoretical integration the core category (the category that represents the main focus of the research) was identified (i.e., 'enhancing and understanding your child's tennis experience') and other concepts were related to this core category. For instance, the concept of shared and communicated goals was identified as necessary for enhancing children's experiences and was therefore integrated into the developing grounded theory.

Additional Analytic Tools. Four analytical tools recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1998; Corbin & Strauss, 2008) were used during this study; Constant comparison, memos, questioning, and diagramming. Throughout the process of data analysis, data were subjected to constant comparison, which is "the analytic process of comparing different pieces of data for similarities and differences"

(Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 65). For example, during audio-analysis and written analysis, concepts were compared to previously identified concepts to ensure that data were coded into discrete categories. Positive and negative examples of parental involvement were compared. Through this comparison it was possible to identify why certain types of involvement were deemed positive or negative and infer how this involvement could be made more appropriate (i.e., optimized).

As noted previously, extensive memos were written during data collection and analysis to provide a trail of how concepts, properties, and dimensions were emerging and apparently related (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In total, 95 memos (ranging from a paragraph to two pages) were recorded during data collection and analysis. The memos covered a range of topics from the role of players' interpretations to the consistency of parents' messages, the intricacies of developing independence, and transitions in players' goals.

Questions about the data, emerging concepts, relationships, and the developing grounded theory were posed throughout data collection, analysis, and manuscript preparation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Questioning was used to encourage continual probing of the data and ensure the author's full immersion in the research process. Initially, questioning focused upon the allocation of labels to concepts and the allocation of data to different concepts. As analysis progressed, questions shifted towards the relationships between questions and the emerging theory. Finally, questioning was addressed at the representation of the results in this manuscript.

Diagrams were used to visually illustrate the relationships between different concepts. Diagrams were used to help establish that the relationships between concepts were clear and logical. Diagrams also helped ensured data were viewed as a whole (rather than as discrete units) so that analysis was conducted at a more abstract conceptual level rather than a descriptive level (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Diagramming was a constant activity during the course of the study, and numerous iterations of the grounded theory were developed during the research process. Diagrams were edited and adapted as a consequence of the ongoing process of data collection and analysis before arriving at the final theory.

Methodological Rigor

Researchers have been encouraged to enhance methodological rigor and validity during the research process, rather than exclusively relying on post-hoc verification techniques (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). Many of the techniques to enhance methodological rigor during research, such as theoretical sampling, continuing to collect data until saturation is reached, writing memos, and an active analytical stance (i.e., engaging in analysis throughout the data collection process) are inherent within the grounded theory methodology and were adhered to throughout this research. A reflexive journal was also maintained throughout the process of data collection, analysis, and manuscript preparation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The completion of a reflexive journal helped ensure that preconceived ideas or biases regarding the data were recorded.

As mentioned previously, focus groups with players (6 older players aged 16-18 years, 6 players aged 12-16 years) and coaches (3 development and 3 performance coaches) as well as four interviews with older players (16-18 years) were used as a form of member-checking within the process of conducting the study rather than solely as a post-hoc technique (see Morse et al., 2002). These interviews were intended to help evaluate the developing grounded theory. That is, rather than asking these participants only to discuss optimal parental involvement, they were also presented with the theory and asked to discuss whether it was representative of their experience, and whether there were any additions they would like to see. Several participants expanded on concepts, helped improve the labels used to describe some concepts, and pushed the author to further examine the relationships between concepts.

Results

Data collection and analysis led to the development of a substantive grounded theory of optimal parental involvement in junior tennis. Based on the views of the participants in this study, the initial definition of optimal parental involvement was refined. It was suggested that optimal parental involvement is a type of involvement that leads to each child having a successful and enjoyable experience in tennis. Although some players placed slightly more emphasis on enjoyment or performance, the majority of players indicated these two factors went 'hand-in-hand.' For example, when discussing the outcome of optimal involvement, a male national player said, "I think it's a mixture really, I want to enjoy my tennis, but I also want to be able to play well in my tennis" (Player 36).

Another player stated, “They [my parents] know that if I win I enjoy it, and I enjoy it a helluva lot more than if I lose!” (Player 1). Thus, the proposed grounded theory aims to illustrate how parents can be optimally involved to help make their child’s tennis experience successful while ensuring it is also enjoyable.

The proposed grounded theory is constructed around the core category of ‘understanding and enhancing your child’s tennis journey.’ Based on the data collected, it appeared three categories underpinned the core category: (1) Shared and communicated goals; (2) Developing an understanding emotional climate; and, (3) Engaging in enhancing parenting practices for competitive tennis.

In the following sections the core category, to which all other categories are related, will be presented. The three underpinning categories and the concepts within these categories will then be described. The results of this study are based upon multiple perspectives (players, ex-players, parents, and coaches). Throughout the results the term participants will be used to account for everyone in the sample. When distinctions are made between participants from different populations (e.g., players, parents, coaches), these will be labelled accordingly.

Core Category: Understanding and Enhancing Your Child’s Tennis Journey

The proposed grounded theory indicates if parents can adhere to the core category of understanding their child’s tennis journey and being involved with the purpose of enhancing this journey, they could help their child be successful and enjoy playing tennis. This core category is based on and described by the concepts of parents’ understanding of tennis, focusing on their child as an individual, and

understanding that their child's parenting needs may change over the course of their child's tennis journey.

Participants consistently discussed the influence parents' understanding of the game had on parents' involvement. For example, as a male national coach stated, "There are times when it [parental involvement] can actually be very positive, if you've got somebody who understands tennis, I think it can be very useful" (Coach 3). Such a view was also supported by parents. Explaining her experience of supporting her son in tennis, one mother said:

> When [name of son] started tennis I had no idea about tennis, it was sort of my husband [who] used to take him, and then he got into matches and games and winning then I realized I have to learn everything about tennis to be able to help him (Parent 1).

Players indicated the importance of parents understanding tennis by sharing stories illustrating the consequences associated with a lack of parental understanding. For example, one of the older male national players explained how players may react if parents provide feedback but do not understand tennis:

> It frustrates the hell out of them [players], thinking, "I just don't want to hear that," and you know, "just go home," and all those teenager things that you say to your parents when you don't respect what they're saying when you're growing up, even though the parents trying to help, cause I'm sure they want their child to do well, but the player's just not going to listen and respond to that (Player 32) .

Inherent to understanding and enhancing a child's tennis journey was parents focusing upon their child as an individual. That is, to be optimally involved in tennis, participants indicated that it would be beneficial for parents to recognize each child's tennis journey is unique and parents should attend to what is important for their child, rather than being concerned with what other players are doing. A male national coach summarized this view, explaining parents should realize:

> My son is my son, as much as perhaps if he played football or tennis I'd like him to be as good as the best person, he can't be, he can only be the best he can be, comparing him to others is not good… I say that to the parents, [I say] "your kid can only be the best they can be, so don't compare. Live your own journey" (Coach 6).

Parents and players echoed these sentiments. For example, a player shared his feelings about his parents comparing him to other players. He said:

> [It makes me feel] not good 'cause my parents are always like you should have done this, they try and tell me what I need to improve, should improve on compared to what the other person was good at. It's kind of annoying when they compare me with them [other players] (Player 14).

Similarly, a parent said, "I guess the role of the parent in that respect should be dependent upon what the child wants because every child's different aren't they. It's about knowing your own child and focusing on what they need" (Parent 8).

Associated with this need to focus on their individual child was a suggestion of the importance of parents recognizing the need to alter their

involvement depending on their child's experiences and needs at different times during their tennis journey. For example, a mother explained how her involvement was dictated by different situations:

> I take a back seat and support, but if I see, and that might be, [name of child] has been injured quite a few times in the last year and that's when he's needed, not just financial support, but emotional support. Where his whole world has collapsed, [he thinks] he's never going to play tennis again, and that's tough, you know, where you've got to keep that emotional support up, so yeah, in physical, emotional, whatever, I'll support him (Parent 13).

Similarly, a national coach explained, "There's going to be, you know, a rocky road. There's going to be ups, there's going to be downs, and it's very, very much how, um, how you handle these situations. Umm because you know, it will certainly rub off on the child" (Coach 5). Players further discussed how the involvement they needed from their parents would depend on different match situations and experiences.

In summary, the proposed core category is that optimal parental involvement requires parents to understand their child's tennis journey. The ways in which parents could achieve this is depicted by the three (sub) categories described below.

Category One: Shared and Communicated Goals

In order to understand and enhance their child's tennis journey it appeared important that parents and children shared the same goals for matches and long-

term involvement in tennis. As one player explained, "It [tennis] works 'cause I think the same… we're [parents and player] like on the same page" (Player 11). A development coach discussed a current player he was working with to highlight the importance of shared goals:

> That lad has a massive chance of making it and they've got some massive decisions to make over the next few years and they've got to want what [name of player] wants. [Name of player] wants to be a tennis player 100% and his dad wants him to be a tennis player and so does his mum, brilliant, absolutely brilliant, their goals are clearly set out (Coach 19).

The father of an international player expressed the need for parents and players to share similar goals for matches. He said:

> If he [son] has his goal for the match and is gonna really try and play this particular way or play this shot a particular way and then he loses, if the parent hasn't really bought into that goal then obviously that can lead to conflict between the parent and the child, saying why did you do that all the time? (Parent 9).

If parents and players were not striving to achieve the same goal, it seemed unlikely that parents would be able to understand their child's experience or be involved in a manner that would enhance it. As a national player explained:

> If it's like they [parents] want you to play but you don't want to play or the other way then it's not, it's a bit pointless really isn't it, 'cause you don't agree on that so you're going to get into arguments (Player 14).

An ex-international player expanded this idea, saying, "If the child's aims vary from their parent's aims, I think it turns into the parent's lifestyle a little bit too much rather than actually the kid like leading the way, doing what they want to do… and that leads to pressure" (Ex-player 10).

However, it was not sufficient for parents to *assume* they held the same goals as their children. Instead, as a national coach explained, "I think communication is also key, whether they agree the goal, ultimately that kid has to agree [with] that goal, otherwise it's [achieve the goal] going to be difficult to do" (Coach 7). Players also described the need for communication regarding goals. A national player said:

> I think again it depends on what the kid wants from the tennis and I think it's how well the kid communicates with the parents as to what they want. If the kid doesn't want anything, he just wants enjoyment, he might not say that and the parents might think he's playing a lot. But he might just be playing a lot for enjoyment purposes and so he might, the kid might feel pressured into playing to win, playing competitively, whereas really he just wants to play for fun. And then I think maybe some parents, maybe, if the kid wants to go professional or have something at it then the parents might not realize and they might not do anything to help him or stuff like that (Player 9).

Such communication regarding goals appeared particularly important to ensure parents could adapt their involvement if players changed their goals. For example, one coach described a situation where a child left tennis because, "The

parents are still on the bandwagon thinking like 2 years ago when they were, the kids were, were aiming for regional or national. And the parents were still there and then the goals have changed for the kid" (Coach 2). The father of an ex-player explained how his involvement changed after he spoke to his daughter about her goals:

> As things went on and we talked about how tennis was going, the goals evolved over a period of time to, "yeah I can reach this goal but I'm not going to play professionally, but I quite like playing tennis and I want to become the best I can." So we continued travelling but not so far and we cut down the number of lessons because they weren't necessary (Parent 15).

As such, it appeared for parents to be optimally involved in their child's tennis, they first needed to established shared goals with their child. Having established these goals parents and players then needed to engage in continual discussion regarding these goals and alter their involvement appropriately.

Category Two: Develop an Understanding Emotional Climate

Participants recognized that the general climate parents produced (in addition to the specific practices parents' displayed) would influence children's experiences. For example, when discussing the influence of specific parenting practices, one father explained, "You can't separate what you do, the way you are and they way you view life and tennis and the way you behave" (Parent 16). A national player further highlighted the importance of the general climate parents created. He said:

> If anything, it's just what it's like with parents away from the tennis situation, whether they're the same, whether they're really strict or whether like say if you've got one of those parents that's really strict on court and really pushing them, what are they like behind when they are at home, how they deal with it…is it a warm environment back at home or a really strict environment? (Player 37).

Based on the data collected, it appeared the general climate parents needed to create was an understanding one. As one player simply said, "If your parents are like in the know, they're going to be less like judgemental" (Player 27). Similarly, a male ex-international player described a negative situation he had experienced to illustrate the importance of parents' understanding of tennis:

> That was the other thing, he [father] would look, when you're watching tennis you, it's always very easy to find out what to do …But 'cause he's never actually been on court it's very, you never, you don't realize when you're running for like a backhand or something how difficult it is actually to make that ball. They [parents] need to understand the, the sort of anxiousness you feel when you're playing like a big point how, how nervous you actually get, how tight your arm actually gets and it, and that's the problem, he just never understood that (Ex-player 6) .

It is proposed that an understanding emotional climate is one in which parents not only display an understanding of tennis but also of their individual child. As the father of two county players explained:

> I think from a parent's point of view you have to understand your children…if they're [players] going through a bad patch and they've been late for school, not getting letters back from school, not doing their homework, probably they're also, from their point of view, they may be tired or ill and tired and maybe you're going to a tennis tournament feeling that it's not going to go well cause they're already tired and maybe injured…you have to show that you understand that (Parent 7).

The development of understanding emotional climate appeared to be influenced by two concepts: (1) The parent-coach relationship, and; (2) Keeping tennis in perspective. These concepts are outlined below.

Parent-Coach Relationship. Participants all discussed the importance of the parent-coach relationship in increasing parents' understanding of their child's tennis. In fact, many participants expressed sentiments similar to the following from a male national coach:

> It is without question the single most important and significant aspect of the job [the parent-coach relationship], it is the bit that is most challenging, it is the bit that can create the most unhappiness, it is the bit that can create the most stress, it is the bit that can ultimately decide success and failure. For me, you cannot over-emphasize the importance of the relationship between the coach and the parent (Coach 6).

Players also discussed the importance of the parent-coach relationship. For example, one player said, "If they [parents and coaches] have a good relationship then like they talk about the same thing, but if they don't then my coach could be

saying like one way how to play but then if my dad doesn't agree he could be saying a different way" (Player 38).

When parents and coaches had a good relationship, it seemed that parents were more capable of developing an understanding emotional climate because they could receive more guidance from coaches. For example, a male national coach explained:

> I think before parents can support, they need to understand the consequences of their actions. I think that's our role more and more as coaches to help inform the parents and make them aware that in behaving in a certain way with their kids or around their kids or at the side of a match, they're gonna have certain impacts (Coach 9).

Similarly, a parent explained:

> Yeah, I think it's, it's good if the coach can communicate with the parents about what progress the child is making or what they are likely to achieve, what they feel is the right sort of playing environment for them if you like. So that there's just a dialogue going on. I think if, if the player is sort of delivered to the centre and then collected without much going on in between then I'd worry that people were kind of working in different directions and the child wasn't benefitting as much as they could (Parent 9).

Thus, it appeared that if parents could develop a good relationship with their child's coach, they would have more opportunities to learn about tennis and

their child's specific experience. This, in turn, would help ensure they had a better understanding and could generate an understanding emotional climate.

Keep Tennis in Perspective. Secondly, participants highlighted the importance of parents understanding how tennis was situated within their child's overall tennis and life development (i.e., parents needed to keep tennis in perspective). As a female ex-national player explained:

> A lot of people do get too intense with it, you know, you have to be able to sit back and see the bigger picture, because if you can't then I think that defeats the whole point of the game (Ex-player 5)

Similarly, the mother of a national player said:

> People, they get too caught up in their child competing, and we've done it, we've done it in [the past], we've got to do this tournament and this tournament, got to do that one, got to get their rating up and I am conscious that I did do that, I'm guilty of all that (Parent 5).

The key issues were that parents should strive to understand that tennis is just one part of their child's life and keep it in perspective. It appeared that if parents became too focused on tennis (i.e., they failed to understand how tennis fitted into players' lives) it could negatively influence players' enjoyment of tennis. This was a situation a male ex-international junior player had encountered, he explained:

> The worst thing I hated about it [his father's involvement] was when we'd never have two separate lives. It'd always be tennis. That was the biggest thing, it would be tennis at the tennis club, when we got home it'd be

> tennis, and that's what I hated… If I lost a match he would not stop speaking about it all night, all night, all night. (Ex-player 6).

Participants indicated that parents recognizing the multiple benefits children might gain from tennis could help parents to keep tennis in perspective and develop an understanding emotional climate. The benefits participants associated with tennis included confidence, concentration, interacting with adults and peers, enhanced schooling opportunities, and the chance to travel. For example, a development coach explained:

> Everything you're [the parents] putting in is giving your child a massive, massive enjoyment of a sport, massive enjoyment of competing, and huge intrinsic rewards of, of, of feeling great, getting fit, socializing, the whole, the whole thing that a sport has, interaction with your own peers (Coach 2).

One player liked, "Making new friends, umm, winning a few matches" (Player 1), while another player wanted to compete in tennis so he could, "Just to get the best I can be and then to be able to take my coaching courses to help pass on my experience to the younger children" (Player 7). Another player expressed benefits of, "Travelling to different places and stuff like that" (Player 9). By seeking out and seeing the multiple benefits players gained from their involvement in tennis, participants perceived parents would be less focused on the outcomes of the matches and remain interested in their child's overall tennis journey.

Participants also discussed multiple potential outcomes of tennis in relation to short-term aspects (e.g., various outcomes of matches) and long-term

consequences (e.g., careers, university scholarships). By being open and accepting to a range of potential outcomes, it appeared parents could reduce the importance they placed on each tennis match or their child's tennis. Rather, parents could situate tennis within the multiple facets of their child's life and understand that it is just one aspect that could influence a child's lifetime development and achievements.

Category Three: Engage in Enhancing Parenting Practices for Competitive Tennis

As illustrated by the core category, this theory proposes that optimal parental involvement will occur when parents are aiming to enhance children's experiences. Within the broader emotional climate it was also important that parents engage in more specific parenting practices that would help children enjoy their tennis experience and be successful. As a national coach explained, appropriate behaviors from parents are, "I think just letting the kid get on and play and enjoy what they are doing and compete the best they can" (Coach 7). The father of a national player also discussed the importance of behaving in a manner that helped children be successful. He described the routine he had established with his son which he thought was important for his son's success:

> Every tournament that we go to, everything is the same structure, there's a pattern, we do the same things all the time and then when he plays his tournament he's following his routine through the tournament…you know we set off early, we allow for traffic, that's if we're driving, we get there at least an hour before his first match and do the warm-ups, the eating, the

> drinking, sit down and have a chat you know, look at his goals, I think, you know, even at 10 there is a huge process that you know you plan to win, you don't plan to lose do you, you plan to win, and for us everything at every single tournament, as long as we're not delayed for 3 hours on the motorway or anything, ummm, for us, and having that professional background, there's a structure and there's a way to win (Parent 3).

To ensure players enjoyed the competitive experience and were as successful as possible, it appeared parents needed to help players develop the skills to cope with competition and adapted to their child's individual competition needs.

Help Players Develop the Skills to Cope with Competition. Participants perceived that competitive tennis was a highly demanding performance environment. For example, a development coach explained:

> This is not a maths examination where you can revise the curriculum and sit in an exam and pass it. What we're talking about is actually going to a competition and the whole environment and everything is changing, it's a flux from one match to the next, from one minute to the next, one day to the next. It's completely out of your control, and therefore you have got to be able to be, to cope with all the crazy situations. It's raining one minute, you're indoors the next, you're outdoors the next, you're on a slow court, on a fast court, you've got a cheat, you've got some of this, you've got that. You know you've got an injury, you haven't got an injury, you know. All these different things. The guy's cheating you know, you know.

> You've got so many things, you've got to be able to uh be so adaptable or flexible mentally, mentally both the mom or the dad and the kid (Coach 1).

Participants consistently identified three factors parents needed to foster in children to help them be successful and enjoy their tennis experience. First participants perceived that parents could help teach children to cope with difficult situations. As one parent said, "I think it's to do with how you teach your child to be rather than trying to fight their battle for them" (Parent 9). Players described negative consequences if parents did not teach children to cope with difficult situations. For example, one player said:

> I hate it when people talk to their kids on court, it really winds me up. 'Cause it's like, almost like they're cheating. Yeah that's really annoying, but yeah, that's just wrong though, cause you shouldn't. And also, if the kids like constantly looking at their parents to check that's really annoying, like looking for reassurance, they're under too much pressure, they should just relax (Player 12).

Teaching players how to cope in these situations was seen as necessary to ensure players did not become distressed or distracted. If players did become angry or frustrated on court (e.g., swearing, throwing racquets), participants thought parents could play a role in helping their child understand the consequences of their actions. Thus, it emerged that the second way parents could help children was teaching them to control their emotions. Specifically, participants indicated that parents could play a role in helping players control their

emotions by holding them accountable for their actions. As a male national coach explained:

> If it's something to do with attitude then I think the parents can get involved cause they could be the ones paying, they could be the ones who drove two hours to get to the tournament, so then I think when there's a discipline, so when there's an area of discipline that needs to be sorted out (Coach 7).

An ex-player shared this view. He said:

> If you're going to do it [throw your racquet] on court in front of other people, then they've [parents] got every right to, to umm have a go at you for it… it's bad, it's a disgrace, so fair enough (Ex-player 7).

However, other participants thought that rather than disciplining players, parents should help their child understand the emotions they were experiencing. This was the approach a male international player preferred, as he said, "I think sometimes I don't think they understand how frustrating it is, like we're, you know you can play much better, they need to help us to deal with this" (Player 24).

Finally, participants frequently discussed the importance of parents helping to foster independence in their children. As a male performance coach explained:

> This is a very individual sport and … at the end of the day if you really want to make it then you're on your own, I mean if you're on tour… then unfortunately you're always on your own, and starting from travelling to

> accommodation to organizing your tickets to actually getting your stuff for tournaments and finally handling the pressure of the match (Coach 20).

For the national and international players, encouraging independence in players at a young age was seen as the first stage to ensuring they could cope with all the aspects related to being a professional player. This was an important point for one player who explained:

> Yeah, I think it [independence] is [important] 'cause when we go to international stuff my dad won't be there to like tell me what I need to do so if you don't know what you need to do before you go on for a match there's no parents to tell you that, so you've just go to do it yourself (Parent 38).

Participants described a variety of ways that parents could help foster independence in children. The following summary by a male development coach highlights the key practices for fostering independence:

> I think the more parents can be getting the kids to look after themselves and even at the younger age group making sure that they're the ones that look after their racquets and are going to fill up their drink bottles and all that sort of stuff then I think that's a pretty good thing… you need to sort of let the kids, you know let the kids pick it up themselves, you know at the younger age and you know let them go out there and deal with all the situations that are associated with being a tennis player (Coach 18).

In a sense, these findings suggested that by parents 'doing too much' for their children they could actually undermine children's tennis experience.

Recognize Individual Child's Needs at Tournaments. Connected with the general idea that parents should understand their child as an individual, more specific practices to achieve this were also reported. As a male development coach said, "It's knowing what makes them [children] tick that's important" (Coach 19). Similarly, a female ex-county player, when describing what she had learnt through her experience, concluded, "I think the main thing is that you've just gotta talk about it [parental involvement] and say 'look we're gonna see what works for us' and then stick with it and just be completely above board and honest about it" (Ex-player 1). A mother of a national player further explained:

> I mean whatever the kid wants, if the kid wants to listen to music or whatever, whatever they feel is beneficial to them. I mean making sure that you're there in plenty of time, you know, at least an hour before you're due to go on is good…but then let them do what they need to do (Parent 5).

Participants discussed specific activities before, during, and after competition when parents may need to adapt their involvement to their individual child. For example, participants identified specific ways players prepared for matches to ensure they felt ready to compete. Some participants described the importance of not focusing too much on the match before they played. This was important for a male international player, who explained, "I don't like to talk about the match… 'cause that puts too much pressure on me" (Player 40). In contrast, a male county player said, "Dad often talks to me about my opponent

and the game plans and things like that and like how well I'll play and what he expects me to do. So, it's really helpful having him there sometimes" (Player 20).

Similarly, participants indicated different needs in relation to parental support during matches. For some players support was displayed by parents not watching matches, as was the case for a former female county player who stated, "Some players love their parents there watching them the whole time but I obviously didn't like that" (Ex-player 4). In contrast, other participants went as far as stating parents should not only attend games and show positive support for their child (through clapping), but also acknowledge their opponent's good tennis. A female county player discussed the importance of such support:

> Parents can help just sort of like giving praise for a good shot and it works both ways really, even if you're the parent of the child who your son's playing, it's good to sort of praise them as well 'cause it shows sportsmanship and respect and if that's being shown by the parents it will follow onto the players and make the game more enjoyable (Player 7).

This support, termed "sporting support" by one female national coach (Coach 4), was seen to help create an environment in which the players felt comfortable and the quality of the tennis was being supported rather than parents creating a very competitive environment. However, not all players embraced such support, particularly if they were losing. As one female national player said, "In this situation [when I'm losing] I find it annoying if they [parents] clap other people's shots" (Player 14).

Finally, participants also indicated that how parents reacted after matches and the feedback they provided would depend on the individual. This point was clearly illustrated by one father when he discussed the differences between providing feedback to his son (an international player) and his daughter (a national player):

> I keep saying it depends on the child cause the older of my two children [his son] is more confident in communicating about these things than the other, my daughter is at the stage where she'd still take it as a personal criticism if I was to suggest there was anything she could possibly improve in that performance in that match she just played, ummm, so with her I have to be very careful and kind of say I think you did this really well or you did that really well, what do you think? (Parent 19).

Additionally, participants highlighted the benefit of parents adapting their parenting practices to the different situations children were in and the outcomes of the matches. For example, participants discussed various potential match outcomes: Winning and playing well, winning but playing badly, losing but playing well, or losing and playing badly. By realizing there are many potential outcomes, parents could ensure they adapt their feedback as necessary. As a development coach explained:

> How upset are they? I mean it depends doesn't it? Say if they're in tears and there are floods of tears and they want to be left on their own you leave them own. If they want a hug and they want a bit of moral support you give them a bit of moral support… The parents need to be aware that

> there's gonna be lots of different issues depending on the performance, the result, the, the match that the player's just played, and that they need to be willing to adapt to that player because actually the player is the most important person there, not the parent. I mean that's the most important thing. The player who's been brave enough to get on that court and play that match is most important and that the parent is merely there to enable them to do that and that it's not a slur on the parent in any way if the player doesn't perform (Coach 1).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to develop a grounded theory of optimal parental involvement in competitive junior tennis. Specifically, the study sought to extend our knowledge of parental involvement in tennis by examining parental behaviors (or practices) within the broader parenting context and identify how parental involvement could be optimized. The proposed grounded theory of optimal parental involvement in junior tennis (Figure 2.1) was based on the categories and concepts outlined above. This grounded theory is founded on the idea that optimal involvement can be achieved when parents strive to both understand and enhance their child's experience, recognizing that each player is an individual with specific requirements and that a child's tennis experience often occurs over an extensive time period. To understand and enhance their child's journey (i.e., to fulfill the core category), this theory posits that parents and players should first generate shared goals (i.e., reasons for involvement) and communicate regarding these goals throughout the tennis journey (category one).

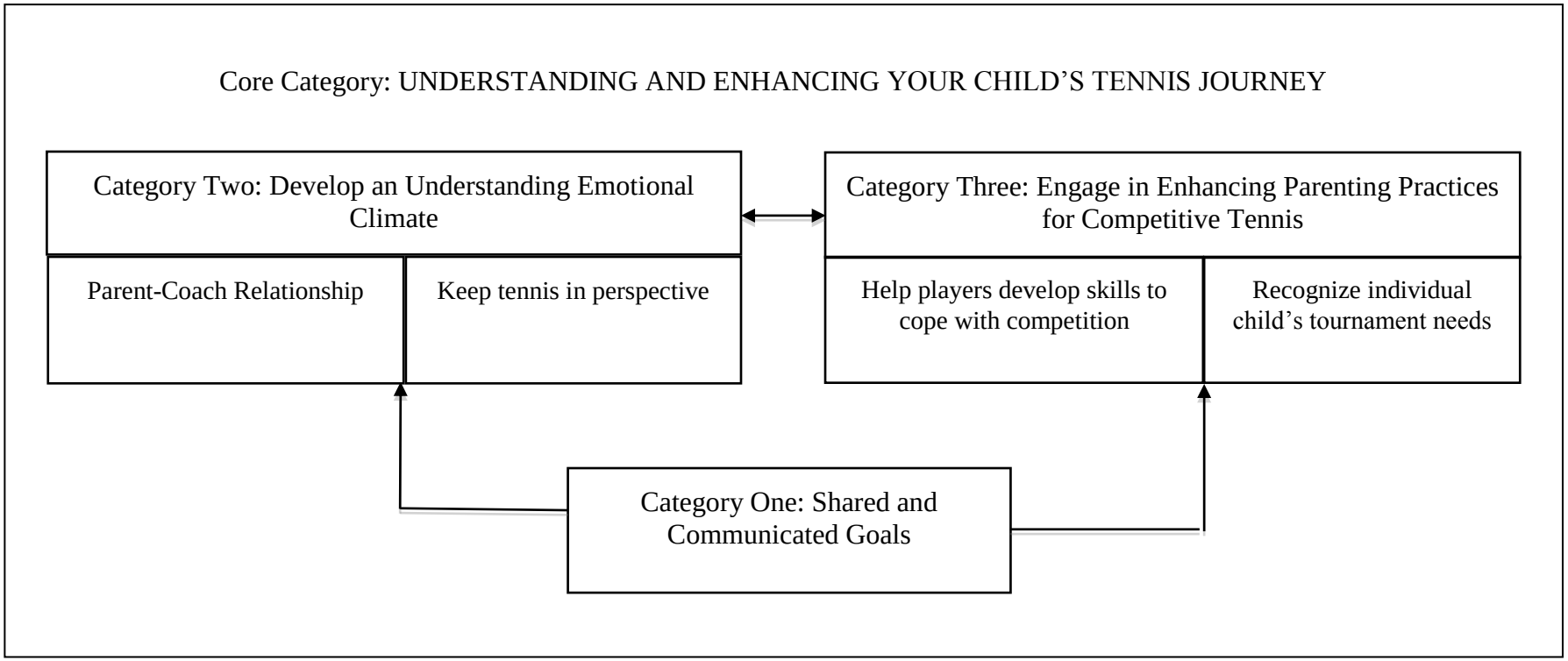

Figure 2.1. A grounded theory of optimal parental involvement in junior tennis

By sharing and communicating their goals, parents can adjust their involvement as goals change or develop.

Having established shared and communicated goals, the proposed theory highlights the importance of parents developing and displaying an understanding emotional climate (category two), which aligns with the shared goals. Shared and commuicated goals also underpin the individual and flexible parenting practices parents engage in (category three). These practices focus upon parents being involved in a manner that prepares children to cope with the demands of tennis tournaments and are reactive to the needs of the individual player – which will again be dictated by the overall goals parents and children have for tennis. Fundamentally then, it appeared there needed to be a consistency between the emotional climate parents created and the parenting practices they engaged in. That is, the parenting practices parents display need to complement, not contradict, the overall emotional climate parents generate.

Although an existing theory was not rigidly imposed during the analysis and rather analysis 'followed the data,' the proposed grounded theory is consistent and coherent with Darling and Steinberg's (1993) proposition that parenting practices must be studied in the context of parenting styles. Darling and Steinberg argued that parenting style (or emotional climate) indirectly, through parenting practices, influences parenting outcomes. In the proposed grounded theory, the extent to which parents display an understanding of tennis influences parents' abilities to engage in the necessary parenting practices and thus, effects parents' overall involvement in youth sport. Consistent with Darling and Steinberg's work,

a key future direction for research based on the proposed grounded theory is to examine the influence of consistency between the emotional climate parents create and the practices they employ and the consequences for child-level psychosocial and emotional constructs.

Within Darling and Steinberg's (1993) theory, it is also proposed that parents' goals would shape their parenting style and parenting practices because they influence the outcomes parents are trying to achieve. The proposed grounded theory also specifies the influence of parents' goals on parenting practices and the emotional climate parents create. However, one difference in this proposed grounded theory (compared to Darling and Steinberg's work) is that parental goals must be shared and communicated with players. It is likely that this distinction exists because the theory generated in this study is focused on optimal parenting in a sport context rather than highlighting the determinants of parenting in general.

Researchers have acknowledged the importance of coaches and players sharing and communicating goals (e.g., Jowett, 2005) and recommended that parents are informed of the goals that children and coaches are working on (e.g., Gould et al., 2008; Harwood, 2011). Further, it has been recognized that parents need to understand their children's long-term sporting goals in order to fully support them (e.g., Lauer et al., 2010a; 2010b). However, this theory extends these findings, highlighting the fundamental importance of parents and children sharing the same short-term and long-term goals and communicating any changes in these goals over their child's tennis journey.

This theory posits that the success or appropriateness of parental involvement in tennis is underpinned by the consistency between children's reasons for involvement and aims for the future and parents' reasons for supporting their children's sporting involvement. Thus, if a parent is supporting their child because the parent has aspirations of their child becoming a professional player, but their child just wants to play tennis to make friends and have fun, there is an inconsistency between the child's and parent's goals. As such, the parent's involvement may be seen as 'pressuring', 'pushy', or 'inappropriate' by the child. However, if a parent and a child both have aspirations for the child to become professional and have both committed to achieving this goal, the same type of parental involvement may be seen as 'supportive,' 'appropriate,' or 'encouraging,' by the child. As such, based on this theory, it appears critical that parents understand their children's goals and rather than imposing their beliefs and values onto their children, parents need to adapt there involvement so it is appropriate for the goals their children hold for tennis – an idea that has received support within the general parenting literature (Grolnick, 2003).

As well as the potential for parents to adopt different parenting styles, the proposed theory also indicates that parents could engage in different parenting practices. A number of researchers have identified specific parenting practices that are appropriate/beneficial or inappropriate/detrimental to children's participation and performance in sport (e.g., Gould et al., 2006 2008; Knight et al., 2010; Lauer et al., 2010a; 2010b). A number of these parenting practices, such as

limiting the focus on match outcomes, providing a range of support, and developing independence emerged as important for optimal parental involvement in junior tennis. However, rather than specifying set practices that all parents should engage in, the proposed grounded theory highlights the importance of parenting practices focusing upon children's individual needs and the requirements of the sport and displaying these within an understanding emotional climate.

Limitations and Future Directions

It is important to consider these findings in light of the limitations of the study. One methodological consideration is that due to logistical constraints (i.e., the fact that data were collected during a fieldwork trip to the United Kingdom) some data analysis occurred after the fieldwork had been completed (although numerous techniques were used to ensure that data collection and analysis were simultaneous and theoretical sampling was used). Nonetheless, there is potential that some concepts were not fully explored during data collection. This may not be a major concern because, as Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested, the procedures recommended in grounded theory, "were designed not to be followed dogmatically but rather to be used creatively and flexibly by researchers as they deem appropriate" (p. 13).

Although the study benefitted from incorporating the views of players, parents, and coaches, player-parent-coach triads were not sampled. Thus, whereas the study included a range of perspectives, the data were not triangulated per se. Obtaining the views from participants within a triad would have been beneficial to

identify the consistency between participants' perspectives and judge the outcomes of parental involvement for particular children. That said, one of the major strengths of this study was sample size (90 participants), which is larger than most previous grounded theory studies in sport and exercise psychology (see Holt & Tamminen, 2010; Weed, 2009, for reviews) and likely helped contribute to the creation of an adequately saturated theory.

Substantive grounded theories, such as the one produced in this study, are theories developed in relation to a particular substantive or empirical area (i.e., youth sport competitions, high school, medical school; see Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These theories are particularly useful in enhancing researchers' initial insights into an area and guiding future action (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Such theories are designed to be fluid and flexible, allowing them to be adapted and tested through future research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). As such, research examining individual aspects of this theory or the theory in its entirety is required to test the predictions put forward.

Researchers may choose to examine parental involvement in other sports to identify whether the proposed theory applies outside tennis. Researchers may then, if necessary, add to or expand the theory to make it applicable in other sport settings. Researchers may also choose to examine the relative contribution of different concepts to the athletes' experience, such as the relationship between athletes' and parents' goals and athletes' experiences, the extent to which parents' understanding (and their ability to display this understanding) influence athletes' experiences, and the influence specific behaviors have upon athletes.

Researchers may also wish to examine more specific characteristics of the athletes. For example, although the theory indicates that different children may desire different behaviors from their parents, aspects of the child's (or parent's) personality and how they may relate to parenting were not examined (cf. Sapieja, et al., 2011). Thus, no predictions regarding the specific personality factors that may influence parental involvement were identified. Similarly, this theory does not distinguish between the involvement of mothers and fathers. Although that finding did not emerge via the data collection, previous research has indicated that athletes may have different preferences for their mothers and fathers involvement and that males and females may desire different involvement from their parents (cf. Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Stein, Raedeke, & Glenn, 1999).

Examining the environmental factors that may influence parents' abilities to be involved in this manner may also be of interest. For example, understanding what support parents require or the challenges they face in being appropriately involved in youth sport would help expand the grounded theory presented here. Additionally, understanding the influence of socio-contextual factors on parents experiences, and consequently their involvement, may be useful. Examining and incorporating these aspects in the theory may offer important directions for future research.

In conclusion, this study offers a substantive grounded theory of optimal parental involvement in competitive junior tennis. The aim was to create a better understanding of how parents can best be involved in junior tennis. In creating this theory the aim was to go beyond describing discrete practices parents should

and should not display in youth sport. Rather, the grounded theory illustrates fundamental concepts that parents can adhere to throughout the course of their child's involvement in junior tennis. In addressing these concepts, it is hoped that parents can ensure their involvement is most suitable to their individual child and his or her aspirations in tennis.

References

Bowker, A., Boeknoven, B., Nolan, A., Bauhaus, S., Glover, P., Powell, T., & Taylor, S. (2009). Naturalistic observations of spectator behavior at youth hockey games. *The Sport Psychologist, 23*, 301-316.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research* (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Côté, J. (1999). The influence of the family in the development of talent in sport. *The Sport Psychologist, 13,* 395- 417.

Darling, N., & Steinberg, L. (1993). Parenting style in context: An integrative model. *Psychological Bulletin, 113,* 487-496. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.113.3.487.

Dewey, J. (1922). *Human nature in conduct*. New York: Henry Holt.

Fraser-Thomas, J., Côté, J., & Deakin, J. (2005). Youth sport programs: An avenue to foster positive youth development. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy, 10,* 19-40.

Fredricks, J. A., & Eccles, J. S. (2004). Parental influences on youth involvement in sports. In M. R. Weiss (Ed.), *Developmental sport and exercise psychology: A lifespan perspective* (pp. 145-164). Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* Chicago: Aldine.

Gould, D., Lauer, L., Rolo, C., Jannes, C., & Pennisi, N. (2006). Understanding the role parents play in tennis success: A national survey of junior tennis

coaches. *British Journal of Sports Medicine, 40,* 632-636. doi:10.1136 /bjsm.2005.024927.

Gould, D., Lauer, L., Rolo, C., Jannes, C., & Pennisi, N. (2008). The role of parents in tennis success: Focus group interviews with junior coaches. *The Sport Psychologist, 22,* 18-37.

Gould, D., Tuffey, S., Udry, E., & Loehr, J. (1996). Burnout in competitive junior tennis players: II. Qualitative analysis. *The Sport Psychologist, 10*, 341-366.

Grolnick, W. S. (2003). *Psychology of parenting control: How well-meant parenting backfires*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Eribaum.

Harwood, C. G. (2011). Enhancing coach-parent relationships in youth sports: Increasing harmony and minimizing hassle. A commentary. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching, 6,* 61-64. doi:10.1260/1747-9541.6.1.61.

Holt, N. L., & Tamminen, K. A. (2010). Improving grounded theory research in sport and exercise psychology: Further reflections as a response to Mike Weed. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 11*, 405-413. doi:10.1016 /j.psychsport.2009.12.002.

Holt, N. L., Tamminen, K. A., Black, D. E., Mandigo, J. L., & Fox, K. R. (2009). Youth sport parenting styles and practices. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 31,* 37-59.

Holt, N. L., Tamminen, K. A., Black, D. E., Sehn, Z. L., & Wall, M. P. (2008). Parental involvement in competitive youth sport settings. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 9,* 663-685. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2007.08.001

Horn, T. S., & Horn, J. L. (2007). Family influences on children's sport and physical activity participation, behavior, and psychosocial responses. In G. Tenenbaum & R. C. Eklund (Eds.), *Handbook of sport psychology* (3rd ed, pp. 685-711). New York: Wiley.

Jowett, S. (2005). The coach-athlete partnership. *The Psychologist, 18,* 412-415.

Juntumaa, B., Keskivaara, P., & Punamäki, R. L. (2005). Parenting, achievement practices and satisfaction in ice hockey. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 46,* 411-420. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9450.2005.00472.x.

Knight, C. J., Boden, C. M., & Holt, N. L. (2010). Junior tennis players' preferences for parental behaviors at tournaments. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 22,* 377-391. doi:10.1080/10413200.2010.495324.

Knight, C. J., Neely, K. C., & Holt, N. L. (2011). Parental behaviors in team sports: How do female athletes want parents to behave? *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 23,* 76-92. doi:10.1080/10413200.2010.525589.

Kotchick, B. A., & Forehand, R. (2002). Putting parenting in perspective: A discussion of the contextual factors that shape parenting practices. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 11,* 255-269. doi:10.1023 /A:1016863921662.

Kreuger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2000). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lauer, L., Gould, D., Roman, N., & Pierce, M. (2010a). Parental behaviors that affect junior tennis player development. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 11*, 487-496. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2010.06.008.

Lauer, L., Gould, D., Roman, N., & Pierce, M. (2010b). How parents influence junior tennis players' development: Qualitative narratives. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 4*, 69-92.

Leff, S. S., & Hoyle, R. H. (1995). Young athlete's perceptions of parental support and pressure. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 24*, 187-203. doi:10.1007/BF01537149.

MacNamara, A., Button, A., & Collins, D. (2010). The role of psychological characteristics in facilitating the pathway to elite performance part 2: Examining environmental and stage-related differences in skills and behaviors. *The Sport Psychologist, 24*, 74-96.

McCarthy, P. J., & Jones, M. V. (2007). A qualitative study of sport enjoyment in the sampling years. *The Sport Psychologist, 21*, 400-416.

Morse J. M., Barrett M., Mayan M., Olson K. & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1(2),* 1–19.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed). London: Sage.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sapieja, K. M., Dunn, J. G. H., & Holt, N. L. (2011). Perfectionism and perceptions of parenting styles in male youth soccer. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 33,* 20-39.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research* (2nd ed). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Stein, G. L., Raedeke, T. D., & Glenn, S. D. (1999). Children's perceptions of parent sport involvement: It's not how much, but to what degree that's important. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 22*, 1-8.

Weed, M. (2009). Research quality considerations for grounded theory research in sport and exercise psychology. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 10*, 502-510. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2009.02.007.

Wolfenden, L. E., & Holt, N. L. (2005). Talent development in elite junior tennis: Perceptions of players, parents, and coaches. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 17,* 108-126. doi:10.1080/10413200590932416.

Wuerth, S., Lee, M. J., & Alfermann, D. (2004). Parental involvement and athletes' career in youth sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 5,* 21-33. doi:10.1016/S1469-0292(02)00047-X.

Appendix

Grounded Theory Interview Guides

Initial player interview guide

Introduction

I am doing a study to find out more about how tennis players would like parents to be involved in tennis. I want to know what you think are helpful things for parents to do and what things are less helpful. Overall, I just want to know how parents can help you have the best experience in tennis possible. Before we start I just want to check you understand a few things: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you can leave at any time. Anything you tell me will be kept confidential, that means I won't tell anyone anything you tell me. When I write up my results I will not include your name or the names of anyone else you might talk about. Also, if you do not want to answer a specific question, that is OK. There are no 'right or wrong' answers to these questions. I am just interested in what you think. Do you have any questions you would like to ask before we start?

Demographics

- What is your name and how old are you?
- How long have you been playing tennis?
    - Probe: Can you remember why you started to play tennis?
- What is your training schedule? (How much do you train and for how long?)
- What is your competition schedule? (How often do you compete and in what types of tournaments?)
- What do you like about tennis?

Goals for tennis

- What is your goal/dream for tennis? (What do you hope to achieve?)

    - Probe: Ideally and realistically – identify what they think is a realistic achievement
    - Probe: What do you think is required to get there?
- What do you think you would be doing if you weren't playing tennis?
    - Probe: What is it about tennis that makes you want to play?
- What do you think your parents want you to get out of tennis?
    - Probe: What are your parents' goals for you?
    - Probe: What would success in tennis be for your parents?
- How important do you think your tennis is to your parents?
    - Probe: Being involved in tennis v achieving in tennis?

<u>Role of parents in tennis (general)</u>

- Do your parents play tennis?
    - Probe: How long, what standard etc?
    - Probe: Do they play other sports and to what standard etc?
- Are your parents involved in your tennis?
    - Probe: If so who? mother/father/both?
    - Probe: How are they involved in your tennis? What do your parents do to help you with your tennis (in general)?
- Do you like your parents being involved in your tennis?
    - Probe: What do you like about your parents involvement?
    - Probe: Is there anything you don't like or would like them to do differently?

<u>Role of parents at tournaments</u>

- What are the most important things for you at tournaments? (e.g., winning, having fun, seeing friends etc)
- For you to feel you had a successful/good tournament, what would need to have happened?
- Do your parents come to your tournaments?
- What do your parents do at tournaments? (Probe to expand stories)

    - Probe: When winning/win match, when losing/lost, when playing well/badly, when the match is close?
- What do you think of (specify specific behaviors)
- What do you think your parents mean when they do (specify specific behavior)
- (Only ask if not already answered) What do your parents do before/during/after match and what do you think of these behaviors?
- What do you like/would you like your parents to do before, during and after matches?
- What don't you like? What would you prefer them not to do?

Optimal Involvement

- If you had a chance to tell parents what they could do to best help you in your tennis what would you say?
- If you had a chance to tell parents what they could do to help you have the best experience at tournaments what would you say?
- What is more important to you, having your parents help you with your performance or having a good experience (e.g., having fun etc) in your tennis?
- What makes (above behaviours) the best things you parents could do?
    - Probe: How would these things help you? How would they make you feel?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Final player interview guide

Introduction

I am doing a study to find out more about how tennis players would like parents to be involved in tennis. I want to know what you think are helpful things for parents to do and what things are less helpful. Overall, I just want to know how parents can help you have the best experience in tennis possible. Before we start I just want to check you understand a few things: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you can leave at any time. Anything you tell me will be kept confidential, that means I won't tell anyone anything you tell me. When I write up my results I will not include your name or the names of anyone else you might talk about. Also, if you do not want to answer a specific question, that is OK. There are no 'right or wrong' answers to these questions. I am just interested in what you think. Do you have any questions you would like to ask before we start?

Demographics

- What is your name and how old are you?
- How long have you been playing tennis? What standard are you?
- What do you like about playing tennis?

Tennis History: Now we get to chat more about your tennis

- Can you tell me a bit of your history in tennis?
    - When and why did you start playing tennis?
    - Who initially introduced you to tennis?
    - How has your tennis involvement changed?
    - What were your goals for tennis when you started?
    - Can you tell me a little about your training when you started?
    - Did you play any competitions? What were they like?
    - What were parents like at that time? Yours and others?
- How has your involvement in tennis changed over time? When did it change?

    - What is your tennis like now?
    - What is your training schedule?
    - What is your competition schedule? What are competitions like?
    - What are your goals for tennis now?
- How do you define success in tennis?
- Why do you think your parents want you to be involved in tennis?
    - What do your parents want you to achieve?
    - How would your parents define success in tennis for you?
    - How important do you think your tennis is to your parents?

<u>Parents' involvement in tennis</u>

- What do you think are the roles of parents in every day life?
    - How are these different in tennis?
- What do you think is the role of parents in tennis?
    - How should they be involved in tennis?
    - What things shouldn't they be involved in?
    - Whose roles do you think these are?
- Do you like your parents being involved in your tennis?
    - What do you like about your parents involvement? How is it helpful?
    - Is there anything you don't like or would like them to do differently?
    - Is there anything about their involvement that is not helpful?
- What do you think makes a good parent-child relationship?
- What do you think is important for good parent-child relationships in tennis?

<u>Parents at tournaments: Look at before, during and after matches</u>

- What do you like about tennis tournaments?
- How do you feel as a tournament approaches? (nervous, excited?).
    - Has this changed as you've been more involved in tennis?

- Can you talk me through an average day at a tennis tournament? Starting from when you wake up to when you leave for the day?
    - How are you feeling during the day?
    - How do your feelings change?
- What do you find is helpful to your performance? What is not helpful?
    - How do your parents help with this? Not help?
- What helps you to enjoy the tournament? What stops you enjoying it?
    - How do your parents help with this? Not help?
- What is your experience of parents at tournaments?
- What things have you seen from parents that you think are really good?
    - What makes these good things?
- What things have you seen from parents that you think isn't so good?
    - What makes these less good things form parents?
- How can parents help or hinder your performance at tournaments?
    - What general atmosphere or environment would you like there to be at tournaments?
    - How can parents help create this environment?

<u>Player's parents at tournaments:</u>

- What do your parents do at tournaments? (Probe to expand stories)
- What match situations would affect how you would like your parents to behave? (Winning, losing, expecting to win, tough game, how playing)
- What would you like them to do when you are winning and playing well?
    - What do you find unhelpful? (during and after)
    - How do you want to feel during and after this match? How can parents help create this?
- What would you like them to do when you are losing and playing well?
    - What do you find unhelpful? (during and after)
    - How do you want to feel during and after this match? How can parents help create this?
- What would you like them to do when you are playing badly and losing?

    - What do you find unhelpful? (during and after)
    - How do you want to feel during and after this match? How can parents help create this?
- What would you like them to do when you are playing badly and losing?
    - What do you find unhelpful? (during and after)
    - How do you want to feel during and after this match? How can parents help create this?
- What would you require from parents if you are going through a good streak in tennis? Or a performance slump?
- How do you feel when you are playing someone and you are expecting to win?
    - What makes you expect to win?
    - What do you want from your parents in that situation (outcome varying)
    - What don't you want from parents in that situation (outcome varying)
- How do you feel when you are playing someone and you are expecting it to be a tough?
    - What makes you expect it to be a tough match?
    - What do you want from your parents in that situation (outcome varying)
    - What don't you want from parents in that situation (outcome varying)

<u>Specific questions</u>

- How important is it for your parents to allow you to develop independence at tournaments? How can they help or prevent you from develop independence?
- How do you think parents should react to poor attitude and behavior?
- Do you think parents understand the difference between effort and performance?

- How might other parents effect how you feel about tournaments and matches?

Optimal Involvement

- How do you think parents can be helpful or harmful to children's tennis? If you had to list all the things your parents do for your tennis what would they be?
- If you had a chance to tell parents what they could do to best help you perform at tournaments, what would you say?
- If you had a chance to tell parents what they could do to help you have the best experience in tennis what would you say?
- What is more important to you, having your parents help you with your performance or having a good experience (e.g., having fun etc) in tennis?
- What makes (above behaviours) the best things you parents could do?

Initial ex-player interview guide

Introduction

I am doing a study to find out more about how we can optimize parental involvement in junior tennis. Based on your experience as a tennis player I am interested to hear what things you liked from parents and what things you didn't like. Also, I am hoping that you will be able to help me to understand the information that I received from current tennis players and see how it relates to your experiences. Overall, I just want to know how parents can help players have the best experience in tennis possible. Before we start I just want to check you understand a few things: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you can leave at any time. Anything you tell me will be kept confidential. When I write up my results I will not include your name or the names of anyone else you might talk about. Also, if you do not want to answer a specific question, that is OK. There are no 'right or wrong' answers to these questions. I am just interested in what you think.

Do you have any questions you would like to ask before we start?

Demographic information:

- What is your name, age, and current occupation?

Tennis history:

- Can you tell me a bit of history about your tennis?
    - Are you still playing?
    - What did you like about playing? What didn't you like?
    - What standard did you reach?
- What were your parents like when you played tennis?
    - How were they helpful or not helpful?
- What were your experiences of tournaments?
    - What did you think of parents at tournaments?
    - What were your parents like at tournaments?

- What did you want from your parents at tournaments?
    - How did you they help with your performance
    - How did they help you enjoy the experience
    - How did they negatively effect your performance?
    - How did they stop you enjoying it?
- How did your desires for your parents involvement change over time?
    - What were your transitions during tennis?
    - How did your parents' involvement transition during your tennis?
- Can you think why parents might act in different ways when you were playing?

Examining player's ideas: (Extended discussions)

Can we chat through different ideas I have about parents' behaviors?

- It seems that there is a continuum of different parental behaviors (embarrassment, annoyance, pressure, support etc) – would this make sense to you based on your experience?
- How important do you think the general parent-child relationship is in creating a successful relationship in tennis?
- How important do you think independence is in tennis?
- What are your thoughts regarding parents' understanding of tennis/parent's experience in tennis?
- How would you locate tennis parents behaviors within the general environment that is created by parents?

Summary questions:

- Overall, what do you think are the most important things for parents to do to help children enjoy tennis?
- What do you think are the most important things for parents to do to help children perform at tournaments?
- In hindsight, is there anything you would have liked your parents to do differently?

Final ex-player interview guide

Introduction

I am doing a study to find out more about how we can optimize parental involvement in junior tennis. Based on your experience as a tennis player I am interested to hear what things you like from parents and what things you didn't like. Also, I am hoping that you will be able to help me to understand the information that I received from current tennis players and see how it relates to your experiences. Overall, I just want to know how parents can help you have the best experience in tennis possible. Before we start I just want to check you understand a few things: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you can leave at any time. Anything you tell me will be kept confidential. When I write up my results I will not include your name or the names of anyone else you might talk about. Also, if you do not want to answer a specific question, that is OK. There are no 'right or wrong' answers to these questions. I am just interested in what you think.

Do you have any questions you would like to ask before we start?

Demographic information:

- What is your name, age, and current occupation?

Tennis history:

- Can you tell me a bit of history about your tennis?
    - Are you still playing?
    - What did you like about playing? What didn't you like?
    - What standard did you reach?
- What were your parents like when you played tennis?
    - How were they helpful or not helpful?
- What were your experiences of tournaments?
    - What did you think of parents at tournaments?
    - What were your parents like at tournaments?

Parental involvement at tournaments:

- What did you want from your parents at tournaments?
    - How did you they help with your performance
    - How did they help you enjoy the experience
    - How did they negatively effect your performance?
    - How did they stop you enjoying it?
- What do you think parents should do before matches – what did your parents do?
- What do you think parents should do during matches – what did your parents do?
- What do you think parents should do after matches – what did your parents do?
- How did your desires for your parents' involvement change over time?
    - What were your transitions during tennis?
    - How did your parents' involvement transition during your tennis?
- Can you think why parents might act in different ways when you were playing?

Examining player's ideas: (Extended discussions)

- Can we chat through different ideas I have about parents' behaviors?
    - It seems that there is a continuum of different parental behaviors (embarrassment, annoyance, pressure, support etc) – would this make sense to you based on your experience?
    - How important do you think the general parent-child relationship is in creating a successful relationship in tennis?
    - How important do you think independence is in tennis?
    - What are your thoughts regarding parents' understanding of tennis/parent's experience in tennis?
    - How would you locate tennis parents behaviors within the general environment that is created by parents?

- How important was the similarity between parent and child goals in dictating parental involvement?
- Is communication between parents and coaches important in your perspective?
- To what degree do you think parents understand the different experiences that tennis players have?
- How did you feel in different situations (e.g., winning, losing etc). How did this affect what you wanted from your parents?
- How did you want your parents to feel in the different situations you encountered when competing?
- How did the specific behaviors you wanted for parents fit with the general atmosphere that you experienced from your parents?

Summary questions:

- Overall, what do you think are the most important things for parents to do to help children enjoy tennis?
- What do you think are the most important things for parents to do to help children perform at tournaments?
- In hindsight, can you think of anything you would have liked your parents to do differently?
- Is there anything else that you think I should know about tennis parents?

Initial parent interview guide

Introduction

I am doing a study to find out more about what tennis players, parents, and coaches think about parents' involvement in junior tennis. Your participation is voluntary, and you can leave at any time. Also, if you do not want to answer a specific question, that is fine. There are no 'right or wrong' answers to these questions. Any information you provide will remain confidential. Do you have any questions before we start?

Demographics

- Please can you tell me about your background in tennis and as a tennis parent
    - Child's age, standard, amount of involvement etc
- What would you like your children to get out of tennis?
- What are your goals for your child in tennis?

General parental involvement

- What are your general experiences of parenting in tennis?
- How do you think parents could best be involved in their children's tennis?
- What types of parental involvement do you think are detrimental to children's tennis?
- What behaviors do you think parents should display in relation to tennis?
- What behaviors do you think parents should avoid in relation to tennis?
    - What would you describe as good or bad parental behaviour? Why would you say this was good/bad?
- Have you ever seen any examples of really "good" parental involvement in tennis? (If yes, what? Why is it good?)
- Have you ever seen any examples of "bad" parental involvement in tennis? (If yes, what? Why is it bad?)

- How do you think you are best involved in your child's tennis?
- Are there any parts of your involvement you think are not so helpful in your child's tennis?
- Have you made any changes to your involvement? What prompted them?

Parental involvement at tournaments

- What do you feel the role of parents is at tennis tournaments? (before/during/after matches)
- How do you think parents should behave at tennis tournaments?
- What do you think is the aim of parents' behavior at tennis tournaments?
- What things do you think effect parents' behavior at tennis tournaments?
- What do you think are the best things parents can do to help their child at tournaments?
- What things do you think parents should avoid at tournaments?
- Presentation of any ideas that have emerged from interviews with players and coaches prior to this interview to see what parents think are important and possible for them to implement.

Summary questions

- What advice would you have for new tennis parents to maximize children's enjoyment in tennis?
- What advice would you have for new tennis parents to maximize children's performance in tennis?
- Overall, how would you describe optimal parental involvement in junior tennis?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Final parent interview guide

Introduction

I am doing a study to find out more about what tennis players, parents, and coaches think about parents' involvement in junior tennis. Your participation is voluntary, and you can leave at any time. Also, if you do not want to answer a specific question, that is fine. There are no 'right or wrong' answers to these questions. I am interested in what you think. Any information you provide will remain confidential. Do you have any questions before we start?

Demographics

- Please can you tell me about your background in tennis and as a tennis parent
    - Child's age, standard, amount of involvement etc

Introductory Questions:

- What has been your experience of being a tennis parent?
- What do you think are the roles of parents in tennis?
- How has your role as a parent changed over time?
- What support have you needed or would you have liked to be able to fulfill these roles?

General parental involvement

- What are your general experiences of parents in tennis?
- How do you think parents could best be involved in their children's tennis?
- What types of parental involvement do you think are detrimental to children's tennis?
- What behaviors do you think parents should display in relation to tennis?
- What behaviors do you think parents should avoid in relation to tennis?

    - What would you describe as good or bad parental behaviour? Why would you say this was good/bad?
- Have you ever seen any examples of really "good" parental involvement in tennis? (If yes, what? Why is it good?)
- Have you ever seen any examples of "bad" parental involvement in tennis? (If yes, what? Why is it bad?)
- How do you think you are best involved in your child's tennis?
- Are there any parts of you involvement that you think are not so helpful in your child's tennis?
- Have you made any changes to your involvement? What prompted them?

Parental involvement at tournaments

- What are your general experiences of parents in tennis?
    - Experiences of parents at tournaments
    - What things have you seen from parents at tournaments that you feel have been helpful or appropriate?
    - What things have you see from parents at tournaments that you feel are not helpful or are inappropriate?
- Based on your experience what do you think parents should do before matches?
- What things should parents avoid before matches?
- What things do you think parents should do during matches?
- What things shouldn't parents do during matches?
- What things do you think parents should do after matches?
- What things shouldn't parents do after matches?
- Presentation of any ideas that have emerged from interviews with players and coaches prior to this interview to see what parents think are important and possible for them to implement.

Specific questions:

- To what degree do you feel independence in players is important? What do you do to help foster independence?
- How do you deal with poor behavior or attitude from players?
- How would you recommend creating a positive environment?
- To what extend do you understand the different situations that player's go through when they are competing? Does it alter your behavior?

Summary questions:

- What general environment do you want parents to create at tournaments?
- What environment/atmosphere do you think should be created around tennis?
- What are the best and the worst things that you think parents can do to help children in tennis?
- What advice would you have for new tennis parents to maximize children's enjoyment in tennis?
- What advice would you have for new tennis parents to maximize children's performance in tennis?
- Is there anything else you think I should know?

Initial coach interview guide

Introduction

I am doing a study to find out more about what tennis players, parents, and coaches think about parents' involvement in junior tennis. Your participation is voluntary and you can leave at any time. Also, if you do not want to answer a specific question that is fine. There are no 'right or wrong' answers to these questions. I am interested in what you think. Any information you provide will remain confidential. Does anyone have any questions before we start?

Demographics

- Please can you give me a bit of background into your tennis and coaching experience.
- What are your goals for the children you coach in terms of tennis?
- What would you like the children you coach to get out of tennis?
- How would you define success in tennis for the children you coach?

General Experiences of Parents

- What are your general experiences of parents in tennis?
- What differences have you seen between parents in terms of their involvement?
    - What have been the consequences of these different types of involvement?
- How do parents "normally" behave in relation to their children's tennis? (Most common behaviors?)
    - What would you describe as good or bad parental behaviour? Why would you say this was good/bad?
- Have you ever seen any examples of really "good" parental involvement in tennis? (If yes, what? Why is it good?)
- Have you ever seen any examples of "bad" parental involvement in tennis? (If yes, what? Why is it bad?)

Parental Involvement at Tournaments

- What do you feel the role of parents is at tennis tournaments? (before/during/after matches)
- How do you think parents should behave at tennis tournaments?
- What do you think is the aim of parents' behavior at tennis tournaments?
- What things do you think effect parents' behavior at tennis tournaments?
- What do you think are the best things parents can do to help their child at tournaments? (probe for reasons why?)
- What things do you think parents should avoid at tournaments? (probe for reasons why?)

Summary questions

- What are the best things that parents can do to help children in tennis?
- What parental behaviors do you think would hinder children's involvement in tennis?
- Is there anything else you think I should know about parents' involvement in tennis?

Final coach interview guide

Introduction

I am doing a study to find out more about what tennis players, parents, and coaches think about parents' involvement in junior tennis. Your participation is voluntary, and you can leave at any time. Also, if you do not want to answer a specific question that is fine. There are no 'right or wrong' answers to these questions. I am interested in what you think. Any information you provide will remain confidential. Does anyone have any questions before we start?

Demographics

- Please can you give me a bit of background into your tennis and coaching experience?

General Role of Parents

- What do you think are the roles of parents in tennis?
- What would you like parents to do to help children in tennis?
- What do you think parents might do which is unhelpful for children in tennis?

General Parental Involvement

- What differences have you seen between parents in terms of their involvement?
    - What have been the consequences of these different types of involvement?
- What is the general atmosphere that you think parents should create around tennis?
- What do you think are the important characteristics of a good parent-child relationship in tennis?
- What role should parents have in tennis? How can they best fulfill this role? What aspects of tennis should they not be involved in?

Parental Involvement at Tournaments

- How do you think parents should behave at tournaments?
- What do you feel parents should and should not be involved in at tournaments?
- How can parents help children to cope and perform better at tournaments as they age?
- How do you feel parents should approach matches?
- What should and shouldn't parents do before matches?
- What should and shouldn't parents do during matches?
- How should parents provide feedback after matches? What should they feedback on?

Specific Ideas to Discuss

Specific ideas to be confirmed or considered:

- In your opinion, how important is parents' positive attitude about tennis?
- In your opinion, what role do parents play in fostering children's independence?
- To what extent do you think parents should focus on their children's attitude and behavior on court?
- How much do you think parents understand about the difficulties of competing in tennis?
- What support do you think parents need to be most effectively involved in their children's tennis?

Summary questions

- What are the best things that parents can do to help children in tennis?
- What parental behaviors do you feel would hinder children's involvement in tennis?
- Is there anything else you think I should know about parental involvement?

CHAPTER 3

How Do Parents Find Ways to Support Their Children's Involvement in Competitive Tennis

Parental involvement is a contributing factor to the achievement of excellence across a range of domains (Bloom, 1985). Within the sporting domain, it is widely accepted that parental involvement and support is fundamental to children's participation and performance (e.g., Côté, 1999; Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes, & Pennisi, 2008; Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2004). However, as Rotella and Bunker (1987) recognized, helping children enjoy their sport participation and reach their potential can be a difficult task for parents. Whereas researchers have extensively examined the types of support parents provide (e.g., Bloom, 1985; Côté, 1999; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005), little attention has been given to *how* parents are able to provide this support (cf. Knight & Holt, 2011). In fact, as Kay (2000) explained, "there is little information about how families operate to support children's sport talent and what obstacles may limit their capacity to do so" (p. 152). Thus, the general intent of this study was to examine how parents find ways to support their children's involvement in sport and identify any additional help they may benefit from.

Parental support can be defined as parental behaviors that children perceive to facilitate their involvement or participation in sport (Leff & Hoyle, 1995). As such, there are numerous types of support parents can provide to their children to facilitate their initial involvement and continued participation in sport. When children first become involved in sport parents arrange for them to attend training and competitions, schedule additional practice, and purchase their equipment and clothing (Côté, 1999; Lauer, Gould, Roman, & Pierce, 2010a; 2010b). As children progress in sport, parents provide tangible and logistical

support by spending money to finance their children's involvement and committing extensive amounts of time to drive them to training and competitions (Bloom, 1985; Côté, 1999). Parents also provide emotional support to help children deal with difficult matches and losses (Côté, 1999; Lauer et al., 2010b). Although we know parents provide this support, *how* parents find ways to do this has received relatively little attention in the literature.

Parental support is an important issue to study because it has previously been associated with enhanced perceptions of competence and self-esteem (Côté & Hay, 2002), enjoyment of sport (McCarthy, Jones, & Clark-Carter, 2008), intrinsic motivation (Woolger & Power, 2000), and longevity of involvement in sport (Woolger & Power, 1993). Parental support has further been associated with reduced perceptions of stress and anxiety (Van Yperen, 1995) and buffering the influence that poor performances might have on children's psychological well-being (Van Yperen, 1998). As such, an understanding of how parents are able to support their children and what may hinder their provision of support will help advance the literature in this area.

Although researchers have examined parental involvement and support across a range of sports, particular attention has been given to parents' involvement in tennis (e.g., Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes, & Pennisi, 2006; 2008; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b; Knight, Boden, & Holt, 2010; Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). As an individual sport that generally exists within private, 'pay-to-play' clubs, junior tennis is heavily dependent upon parental involvement (Gould et al., 2008). Junior tennis, particularly at the higher

levels, can be extremely demanding for parents both in terms of finance and time (Harwood & Knight, 2009a; Leff & Hoyle, 1995). Parents are also often responsible for providing emotional, and in some cases, technical and tactical support to players at tournaments because coaches usually do not attend (Harwood & Swain, 2002). Thus, junior tennis is an environment in which an understanding of parental involvement and support is particularly pertinent.

Gould and colleagues (2006; 2008; Lauer et al., 2010a) identified various types of support parents in the United States provided to help players succeed in tennis. This included, but was not limited to, financial, emotional, logistical, and informational support. For example, parents funded training and competitions, comforted children after losses, organized practices and tournaments, and provided information regarding the tennis process. Parents also supported their children by making sacrifices for them (e.g., giving up vacations and changing working hours), displaying unconditional love, and providing tennis opportunities. Overall, Gould and colleagues (2008) concluded that parental support was "crucial to the development of junior tennis players" (p. 30). These findings were generally consistent with earlier research examining parental support received by elite (adult) tennis players (Monassas, 1985) and top sectional players in the United Kingdom (Wolfenden & Holt, 2005).

Adding additional context and depth to the aforementioned studies, Lauer et al. (2010b) produced narratives highlighting the influence of parents on junior tennis players' development. These narratives were based on interviews with the parent-coach-player dyads of eight elite tennis players (and one additional player)

and illustrated three potential pathways that players may take as they develop in tennis. These were: (a) A smooth pathway, characterized by good parent-child relationships, with no apparent negative consequences of parental involvement; (b) Difficult transitions, a pathway characterized by some negative consequences of parental involvement, but one in which parent-child conflicts were usually resolved, and; (c) Turbulent pathways, which were associated with many negative consequences of parental involvement and were often unresolved. These pathways illustrated different influences (and consequences) of parental involvement and reinforced the need for parental support to achieve success in tennis. However, the provision of parental support appeared to be complex and, in some instances, a difficult task for parents.

Wiersma and Fifer (2008) recognized that, "as the demands of youth sport participation have become more complex and competitive, so, too, has the role of the youth sport parent" (p. 505). As parents attempt to negotiate their complex role it appears they encounter some challenges to supporting their children's sport involvement. Through focus groups with 55 parents, Wiersma and Fifer identified that parents found providing emotional and instrumental support to their children particularly challenging. The provision of instrumental support was challenging due to the consequences it had on general family life and parents' ability to fulfill other parenting responsibilities (such as organizing dinner, helping with homework, and getting children to bed on time). Challenges associated with providing emotional support arose because parents were unsure of how to support their children in difficult situations, such as when children had been unsuccessful,

if they were not as good as the other players on their team, or did not want to commit to a team for an entire season. This study highlighted a need for a better understanding of how parents find ways to negotiate these challenges and additional types of assistance parents may require.

In addition to the challenges identified by Wiersma and Fifer (2008), there are numerous other stressors associated with parenting in youth sport. Harwood and Knight (2009a) surveyed 123 parents who identified stressors they encountered in relation to supporting their children's involvement in tennis. Parents reported seven categories of stressors: Attendance at competitive matches and tournaments; coaches' behavior and responsibilities; financial and time demands placed upon the family; sibling resentment and inequality of attention; inefficiencies and inequalities attributed to tennis organizations; and developmental concerns related to education and future tennis transitions. Following on from this study, Harwood and Knight (2009b) conducted interviews with 22 parents of tennis-playing children. These parents indicated stressors associated with competitions (e.g., watching matches, logistical concerns), organizational factors (e.g., financial concerns, time issues), and developmental issues (e.g., tennis progression, academic concerns). Again, these findings suggest that supporting children in sport is a potentially difficult task for parents and an area of research that warrants attention.

As the aforementioned studies indicate, it is important that parents support their children's involvement in tennis, but being a 'tennis-parent' has been associated with numerous stressors and concerns (Harwood & Knight, 2009a,

2009b). Understanding *how* parents find ways to support their tennis-playing children, particularly given the challenges or stressors they may encounter, may produce useful information that can ultimately be used to enhance parental involvement in tennis (Knight & Holt, 2011). Furthermore, there is also a need to identify additional assistance that parents may require to support their children (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008). Thus, the purposes of this study were to (a) identify the strategies parents use to support their children's involvement in competitive tennis and (b) obtain parents' views about how they could be helped to better support their children's involvement in tennis

Method

Participants

The sample was comprised of 41 parents from the United States. Parents were purposefully sampled (Patton, 2002) based on the age of their child (10-16 years) and the standard of their child (in the top 25 in their section or higher). The United States is split into 17 geographical sections (regions) in which children can compete in tennis. Children are allocated a ranking in the section where they reside based on their results at tournaments. Hence, these sampling criteria were selected because they ensured parents were likely to be heavily involved in junior tennis, would probably have encountered a range of different tennis situations, and had supported their children to relatively high levels in junior tennis. It was anticipated these participants would be 'information-rich' cases who could provide detailed accounts of their experiences.

There were 24 mothers and 17 fathers of 25 female players and 33 male players in the sample. At the time of the interview, all participants had at least one child aged between 10 and 16 (*M* age of children = 13.25 years, *SD* = 2.35) participating in tennis. All children were in the top 25 in their section, and of these players, 25 were ranked in the top 65 for their age group in the entire United States. On average, the participants' children had been involved in tennis for 7.7 years (*SD* = 3.72). All but one participant was part of a two-parent family.

Procedure

Institutional Research Ethics Board approval was obtained and approval to conduct interviews was gained from the tennis managers and coaches at two regional training centers in the United States - one on the east coast and one on the west coast. Two-week fieldwork trips were then scheduled to each of the centers. Coaches at each center were given the sampling criteria, the study information letter, and informed consent forms to distribute to potential participants. Interested participants contacted the lead author (via e-mail) to schedule an interview during the fieldwork trips to each center. On arriving at each center, additional participants were also approached and recruited by the author as they were watching their children practice.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred through individual semi-structured interviews. Prior to the interviews all participants provided written informed consent. They were reminded their participation was voluntary, all information they provided

was confidential, and they were given an opportunity to ask any questions. The average length of the interviews was 49.28 minutes (*SD* = 13.93 minutes).

An interview guide was developed based upon previous studies of parenting in tennis (e.g., Gould et al., 2008, Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b; Knight et al., 2010) and discussions among the researchers. Two pilot interviews were conducted with parents prior to data collection. These interviews led to substantial refinement of the interview guide, specifically the structure of the main questions, the inclusion of more probes regarding the types and sources of help parents accessed, and the expansion of summary questions to ask for specific recommendations for coaches, clubs, and organizations. Data from the pilot interviews were not included in the analysis.

The interview guide followed the structure recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2005), starting with introductory questions, followed by the main questions, and finishing with summary questions. Introductory questions focused on collecting demographic information and general information regarding tennis parenting experiences in order to help build rapport (e.g., How would you describe your experience of being a tennis parent?). The main questions focused on how parents had been able to support their tennis-playing child and any areas where they needed additional help (e.g., What have you done to help your child progress in tennis? Who did you seek help from to be able to support your child in tennis? How were you able to support your child when they initially started in tennis? When they began to play tournaments? What additional help would have been beneficial as you supported your child in tennis?). Finally, summary

questions asked parents to reiterate their main sources of help and recommendations for coaches, clubs, and tennis organizations to better help tennis parents (e.g., Overall, what would you say has been most important in allowing you to support your child? How can coaches best help parents of tennis-playing children? What advice would you have for other parents regarding how to support their child in tennis?). See appendix at the end of the chapter for a copy of the final interview guide.

Data analysis

Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, resulting in 902 pages of single-spaced data. Transcripts were read and re-read by the author to ensure her immersion in the data. Analysis was conducted through an iterative process of data reduction, the development of data displays, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data reduction was carried out by selecting and abstracting meaningful units of data from the transcripts. That is, excerpts from the interview transcripts were reviewed and units of data that appeared meaningful (i.e., words or sentences that related to the research purposes) were identified and allocated codes. Three types of codes were developed: (1) Descriptive codes, which comprised little interpretation (e.g., Talking to other parents at tournaments); (2) Interpretive codes, which comprised more abstraction and background ideas (e.g., Guidance from other parents) and; (3) Patterns codes, which were more inferential and explanatory (e.g., Feeling like part of the group). Although initial coding tended to result in descriptive codes

and later-stage coding resulted in more pattern codes, this was not a linear process. Rather, coding took place at all levels throughout the analysis process.

Data displays ("A visual format that presents information systematically," Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 91) of the codes were then developed to help identify how the codes fitted together and were distinct from each other. Data displays also allowed the author to review data relating to similar ideas simultaneously rather than sequentially. Thus, it was possible to view extensive amounts of data in a systematic and effective manner, rather than constantly sifting through transcripts to re-examine each code (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Two types of data displays were used in this study: Data networks and data matrices. Data networks are "a collection of 'nodes' or points connected by lines" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 94). Data networks, particularly in the form of cognitive maps (figures that connect related information in a systematic and broad manner), were developed to examine multiple codes at once and allow for the identification of relationships between codes. Data networks were used during the earlier stages of data analysis to help the author visually depict how codes fitted together and formed broader categories. For example, all the codes making reference to 'other parents' were extracted and used to create a data network. As these codes were put together, links between the codes were identified and codes were grouped together.

Once data networks had been developed and the codes had been allocated to categories, data matrices were developed. Data matrices are "essentially a 'crossing' of two lists, set up as rows and columns" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.

93). Data matrices were particularly useful in allowing the comparison of specific codes across the entire set of participants. For example, the category relating to other parents was put into a larger data matrix and the codes were compared across each of the participants. The final data matrices are presented in Tables 3.1 and 3.2. Table 3.1 refers to the strategies participants used to support their children in tennis (i.e., the first purpose of the study). Table 3.2 refers to the additional help participants wanted (i.e., the second study purpose).

Methodological Rigor

Steps were taken during and following data collection to enhance the methodological rigor of this study (see Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). During the process of data collection and analysis a reflexive journal was maintained by the author to record her emerging ideas and thoughts regarding the data (Patton, 2002). This helped ensure that her biases and pre-existing ideas were identified during the research process, which was important because the author was a former competitive tennis player herself and had also completed previous research examining parenting in tennis.

Additionally, audio-files of the interview(s) conducted on the previous day were reviewed prior to the interview(s) conducted the next day. This allowed for the identification of subtle new ideas and, occasionally during the early phases of data analysis, slight alterations to be made to the interview guide as necessary (such as re-phrasing some questions: See Holt, Knight, & Tamminen, 2011).

Table 3.1

Strategies Parents Use to Support Their Children

Participant number	Spouses working together	Other parents	Role of coaches	Research information
1	Share the decision making process Take on different tasks	Discuss challenges and support each other	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects	USTA website information regarding tournaments
2	Share the decision making process Take on different tasks	Provide information and advice	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Search the Internet Information on the USTA website
3	Take on different tasks	Discuss challenges and support each other	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Information on the USTA website
4	Share the decision making process	Provide information and advice	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Search the Internet Read books Information on the USTA website
5		Provide information and advice	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects	Read books Information on the USTA website
6		Discuss challenges and support each other	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	
7	Share the decision making process Take on different tasks	Provide information and advice Discuss challenges and support each other	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Read books Search the Internet

8	Take on different tasks Share the decision making process	Discuss challenges and support each other Provide information Take on different tasks	Be open and available to parents during challenging times Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects	Watch tennis Information on the USTA website
9	Take on different tasks Share the decision making process	Discuss challenges and support each other Provide information and advice	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects	Read books Information at elite camps
10	Share the decision making process	Provide information and advice Discuss challenges and support each other	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects	Search the Internet Information on the USTA website
11	Share the decision making process Take on different tasks	Provide information and advice Discuss challenges and support each other	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Search the Internet
12	Take on different tasks	Provide information and advice Discuss challenges and support each other	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Search the Internet Information on the USTA website
13	Take on different tasks	Discuss challenges and support each other Provide information and advice	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects	Read books Search the Internet Information on the USTA website
14	Take on different tasks	Provide information and advice Discuss challenges and support each others	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Read books Search the Internet
15	Take on different tasks Share the decision making process	Provide information and advice	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Search the Internet Information on the USTA website

16	Share the decision making process Take on different tasks	Provide information and advice Discuss challenges and support each other	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Search the Internet
17	Sharing tasks	Provide information and advice Discuss challenges and support each other	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Access information on USTA website Read books Read magazines
18	Sharing tasks Sharing decisions	Provide information and advice Discuss challenges and support each other	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects	Search the Internet Watch tennis Listen to all sources Read books Read magazines
19	Different view Take on different tasks	Discuss challenges and support each other Provide information and advice	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	USTA available to answer questions Information on the USTA website
20	Take on different tasks	Provide information and advice Discuss challenges and support each other	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Take lessons Read books Search the Internet USTA available Accessed information at camps
21	Share the decision making process	Provide information and advice	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Search the Internet
22	Share the decision making process Take on different tasks	Provide information and advice Discuss challenges and support each other	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	
23	Sharing tasks Take on different tasks	Provide information and advice Discuss challenges and support each other	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects	Search the Internet Information on the USTA website Information at elite camps

24	Share the decision making process	Provide information and advice	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Search the Internet Read books Information at elite training camps
25	Take on different tasks	Provide information and advice Discuss challenges and support each others	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Information on the USTA website
26	Share the decision making process	Discuss challenges and support each others	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	
27	Take on different tasks	Provide information and advice	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Search the Internet
28	Take on different tasks Share the decision making process	Discuss challenges and support each others	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects	Search the Internet Gain information at elite training camps
29	Share the decision making process	Discuss challenges and support each others Provide information and advice	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Search the Internet Information on the USTA website
30	Take on different tasks	Provide information and advice	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects	Watching movies Watching tennis Reading books
31	Take on different tasks Share the decision making process	Discuss challenges and support each other	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects	Read books Watching tennis Information on the USTA website
32	Take on different tasks Share the decision making process	Discuss challenges and support each other Provide information and advice	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Search the Internet Information on the USTA website Information at elite training camps

33	Take on different tasks	Provide information and advice	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects	Reading magazines Search the Internet
34	Take on different tasks Share the decision making process	Provide information and advice Discuss challenges and support each others	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Search the Internet Information on the USTA website
35	Share the decision making process	Provide information and advice	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects	Seeking Internet Read books
36	Share the decision making process Take on different tasks	Discuss challenges and support each other	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects	Search the Internet Read books
37	Share the decision making process Take on different tasks	Provide information and advice	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Search the Internet Information at elite training camps
38	Take on different tasks Share the decision making process	Provide information and advice Discuss challenges and support each other	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects Be open and available to parents during challenging times	Read magazines Flyers Search the Internet Read books
39	*Divorced Different view Lack of support	Provide information and advice	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects	Read books Search the Internet
40	Take on different tasks	Provide information and advice Discuss challenges and support each other	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects	Read books Read magazines Search the Internet Need more information Information on the USTA website
41	Sharing tasks	Provide information and advice Discuss challenges and support each other	Provide guidance and information beyond just technical aspects	Search the Internet Information on the USTA website Information at elite training camps

Table 3.2.

Areas Parents Require Further Support

Participant number	Understanding and negotiating player progression	Education on behaving and encouraging children at tournaments	Evaluating and selecting coaches	Identifying and accessing financial support	Managing and maintaining schooling
1	Overall player development Tournament structure	How to deal with negative experiences	Identifying appropriate coaches	Understanding costs	Accessing academies
2	Tournament structure How to help progress	Providing appropriate feedback	Identifying appropriate coaches	Need financial assistance	Focus on schooling Balancing school and tournaments
3	Tournament structure How to help progress College scholarships	How to deal with negative experiences Providing appropriate feedback Coping with own emotions	Identifying appropriate coaches Accessing necessary clinics What to look for in coaches	Understanding costs Need financial assistance Information on grants Reduce costs	Balancing homework and tennis Scheduling of tournaments
4	Tournament structure How to help progress	Providing appropriate feedback Coping with own emotions	Identifying appropriate coaches Accessing necessary clinics What to look for in coaches	Information on grants Reduce costs	Balancing homework and tennis
5	Tournament structure	Providing appropriate feedback	Identifying appropriate coaches	Need financial assistance Reduce costs	Accessing academies
6	Overall player development Tournament structure How to help progress College scholarships		Identifying appropriate coaches What to look for in coaches	Need financial assistance Information on grants Reduce costs	

7	Overall player development Tournament structure How to help progress	How to deal with negative experiences Providing appropriate feedback	Identifying appropriate coaches Accessing necessary clinics What to look for in coaches	Understanding costs Need financial assistance Information on grants Reduce costs	
8	Overall player development Tournament structure How to help progress College scholarships	Providing appropriate feedback How to encourage children	Identifying appropriate coaches Accessing necessary clinics What to look for in coaches	Understanding costs Need financial assistance Reduce costs	Decisions regarding home schooling Balancing homework and tennis
9	How to help progress College scholarships Tournament structure	Coping with own emotions How to encourage children	Identifying appropriate coaches Accessing necessary clinics What to look for in coaches	Information on grants Reduce costs	Decisions regarding home schooling Accessing academies
10	Overall player development Tournament structure	How to deal with negative experiences Providing appropriate feedback Coping with own emotions	Identifying appropriate coaches Accessing necessary clinics What to look for in coaches	Understanding costs Need financial assistance Information on grants Reduce costs	Focus on schooling Balancing homework and tennis Scheduling of tournaments
11	Tournament structure How to help progress	Providing appropriate feedback How to encourage children	Identifying appropriate coaches What to look for in coaches	Need financial assistance Information on grants	Focus on schooling Scheduling of tournaments
12	Tournament structure How to help progress	Providing appropriate feedback	Identifying appropriate coaches What to look for in coaches	Understanding costs Need financial assistance Information on grants Reduce costs	

13	Overall player development Tournament structure How to help progress College scholarships	How to deal with negative experiences Providing appropriate feedback	Identifying appropriate coaches Accessing necessary clinics	Need financial assistance Information on grants Reduce costs	Accessing academies Scheduling of tournaments
14	Tournament structure How to help progress College scholarships	How to deal with negative experiences Providing appropriate feedback How to encourage children	Identifying appropriate coaches Accessing necessary clinics Identifying appropriate coaches Accessing necessary clinics	Understanding costs Need financial assistance Information on grants Reduce costs	Scheduling of tournaments
15	Tournament structure How to help progress	How to deal with negative experiences Providing appropriate feedback	Identifying appropriate coaches Changing coaches	Understanding costs Information on grants Reduce costs	School understanding
16	How to help progress	Providing appropriate feedback How to encourage children	Identifying appropriate coaches What to look for in coaches	Understanding costs Need financial assistance Reduce costs	
17	How to help progress	Providing appropriate feedback	Identifying appropriate coaches	Understanding costs Need financial assistance Information on grants Reduce costs	Balancing homework and tennis School understanding
18	Tournament structure How to help progress	Providing appropriate feedback Coping with own emotions How to encourage children	Accessing necessary clinics	Need financial assistance Information on grants Reduce costs	Decisions regarding home schooling School understanding

19	Tournament structure How to help progress	Coping with own emotions	Identifying appropriate coaches What to look for in coaches	Understanding costs Information on grants Reduce costs	
20	How to help progress	Providing appropriate feedback How to encourage children	Identifying appropriate coaches Accessing necessary clinics		Balancing homework and tennis
21	How to help progress	How to deal with negative experiences Providing appropriate feedback	Identifying appropriate coaches Accessing necessary clinics	Understanding costs	Balancing homework and tennis Scheduling of tournaments School understanding
22	Overall player development Tournament structure How to help progress College scholarships		Identifying appropriate coaches Accessing necessary clinics What to look for in coaches	Understanding costs Information on grants	Balancing homework and tennis
23	Tournament structure How to help progress	Providing appropriate feedback How to encourage children	Identifying appropriate coaches Changing coaches What to look for in coaches	Need financial assistance Information on grants Reduce costs	Balancing homework and tennis Scheduling of tournaments
24	Tournament structure How to help progress	How to deal with negative experiences Providing appropriate feedback	Identifying appropriate coaches Accessing necessary clinics Changing coaches	Need financial assistance	Balancing homework and tennis Scheduling of tournaments School understanding

25	Overall player development Tournament structure How to help progress College scholarships	How to deal with negative experiences Providing appropriate feedback Coping with own emotions How to encourage children	Identifying appropriate coaches Accessing necessary clinics What to look for in coaches	Understanding costs Need financial assistance Information on grants Reduce costs	
26	Overall player development Tournament structure How to help progress	How to deal with negative experiences Providing appropriate feedback Coping with own emotions	Identifying appropriate coaches	Information on grants Reduce costs	
27	Tournament structure	Providing appropriate feedback How to encourage children	Identifying appropriate coaches Accessing necessary clinics What to look for in coaches		Balancing homework and tennis Scheduling of tournaments
28	Overall player development Tournament structure How to help progress	How to deal with negative experiences Providing appropriate feedback Coping with own emotions	What to look for in coaches	Understanding costs Reduce costs	Decisions regarding home schooling Balancing homework and tennis School understanding
29	Overall player development Tournament structure How to help progress College scholarships	How to deal with negative experiences Coping with own emotions	Identifying appropriate coaches Accessing necessary clinics What to look for in coaches	Reduce costs	

30	Overall player development Tournament structure How to help progress	How to deal with negative experiences Providing appropriate feedback Coping with own emotions How to encourage children	Identifying appropriate coaches Accessing necessary clinics What to look for in coaches		Balancing homework and tennis
31	How to help progress	Providing appropriate feedback Coping with own emotions How to encourage children	Accessing necessary clinics What to look for in coaches	Understanding costs Need financial assistance Reduce costs	Focus on schooling Balancing homework and tennis Scheduling of tournaments
32	Tournament structure How to help progress	How to deal with negative experiences Providing appropriate feedback Coping with own emotions How to encourage children	Identifying appropriate coaches What to look for in coaches		
33	Tournament structure	How to deal with negative experiences Providing appropriate feedback Coping with own emotions	What to look for in coaches		
34	How to help progress	How to deal with negative experiences How to encourage children	Identifying appropriate coaches What to look for in coaches		Balancing homework and tennis

35	Tournament structure How to help progress	Providing appropriate feedback	Accessing necessary clinics What to look for in coaches		
36	Tournament structure How to help progress	Providing appropriate feedback How to encourage children	Changing coaches	Reduce costs	Decisions regarding home schooling
37	Tournament structure How to help progress	Providing appropriate feedback How to encourage children	Changing coaches	Need financial assistance	Decisions regarding home schooling
38	How to help progress College scholarships	How to deal with negative experiences Providing appropriate feedback How to encourage children	What to look for in coaches	Reduce costs	
39	How to help progress	Providing appropriate feedback	Identifying appropriate coaches Accessing necessary clinics What to look for in coaches	Information on grants Reduce costs	Decisions regarding home schooling Accessing academies School understanding
40	How to help progress College scholarships	Providing appropriate feedback	What to look for in coaches	Need financial assistance Information on grants Reduce costs	Accessing academies Balancing homework and tennis
41	How to help progress College scholarships	How to deal with negative experiences Providing appropriate feedback Coping with own emotions	Identifying appropriate coaches What to look for in coaches	Understanding costs Need financial assistance Information on grants Reduce costs	Focus on schooling Balancing homework and tennis Scheduling of tournaments

During data analysis the author's supervisor (who had not been part of the data collection process) was presented with the data displays and provided with verbal and written explanations of the emerging codes and categories. The author and her supervisor engaged in extensive discussions regarding the results, seeking to ensure a balanced, comprehensive, and explanatory account was created – one that would be clear to someone not familiar with the original data or the subculture of competitive junior tennis. Then, the supervisor was given a list of the codes and a sample of quotes for each category. He questioned the production of the categories and the allocation of quotes to each category to help ensure the categories were discrete and self-contained. Once a coding structure had been agreed (i.e., having completed the analytic tasks described above) the author then wrote up the first category, which was then reviewed and evaluated by the supervisor. This questioning and justification of data allocation continued throughout the process of writing the results (Richardson, 1994). That is, once the author and supervisor were satisfied the first category appropriately represented the data, the author progressed to writing up the second category, followed by the third and fourth (all of which were reviewed by the supervisor) until the results had been completed. Therefore, the coding, data displays, and written narratives were initially created by the author and subsequently scrutinized by her supervisor throughout the research process.

Results

In the following sections categories depicting the strategies participants used to support their children's involvement in tennis are presented. Challenges

associated with these strategies are also reported in the interest of providing a balanced account. Next, areas participants thought they needed additional help with are presented. The extent to which individual participants reported data for each category is provided in Table 3.1 and 3.2.

Strategies Parents Adopt to Support their Children's Tennis Involvement

Spouses Working Together. (Number of participants reporting this category: 38). One approach that helped participants support their children's tennis involvement was working 'as a team' with their spouse (as noted in the method, all but one of the participants in this study were in two-parent families). For example, when discussing his biggest help in supporting his son's tennis, one father concluded, "My wife's support you know, the fact that both of us are on the same page supporting each other to support our kids in sports" (P31). Similarly, the mother of two national junior players explained that she and her husband were, "a team…Not only the support, communication, or committing time to each other, but really working together" (P28).

Participants described working with their spouse in a number of ways, including sharing decision-making about their child's training and tournaments. The mother of a national player explained the types of discussions she and her husband had:

> We usually discuss things when we don't know what he [son] is going to do next. "Does he do a tournament? Could he progress more?" That's what we discuss, we talk about goals, [our] kid's strengths and weakness, how could we prepare, how could we have a kid that's ready (P21).

Another mother of a national male player discussed how her husband supported her decision to change her son's coach. As she explained:

> My husband he was always [saying] "You're doing the right thing." "You have to do this." And he actually was kind of forceful about that, 'cause I'm not, I, I don't like to confront people. So he was kind of telling me "You have to do it, you have to tell him [coach] he is holding [name of son] back" (P9).

Participants also worked as a team to support their child's involvement by adopting different roles. One father explained, "In my family… my wife, she is involved… so we have like some kind of different areas. I am responsible for training, she's responsible for enrolling to tournaments, gathering all information" (P18). Similarly, the mother of one of the highest nationally ranked juniors explained the distinct roles she and her husband fulfilled. In their family the father, "spent [name of son's] whole childhood at tournaments. He was gone every week, at least two or three weekends a month." While the father travelled with the son, the mother has, "sort of been the IMG sports manager…registering for tournaments…trying to understand each of the systems… and then making the travel arrangements, getting the hotel with two double beds, finding the lowest airfare…" (P37).

By sharing these tasks participants described being better able to fulfill the extensive demands associated with having a child involved in competitive tennis. Participants were also able to avoid tasks they found particularly stressful or challenging. For example, when discussing attendance at tournaments, one mother

explained, “No, my husband goes [to tournaments], I always have him take my daughter. I don’t like to take her” (P23). By sharing responsibilities participants could avoid tasks they did not like but still ensure their children had sufficient support to progress.

In some families it was not possible for both parents to take an active role in their child’s tennis due to work commitments or a limited interest in or understanding of the sport. Nevertheless, in these situations, participants still described being supported by their spouse because they took on a larger share of the household and family tasks. For example, in the family of a female sectional player, the father said his wife “did not understand tennis” and decided to leave the management of her daughter’s tennis to him. Instead, she supported him by “taking on more responsibility with my son and the other stuff at home” (P22).

Whereas participants indicated that working with their spouse was extremely important, it was sometimes difficult because parents did not always agree on what was necessary for their child to progress. For example, the mother of a top sectional player explained that she and her husband had disagreements regarding how to provide feedback to their child after losses. In fact, this led her to ‘ban’ her husband from tournaments, as she explained:

> I don’t like him [husband] to come with me [to matches] anymore because it’s too much. I like it to be very positive, more like saying what you did right when he [son] loses ‘cause you lose more than you win. But he [husband] is different, he’s so into it (P23).

Although this was a more negative type of interaction between parents, it again reflected the idea of spouses working together to find ways to provide support to their children. Hence, even in the face of disagreements between parents, the need for parents to 'work as a team' to provide for and support their child's tennis was highlighted.

Interacting with Other Parents. (Number of participants: 41). Participants often cooperated with other parents to find ways in which they could support their tennis-playing children. For example, participants turned to other parents when their children initially became involved in the sport. As one mother explained:

> I talked to [other] parents a lot about tennis…I feel like you learn a lot from other parents, what they've done. Especially with kids at different levels so I think that's [important]. I definitely tried to make time for most of her lessons to be there by the courts… then I could sort of talk to the parents…meet the other families (P29).

Participants indicated that even as children progressed in tennis they continued to learn from other parents. For example, the mother of one of the top juniors in the United States was asked if she still turned to other parents for advice and she responded:

> Absolutely, absolutely. Because the stuff that you find out, you're amazed by it because um, there's certain national tournaments that you could have put your child in but you didn't know much about it and it's easier to get into this one versus that one and different things you know, so the parents

> really give you the ins and outs of, you know, what's going on with their child and you try to just follow suit (P7).

Although participants indicated that learning from other parents was important, they also cautioned against blindly copying other parents because they were not always 'right.' This was illustrated by one mother who explained the negative effect copying other parents' behaviors had on her daughter's tennis:

> I have my older daughter whose experience in the beginning wasn't positive at all. You know you see other parents getting results by yelling at kids during and after tournaments, getting them to perform. So as a bystander, I would see it and think, "OK she's getting results, maybe this is the method I should use." So I adopted some methods that were really bad and didn't work and I found out later all it did was make her hate the sport (P7).

Similarly, whereas many participants said parents helped each other, some parents were viewed as being secretive, unhelpful, and unwilling to cooperate. As one father recalled, "I don't think that all parents are forthright when they talk to you, 'cause they're always fearful of your kid being better than theirs" (P26). Another father echoed these sentiments, explaining, "What I find is that it's competitive and everybody wants to keep secret their good coaches and their good programs" (P6). Thus, although parents relied on the advice of other parents to support their own children, they cautioned against relying on their information too much.

In addition to gaining information from parents, participants also sought out other parents for support in terms of friendship and camaraderie. As the father of a national player said, "You become friendly with a lot of the parents. It's like a

small community" (P17). On a similar note, the mother of a national male player explained, "It's funny, you'll find the same group of friends, you kinda make a group of friends and, you know, we text each other and you know we help each other out" (P20). Such friendships appeared particularly helpful at tournaments, as many participants found these to be challenging experiences. As the mother of two national players explained:

> [Going to tournaments is] a grind. But you know, you do find a few people that you enjoy their company and hopefully you are on the same schedule as they are. In fact, [one of my children] went to Zonals, and my other friend was going and her daughter is at the top of the under 12s… They weren't on the same team but their schedule was very close and I told her this was the most fun I've ever had at a tournament. [I] could laugh at the crazies [i.e., the 'crazy parents'] and you know, kinda keep myself together (P13).

Developing friendships with other parents also enabled participants to distract themselves from the anxiety they may experience when watching their child compete. A mother explained:

> If I don't have other parents to talk to then I kind of sit in the car or stay far away watching and getting nervous, but you know if I talk to a friend, another tennis mom, then you kind of like take that nervousness away from you 'cause then you're distracted by the talking and focusing on the talking instead of the ball and "oh into the net." So yeah, so it's just kind of like a support for each other (P23).

Selecting an Appropriate Coach. (Number of participants: 41). Another way participants supported their children was to find coaches who were not just technically proficient but also had the skills and education to provide a holistic training program to help children develop as players and people. For example, one mother summarized the sentiments of many when she explained:

> I am looking for a coach to provide guidance, have some discipline, teaching discipline, and strict but not too harsh. Teaching the ethics about sport and so basically that. You know care about the kid, the overall development of the kid. I wouldn't put him in a place where they train professional tennis players 'cause that's not where we're going. But yeah something, some place that will appreciate his all around development, care about his development and care about safety and things like that (P38).

Another mother (who had aspirations for her son to become a professional player) explained how she selected a coach that would completely manage her son's tennis development so she would not hinder it. She said:

> I don't want to be his [son's] obstacle. So, I told him [his coach], "I expect you to manage him, not just to train him also manage him, what he needs, the overall package, because I don't know. I have no clue in sport, OK I played, but never, you know, never professional and I have no clue what to do. You have to, you have to come and tell me he needs this, he needs this, he needs this. I don't even know when he needs to change racquets, I don't know… so you come and tell me what I should do" (P30).

In addition to providing the necessary guidance and training to players, participants also sought out coaches who would provide *parents themselves* with guidance and support. A father explained, "A good coach is coaching parents, they share their experience and what they have learned" (P24). Similarly, a father explained the "coach is very important to tell parents what [the] kid needs right now to develop their game for the next level" (P22).

In addition to guidance participants also sought coaches who could provide them with emotional support to help them cope with the challenges associated with being a tennis parent. As the father of two nationally ranked players said, "You've got to cry on their [the coaches'] shoulders cause they're the ones that you rely on and that's what I'm paying them to do, to help" (P26). Participants' need for emotional support from coaches appeared particularly necessary when children had lost or had difficult tournament experiences. For example, one mother recalled a situation when her child had lost and was disappointed:

> You cannot deal with that. Sometimes you have to, you know, like in a hotel let it go… Once I cried you know, I call [name of coach] and said "I don't know what to do, I don't know how to deal with this because there's nothing I can do really" (P2).

In addition to turning to coaches after a loss or difficult tournament, participants also proactively sought support from coaches. For example, one mother said, "If I know it's going to be a very stressful match … I'll ask [name of coach] to come with me…his presence, like when he comes to a tournament, he just knows what to do to make you OK" (P3). Similarly, another mother asked her

daughter's coach to talk to her husband about his inappropriate behavior at tournaments. She said that her daughter came home saying:

> "I just wish dad would stop telling me [what to do] and trying to be a coach." So I went to [name of coach], I said, "Is there any way you could talk to [husband] and tell him like he is dad, be her dad not her coach?" And he's like, "I'll talk to him" (P19).

Overall, coaches appeared to play an important role in helping parents find ways to support their children by providing support to the parents themselves.

Researching Information. (Number of participants: 38). Many participants recognized that they needed to "become students of the game" (P14), educating themselves about tennis and how to parent their tennis-playing children. For example, a number of participants discussed learning about the psychological side of tennis. One mother said:

> The mental aspect of tennis is very important, and that's where I decided to read these books and get a little bit more information. Being that my kids are pretty young, it's hard for them to pick up these books and read it and understand it, so you listen to the TV, you listen to the things that other players experience and try to draw from that and try to get them to see that OK, you have to be mentally ready, certain attitudes, certain rituals you must develop if you want to be successful (P7).

Another father explained how he went about educating himself on tennis technique, "I would go on YouTube and we would just like type in like 'Federer's forehand' or something and we would watch it. We're trying to become more

knowledgeable that way ‘cause I really don’t know anything about tennis” (P18). Another father explained how he dedicated time at night to searching the Internet and reading about tennis. As he described:

> You know, not every parent is into this. Some of the parents just want results. Some people think it’s money. You know, just throw money at it. Um, I read online, I mean, I read online everything, everything. I read blogs, I read message boards, I read, read articles. I read everything. I have three magazine subscriptions. I’ve gotten every tennis magazine (P17).

In addition to using the Internet, parents also read autobiographies of tennis players and their parents because, “it’s always good to read more about it [tennis] you know, from people who do have experience” (P4).

By searching for such information and educating themselves, parents perceived they were in a better position to guide their child’s tennis and ensure they were involved in the most appropriate manner. However, participants were concerned they may not necessarily be accessing accurate information. One mother, when discussing tennis resources on the Internet, said, “That’s not always a good source either though, ‘cause you could get a lot of bad information, we’ve gotten a lot of good information, but there’s a lot of bad information out there too…it’s kind of tough” (P15). Thus, although parents tried to find ways to support their children’s involvement in tennis by accessing external sources, they also recognized some problems with this, especially with the accuracy of Internet sources.

One website that participants did think had accurate information was that of the USTA **(**United States Tennis Association – the governing body for tennis in the United States). One mother often spent evenings on the USTA website to find information. As she said, "[I spend time] looking between the Northern California USTA site and then just the general USTA [website]… it's there, that [tournament and rules etc] information is there" (P29). Another father said, "Actually USTA is very, uh USTA website is very convenient, you check all the types of tournaments" (P10).

But one concern raised about the USTA website was the information was too general. As one mother explained:

> They have a lot of stuff on the website that you can, you know, for coaches, parents, yeah so I mean I think they have a lot of information there, which is great. You know, I mean it's great general information, but um, you know, I guess it would be nice to get more specific information (P15).

Further, some participants reported that the information provided by the USTA was difficult to understand and did not provide clear guidance. Consequently, participants explained that they had called their sectional USTA office to gain information. This was the approach the mother of a national player would recommend for new tennis parents:

> I guess they can call your section player development [officer] and say "Hey I wanna start" and let her tell you over the phone how it works, and take notes. Like one time I spoke to her, [name of development officer]

> and I took notes of everything she said. …When he wanted to sign up for that first Zonals, they took the top 24 and I didn't understand how they came, based on what, top 24 based on what, and she was like telling me "well they have to have done this many sections"… (P8).

Finally, some participants had received additional guidance from the USTA because their children were invited to USTA training camps. These camps were viewed very favorably, as one mother explained:

> We've been kind of lucky, with my two youngest kids that we have been invited by the USTA to different, err, it's called training camps for the kids. I have learned a lot going to these training camps… because they have meetings for parents… and they explain that for a parent you know, what kind of tournament you should be playing, play some open tournaments and then championships with going back and forth you know, stuff like that (P28).

Participants who had accessed these camps, and those who had heard about them but not been invited, thought that if these opportunities were expanded to a wider proportion of players and parents all parents would be in a better situation to support their child.

Additional Help Required to Allow Parents to Best Support their Children

Although participants had developed a number of strategies to allow them to support their children's involvement in tennis, they also indicated a number of areas where they felt additional help would have been beneficial (as per the second purpose of this study). These areas are outlined below.

Understanding and Negotiating Player Progression. (Number of participants: 41). Although participants gained information about tennis from a range of sources, they all highlighted a need for more information regarding *player progression*. This was most clearly stated by the mother of a national player who said:

> I would love to know what's gonna happen next or what he should be doing at this stage of, you know, his career, cause we spend a lot of money on his tennis, on the classes, we would love to know what's gonna happen next or what should happen next (P9).

Similarly, another parent suggested, it would be useful to "have kind of like A, B, C's, you know… 'How to develop a junior player'" (P26). Specifically, participants highlighted the need for more information regarding what to expect as their children progressed, particularly if their children had not been selected to attend training camps where parent seminars were provided. As one mother explained, the USTA could provide:

> … some kind of seminars and explain to parents and show them some kind of tangible things. OK, let's say "what do you want to achieve?" "Oh you want to see your kid like top ten Eastern section?" "OK, let me show you the amount of money that you have to invest to get that" (P16).

Participants indicated a desire for such information because they wanted to provide the best opportunities for their child to be successful. However, they did not always know or understand what they needed to be doing. As one mother summarized, "they [coaches and the USTA] assume that everyone knows a lot, all

of it and parents like me, we don't know anything" (P30). Reiterating these thoughts, a mother explained, "You have a lot of parents here and you have like the younger ones who wanna know what you're getting involved in because we don't know…It would be good to get all the information about that" (P20).

It appeared there were two particular aspects of player progression participants wanted more information about. The first was information related to starting and progressing in tournaments. Such information was desired because participants had difficulties understanding the tournament structure (the different tournament levels that children progress through as they improve in tennis). For example, in the United States children can enter different levels of tournaments in their section from novice to sectional championship and they can also enter national tournaments. The number of sectional and national ranking points children get from a tournament will depend on the grading or level of the tournament. Understanding the different tournament levels had been a particular issue for the mother of one national player who explained:

> I don't think it's [the levels of tournaments] easily spelled out, like why, what's an L1 [L1 is the highest graded tournament] plus and L1 and L1B and who teaches you that? There's no like place it says. And then when you try to get into the nationals they're [the USTA] like "Oh, well you have to qualify." "Well what does it, what does it take to qualify?" "You have to play so many sectionals of this level." How would I have known that? …I wish there was some kind of diagram that really just spelled it out easy (P9).

Similarly, summarizing the additional help he would like, one father said:

> Like I mentioned before, how to choose the tournament you know, that would be [a] great help and that, provided information about ah, the most important tournaments and tournaments that have the best facilities, direction on that (P4).

The second area participants indicated needing more information about was obtaining college scholarships. The majority of participants in this study indicated a desire for their children to achieve a high level in tennis to gain a college scholarship (and some wanted their children to attend an Ivy League university). However, participants appeared to be unsure of how to actually help their children at this stage of their career because they did not always know what was required to achieve a college scholarship. As one mother explained, "Tennis costs about 30 grand a year at this level with travel and coaching, it's a year's college tuition… so we're looking at college scholarships…what kind of support is there? You know, again, talking and guessing?" (P9). Another mother stated, "Nobody knows what is going on, where and when selections for colleges happen and there's a lot of mistakes, the parents need to know more" (P13).

By having more information about player progression, particularly in relation to tournaments and college scholarships, participants believed they could provide more or better support to their children because they could anticipate and plan for the future. A father summarized, "I would say some sort of a workshop for parents covering goals and progress would help parents plan for if their kid is good and know what they need to be in high performance" (P36).

Education About Behaving and Encouraging Children at Tournaments. (Number of participants: 39). Participants discussed the role of parents at tournaments and the parental behaviors they witnessed after matches. The majority of participants shared stories regarding, what they deemed to be, inappropriate parental behaviors and the consequences these could have on players. As a result of witnessing such situations many participants advocated for better education of parents regarding appropriate behaviors at tournaments. As one mother explained:

> We have to like educate parents because some parents, like I see now at the tournaments a lot of parents they run into a guy [i.e. another parent] like and yell 'you cheat my son, why you doing this you?' We have to actually educate the parents (P13).

Participants also indicated that parental education would be helpful because they often felt unprepared to provide support to their children at tournaments. A mother explained, "We have to find out for ourselves each time when we face some situation, we have to find out the answer ourselves and we are not prepared" (P14). She later returned to this issue and continued explaining:

> Every tournament something new pops up, you know, like the last time it was cheating, the time before he [son] lost and he was discouraged and he said he didn't want to play tournaments any more, you know it's like everytime something, yeah, something new to figure out.

Rather than having to just 'figure out' what to do and how to support their children, participants indicated they would benefit from actually being advised

how they could provide feedback or encouragement after matches. For example, when discussing how to support her son after matches, one mother said:

> It would be nice if somebody came and just told me these answers, 'cause it would make my life a lot easier. 'Cause there are times when, you know, I try not to be hard on him [son], but in books that I've read, some of the research that I've done online, …they suggest that you talk to your kids and try to work through these things and not give them their time to digest it on their own. But there should be a tennis 101, you know, for parents and kids (P15).

Participants provided numerous suggestions regarding the type of information or advice that would help them. The idea that was consistently discussed was the need for more USTA run seminars (particularly for those parents whose children did not get selected for elite training camps) or booklet outlining how to be a 'good' tennis parent. For example, when discussing the tournament experience, one father explained:

> They should have parents, tennis parents coaching 101, you know, something like that, because I don't think parents have a clue what to do, other than the fact that they love their kids and they want them to do well and be successful. I don't think that they have any idea how to go about being a good tennis parent (P26).

Another parent reiterated this idea, stating:

> OK, uh either give us information in any kind like a brochure or a class or, or in the website, as we already mentioned, how to deal with, you know,

> such and such situation or just assign someone maybe for all the questions of parents if we have some questions, we know who we can talk to about it (P14).

Overall, participants perceived that educating parents about their behaviors at tournaments and how to emotionally support their children would ensure parents were better prepared to create positive and beneficial tournament experiences for their children.

Selecting and Evaluating Coaches. (Number of participants: 41). The participants in this study wanted and gained a lot of support from their children's coaches. As one mother suggested, "Everything comes back to the coach. If the coach does his job on every level, then it's less for you to work at or talk about" (P3). However, participants described having little guidance or information regarding how to select an appropriate coach for their children. As one parent explained:

> Well the parents are on their own. Literally it's a trial by fire. You try this coach, you try that coach until you get to the right guy. I was fortunate enough to, the first personal coach that [name of child] had was a very good guy, he taught him very well (P12).

Unfortunately, not all the participants had been so successful at selecting a coach. For example, repeating a story provided by many, one mother said, "We had tried a lot of programs and they were terrible. They were basically money makers with no real good coaching" (P3).

Given the importance of coaches in allowing parents to help their children develop, participants thought more information from the USTA regarding how to select coaches or assess the quality of coaches would be beneficial. For example, one father suggested, "Maybe there could be a rating system, maybe the parents could say 'I like this coach or this coach is good for this or that.' That should be something that the USTA should think about" (P26). Advocating for a similar idea, another mother said, "It would be very helpful to have a summary of what each one [coach] offers, what their caliber is, what kind of students they coach, their strengths, their styles… I think it would be awesome" (P27).

Some participants expressed a desire for a parents' forum or online network that would allow parents to share information about coaches or classes. When discussing a negative coaching experience she had, one mother explained, "I think it would be good if there's a network of parents, there's a forum…for parents to go to and discuss the issues" (P38). A father described the benefits he saw arising from having a parents' forum:

> I think you could kind of start figuring out what you're getting into. Right now we have no way of finding out a good coach, unless you're lucky to find it by word of mouth, right but there's no [information], even online. It's very hard to find out who a good coach would be, what their style is, and how they would work with you and so there's no source of information for that, and that would be really good to have. For instance, even if you're buying products, like a TV or something right you can go online and figure out, everyone's done a review of some sort, so you know

> where things are at, so you feel comfortable when you're buying something. Everyone's done that, 5 stars or 4 stars, yeah I like that, that's what I'd like to see (P22).

Overall, participants perceived that having access to more evaluative information about coaches would allow them to make informed choices regarding their children's coach, allowing them to provide the best support to their children.

Identifying and Accessing Funding Opportunities. (Number of participants: 34). Competitive tennis is expensive, particularly as children reach higher national and international levels. For example, the mother of a top national player discussed the costs of paying for her son and his coach to travel to national and international tournaments:

> The biggest issue with tennis is it costs too much. You know to go to the tournaments, that [player's junior world ranking] was about a $20,000-$25,000 [per year]. A one-week tournament $2000, [and] close to $4000 for a 10-day tournament. You know, somebody asked me that once, "what do I spend? "I said "with [name of coach] and [name of child] travelling a ballpark of $2000-$2500 a week," and I mean if they go to Mexico with that airfare [it's] expensive, $5000 a week, and this is juniors! (P37).

Given the expense of tennis, some participants indicated they had to restrict the opportunities they provided to their children. As one father said, "I don't have that kind of money to pick up with my kid and have him all over the place playing tournaments. I would be broke" (P11). Another mother explained, "He doesn't take any private lessons now because it's just too expensive" (P5). Given such

financial concerns, participants highlighted a need for more financial assistance to allow them to best support their children's tennis involvement.

Participants provided numerous suggestions for how the USTA and clubs could help reduce some of the costs associated with tennis. For example, one participant thought tennis should be subsidized, "You would think that the USTA would like you know try to help subsidize some of that [the travel costs] with the parents who really want their kid to play tennis but they don't" (P12). Another participant said, "One of the things I think that the USTA could do is provide more scholarships and stuff for parents that need the money to take their kids through that journey cause it's an expensive sport" (P7). One other suggestion was that clubs or coaches could, "Just allow the good kids to play for free a couple of hours a week" (P13).

Participants also discussed how beneficial it would be to have more information regarding what financial assistance was available and how they could obtain it. For example, one mother explained:

> I would like to get maybe more information, maybe there is some places I just don't know those places, and I would like to really know better what opportunities we have, you know… what is the requirements for tennis grants, because even uh you know I just found out recently that he has to play in all the states [in the United States] to be selected for you know a tennis grant. I was thinking that just to play tennis for a lot of years is enough to get a grant, but it's not. And I just talked to some parents, so I

> would like to yeah, get more information about where we can get this financial support for tournaments (P14).

Participants perceived that having access to such information would allow them to provide more tennis opportunities to their children, therefore allowing them to better support their children.

Managing and Maintaining Schooling. (Number of participants: 29). Given the time commitment associated with tennis, some participants discussed the difficulties associated with maintaining their children's schooling. The main difficulties participants described were negotiating time for their children to miss school for tournaments and balancing homework and training requirements. As one mother said, her main difficulty in supporting her son had been him, "missing classes, I mean it's [name of city] you don't miss school, I mean we've had to lie to go to a National tournament and we're lying to a [religious-based] School, that's just great!" (P37).

Given these concerns, participants perceived they would be able to help their children if schools could be more understanding of tennis and the USTA could be more understanding of children's school commitments. For example, the mother of a national player explained:

> They're missing a lot of school, you know taking kids for the nationals or the sectionals and parents have an issue with school, sometimes we have to take a week off for the Orange Bowl [the unofficial junior world tennis championships] and the school won't cooperate" (P13).

On the other hand, one mother summarized the sentiments of many when she explained:

> I would like the whole [tennis] system to respect school. You know and that school should come first and you know they're not all you know, forget this hype because they're not going to be professionals. And the other side is you know it's fine to be a teaching coach and feed balls, but even those jobs are not limitless. So you know you really need to stress having an education so that you can do something else (P2).

To help schools better understand children's tennis commitments, parents thought it would be useful if the USTA could produce letters for schools explaining when and why children would be away for tournaments. One mother discussed how helpful this would be:

> First of all like we have a problem when we're taking our kids for the tournament because we have to leave Friday morning so that's like a problem with the school. If we can just have a letter from the USTA, a letter to the school to explain what the tennis is and some tournaments happen on Friday it would really help because in a lot of schools the principal doesn't understand where the kid needs to be. So some like help from USTA with some general explanation would be good (P13).

In addition to helping schools to better understand tennis commitments, participants discussed a number of ways the USTA could help them balance the school and tennis commitments. For example, one of the main issues participants discussed was with the scheduling of tournaments. One mother explained, "The

schedules aren't always run very well and you're kind of a slave to the schedule…and the kids have homework, they have school you know, but they're playing late and all weekend, it's not well scheduled" (P1). Thus, participants indicated a desire for help in managing their children's school and tennis commitments and guidance regarding the best schooling path to take.

Discussion

The purposes of this study were to (a) identify the strategies parents used to support their children's involvement in competitive tennis and (b) obtain parents' views about how they could be helped to better support their children's tennis involvement. Participants indicated that they actively sought information, guidance, and emotional support from a range of sources to support their children. In other words, they 'surrounded themselves with support' so that they could provide the necessary support to their children. They also highlighted a number of areas where they required additional help to support their children's involvement. Overall these findings revealed information about *how* parents find ways to support their children's involvement in tennis and provide insights into how organizations and coaches can provide better support to parents.

A key finding was that spouses worked together to support their children's involvement in tennis. Although this issue has been mentioned previously in the sport psychology literature (e.g., Côté, 1999; Holt & Dunn, 2004), it has not been thoroughly examined. Research in developmental psychology has shown that spousal support is important in reducing general parenting stress and helping with parents' mental health (Cairney, Boyle, Offord & Racine, 2003; Simons, Lorenz,

Wu, & Conger, 1993). Hence, it would seem plausible, given previous research and the current findings, that spousal support is an important strategy parents can use to help support their children's involvement in tennis. This is potentially important given that parenting children involved in competitive sport can be challenging and stressful (Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b; Wiersma & Fifer, 2008).

A seemingly unique finding of the current study was participants found other parents were helpful in terms of providing them with support and information (although there were some reports of parents not helping each other). Research examining parental stressors and challenges has indicated that 'inappropriate' parental behaviors or interactions can cause parents stress (Knight & Harwood, 2009a; 2009b). However, this issue of 'parents supporting parents' does not appear to have been extensively reported in the literature – possibly because previous research has generally looked at the types of support parents provide to their children or the stressors they experienced rather than how parents find ways to provide such support.

Participants wanted coaches to provide guidance regarding their children's overall tennis program, support their development as people, and provide parents themselves with emotional and tangible help when they faced difficulties. The importance of a good relationship between parents and coaches has previously been reported in the literature (e.g., Bloom, 1985; Gould et al., 2006) but the current findings extend previous work by revealing information about the specific types of assistance parents wanted from coaches in order to better support their

own children (i.e., intervening in difficult situations, aiding their child's overall development). That said, recent arguments put forward in the coaching literature have highlighted the need to understand the social process of coaching and recognized a coach's work is not done in isolation, but is a product of their environment and those around them (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2006). The current study supported this perspective, which is important because the findings are suggestions *from parents* about how coaches may enable them to better support their children.

Another finding that has received little attention in the literature was the extensive time parents spent researching information. Previous studies have shown coaches sometimes interpret parents turning to other sources of information as a lack of trust in their coaching abilities (Gould et al., 2006; 2008; Knight & Harwood, 2009). However, the parents in the current study did not seem to be researching additional information because they did not trust coaches. Rather, it seemed researching information provided parents with more knowledge, which they thought allowed them to provide better support to their children. Given that the accuracy of information available on the Internet can be inaccurate at times, it seems important to further examine what types of information parents access and how they use such information to inform their parenting. Furthermore, from a practical perspective, it may be possible for sport governing bodies to officially endorse certain websites known to contain practical and informative advice (and even warn against parents using information from other websites).

As noted above, reflecting generally on the strategies parents used to be able to support their children, one plausible interpretation is that parents 'surrounded themselves with support.' For example, spouses worked together, other parents guided them, and they had or wanted multiple types of support from coaches. Arguably, even turning to the Internet was another way of parents finding support 'for themselves' (i.e., informational support). This suggestion that parents surrounded themselves with support is partially supported by research in developmental psychology, which has shown the support parents access can positively influence the quality of their parenting, along with their perceptions of stress, mental health, and even their children's development (e.g., Abidin, 1992; Belsky, 1984; Koeske & Koeske, 1990; Simons et al., 1993). Taking the current findings and previous research in developmental psychology in conjunction, it would seem parents would benefit from an environment in which multiple individuals are working together to support each other.

Despite parents' best efforts to obtain information from a range of sources, they still wanted or needed more information on a number of tennis-specific factors. They highlighted the need for more help with evaluating and selecting coaches, understanding children's progression in tennis, funding, and managing school and tennis participation. Similarly, Harwood and Knight (2009a; 2009b) found that parents of competitive junior tennis players in the United Kingdom reported stressors related to a number of these factors, such as the quality of coaching, decisions regarding schooling, and behavior at tournaments. The fact the current findings show parents from the United States shared similar concerns

as parents from the United Kingdom perhaps reflects a challenge for numerous tennis organizations. That is, because there is such a high level of responsibility for parents to support their children's involvement in tennis, parents are heavily dependent upon direct communication from tennis organizations. By providing such information the USTA or other sports organizations may help to reduce parenting stress and with it inappropriate parental involvement in sport (cf. Gould et al., 2008; Knight et al., 2010).

Although the current findings replicate some of the parenting stressors and challenges identified in previous research, they also add to the literature by providing practical suggestions *from parents* to overcome these challenges. For example, Harwood and Knight (2009a; 2009b) identified that the financial demands of tennis is one of the greatest stressors parents may encounter. Participants in the current study provided numerous suggestions (e.g., reduced court fees, information regarding grants) regarding how to reduce the financial demands parents encounter. Similarly, previous research has indicated that parents would benefit from educational resources regarding appropriate behavior at tournaments (e.g., Gould et al., 2006; Knight et al., 2010). The participants in this study indicated specific ways they thought such parent education should be delivered (e.g., parents seminars and booklets). Given that these are recommendations *from parents* to improve parenting of children in tennis, it is feasible that they would be more persuasive than recommendations from people (i.e., coaches, researchers, practitioners) who have not had the experience of parenting a child in tennis.

The current findings must be considered against the limitations of the study. Data were collected via fieldwork trips to two tennis centers in the United States – thus, they may not be representative of parents' experiences at different tennis centers or different areas of the country. For example, parents whose children attend full-time tennis academies may have different experiences to the parents interviewed in this study because parents whose children live away often do not attend training or competitions with their children. Furthermore, given that participants volunteered to discuss their parenting and there were few examples of the negative stereotype of the 'pushy' tennis parent there may have been a risk of sampling bias. That is, the current findings may only represent the views of parents that perceived themselves to be successfully supporting their children, not accounting for those parents that were struggling to provide the necessary support or may have been inappropriately involved in their child's tennis.

Another limitation was parents' data were not triangulated or compared with data from coaches, clubs, or representatives from the USTA. Research examining the perspectives of multiple agents, particularly those specified by parents as sources of information or help, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how support is provided to parents and how parents access this support. This is an important future direction arising from the current study. Another issue was that no child-level outcomes were assessed in the study. Thus, it is not possible to conclude what the consequences of the help and support parents received (or desired) were on children's participation or performance in tennis. Furthermore, given that the current study focused on a specified age range

(i.e., parents of children aged 10-16 years old), changes in ways parents find to support their children as they develop cannot be firmly established. Finally, information about family income was not obtained, which may have been an oversight because of the high financial demands of tennis participation (and that one of the findings referred to finding additional sources of financial support).

In summary, the current study showed that parents found ways to support their children's involvement in tennis by 'surrounding themselves with support.' Some sources of additional assistance parents wanted were similar to findings from previous studies about the stressors parents experience (Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b; Wiersma & Fifer, 2008) and further reinforce the need for sport organizations to communicate and educate parents. To this end, the findings provided here highlight some of the key issues parent education initiatives should address (i.e., how to fund junior tennis, planning for children's progression, and appropriate methods of feedback and encouragement). Given that parental support is fundamental to youth sport and that the process by which parents are able to provide support to children has often been taken for granted (Kay & Bass, 2011), the current study offers some valuable additions to the literature, practical implications, and directions for future research.

References

Abidin, R. R. (1992). The determinants of parenting behavior. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 21*, 407-412. doi:10.1207/s15374424 jccp2104_12.

Belsky, J. (1984). The determinants of parenting: A process model. *Child Development, 55*, 83-96. doi:10.2307/1129836.

Bloom, B. (1985). *Developing talent in young people*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Cairney, J., Boyle, M., Offord, D. R., & Racine, Y. (2003). Stress, social support and depression in single and married mothers. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 38*, 442-449. doi:10.1007/s00127-003-0661-0.

Côté, J. (1999). The influence of the family in the development of talent in sport. *The Sport Psychologist, 13*, 395- 417.

Côtè, J., & Hay, J. (2002). Children's involvement in sport: A developmental perspective. In J. M. Silva, & D. E. Stevens (Eds.), *Psychological foundations of sport* (pp. 484-502). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Cushion, C. J., Armour, K. M., & Jones, R. L. (2006). Locating the coaching process in practice: Models 'for' and 'of' coaching. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy, 11*, 83-99. doi:10.1080/17408980500466995.

Gould, D., Lauer, L., Rolo, C., Jannes, C., & Pennisi, N. (2006). Understanding the role parents play in tennis success: A national survey of junior tennis coaches. *British Journal of Sports Medicine, 40*, 632-636. doi:10.1136 /bjsm.2005.024927.

Gould, D., Lauer, L., Rolo, C., Jannes, C., & Pennisi, N. (2008). The role of parents in tennis success: Focus group interviews with junior coaches. *The Sport Psychologist, 22*, 18-37.

Harwood, C., & Knight, C. (2009a). Understanding parental stressors: An investigation of British tennis-parents. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 27*, 339-351. doi:10.1080/02640410802603871.

Harwood, C., & Knight, C. (2009b). Stress in youth sport: A developmental investigation of tennis parents. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 10*, 447-456. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2009.01.005.

Harwood, C., & Swain, A. (2002). The development and activation of achievement goals within tennis: II. A player, parent and coach intervention. *The Sport Psychologist, 16*, 111-137.

Holt, N. L., & Dunn, J. G. H. (2004). Toward a grounded theory of the psychosocial competencies and environmental conditions associated with soccer success. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 16*, 199-219. doi:10.1080/10413200490437949.

Holt, N. L., Knight, C. J., & Tamminen, K. A. (2011). Grounded theory. In K. Armour & D. MacDonald (Eds.), *Research methods in physical education and sport* (p. 276-294). London: Routledge.

Kay, T. (2000). Sporting excellence: A family affair? *European Physical Education Review, 6*, 151-169. doi:10.1177/1356336X000062004.

Kay, T., & Bass, D. (2011). The family factor in coaching. In I. Stratford (Ed.), *Coaching children in sport* (p. 169-180). Abingdon, Oxon; Routledge.

Knight, C. J., Boden, C. M., & Holt, N. L. (2010). Junior tennis players' preferences for parental behaviors. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 22,* 377-391. doi:10.1080/10413200.2010.495324.

Knight, C. J., & Harwood, C. G. (2009). Exploring parent-related coaching stressors in British tennis: A developmental investigation. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching, 4,* 545-565. doi:10.1260/ 174795409790291448.

Knight, C. J., & Holt, N. L., (2011, September). *Understanding and enhancing children's experiences in competitive tennis*. Oral Presentation at the meeting of the Association of Applied Sport Psychology (AASP). Honolulu, HI

Koeske, G. F., & Koeske, R. D. (1990). The buffering effect of social support on parental stress. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 60,* 440-451. doi:10.1037/h0079164.

Lauer, L., Gould, D., Roman, N., & Pierce, M. (2010a). Parental behaviors that affect junior tennis player development. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 11,* 487-496. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2010.06.008.

Lauer, L., Gould, D., Roman, N., & Pierce, M. (2010b). How parents influence junior tennis players' development: Qualitative narratives. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 4,* 69-92.

Leff, S., & Hoyle, R. (1995). Young athletes' perceptions of parental support and pressure. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 24,* 187-203. doi:10.1007 /BF01537149.

McCarthy, P. J., Jones, M. V., & Clark-Carter, D. (2008). Understanding enjoyment in youth sport: A developmental perspective. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 9,* 142-16. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2007.01.005.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed). London, UK: Sage.

Monasaas, J. A. (1985). Learning to be a world-class tennis player. In B.S. Bloom (Ed.), *The development of talent in young people* (pp. 211-269). New York: Ballantine.

Morse J. M., Barrett M., Mayan M., Olson K. & Spiers J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1(2),* 1–19.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed). London: Sage.

Richardson, L. (1994). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 293–248). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rotella, R. J., & Bunker, L. K., (1987). *Parenting your superstar: How to help your child get the most out of sports*. Champaign, IL: Leisure Press.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Simons, R. L., Lorenz, F. O., Wu, C., & Conger, R. D. (1993). Social network and marital support as mediators and moderators of the impact of stress and

depression on parental behavior. *Developmental Psychology, 29,* 368-381. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.29.2.368.

Van Yperen, N. W. (1995). Interpersonal stress, performance level, and parental support: A longitudinal study among highly skilled young soccer players. *The Sport Psychologist, 9,* 225-241.

Van Yperen, N. W. (1998). Being a sportparent: Buffering the effect of your talented child's poor performance on his or her subjective well-being. *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 29,* 45-56.

Wiersma, L. D., & Fifer, A. M. (2008). "The schedule has been tough but we think it's worth it": The joys, challenges, and recommendations of youth sport parents. *Journal of Leisure Research, 40,* 505-530.

Wolfenden, L. E., & Holt, N. L. (2005). Talent development in elite junior tennis: Perceptions of players, parents, and coaches. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 17,* 108-126. doi:10.1080/10413200590932416.

Woolger, C., & Power, T. G. (1993). Parent and sport socialization: Views from the achievement literature. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 16,* 171-189.

Woolger, C., & Power, T. G. (2000). Parenting and children's intrinsic motivation in age group swimming. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 21*, 595-607. doi:10.1016/S0193-3973(00)00055-1.

Wuerth, S., Lee. M. J., & Alfermann, D. (2004). Parental involvement and athletes' career in youth sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 5*, 21-33. doi:10.1016/S1469-0292(02)00047-X

Appendix

Parent Interview Guide

Introduction

I am doing a study to find out more about the experiences of tennis parents, particularly looking to identify how parents have managed to support their children's tennis and if there is any additional help parents require. Your participation is voluntary, and you can leave at any time. Also, if you do not want to answer a specific question, that is fine. There are no 'right or wrong' answers to these questions, I am just interested in what you think. Any information you provide will remain confidential, all names and identifying information will be removed from the data. Do you have any questions before we start?

Demographics

Before we start talking about your parenting experience, would you mind if I collected some basic information about your and your child's tennis involvement.

- How long have you been involved in tennis as a parent?
- How many children do you have that play tennis?
- What age are your children?
- What standard are your children?
- Where do your children train? Have they always trained there? If not, where else have they trained? What kind of club is it? (e.g., an academy, national training centre etc).
- How frequently are your children competing? Do you travel with them to competitions? Do they ever travel with anyone else?
- What are your goals and your child's goals for their tennis involvement?

Tennis History

Now I'd like to learn a bit more about your experience as a tennis parent and your child's experience in tennis.

- Can you tell me a bit of your history as a tennis parent?
    - When did your child start playing tennis?
    - How did they become involved in tennis?
    - How has your child's tennis involvement changed?
- When your child first started playing tennis what was their involvement like? How much training and competition did they do etc?
    - What were you required to do? What roles did you fulfill?
- How has the child's involvement in tennis and training changed over time?
    - How have your roles changed?
    - How would you describe your experience of being a tennis parent?
- What was it like when you first "became a tennis parent?" How were your initial experiences? How did you feel starting out?
- As your child progressed in tennis how did you feel? How did your experiences change? Did you feel any differently?
- How about now? What does it feel like now to be a tennis parent? What have your most recent experiences been like?
- How about your child's tennis experience, what do you think their experience has been like? Any defining moments or memories?

<u>Parents' provision of support to their children</u>

- What do you think is the role of parents in tennis?
- How have you been able to fulfill these roles?
- Has your role changed as your child has progressed? (how?)
- How have you been able to fulfil these changing roles?
- What have you done to help your child progress in sport?
- Who did you seek help from to be able to support your child's progress?

- What did you do initially to help your child when they first started in tennis?
    - What help or guidance did you seek at this time?
- What did you do to help your child when they first started tournaments?
    - What help or guidance did you seek at this time?

Specific sources of help and guidance

- Who has provided you with help as a tennis parent?
    - Has this help been useful? If yes, in what way has it been useful? If no, can you think of a reason why it hasn't been helpful?
- Specify potential sources of help – USTA, Club, Coach, other parents etc
    - What help have you received from them?
    - What has been your best help or guidance?

Additional help or guidance required

- What help do you feel would have been beneficial or helpful which maybe you didn't receive?
    - How would this have been helpful?
    - Who would you have liked to receive this help from?
    - Can you think of a reason why you might not have received this support?
    - How would you have liked this support to be provided?

Parental support and optimal experiences

- Overall, what would you say has been most important in allowing you to support your child in tennis?
- What help do you feel has most helped to enhance your child's experiences in sport?
- What help has most enhanced your experience as a tennis parent?

- What support do you feel would have helped you to further enhance your children's experiences?

Summary Questions

- Overall, how can we best help parents in tennis?
- What advice would you have for organizing bodies and clubs to help parents?
- How can coaches best help parents of tennis-playing children?
- What advice would you have for other parents regarding how to support their child in tennis? How could we help other parents?
- Overall, what would you say has been most beneficial in allowing you to support your child in tennis?
- Is there anything else regarding your help or support that you feel I should have covered that I haven't? Anything else you would like to tell me?

Thank-you very much for your help.

CHAPTER 4

Improving the Experiences of Parents at Junior Tennis Tournaments

Children who participate in sport are largely dependent upon the support and encouragement of their parents (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). Parents usually select the sports programs in which their children will participate, and schedule their work, family, and social lives around transporting children to training and financing sporting activities (Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes, & Pennisi, 2006, 2008; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). Thus, as Green and Chalip (1998) recognized, although children are the consumers of youth sport experiences, parents are the purchasers of these experiences. Parents' experiences in the youth sport environment may "influence the extent of encouragement, support, and/or provision of opportunities for their children, and the manner in which this support is provided" (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008, p. 506). As such, while the need to understand children's experiences in sport cannot be discounted, it is also important to examine *parents' experiences* in youth sport. The current study was designed to address this issue.

Several recent studies, that provide the foundation for the current study, have specifically focused on parents' experiences of youth sport. For example, Wiersma and Fifer (2008) found parents' experienced benefits and challenges associated with their children's sporting involvement. The benefits parents perceived related to their own satisfaction and opportunities to meet other people, their children developing life skills, self-concept, and having opportunities to be affiliated with a team and community. The challenges parents encountered arose in relation to the difficulties of providing the necessary support to their children and the pressure their children encountered due to their involvement in sport. Concluding on their findings, Wiersma and Fifer speculated that the extent to

which parents encounter challenges associated with youth sport may influence the quality of support and encouragement they provide to their children.

Adding to the work of Wiersma and Fifer (2008), but focusing specifically upon more negative aspects of the parenting experience, Harwood and colleagues conducted three studies to identify the stressors parents associated with their children's involvement in sport. In the first study (Harwood & Knight, 2009a), 123 parents of junior tennis players completed open-ended surveys examining the stressors they encountered as a result of their children's participation in tennis. Analysis of the survey data revealed seven categories of stressors: Competition, coach-related, financial, time, sibling-related, organization, and developmental. Extending this study, Harwood and Knight (2009b) conducted interviews with the parents of 22 junior tennis players. Consistent with the previous study, parents described a broad variety of stressors, which were ultimately classified into three categories: Competitive, organizational, and developmental stressors. The final study (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010) examined stressors reported by parents of children attending professional youth soccer academies. Four categories of stressors were identified, which were: Academy processes and quality of communication from the academy; match-related factors; sport-family role conflict; and school support and education issues.

Overall these studies highlighted some of the positive and negative aspects of being a youth sport parent. The findings identified an extensive range of issues that parents may encounter as they support their children's sport participation and point to the importance of examining and understanding parents' experiences in

youth sport. As Harwood et al. (2010) suggested, further research in this area would be beneficial because, "only by understanding and appreciating the 'sport parent' might applied researchers and youth sport organizations assist in the process of helping parents to enjoy and optimize their role as a key social agent in their child-athletes' development" (p. 53).

One specific aspect of the sport parenting experience that appears to require further investigation is the experience of parents at youth sport *competitions*. At competitions parents can directly observe and provide feedback to their children. Such feedback has the potential to either positively or negatively influence children's perceptions of competence, confidence, and achievement (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). Parents have indicated that watching their children compete can be stressful, particularly if they do not know how to behave or provide feedback to their children (Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). As the emotional intensity of competition increases, well-intentioned parents may become pressuring, outcome-oriented, overly involved (Lauer, Gould, Roman, & Pierce, 2010a; 2010b), and make more negative comments to their children (Holt, Tamminen, Black, Sehn, & Wall, 2008).

Research examining parental involvement at competitions has indicated that, although many parents display positive behaviors and make appropriate comments, a number of parents also display negative behaviors and make negative comments. For example, in a study of 101 tennis players, over 20% of parents self-reported negative behaviors in relation to their children's tennis (DeFrancesco & Johnson, 1997). Similarly, another self-report survey of 189

American youth sports parents identified that 14% of parents yelled at or argued with the referee and 13% criticized their children's sport performance (Shields, Bredemeier, LaVoi, & Power, 2005). Observational studies of parents' behaviors at competitions have also shown that parents' verbal comments during competitions include (infrequent) criticisms to a range of (more frequent) types of apparently supportive comments (Bowker et al., 2009; Holt et al., 2008; Kidman, McKenzie, & McKenzie, 1999).

Parents' involvement at competitions seems to be influenced by a range of social-contextual factors. For example, in their grounded theory of parental behaviors at youth sport competitions, Holt and colleagues (2008) identified that parents' comments appeared to vary in relation to contextual factors (i.e., score, time of game, and importance of the match) and personal factors (i.e., parents' perceived expertise and parents' empathy with child). Further, it emerged that policy issues related to controlling crowd behavior (e.g., referees awarding penalties for inappropriate parental behaviors) appeared to influence parents' behaviors. Wiersma and Fifer (2008) also highlighted a number of social-contextual factors that may influence parents' behaviors at competitions, specifically, certain characteristics of youth sport and situational triggers. Characteristics of youth sport included factors such as the nature of specific sports, the quality of the officials, and the league quality (e.g., the level and organization of the league). Situational triggers included aspects such as perceived inequality (e.g., unequal distribution of playing time), self-regulated behaviors (e.g., seeing children struggle), and unintended competitive reactions (e.g., good

intentions that boil over). These studies point towards the importance of understanding more about parents' experiences in the social context of competitions to ensure steps can be taken to change or improve the competitive experience for parents.

In attempts to provide direction for enhancing parents' involvement at competitions, researchers have sought to identify children's perceptions of appropriate parental behaviors (e.g., Knight, Boden, & Holt, 2010; Knight, Neely, & Holt, 2011) and made recommendations for organizations, coaches, and parents themselves regarding how to improve parental involvement at competitions (e.g., Gould et al., 2006; 2008; Knight et al., 2010; 2011). For example, numerous researchers have indicated that parents need to be educated regarding positive and negative parenting practices (Gould et al., 2006; Knight et al., 2010; 2011), the psychological and emotional demands of competition (Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b), and recommended that parents are taught emotional-management or coping strategies (Gould et al., 2008; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). However, as Wiersma and Fifer (2008) concluded in their study, "It was clear that the child's behaviors and expectations – the entire sport environment in which the children played - also fed back to their parents' decision making and involvement" (p. 527). As such, understanding more about parents' own experiences at competitions, particularly the influence of social-contextual factors, may be needed to provide effective education to parents.

In summary, given the importance of parental support for children's sport participation, the potential for parents to encounter challenges when supporting

their children, and the opportunities for parents to display negative behaviors at competitions, it seems necessary that researchers examine the experiences of parents at competitions. As such, the purpose of this study was to examine parents' experiences of watching their children compete at junior tennis tournaments. Specifically, this study sought to address two research questions: (a) What social-contextual factors influence parents' experiences at tournaments? And, (b) What suggestions do parents have to enhance their tournament experiences?

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from three tennis tournaments in Western Australia. The three tournaments were selected based on the standard of the competition (players must be competing for Australian Ranking points), the timing of the tournament (during the summer months, which is the main tournament season in Australia), and the age groups at the tournament (12 and under to 16 and under). Tournament selection was based on these criteria to increase the likelihood of potential participants being regularly involved in tournaments and having information to share.

Participants attending these tournaments were then purposefully sampled based on two criteria: (a) Parent of at least one child competing in the tournament, and (b) had been attending tournaments with their child for at least a year. In total, the sample was comprised of 40 parents (20 mothers and 20 fathers) of 47 children (14 female and 33 male) competing in the tournaments. The mean age of

the players was 13.07 years (*SD* = 1.70 years). On average, the participants had been attending tournaments with their children for 4.5 years (*SD* = 1.87).

Procedure

Following the receipt of Institutional Research Ethics Board approval, personnel at Tennis Australia, Tennis West, and tournament directors in Western Australia were contacted to inquire about the possibility of spending time at their tournaments and conducting interviews with parents regarding their experiences. Tournament directors were provided with an overview of the study, the information letter that would be distributed to parents, and given an opportunity to raise any questions or concerns. Although initially there was some hesitancy from Tennis Australia, approval to attend three tournaments was granted. A four-week fieldwork trip to Australia was planned to coincide with the three tournaments.

Participants were recruited directly at the tournaments. The timing of participant recruitment was important as it was deemed inappropriate to approach participants when they were interacting with their children (particularly following matches) or watching them compete. Thus, potential participants were approached at the beginning of the day while players were warming up (prior to the start of play) and an interview was scheduled for later that day. In other cases potential participants were approached to schedule an interview when it was clear their child was engaged in other activities (e.g., watching their friends' matches or playing table tennis). To ensure ample opportunities to recruit participants, the author attended each tournament daily (approximately 10-12 hours each day, over 4-6 days depending on the length of the tournament).

The extensive amount of time spent at each tournament ensured immersion in the tournament environment, increasing understanding of the Western Australian tournament context. Such an understanding of the context helped the author understand the examples participants provided in the interviews. Over the course of the tournaments the parents (many of whom attended all three tournaments) also became increasingly familiar and comfortable with the presence of the author. As familiarity increased a number of informal conversations occurred, which were not included as data in this study, but again helped to provide additional context to the interview data.

Data Collection

Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews (with the exception of one interview in which a husband joined his wife half-way through. This interview was included because they provided excellent data which addressed the research questions). Interviews were conducted in a private or secluded area in the clubhouse at each tournament. Before the interview, each participant was provided with a verbal and written explanation of the study. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, that all the information they shared was confidential, and they were provided with an opportunity to ask any questions about the study. Participants then completed an informed consent form before beginning the interview. On average the interviews lasted between 40 and 50 minutes.

The interview guide was developed based on previous studies examining parental involvement in youth sport (e.g., Gould et al., 2008; Wiersma & Fifer,

2008), parental stressors (e.g., Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b), and parental support (Knight & Holt, 2011). The interview guide began with introductory questions, followed by main questions, before concluding with summary questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Introductory questions provided an opportunity for the researcher and participant to develop rapport. Introductory questions focused upon parents' and children's tennis history (e.g., Can you tell me a bit of your history as a tennis parent?), and children and parents' reasons for involvement in tennis (e.g., What would you like your child to get out of tennis?). Then it was made clear that the focus of the interview was parents' (rather than children's) experiences and parents were asked an introductory question about their general experiences of their children's tennis involvement (e.g., How would you describe your experience of being a 'tennis parent'?).

Having established some rapport and clarified the focus of the interviews, the main questions then focused upon parents' general experiences at *tournaments* (e.g., How would you describe your general experiences of tennis tournaments?) and experiences of specific aspects of tournaments (e.g., What is it like watching your child compete?). It is important to note that participants were asked to describe their general experiences at tournaments, not specific positive or negative experiences. It was only after participants had classified their general experience as positive or negative that questions were asked regarding more specific details. Participants were then asked to provide suggestions for enhancing their experiences at tournaments (e.g., Is there anything you think would improve your experience at tournaments?).

Finally, summary questions asked participants to summarize their overall views of tournaments (e.g., How would you summarize your experiences of watching your child at tennis tournaments?). Participants were then asked to highlight their main recommendations for coaches, clubs, tournament directors, and organizations to improve the tournament experience (e.g., What advice would you have for coaches to improve parents' experiences?). The last question asked participants to provide any additional information they thought was important (e.g., Is there anything else you think I should know?). A copy of the interview guide is available in the appendix at the end of the chapter.

Data analysis

Initial data analysis took place by reviewing the audio files of the interviews completed each day prior to conducting interviews the next day (cf. Holt, Knight, & Tamminen, 2011). Through this process of audio data analysis, initial ideas regarding parents' experiences, specific aspects of tournament experiences, and recommendations were identified. These initial ideas led to small changes to the interview guide during the data collection period (e.g., phrasing of questions and certain probes to use). Analysis of the audio files also allowed the researcher to clarify meanings with participants on subsequent days if any issues arose from listening to the audio files (e.g., the researcher was able to clarify the meaning of unclear stories).

Once data collection had been completed, a professional service transcribed the interviews verbatim and the interviewer then checked the audio files with the transcripts for accuracy. The transcripts were then read and re-read

to ensure immersion in the data prior to beginning the formal process of analysis. Data analysis followed the stages outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994), in which data are reduced, put into varying data displays, and then conclusions are drawn and verified against the data. Although these stages are described in a linear fashion in the following section, the process of data analysis was actually more iterative with interviews being analyzed in sets of five and compared to other previously analyzed interviews.

The initial stage of data analysis was a process of data reduction, which sought to reduce the amount of information in the transcripts and extract the meaningful information (or units of data) from the transcripts (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This occurred by identifying the data related to and answering the research question and then allocating codes to these data. Three different types of codes were allocated to the data during the process of data reduction: (a) Descriptive codes, which involve limited interpretation and simply describe the units of data; (b) Interpretive codes, which involve an interpretation of the meaning of the data, taking the coding beyond basic description; (c) Pattern codes, which were more explanatory and sought to infer relationships between the descriptive and interpretive codes. For example, descriptive codes such as parents coaching, players calling lines incorrectly, children being disappointed, and children playing badly were allocated to the data. Interpretive codes, such as opponents cheating and child's performance, were then developed by interpreting the meaning of the descriptive codes and grouping them together. Relationships

were then identified between and across the interpretive codes and pattern codes such as poor sportspersonship were created.

Once data had been coded and reduced, data displays were produced. Data displays are visual representations of the data, which allow the data to be viewed systematically aiding the identification of relationships between codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Two forms of data displays were used. First, data networks, which link ideas or codes through a series of interconnected lines, were created. Next, data matrices were produced to illustrate the codes each participant had discussed. Data matrices are tables containing two lists that intersect across rows and columns (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this study the participant numbers were listed in each row and the four factors influencing parents' experiences were each allocated to a column. The descriptive codes identified by each participant were then inserted into the appropriate column, producing a visual display of participants' experiences. The final data matrices are displayed in Table 4.1 and 4.2. Table 4.1 displays the factors influencing parents' experiences at tournaments (i.e., the first research question). Table 4.2 illustrates the suggestions parents had for improving the tournament experience (i.e., the second research question).

Table 4.1

Factors Influencing Parents' Experiences at Tournaments

Participant number	Child's performance and behavior	Poor sportspersonship	Parent-parent interaction	Tournament context
1	Performing to potential Child's behavior Parent's reaction	Parents overinvolved Opponents cheating	Social opportunities Disputes with parents	Rankings
2	Child's reaction Performing to potential	Mind games Opponents cheating Parents overinvolved	Social opportunities Cliques Lack of interactions	Rankings Organization
3	Child's behavior	Parents overinvolved	Social opportunities Lack of interactions Disputes between parents	Rankings
4	Performing to potential Parent's reaction Child's behavior	Players being rude Opponents cheating Parents overinvolved	Lack of interactions	Rankings
5	Parent's reaction Performing to potential	Opponents bad attitude Parents coaching Mind games	Lack of interaction Cliques	Rankings
6		Parents getting involved Opponents cheating	Social opportunities Not making parents welcome	Organization Rankings
7	Child's behavior		Social opportunities	
8	Performing to potential Parent's reaction	Parents overinvolved Opponents cheating	Social opportunities Cliques	Organization
9	Performing to potential Parent's reaction Child's behavior	Parents overinvolved	Lack of interaction	

10	Child's behavior Performing to potential	Mind games Parents overinvolved Opponents cheating	Disputes between parents Social opportunities	Organization Rankings
11		Parents too involved Parents coaching Players cheating	Lack of Interactions Social opportunities	Rankings Organization
12	Performing to potential	Players cheating Parents coaching		Rankings
13	Performing to potential Reaction to match Behavior during match	Opponents cheating	Lack of interactions Social opportunities	Organization
14	Performing to potential Reaction to the match Behavior on court	Opponents cheating Opponents bad behavior	Lack of interactions	Organization
15	Performing to potential	Parents too involved Parents coaching Children cheating	Lack of interactions Disputes between parents	Rankings Organization
16	Performing to potential Behavior during match Reaction to match	Opponents cheating	Social opportunities	Rankings Organization
17	Performing to potential Behavior during match Reaction to match	Parents coaching Opponents cheating	Social opportunities	
18	Performing to potential	Opponents cheating Parents coaching	Social opportunities	Rankings
19	Performing to potential	Opponents cheating Parents coaching	Parent disputes	
20	Performing to potential	Opponents cheating Parents too involved Mind games	Not welcoming parents Lack of interactions	Organization

21	Performing to potential Behavior during match	Mind games Opponents cheating Parents too involved Parents coaching	Lack of interactions	
22	Behavior during match	Opponents poor behavior Opponents cheating Parents coaching	Social opportunities	Rankings
23	Reaction to match Performing to potential	Opponents bad behavior Opponents cheating Mind games	Lack of interactions Disputes with parents Social opportunities	Rankings
24	Behavior during match	Opponents cheating Lack of respect	Social opportunities	Organization
25	Performing to potential Behavior during match	Parents too involved	Competition between parents Social opportunities	Rankings
26	Behavior during match Performing to potential	Parents too involved	Lack of interaction Not welcoming parents	
27		Opponents cheating Parents too involved Parents coaching	Social opportunities	Organization
28	Reaction to match Performing to potential	Opponents cheating Parents coaching	Lack of interactions	Organization
29	Behavior during match Performing to potential Reaction to match	Mind games Opponents cheating Parents coaching	Disputes with parents Social opportunities	Organization
30	Performing to potential	Parents coaching Parents too involved Opponents cheating	Lack of interactions Social opportunities	Rankings
31	Behavior during match	Opponents cheating Behavior on court	Social opportunities	Organization

32	Performing to potential Behavior during match	Parents coaching Player cheating	Disputes with parents Social opportunities	Rankings
33	Behavior during match Reaction to performance	Parents too involved Parents coaching Opponents bad behaviors	Communication between parents Social opportunities	Organization Rankings
34	Behavior during match Reaction to performance	Parents too involved Parents coaching Opponents bad behaviors	Communication between parents	Organization Rankings
35	Behavior during match Reaction to match	Opponents cheating Parents overinvolved	Lack of interactions Social opportunities	Organization
36	Behavior during match	Parents too involved Parents coaching Opponents bad behavior	Lack of interactions	Organization
37	Behavior during match Performing to potential	Mind games Opponents bad behavior Parents too involved	Disputes with parents	Organization
38	Performing to potential Reaction to match Behavior during match	Mind games Opponents cheating Parents coaching	Communication with parents Lack of interactions Social opportunities	
39	Performing to potential Behaviors during match Reaction to match	Opponents cheating Parents coaching	Social opportunities	Rankings Organization
40	Performing to potential Behavior during match	Mind games Opponents cheating	Disputes with parents Social opportunities	Rankings

Table 4.2.

Suggestions to improve parents' experiences at tournaments

Participant number	Develop children's coping skills	Reduce poor sportspersonship	Education and psychological support for parents	Social activities for parents
1	Psychological support Develop coping strategies	Zero tolerance More umpires	Educate on appropriate behaviors Psychological support	
2	Develop coping strategies	Zero tolerance More umpires	Educate on appropriate behaviors	At tournament activities
3	Develop coping strategies	Adhere to rules Educate players	Educate on appropriate behaviors Psychological support	
4	Develop coping strategies Psychological support	More umpires Adhere to rules	Educate on appropriate behavior	At tournament activities
5	Psychological support		Educate on appropriate behavior Psychological support	At tournament activities Encouraged interactions
6		Adhere to rules More umpires	Educate on appropriate behavior	At tournament activities Activities between tournaments
7	Develop coping strategies		Educate on appropriate behaviors	
8	Develop coping strategies Psychological support	Adhere to rules	Educate on appropriate behaviors Information on what to expect	At tournament activities Activities between tournaments
9	Develop coping strategies	Zero tolerance Educate players	Educate on appropriate behaviors Psychological support	At tournament activities
10	Psychological support	Adhere to rules	Educate on appropriate behaviors	At tournament activities Social opportunities away from tournaments
11		Zero tolerance More umpires		At tournament activities
12	Psychological support			

13	Develop coping strategies Psychological support	Educate players	Educate on appropriate support	Activities between tournaments
14	Develop coping strategies	More umpires	Educate on appropriate support Psychological support	
15		Educate players	Educate on appropriate support	Activities at tournaments
16	Psychological support Develop coping strategies		Psychological support Educate on appropriate support	
17	Psychological support Develop coping strategies	Zero tolerance Educate parents Adhere to rules	Psychological support	Activities at tournaments Encouraged interactions
18	Develop coping strategies	More umpires Adhere to rules Educate players	Educate on appropriate support Psychological support	Activities at tournaments
19	Psychological support	More umpires	Educate on appropriate support	
20	Develop coping strategies	More umpires Zero tolerance Educate players		Activities at tournaments
21	Develop coping strategies Psychological support	Adhere to rules Educate players More umpires	Psychological support Educate on appropriate behavior Information on what to expect	Encouraged interactions
22	Develop coping strategies	Educate players	Educate on appropriate behaviors	
23	Psychological support Develop coping strategies	More umpires Adhere to rules	Educate on appropriate behaviors Psychological support	Activities at tournaments Encouraged interactions
24		Educate players More umpires Adhere to rules		Activities at tournaments
25	Develop coping strategies		Educate on appropriate behaviors	Activities at tournaments
26	Psychological support		Educate on appropriate behaviors Information on what to expect	Activities at tournaments Encouraged interactions
27		More umpires Zero tolerance	Educate on appropriate behaviors	

28	Develop coping strategies	Educate players More umpires Zero tolerance	Educate on appropriate behaviors	
29	Psychological support Develop coping strategies	Adhere to rules More umpires Zero tolerance	Educate on appropriate behaviors Information on what to expect	Encourage interactions
30	Psychological support	Educate players		Activities at tournaments
31	Develop coping strategies	More umpires Zero tolerance Educate players	Psychological support	
32	Develop coping strategies	Educate players Adhere to rules More umpires	Educate on appropriate behaviors	
33	Psychological support Develop coping strategies	Adhere to rules Educate players	Information on what to expect Educate on appropriate behavior	Activities at tournaments
34	Psychological support Develop coping strategies	Adhere to rules Educate players	Information on what to expect Educate on appropriate behavior	Activities at tournaments
35	Psychological support Develop coping strategies	More umpires Educate players	Psychological support	Activities at tournaments
36	Psychological support	More umpires Adhere to rules	Educate on appropriate behaviors Psychological support	Activities at tournaments
37	Psychological support Develop coping strategies	Adhere to rules More umpires	Information on what to expect	Activities at tournaments
38	Psychological support Develop coping strategies	More umpires Educate players Adhere to rules	Educate on appropriate behaviors Psychological support	Activities at tournaments
39	Psychological support Develop coping strategies	Zero tolerance More umpires Educate players	Educate on appropriate behaviors Psychological support	
40	Psychological support Educate players	Zero tolerance More umpires Educate players	Educate on appropriate behaviors	Activities at tournaments

Methodological Rigor

Consistent with recent recommendations, steps were taken during and following data collection to enhance the methodological rigor of this study (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). During data collection, the author ensured she was immersed in the area of study, spending considerable time in the tournament environments. This helped to provide context to the interview data and ensured the author could understand the experiences participants described. Additionally, through intensive engagement in the setting(s) the author had opportunities to engage in a number of informal conversations with tournament directors, coaches, and sport psychologists who were present at the tournaments, providing additional context and understanding of the parents' experiences (cf. Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Initial analysis of the audio files also occurred during the tournaments, which provided an opportunity for informal follow-up conversations with participants regarding the initial findings or areas needing clarification. For example, there were a few instances when participants had provided stories regarding different tournaments, but details had been missing or the main point of the story was unclear. Through additional conversations, verification of these points occurred and initial ideas emerging from the data were shared and discussed. This additional information was recorded as fieldwork notes, which were referred to during data analysis if required (but were not included as data).

During data analysis, the author and her supervisor also engaged in numerous discussions regarding the allocation of codes to the data and the

distinctions between codes. Through this process, the author's supervisor questioned the production of codes and categories, the explanations of different ideas, and the links between the issues and recommendations. This process of verification and justification helped ensure that multiple possibilities to explain the data were explored.

Results

Analysis led to the identification of four factors that influenced participants' experiences at tournaments. These four factors were child's performance and behavior; poor sportspersonship; parent-parent interactions; and the overall tournament context. Participants also provided four recommendations to directly enhance their tournament experience. Participants advocated for teaching children coping skills, reducing poor sportspersonship, providing education and psychological support to parents, and providing parents with social opportunities. These factors and recommendations are outlined in the following sections.

Factors Influencing Parents' Experiences at Tournaments

Child's Performance and Behavior. (Number of participants reporting this category: 37). One factor influencing participants' experiences of watching their child at tournaments was their child's performance -- specifically their child's response to their performance. For example, a mother said she enjoyed tournaments:

> When [name of child] is playing to her best. I mean she's played some brilliant games that she's lost but it's like the coaching is kicking in. Her

> feet are moving. She's hitting well. They're really enjoyable games. It's enjoyable tennis (P34).

Reinforcing the fact their child's performance influenced participant's experience, participants also indicated that watching their child's matches, particularly when they perceived their child to be underperforming, could be difficult. A father described this experience, stating, "I mean it's just… when you know the kid's not playing to their ability level is, that's slightly, I get slightly tense" (P28). Another parent shared similar thoughts, she said, "Sometimes I find it very angsty [anxiety inducing] when I'm watching her and I know she can hit better and she's not" (P37). For some participants the potential of seeing their child underperform appeared to prevent them from watching matches. As one father said:

> Uh I just don't watch now. I used, I used to go and watch and get extremely nervous and get really fretful that he would play well, not win, but play well and now I've learnt that some days you play shocking and other days you play well… So now I just leave him to it (P4).

Overall, participants indicated that they found watching their children underperform difficult because they did not want them to be disappointed during or after matches. For example, one mother explained her feelings watching her son, "You want them to achieve something and I suppose also… every time they come and they're upset because they've lost or played badly you feel sad for them" (P14).

The difficulties participants encountered watching their children compete appeared to be exacerbated if their child displayed a negative attitude or behavior on court. As a father said:

> You know it's not very nice when you sit out there and kids are screaming and throwing their racquets and you think "God!" That's probably the worst thing for a parent. My son went through a little, thankfully a fairly short period, and I said to him, "If you do that again I'm not, you know, you can forget it because I'm not going to sit and watch that" (P31).

Some participants described being embarrassed by their child's behavior in these situations. However, the majority of participants who discussed this issue shared feelings of frustration and disappointment because their child's negative behavior or attitude could lead to them underperforming. For example, one father explained:

> The difficult part of, about the point that we're at, at the moment is that you see a lot of potential and you see them, you see them not realizing their potential because of things, you know, chiefly like the mental side of the game…you see them underachieve because of anger, or underachieve because of … lack of focus and things that are controllable. It's not so much about wins and loses, it's about good performances and you see them underperforming because of things that aren't related to hitting balls, they're related to what's going on up top and that's frustrating, that's very frustrating (P38).

As a result of the disappointment or frustration they experienced watching their children, some participants highlighted concerns regarding how they might respond to their child after their match. One mother said:

> I need to talk to somebody [about] how to stay positive all the time because for parents it's hard to do. Because as I say, you get so frustrated, you do so much before you even come here and then if you've watched a bad match it's sometimes hard to stay positive (P35).

Another mother shared her concerns regarding how she responded to her child after matches:

> Sometimes if he has a bad loss I can't even speak to him. I hate myself for it. Because I want him to know that I'm proud of him. But I also want him to know that he could have done so much better out there. So much better, and he is much better than that…I hope that he doesn't see me as a tyrant (P23).

Overall, it appeared participants' experiences of watching their children compete at tournaments were influenced by their child's performance and behavior. As a result of these two factors, participants indicated concerns regarding their reaction to their child's match, which could further add to the difficulties parents associated with watching their children compete.

Poor Sportspersonship. (Number of participants: 39). In addition to issues arising from their children's performance, participants also highlighted factors associated with witnessing poor sportspersonship from children and adults at tournaments. Specifically, participants indicated their experiences at

tournaments could be negatively effected by the behaviors of their child's opponent or parents during matches. In fact, as one father explained, the behavior of the children and parents at tournaments prevented him from entering his children in many events. As he said, "My view is that I don't want to let them [children] play in too many tournaments, with all the upstart kids and also some annoying parents around…I don't really want to be around it much" (P32).

The most commonly recounted problem participants described was opponents cheating on line calls during matches (at junior tournaments there is usually not an umpire on each court). When participants witnessed children cheating during matches it could cause them to feel frustrated and annoyed. For example, one mother described her feelings:

> It's [cheating] very frustrating, very frustrating. And the kids can't do anything about it and nor can us… You know, and that's half the time why I kind of can't watch the match because I just find it too frustrating, some of the line calls (P27).

The frustration participants described appeared to emerge because they thought opponents cheating upset their child and effected their game. As one parent simply stated, "If he thinks the other guy is cheating it upsets him…and now I get annoyed" (P1). Another father said:

> Well I know that the tournaments that haven't been very positive have been the ones with kids that cheated, that have cheated him [his son]…and he didn't win a game after that, he just, just absolutely crushed him. And

> you know for us as parents it is the most frustrating thing, I think, for me anyways, if [name of child] is being cheated, because it crushes him (P4).

Participants also recalled issues arising from parents cheating at tournaments. Specifically, participants described problems occurring because parents became involved in matches or coached their children. A mother described her experiences of other parents:

> The parents are sometimes despicable with what they do. You know? They all know you can't coach off the field, but they all do it to the degree that they'll do it in another language so that you don't know what they're saying, but you do know what they're doing…it's annoying" (P29).

Adding to these sentiments, a father said, "I mean I've seen some horror stories when I've just walked away and I stopped coming 'cause I was embarrassed, you know, as a parent to think there are other parents out there behaving that way" (P2). Hence, the involvement of other parents' influenced the participants' experiences at tournaments.

Similar to their feelings about opponents cheating, participants indicated that parents cheating could frustrate and annoy them. One mother said, "Sometimes I almost burst into tears, especially when they play somebody you know and you know the parents are like that [get involved in matches], it's very frustrating" (P35). Another mother explained:

> Oh it [parents cheating] infuriates me, but after a while you learn, in your first year you don't know what you can do about it and what the rules are. But, now that it's the second year I would not put up with it. I would go

> and get a referee and say, "Deal with that person because I'm not putting up with it" (P29).

In addition to cheating, participants recalled issues arising from opponents using "mind games" to win matches or distract their children, which also negatively influenced their (i.e. parents'/participants') experiences. This was an issue parents particularly associated with the higher ranked players. For example, one father said:

> Yeah it's very frustrating because you know the kids are overpowering your kid in the mental state, and, and they're only children themselves, but because they've been playing these games a bit more …they're a bit stronger minded and so they know that they can intimidate you that way and once they've got you like that, they've got your nerves and you're gone (P20).

Another mother, when describing difficulties with other children, explained:

> Definitely with children that are being selected for state teams, are put on pedestals. By themselves and by the parents. They just assume that they're going to go out there and win. They have not so much bullied their way to win the game, but it's more that when they're, just their attitude and their talk. They've already started that whole psychology, mental psychology on the kid… I find it cruel… you know [name of child] comes off and he's upset so that's hard…yeah that's the hardest part [for me] (P23).

In summary, participants shared a number of stories relating to the behaviors of opponents and their parents during matches that could negatively influence their experiences at tournaments.

Parent-Parent Interactions. (Number of participants: 39). Participants indicated that other parents at tournaments also influenced their experiences. The nature of the interactions participants had with other parents ranged from more positive to more negative interactions. For example, participants highlighted the enjoyment they gained from having opportunities to socialize with other parents at tournaments. As one mother explained:

> Most of the parents you know have got this little group and we all sort of see, seeing as we all sort of see each other at tournaments it's like we'll hang out for a little while, coffees and stuff, so yeah I think without his tournaments we wouldn't have much of a friends network (P17).

Expanding on this, a mother said:

> Generally, I actually love them [tournaments]. [Name of child] enjoys them. I find it's a bonding experience. I think it's a good community. You do become a part of the tennis world. You start to know parents and families who become lifelong friends…I enjoy it. I enjoy that whole atmosphere of it. I enjoy myself. I enjoy talking to parents and having coffees… I reckon it's great. I love it and I'm probably not one of these parents that could drop off and leave (P23).

Although some participants recalled opportunities to socialize and develop friendships as a factor that could enhance their experience at tournaments,

participants also indicated that other parents could detract from the tournament experience. More specifically, it appeared that a lack of interaction between parents could result in less enjoyable tournament experiences for participants. As one mother said:

> My experience is sitting around bored with not many people talking to me. And if they do, like if they do talk to you and then your son is beating them, then they're not very happy about [your son] beating their son or whatever. So yeah it's not very sociable for parents at the tournaments I don't think…so yeah quite boring I think would be the overall thing for me (P36).

Participants also explained that, in some situations, they actually felt excluded by parents. Such feelings of exclusion appeared to develop due to parent cliques at tournaments. A father explained:

> [Some] people are a little bit more reserved, they wanna just stick in their little corner. They'll probably say hi and that's about it, don't really come up and converse much about your kid or stuff like that. So that's what I found a bit disappointing with coming to tournaments (P20).

The result of these parent cliques was some parents felt they were not really accepted at tournaments. A mother recalled:

> The parents sort of stick in their little groups. I don't really like that, I mean we're all here to see our children get somewhere but they all know that the ones where the kids are really good they're [the parents] just 'better' type thing. I don't like that sort of 'in groups' [parents of the better

> players], the 'out groups' [parents of younger, less successful, or visiting players], and on the 'outer' or the 'inner' [group], but then at the end of the day it's not me out on court. I can't show to my daughter that that bothers me about a tournament otherwise that's going to affect her and affect her game too (P21).

Participants also described some difficulties they had encountered with parents when disputes arose. For example, some participants recalled situations in which they had altercations with parents regarding their behavior at tournaments. One mother shared an experience she had when she witnessed a father coaching, "I went and spoke to the club and then the father came and he was in my face abusing the crap out of me in front of everyone" (P37). Another parent shared their experience of other parents getting involved in matches. As he said:

> They [the parents] were really loud and I was listening and just shut up 'cause I don't like to cause fights or arguments. So I just listened but my wife said something like "Why don't you take off out of here? You know you're causing more grief for the kids"….and he was off his head for half an hour (P1).

Overall, parental interactions were identified as potentially positively or negatively influencing parents' experiences at tournaments.

The Tournament Context. (Number of participants: 33). Aside from their interactions with other people at tournaments, participants also described elements of the tournament context that could influence their experience of watching their children. Specifically, participants highlighted that the organization of the

tournament and the focus on obtaining ranking points could influence their experiences in various ways. For example, participants preferred tournaments that were well organized and ran on time. One mother explained how she choose the tournaments in which to enter her child:

> You get a general vibe from sort of everyone that's about. After a couple of days you know, "Oh this is a really good tournament." They've scheduled it really well with the times, so we're not sitting around waiting for four hours and things like that (P34).

In contrast, tournaments that did not run on time or were perceived to be scheduled badly were associated with more negative tournament experiences because participants described long days leading to them being tired. As one mother said, "Sometimes it's a bit tiring just sitting around, you know, watching. Like today we've been here since 8 o'clock this morning and I think the last game's at 3.30 so that side of it is perhaps a negative" (P10). Participants explained that such long days could potentially exacerbate the negative feelings associated with the aforementioned factors. For example, one mother explained how the long days could lead to her reacting badly to her son after matches. She said:

> Usually by 5pm of the tournament I'm so tired from getting up early and getting everything and everybody organized and I always say I have to sit and watch these bad manners. It really upsets me. I say to him [son], "I do so much for you but all you have to do is just go and have a good match" (P35).

In a similar manner, participants indicated that the emphasis on ranking points that is inherent in tournaments influenced their experience of watching their child compete because they perceived it led to children (and parents) feeling under pressure to win, which could lead to poor sportspersonship. For example, one father said:

> The problem is… the better players, they only like to play in tournaments where they can obtain points so they get a national ranking. I reckon that's a good system on the one hand but a bad system on the other because the parents get too jumpy, parents get too jumpy and it's all about the points (P32).

Another parent when explaining why she thought children cheated, said:

> I think the major problem is the points system myself, because that's the, that's primarily what the majority of these kids are out there for, the points… I think the pressure of getting ranked and if you're not ranked… there's so much pressure on the kids to get points… so a lot of those kids you sort of tend to think you know they're doing it [cheating] for a reason (P17).

Ultimately, participants indicated that certain factors inherent within the tournament context could directly and indirectly influence their experience of watching their children compete.

Suggestions for Improving Parents' Experiences at Tournaments

Teach Children Coping Strategies. (Number of participants: 35). As outlined previously, participants' experiences at tournaments were influenced by

their children's behavior and attitude on court. As such, participants perceived that teaching their children to cope with their on-court experiences would make their matches easier to watch, therefore, enhancing parents' tournament experiences. As one mother simply said, "It's easy to watch him if he doesn't frustrate" (P16). Participants perceived that teaching children to be 'mentally tough' or help them develop coping skills would reduce the anger or frustration they displayed on court, reducing the influence it has upon their performance. As one father explained when discussing the difficulties of watching his son lose his temper and throw his racquet on court, "You would think they would learn that it doesn't help them. It gets them stressed and you're just giving points to the other opponent but they don't…they need to be taught what to do" (P31).

Coaches were perceived to play an important role in helping children develop their coping skills. As one father said:

> You know that mental toughness or the ability to you know cope, I mean that's the different between a good tennis player and a wonderful tennis player. Sometimes it's how strong they are mentally and I think it would be good if they had some sort of coach support there just to talk things over (P4).

Another parent shared similar thoughts, explaining:

> I think also the coaches could help them mentally, like how to be mentally tough. That sort of stuff helps. A lot of the coaches played it, so they do understand how it is to play and how to deal with being psyched out and that sort of stuff (P37).

Other participants suggested their children would benefit from having specific psychological guidance or support to help them develop the skills to cope with poor performances. For example, discussing the difficulties her son had dealing with losing, one mother suggested:

> There are very few kids that sort of do have that mental mindset themselves that they can cope and there's a lot of others that can't. They can't obviously fathom out how to deal with it [losing]. But if you've got a mentor that deals, or a psychologist or whatever, you know, a sports psychologist that deals with that on a regular basis that knows and has sort of been there. Then obviously their input would be greatly received by a lot of children really and parents, just to make life a bit easier (P34).

Overall, although this suggestion is not directly targeted at parents, participants perceived that teaching children to cope when they were losing could enhance parents' experiences because it would be easier to watch matches.

Reduce Poor Sportspersonship. (Number of participants: 34). Participants indicated their experience at tournaments would be better if they did not have to witness poor sportspersonship during matches. As one father explained:

> I don't like to see it [poor sportspersonship]. I think it would just be so much more, a much more, I'm not saying that the atmospheres not friendly, but … when the kids play certain players it takes the enjoyment out of the game…It would just be a much more enjoyable experience I think if it [poor sportspersonship] wasn't seen (P31).

One recommendation to reduce poor sportspersonship was to better educate players regarding appropriate behaviors on court. For example, one mother explained:

> I was actually only thinking about this the other day because I just thought there's a lot of it [cheating] happening. We're seeing it more and more….they can maybe call the kids together and have a talk to them after the games every day or have a bit of more notifications you know, like stickers or something saying cheating doesn't count, doesn't help or anything like that just to get their mind set in a different direction (P40).

Another father said, "I think it's teaching kids how, you know, to behave on court and perhaps how to behave in matches" (P18). Thus, parents recommended that player education from coaches, tournament organizers, and the local tennis organization was needed.

Participants also indicated that changes at the policy level were needed to help reduce poor sportspersonship at tournaments. Specifically, participants indicated a need for greater adherence to the rules regarding parents coaching, bad line calls, and unsporting behaviors during matches. One participant suggested:

> If the court supervisors really were to come down on them [children] and say look this is just not acceptable, straight off the bat… take a point, take a game off them [children], take something that they [children] really will feel, you know that they'll [children] really think "Oh that's not worth it" I think it will be very, I'm sure improvements would be seen very, very quickly (P31).

In fact, a number of parents advocated for a 'zero tolerance' policy regarding such behaviors. A mother provided the following suggestion:

> I think they've just got to, I think Tennis West have got to tell all the organizers, "Right we're going to wipe this bad behaviour out"… they say "This year we're taking hard like, if anyone swears they're off, if a parent swears the game will be called off."

She later continued, "…if they did stop them [children] all doing it [cheating] and it just was not seen, then that would set the standard and no one would slip" (P29).

To ensure people displaying poor behaviors could be reprimanded, participants indicated a needed for more umpires at tournaments. At most junior tournaments there were only one or two roaming umpires that were responsible for overseeing all the courts (in some instances up to 16 courts). Thus, as one parent explained:

> As far as sort of the umpiring and line calls and that, I don't think it's totally fair. I don't think it's sort of policed as much as it could be. But again, unfortunately, we don't have the personnel here in WA [Western Australia] to actually cover these tournaments for the young kids (P35).

As such, participants advocated for more umpires. One parent said, "Well if this was an ideal world and there could be an umpire on every court, that would be, that would be great, cause then you know that nothing could happen" (P19). Another father explained:

> I also think that a lot of tournaments, there should be some more umpires and umpires that can overrule or give a ruling because these guys won't overturn a point, even when you're getting to, it's only when you're getting to the sort of national level that they've actually got an umpire who will be calling the score and I know that that's difficult (to have more umpires) but you know (P4).

Overall, by preventing players from displaying unsporting behaviors parents would not have to witness cheating, which could detract from their tournament experience.

Provide Education and Psychological Support for Parents. (Number of participants: 35). A consistently discussed recommendation to reduce inappropriate parental involvement in matches and the negative feelings participants' experienced was to educate parents regarding the tournament process and appropriate behaviors. For example, one mother described the need for parent education:

> Maybe what they could have done was the first time your kid enters a tournament, maybe they could send you out a package saying you've entered the tennis world, and this is how it works, this is what your kid will go through, and this is what you will go through, here's some hints of how to deal with it (P29).

Another parent advocated for better education based on a recent incident she had experienced. She explained:

> Maybe more education I guess for, a lot of parents come in new and they don't know what's going on…at the last tournament we played one of the girls and she was new again, so we told the parents "Oh no, no, don't do this, or don't do that." I think education is one of the biggest things (P14).

In addition to recommending that other parents were educated, participants also indicated that they would benefit from education. As one father, who had discussed the difficulties his daughter had coping with his and his wife's involvement, said, "If you had an independent party that is mentoring you about coaching your child and what you should do…then you will know how to best be involved" (P5). Another parent reiterated such sentiments, explaining, "I think there's a need for an emphasis whereby we all get together and someone points out the importance, with the parent and child present, of what will help" (P8).

Participants also indicated that having help to develop their own coping strategies or offload their emotions might help to make the tournament experience easier for them. A mother summarized:

> I have talked about it with some parents, because sometimes we see a parent, see them lose the plot and you think to yourself, "Is there someone, a sport psychologist, that maybe they could talk to, we could talk to as parents?" Or someone outside of the family realm and the coaches realm, you know what I mean? Someone not connected" (P23).

Another father had a similar suggestion:

> I would say parents would probably need a lesson in themselves on how to cope. The coaches can advise us and guide us on how best to cope.

> Different techniques parents could use to help them cope with the matches and the experience. It's almost a lesson in itself, how do you stop the butterflies? I mean I get butterflies as much as probably what she does, if not more in the stomach (P38).

Provide Social Opportunities for Parents. (Number of participants: 27). In addition to the suggestions described in the previous theme, participants thought being encouraged, or even "forced" to engage in interactions with parents at tournaments might help overcome issues between parents. For example, one mother said:

> Maybe the parents also need a forced interactive, just to meet each other, or maybe before they start a tournament, just say these are all the parents and if you have any questions or whatever, because there's no introduction for somebody who's an outsider (P25).

By providing opportunities for parents to meet during the early stages of the tournament participants thought they may be more likely to strike up friendships or identify people they could spend time with.

As a way of introducing parents to each other, participants also recommended providing activities for parents at tournaments that would encourage them to interact. For example, one parent recommended:

> Have a little social aspect, set up some sort of games or ping pong table or get parents doing something or a pool table and have a little pool competition to take the parents away from the court and have social aspects as well to relax them (P38).

Another parent suggested, "You know, sort of like bring in your racquet, I give you a racquet, and just hit the ball. I am sure that lots of parents would come. I don't mind to go and play tennis" (P13).

The additional benefit participants associated with having such activities available for parents was that they could interact when their children were playing, potentially reducing some boredom, tension, or anxiety. As one mother explained:

> I've always tried to think of things that parents can do while we're just sitting around doing nothing, you know and we could get some groups together where we could do something, you know… I think you know the amount of hours that I sit around playing Tetrus or Angry Birds [games on the Iphone], 'cause I've got nothing else to do…I wonder how many kilos I've gained just by sitting there and doing nothing watching tennis, because there's nothing else to do (P17).

Parents suggested that putting on a social event, such as a barbeque or a dinner, may also encourage interactions between parents. For example, a mother explained:

> Maybe hold some functions, maybe, from time to time…, maybe [a] function after this tournament for example…or maybe events in between the tournament, or before the tournament, or after the tournament…make parents feel part of the community (P6).

Providing social opportunities and activities for parents outside of the tournament was also recommended as a way of overcoming the cliques and feelings of being

an outsider. As one mother who had recently moved from Korea and spoke English as a second language explained:

> I'm very not confident enough to get involved on all community things because language, maybe I've got language problem. Also, I don't know people much in here. But if we have much of social thing you know then we just come and see you kind of and then I feel more comfortable...Yes so to me that'll sort of help me get involved (P30).

Clearly parents perceived many benefits associated with providing more social opportunities for parents at tournaments.

Discussion

In response to calls for further research investigating the experience of parenting children in sport (Harwood et al. 2009a; 2009b; 2010), the purpose of this study was to examine parents' experiences of watching their children compete at tournaments. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Holt et al., 2008; Wiersma & Fifer, 2008), the participants in the current study highlighted personal, contextual, and policy-level factors that influenced their experiences at tournaments. Specifically, four factors were identified: (a) Their child's performance and behavior, (b) poor sportspersonship, (c) the interactions between parents, and, (d) the overall tournament context. Participants also provided four suggestions for enhancing parents' experiences at tournaments: (a) Teach children coping skills, (b) reduce poor sportspersonship, (c) provide education and psychological support for parents, and (d) provide social activities for parents. The range of contextual and policy factors that influence, or have the potential to

influence parents' experiences, reinforces the importance of considering the broader social-context of youth sport when examining parents' experiences or involvement (cf. Holt et al., 2008).

The most proximal factors that appeared to influence participants' experiences were their own child's performance and behavior and the influence of poor sportspersonship upon their child. Parents have previously indicated that their child's performance and behavior and the behavior of their opponents can influence the stress they associate with watching their child compete (Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). Further, researchers have indicated that parents might unintentionally display inappropriate behaviors at competitions due to the emotions evoked when their children compete (e.g., Gould et al., 2008; Wiersma & Fifer, 2008). The current study supports both these findings and provides additional understandings of why participants may experience such emotions. That is, when participants witnessed their child underperforming, particularly if it is due to poor sportspersonship, they experienced negative emotions on their child's behalf. That is, parents' negative emotions, generally, appeared to arise because they thought their child would be upset or disappointed. This finding provides some support for Holt et al's. (2008) finding that the behaviors parents' display at competitions may be influenced by the empathy parents perceive they have with their child.

If parents' emotions and possibly their reactions at competitions arise due to parental empathy, focusing parent education initiatives on parents' emotions (or abilities to cope with their emotions), rather than their behaviors may be

beneficial. Parent education often focuses upon suggesting or teaching parents about appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. However, as Wiersma and Fifer (2008) acknowledged, parents may have good intentions but be unable to follow through with these because of unintended emotional reactions. Thus, parent education initiatives focused upon helping parents to better understand their and their child's experiences and, as advocated by the participants in this study, providing parents with strategies to cope with the emotions they experience may be more effective for enhancing parents' experiences than only highlighting appropriate and inappropriate behaviors (Gould et al., 2008; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). Further, as addressed in two of the recommendations provided by participants in the current study (i.e., helping children to develop coping strategies and reducing poor sportspersonship), reducing the 'triggers' for parents' emotional reactions at competitions may also be an effective way to reduce parents' emotional experience at tournaments.

Previous research examining parental behaviors at youth sport competitions has indicated that tension between parents may influence parents' reactions during games, highlighting the importance of contextual- and policy-level changes at youth sport competitions to reduce the potential for negative parental behaviors and interactions (e.g., Holt et al., 2008; Omli & LaVoi, 2009). Policy suggestions to enhance parents' involvements at competitions have included: Separating parents, preventing parents from commenting during games, and banning parents entirely (c.f. Holt et al., 2008; Kidman et al., 1999; Strean, 1995). However, the experiences and recommendations of the participants in the

current study provide an alternative approach, which is actually to increase the amount of interaction and communication between parents. It appeared that by increasing the social aspect of tournaments and reducing feelings of exclusion, parents would feel more comfortable at tournaments, reducing one more of the emotional stressors parents were encountering.

It is recognized that parents' make considerable sacrifices to support their children in sport, particularly with regards to their own social life (e.g., Kirk et al., 1997; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). Given humans innate need for relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985) it is understandable that parents would seek to develop relationships with parents at tournaments and may have negative experiences if they are unable to develop relationships with other parents. A lack of relatedness, such as the feelings of exclusion recalled by participants in this study, may reduce parents' motivation to attend tournaments or hinder their ability to fully support their children's involvement (cf. Knight & Holt, 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus, as advocated by the participants in this study, increasing parents' sense of relatedness through social activities is another alternative avenue through which to enhance parents' experiences at tournaments.

Similarly, understanding the constraints and influences within the overall tournament context provides further insight to enhance parent education initiatives. For example, parents emphasizing match outcomes and focusing upon winning is consistently identified as one factor that can negatively influence children's sporting experiences and development (e.g., Gould et al., 2008; Lauer et al., 2010a). As such, researchers have often highlighted the importance of

parents focusing upon their child's performance (creating a task-oriented rather than ego-oriented climate; Harwood, Spray, & Keegan, 2008) and advocated for parent education regarding this factor (e.g., Knight et al., 2010). However, children are competing within a result-oriented environment and the outcomes of their performance might lead to an array of benefits for children and possibly their parents. Given the outcome-focus of tournaments, it seems understandable that parents might focus on their child's performance. Acknowledging the influence of contextual factors on parents' involvement is important to fully appreciate parents' experience and identify any areas where changes may be possible. For example, could changes in the social-context of tournaments, such as a recognition of individual improvement or team-based competitions, be incorporated within youth sport to reduce the sole focus on individual outcomes and reduce the influence rankings can have on parents' experiences?

The factors influencing parents' experiences and the recommendations arising from this study must be considered within the limitations of the study. Specifically, data was collected from a relatively remote area in Western Australia. Thus, the extent to which these findings are representative of the experiences of parents in other areas of Australia or other cultures is unknown. Interviewing participants regarding their experiences at National tournaments, where there is more pressure to perform and also a mix of people from different areas around the country, would provide further information to more fully understand the experience of parenting junior tennis players.

Given that data collection occurred while participants were at tournaments, there is also potential that participants recalled experiences specific to those tournaments, rather than the broader tournament experience. Thus, if participants were having a particularly enjoyable or difficult tournament experience, their responses may have be distorted. Future research examining parents' tournament experiences over an extended period, or considering parents' general experiences of parenting their children in tennis, might give greater insight into parents' experiences and potential avenues through which their experiences may be enhanced.

Participants were asked to volunteer for this study to discuss their experiences of parenting children in tennis. Through this process of self-selection, there is potential for sampling bias to be present within this study. That is, the current study might be limited to parents that perceived themselves to be more appropriately involved at tournaments because parents that have more negative experiences or more negative involvement may be less inclined to volunteer for such a study. Future research that specifically examines the experiences and involvement of parents that are more negatively involved in their children's tennis would provide additional insight in this area. However, accessing such participants is likely to be difficult.

Finally, although participants described their emotions and the potential influence their emotional response may have upon their reaction to their children, this study did not specifically seek to examine how certain tournament experiences influenced parents' involvement at competitions or the consequences

this may have for children. As such, it is not possible to conclude that specific factors in parents' experiences led to different behaviors or that making specific changes at tournaments would change parents' involvement and children's experiences. Future research examining the link between parents' experiences and parents' behaviors or parents' experiences and children's experiences might highlight more specific changes to enhance parental involvement or provide further justification for changes within the tournament environment.

Overall, the findings of this study clearly respond to Harwood et al's (2010) suggestion that examination of parents' experiences is needed to enhance parents' enjoyment and optimize their role in youth sport. Participants' experiences of watching their children compete at tournaments appeared to be influenced by factors at different levels within the social-context of tournaments and it appeared there were interactions between the different factors. To enhance parents' experiences at tournaments participants indicated that changes were required at different levels within the social-context of tournaments. Specifically, participants indicated how policy-level changes, in addition to child- and parent-level changes, were required to enhance parents' experiences. This study points to the importance of expanding parental education initiatives to account for broader social-contextual factors when considering parents' experiences in youth sport.

References

Bowker, A., Boeknoven, B., Nolan, A., Bauhaus, S., Glover, P., Powell, T., & Taylor, S. (2009). Naturalistic observations of spectator behavior at youth hockey games. *The Sport Psychologist, 23*, 301-316.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum.

DeFrancesco, C., & Johnson, P. (1997). Athlete and parent perceptions in junior tennis. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 20*, 29-36.

Fredricks, J. A., & Eccles, J. S. (2004). Parental influences on youth involvement in sports. In M. R Weiss (Ed.), *Developmental sport and exercise psychology: A lifespan perspective* (pp. 145-164). Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology.

Gould, D., Lauer, L., Rolo, C., Jannes, C., & Pennisi, N. (2006). Understanding the role parents play in tennis success: A national survey of junior tennis coaches. *British Journal of Sports Medicine, 40,* 632-636. doi:10.1136 /bjsm.2005.024927.

Gould, D., Lauer, L., Rolo, C., Jannes, C., & Pennisi, N. (2008). The role of parents in tennis success: Focus group interviews with junior coaches. *The Sport Psychologist, 22*, 18-37.

Green, C. B., & Chalip, L. (1998). Antecedents and consequences of parental purchase involvement in youth sport. *Leisure Sciences, 20,* 95-109. doi:10.1080/01490409809512268.

Harwood, C., Drew, A., & Knight, C. J. (2010). Parental stressors in professional youth football academies: A qualitative investigation of specialising stage parents. *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise, 2,* 39-55. doi:10.1080/19398440903510152.

Harwood, C., & Knight, C. (2009a). Understanding parental stressors: An investigation of British tennis-parents. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 27,* 339-351. doi:10.1080/02640410802603871.

Harwood, C., & Knight, C. (2009b). Stress in youth sport: A developmental investigation of tennis parents. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 10,* 447-456. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2009.01.005.

Harwood, C., Spray, C. M., & Keegan, R. (2008). Achievement goal theories in sport. In T. S. Horn (Ed.), *Advances in sport psychology* (3rd ed., pp.157-186). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Holt, N. L., Knight, C. J., & Tamminen, K. A. (2011). Grounded theory. In K. Armour & D. MacDonald (Eds.), *Research methods in physical education and sport.* (pp.276-295). London: Routledge.

Holt, N. L., Tamminen, K. A., Black, D. E., Sehn, Z. L., & Wall, M. P. (2008). Parental involvement in competitive youth sport settings. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 9,* 663-685. doi:10.1016 /j.psychsport.2007.08.001.

Kidman, L., McKenzie, A., & McKenzie, B. (1999). The nature and target of parents' comments during youth sport competitions. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 22,* 54-68.

Kirk, D. K., O'Connor, A., Carlson, T., Burke, P., Davis, K., & Glover, S. (1997). Time commitments in junior sport: social consequences for participants and their families. *European Journal of Physical Education, 2*, 51-73. doi:10.1080/1740898970020105.

Knight, C. J., Boden, C. M., & Holt, N. L. (2010). Junior tennis players' preferences for parental behaviors. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 22,* 377-391. doi:10.1080/10413200.2010.495324.

Knight, C. J., & Holt, N. L. (2011, October). *How do parents find ways to support their children's involvement in sport?* Oral presentation at the meeting of the Canadian Society for Psychomotor Learning and Sport Psychology (SCAPPS). Winnipeg, MB.

Knight, C. J., Neely, K. C., & Holt, N. L. (2011). Parental behaviors in team sports: How do female athletes want parents to behave? *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 23,* 76-92. doi:10.1080/10413200.2010.525589.

Lauer, L., Gould, D., Roman, N., & Pierce, M. (2010a). Parental behaviors that affect junior tennis player development. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 11,* 487-496. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2010.06.008.

Lauer, L., Gould, D., Roman, N., & Pierce, M. (2010b). How parents influence junior tennis players' development: Qualitative narratives. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 4,* 69-92.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed). London, UK: Sage.

Morse J. M., Barrett M., Mayan M., Olson K., & Spiers J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1*(2), 1–19.

Omli, J., & LaVoi, N. M. (2009). Background anger in youth sport: A perfect storm? *Journal of Sport Behavior, 32*(2), 242-260.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *25*, 54-67. doi:10.1006/ceps.1999.1020.

Shields, D. L., Bredemeier, B. L., LaVoi, N. M., & Power, C. F. (2005). The behavior of youth, parents, and coaches: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *Journal of Research in Character Education, 3*, 43-59.

Strean, W. B. (1995). Youth sport contexts: Coaches perceptions and implications for intervention. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 7*, 23-27. doi:10.1080/10413209508406298.

Wiersma, L. D., & Fifer, A. M. (2008). "The schedule has been tough but we think it's worth it": The joys, challenges, and recommendations of youth sport parents. *Journal of Leisure Research, 40*, 505-530.

Wolfenden, L. E., & Holt, N. L. (2005). Talent development in elite junior tennis: Perceptions of players, parents, and coaches. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 17*, 108-126. doi:10.1080/10413200590932416.

Appendix

Parent Interview Guide

Introduction

I am doing a study to find out more about parents experiences of junior tennis, particularly parents' experiences of watching their children at tennis tournaments. Your participation is voluntary, and you can leave at any time. Also, if you do not want to answer a specific question, that is also fine. There are no 'right or wrong' answers to these questions. I am interested in what you think. Any information you provide will remain confidential. When I write up the results of this study for reports or for journal articles I will not include any names or identifying information. You are free to withdraw at any time up to 2 weeks after the completion of my data collection. Do you have any questions before we start?

Demographics – First I would just like to get some basic information about your involvement in tennis.

- How long have you been involved in tennis as a parent?
- How many children do you have that play tennis?
- What age are your children?
- What standard are your children?
- Where do your children train? Have they always trained there? If not where else have they trained? What kind of club is it (e.g., an academy, national training centre etc).
- How frequently are your children competing? Do you travel with them to competitions? Do they ever travel with anyone else?
- What are your goals/child's goals for their tennis involvement?

Tennis History: Now I'd like to learn a bit more about your experience as a tennis parent and your child's experience in tennis.

- Can you tell me a bit of your history as a tennis parent?
    - When did your child start playing tennis?
    - How did you become involved in tennis?
    - How has your tennis involvement changed?
        - When your child first started playing tennis what was their involvement like? How much training and competition did they do etc?
        - What were you required to do? What roles did you fulfill?
        - How has the child's involvement in tennis and training changed over time?
        - How have your requirements and roles changed?
        - Can you think of any reason for a change in involvement?
- What would you like your child to get out of tennis?

<u>General experience as a tennis parent</u>

- How would you describe your experience of being a tennis parent?
    - Overall experience – positive, negative, any defining parts?
    - What was it like when you first "became a tennis parent?" How were your initial experiences? How did you feel starting out?
    - As your child progressed in tennis how did you feel? How did your experiences change? Did you feel any differently?
    - How about now? What does it feel like now to be a tennis parent? What have your most recent experiences been like?
    - Can you think of any reason why your experiences may have changed? Why you might feel differently? (If of course they do feel differently?)
    - How about your child's tennis experience, what do you think their experience has been like? Any defining moments or memories?

<u>Experiences at tournaments</u>

- How would you describe your general experiences of tennis tournaments?

    - What factors have made it positive/negative?
    - How have these experiences changed over time?
    - Probe regarding positive and negative experiences
- What is it like as a parent watching your child compete at tournaments?
    - What factors influence this experience?
- What is your experience of other children at tournaments?
    - Probe for positive and negative experiences
- What is your experience of other parents at tennis tournaments?
    - Probe for positive and negative experiences
- What is your experience of coaches at tennis tournaments?
    - Probe for positive and negative experiences
- Is there anything you think would improve your experience at tournaments?
    - Probe regarding how these factors might improve the experience

Summary Questions

- Please could you summarize your overall experiences as a tennis parent?
- What factors do you think have the largest effect on your experience as a tennis parent?
- How would you summarize your experiences of watching your child at tennis tournaments?
- What factors do you think have the largest effect on your experience at tournaments?
- What advice would you have for organizing bodies and clubs to improve parents' experiences?
- What advice would you have for coaches to improve parents' experiences?
- Overall, what recommendations do you have for improving parents' experiences in junior tennis?

- Overall, what recommendations do you have for improving parents' experiences at tennis tournaments?
- Is there anything else you would think I should know?

Thank-you very much for your help.

CHAPTER 5

General Discussion and Conclusions

The ultimate goal of this Dissertation was to identify ways to enhance parental involvement in junior tennis. Three studies were conducted in three countries to address this purpose. The first study illustrated the parenting practices and broader parenting context required to optimize parental involvement in junior tennis. The grounded theory that was generated indicated the importance of parents understanding and enhancing their child's individual tennis journey, focusing specifically on the creation of an understanding emotional climate and engagement in individual and flexible parenting practices, underpinned by shared and communicated goals. Within this theory it was apparent that consistency between parenting practices and the emotional climate parents generated was necessary. Similarly, the importance of parents individualizing their involvement in relation to the needs of their child at the different stages of their child's tennis journey emerged. Overall, this theory highlighted the importance of considering the broader parenting context and parenting practices when attempting to enhance parental involvement in tennis.

The purpose of the second study was to identify the strategies parents used to support their children's tennis involvement. The results of the second study showed that parents seek help and guidance from a range of sources to be able to support their children. In fact, it appeared that parents 'surrounded themselves with support' to best help their children's participation and performance in tennis. Although parents appeared to have developed a number of strategies to be able to

support their children's tennis involvement, it was also clear that parents desired additional help regarding certain tennis-specific areas.

Finally, the third study examined parents' experiences of watching their children compete at junior tennis tournaments and pointed to the importance of considering the social-context when examining and attempting to enhance parental involvement in junior tennis. Findings highlighted the range of social-contextual factors, from parent and child interactions through to elements of the tournament context, that influenced parents' experiences at tournaments. Recommendations to improve parents' experiences also spanned a range of factors, highlighting a need for individual and policy-level changes.

Taken together these studies highlight the complexity of parenting in junior tennis and emphasize the importance of considering various factors when examining parental involvement in junior tennis. These findings point to the potential benefits of extending parent education initiatives to consider the needs of parents, parents' interactions with others in the tennis environment, and the overall social-context of tennis. Further, this Dissertation illustrates that parental involvement in junior tennis is a topic of interest across a number of different countries.

Complexity of Parental Involvement in Junior Tennis

Over the past two decades there has been an increase in research examining parental involvement in junior tennis (e.g., Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes, & Pennisi, 2006; 2008; Knight, Boden, & Holt, 2011; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). As research in this area has increased, the difficulties of successfully parenting

children in sport has become increasingly apparent (Lauer, Gould, Roman, & Pierce, 2010a; 2010b). Recognizing the complexity of parenting in youth sport, Holt, Tamminen, Black, Sehn, and Wall (2008) highlighted the importance of studying multiple perspectives and variables to fully explore this phenomena. By adopting such an approach and conducting three related yet distinct studies, the results of this Dissertation reinforce the importance of considering numerous factors associated with parental involvement.

Taken together, the studies conducted in this Dissertation shed light on some of the intricacies inherent within the actual process of parenting and situating parenting within the broader social context of tennis. For example, previous research has highlighted specific parenting practices that appear to be more or less favorable within tennis (Gould et al., 2006; 2008; Knight et al., 2011; Lauer et al., 2010a; 2010b). This Dissertation highlights the importance of parents individualizing such practices throughout their child's sporting career and ensuring they are consistent with the overall emotional climate they are producing. As such, to fully understand and appreciate the complexities of parenting in youth sport, future research should endeavour to attend to individual parenting practices and the broader parenting context associated with youth sport.

Further, this Dissertation illustrates the extensive influence other people can have upon parents' involvement – something which has received limited attention within the literature (Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2009). In fact, other than acknowledgements of the importance of the parent-coach relationship (Knight & Harwood, 2009; Smith, Cumming, & Smith, 2011), research has

generally focused upon parents behaviors and involvement rather independent of those around them. However, it was clear across all three studies that the interactions parents had with others (e.g., their spouse, parents, coaches, and tennis officials) influenced the emotions they experienced, their understanding of tennis and their child, and the behaviors they displayed in relation to tennis. Thus, the knowledge, experience, and understanding of others within the tennis environment appears, to an extent, to dictate the involvement of parents within junior tennis. Future research studying the social network surrounding parents may help to explain why parents are involved in certain ways, and help increase the effectiveness of strategies to improve parents' involvement. Similarly, supporting the proposal of Holt et al. (2008) and Wiersma and Fifer (2008) this Dissertation has highlighted the need to extend our examination of parents to include the context in which they are functioning.

Finally, taken together, these three studies indicate that parental involvement is a topic worthy of study across different countries. Although the same study was not conducted in all three locations, it was apparent in all three studies that parents' involvement is an issue of concern to parents (and players, coaches, and organizations) internationally. In fact, while each study had different purposes, there were consistencies between the specific comments participants made across the studies. Further, it was clear that steps need to be taken in different countries to enhance parental involvement. This supports previous research in the United States (e.g., Gould et al., 2006; 2008), the United Kingdom (e.g., Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005), Australia

(e.g., Kirk, Carlson et al., 1997; Kirk, O'Connor, 1997), and Canada (Knight et al., 2010), which have all examined parental involvement in junior tennis and highlighted the complexities of supporting children in tennis.

Enhancing Parental Involvement

It has been accepted by researchers, practitioners, and sports organizations that educating parents regarding their involvement is a worthwhile and necessary endeavour (e.g., Gould et al., 2008; Taylor, 2008; Tennis Australia, 2011). The studies in this Dissertation unanimously support the need for parent education, and provide a number of suggestions regarding areas in which parent education may be beneficial. However, parenting in junior tennis is clearly a complicated and potentially difficult endeavour. As such, the process of enhancing parental involvement in junior tennis is equally difficult and complicated. Although the traditional method of parent education, whereby coaches or organizations inform parents of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors may be beneficial, I would suggest it represents only one step towards improving parental involvement in junior tennis.

The studies in this dissertation illustrate at least three different approaches that could be taken to enhancing parental involvement in junior tennis. First, parent education is a necessity as it was clear across all three studies that the quality of parents' involvement in junior tennis is likely to be influenced by their knowledge. However, the information that is shared with parents needs to be expanded. For example, not only do parents need to be provided with examples of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors (e.g., Gould et al., 2006; 2008; Lauer et

al., 2010a; 2010b), attention also needs to be given to helping parents develop an understanding emotional climate. Coaches and tennis organizations may need to increase the amount of tennis-specific resources and information they provide to parents so they can enhance their understanding and help facilitate the generation of the appropriate climate.

Similarly, the reciprocal nature of parental involvement in tennis and the need for parents to individualize their involvement to their child's needs and the needs of the sport might also be an important component to include within parent education seminars (Dorsch et al., 2009). Given this consideration, an important factor around which parents may need educating regards communicating with their child (Knight et al., 2011; Omli & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2011) so that parents can ensure their involvement is specific and appropriate for their child. Thus, providing parents with strategies to improve communication with their children may be particularly important to enhancing parental involvement.

Furthermore, parent education initiatives may be more successful if they focus on providing parents with techniques to cope with their emotions, rather than simply telling parents not to react in certain ways (cf. Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). For example, helping parents to see the multiple benefits associated with tennis rather than just winning matches may help relieve some of the anxiety parents associate with tournaments. Similarly, teaching parents about the importance of shared goals and the different types of goals that children can set could help to reduce the focus on winning and losing. Such goals could then

help to form the basis for post-match conversations, which can be particularly challenging for parents (Harwood & Knight, 2009b).

In addition to adapting the education parents receive, these studies point to the benefits of utilizing external sources to improve parents' experiences and involvement. Although only the second study in this Dissertation specifically examined and addressed the help parents need to be able to support their children in tennis, the influence of other people (e.g., coaches, parents, and the organization) on parents' involvement was a common thread throughout the three studies. The findings of these studies illustrate the potential benefit of educating coaches regarding interacting with parents and sharing information with parents to improve parents' knowledge and feelings of support (e.g., Harwood, 2011; Smoll, Cumming, & Smith, 2011). Similarly, this Disseration highlights the possible positive consequences of developing relationships between parents and using parents as a resources for each other. For example, creating parent mentoring programs, developing parents forums or networks, and increasing the number of team competitions (allowing parents to travel together) may be viable options to increase the guidance and support parents receive from each other.

Finally, the three studies also indicate that changes within the general tennis context may be beneficial in enhancing parental involvement in tennis. Across all three studies it was clear that certain factors, particularly at tournaments, could influence parents' emotions and experiences. Reducing or removing these triggers to create a more "parent-friendly" environment may be an indirect way through which to enhance parental involvement in tennis. One area

in which such changes may be particularly beneficial is addressing poor sportspersonship at tournaments. In all three studies parents made reference to the issues they encountered due to children or parents cheating. Previous research has indicated that perceived injustices during competitions can contribute to parents' emotional responses during and after games (Harwood & Knight, 2009b; Holt et al., 2008). Reducing the possibility for children or parents to cheat at tournaments by increasing the number of umpires, giving out harsher punishments for poor behavior, and rewarding players for good behavior could all help to reduce poor sportspersonship at tournaments. In turn, reducing the negative emotions parents might experience at tournaments, helping to improve parents' involvement.

Knowledge Dissemination

Knowledge dissemination is increasingly being recognized as an important component of research (e.g., Carpenter, Nieva, Albaghal, & Sorra, 2005; Davies et al., 2003). In fact, knowledge dissemination is seen as such a critical factor in extending scholarly thought and bridging the gap between research and practice, the Tri-Council research agencies in Canada (i.e., Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2011; Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, 2011; Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2011) have grants and awards available for the specific purpose of supporting knowledge translation or dissemination.

As an applied researcher myself, knowledge dissemination is an important part of my work. As such, I have taken a number of steps to disseminate these findings within academic and sport environments. Knowledge dissemination to

the academic community has occurred through presentations at national and international sport psychology conferences (Knight & Holt 2011a; 2011b; 2011c). Research presentations based on these studies have also been made to students and professors at the University of Alberta (e.g. Knight, 2011a). The findings of the studies have been shared at national and international coaching conferences (Knight & Holt, 2011d; Knight & Holt, 2011e) and through a number of invited talks to the parents and coaches of children involved in youth sport (e.g., Knight, 2011b).

Most recently, the results of this Dissertation were presented at the International Tennis Federation Worldwide Coaches Conference (Knight & Holt, 2011d). This conference provided an opportunity to share my results with tennis coaches from over 80 countries and to provide feedback to the International Tennis Federation who had provided financial support for this Dissertation through a research grant. Executive reports and recommendations based on the findings of the studies have also been produced for the International Tennis Federation, The Lawn Tennis Association, The United States Tennis Association, and Tennis Australia (Knight, 2011c; Knight & Holt, 2011f). Finally, summaries of the results have been shared with the parents and coaches who participated in the studies and tennis clubs and managers that facilitated participant recruitment.

Limitations and Future Directions

For this Dissertation three studies considering different aspects related to parental involvement were conducted. However, individually or collectively, these studies could not address or consider all the factors that may potentially

influence parents' involvement in tennis. The studies represent initial steps toward understanding different factors that have the potential to influence and enhance parents' involvement in tennis. More research is required to further explore the factors influencing parental involvement in tennis (e.g., personality factors, gender) and intervention research will help establish what types of programs may be beneficial to enhance parents' involvement.

Although the studies in this Dissertation highlighted the complexity of parental involvement and indicated factors that could influence parents' experiences, no information was gained regarding the influence these factors have upon children's experiences. Thus, research examining the child-level outcomes associated with parental involvement and the influence different factors effecting parents have upon children is necessary. For example, longitudinal studies examining the experience of parents across a season and the corresponding experience children have may be appropriate. Similarly, developing parental involvement interventions and evaluating the corresponding change in both parents' and children's experiences may be useful in the future.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the potential sampling bias in all three studies. When examining parental involvement in tennis one of the inherent difficulties is sampling parents who are possibly less appropriately involved in their children's tennis. Although attempts were made to interview parents with negative experiences, given that parents volunteered for the studies, it is appropriate to assume that those parents who perceived themselves to be less appropriately involved may not volunteer. This limitation was, to an extent,

overcome in Study 1 by talking to children, ex-players, and coaches who did provide stories of parents with less appropriate involvement. Future research involving multiple populations to triangulate data and, if possible, focusing specifically on those parents whose involvement was 'less than optimal' would be beneficial to fully explore the factors underpinning negative parental involvement.

Conclusion

Overall, this Dissertation provides insight into some of the different factors associated with parental involvement in junior tennis and highlights the range of avenues through which this topic can be explored. Practical implications regarding expanding and increasing parent education initiatives based on these three studies are provided for coaches, tennis organizations, sport psychology practitioners, and researchers. However, given the complexity of this topic, it is clear that future research is needed to fully explore all the aspects influencing parents' involvement in tennis and the different mechanisms through which parental involvement could be enhanced. As such, it is hoped that future research will build upon this work by continuing to examine parents' involvement in tennis from different angles and uncover different ways to enhance parental involvement in tennis rather than relying solely upon traditional methods of parent education.

References

Carpenter, D., Nieva, V., Albaghal, T., & Sorra, J. (2005). *Development of a planning tool to guide research dissemination. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.* Retrieved from http://www.ahrq/gove/ downloads/pub/advances/ vol14/Carpenter.pdf.

Canadian Institutes of Health Research. (2011). *CIHR Knowledge translation awards.* Retrieved from http://www.irsc.ca/e/27904. html.

Davis, D., Evans, M., Jadad, A., Perrier, L, Rath, D., Ryan, D., Sibbald, G., Straus, S., et al. (2003). The case for knowledge translation: Shortening the journey from evidence to effect. *British Medical Journal, 327,* 33-35.

Dorsch, T. E., Smith, A. L., & McDonough, M. H. (2009). Parents' perceptions of child-to-parent socialization in organized youth sport. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 31,* 444-468.

Gould, D., Lauer, L., Rolo, C., Jannes, C., & Pennisi, N. (2006). Understanding the role parents play in tennis success: A national survey of junior tennis coaches. *British Journal of Sports Medicine, 40,* 632-636. doi:10.1136 /bjsm.2005.024927.

Gould, D., Lauer, L., Rolo, C., Jannes, C., & Pennisi, N. (2008). The role of parents in tennis success: Focus group interviews with junior coaches. *The Sport Psychologist, 22,* 18-37.

Harwood, C. (2011). Enhancing coach-parent relationships in youth sports: Increasing harmony and minimizing hassle: A commentary. *International*

Journal of Sports Science and Coaching, 6, 61-64. doi:10.1260/1747-9541.6.1.61.

Harwood, C., & Knight, C. (2009a). Understanding parental stressors: An investigation of British tennis-parents. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 27,* 339-351. doi:10.1080/02640410802603871.

Harwood, C., & Knight, C. (2009b). Stress in youth sport: A developmental investigation of tennis parents. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 10*, 447-456. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2009.01.005.

Holt, N. L., Tamminen, K. A., Black, D. E., Sehn, Z. L., & Wall, M. P. (2008). Parental involvement in competitive youth sport settings. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 9,* 663-685. doi:10.1016 /j.psychsport.2007.08.001.

Kirk, D., Carlson, T., O'Connor, A., Burke, P., Davis, K., & Glover, S. (1997). The economic impact on families of children's participation in junior sport. *Australian Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport, 29*, 27-33. doi:10.1080/1740898970020105.

Kirk, D. K., O'Connor, A., Carlson, T., Burke, P., Davis, K., & Glover, S. (1997). Time commitments in junior sport: social consequences for participants and their families. *European Journal of Physical Education, 2,* 51-73. doi:10.1080/1740898970020105.

Knight, C. J. (2011a). *Parental support of female athletes*. Invited talk for the Coaching Research Group, Edmonton, AB.

Knight, C. J. (2011b). *Parenting your child in sport.* Invited talk for the Alberta Pandas U16 volleyball team, Edmonton, AB.

Knight, C. J. (2011c). *Enhancing parental involvement in junior tennis*. Report for the International Tennis Federation, Lawn Tennis Association, Tennis Australia, and United States Tennis Association. University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB.

Knight, C. J., Boden, C. M., & Holt, N. L. (2010). Junior tennis players' preferences for parental behaviors. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 22*, 377-391. doi:10.1080/10413200.2010.495324.

Knight, C. J., & Harwood, C. G. (2009). Parent-initiated coaching stress: A developmental study. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching, 4*, 545-565. doi:10.1260/174795409790291448.

Knight, C. J., & Holt, N. L. (2011a). *How do parents find ways to support their children's involvement in sport?* Oral presentation at the meeting of the Canadian Society for Psychomotor Learning and Sport Psychology. Winnipeg, MB.

Knight, C. J., & Holt, N. L., (2011b). *Understanding and enhancing children's experiences in competitive tennis*. Oral Presentation at the meeting of the Association of Applied Sport Psychology (AASP). Honolulu, HI.

Knight, C. J., & Holt, N. L. (2011c). *Creating the optimal psychosocial environment for youth sport: The role of parents.* Oral presentation at the meeting of the 13th European Congress of Sport Psychology. Maderia, Portugal.

Knight, C. J., & Holt, N. L. (2011d). *Supporting the supporters: The role of coaches and tennis organizations in supporting parents.* Oral presentation at

the meeting of the International Tennis Federation Worldwide Tennis Coaches conference, 2011. Port Ghablis, Egypt.

Knight, C. J., & Holt, N. L., (2011e). *Working with parents: Strategies for developing successful parent-coach relationships*. Oral Presentation at the Petro-Canada Sport Leadership Conference 2011. Toronto, ON.

Knight, C. J., & Holt, N. L. (2011f). *Optimizing parental involvement in junior tennis*. Interim Report for International Tennis Federation. University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB.

Lauer, L., Gould, D., Roman, N., & Pierce, M. (2010a). Parental behaviors that affect junior tennis player development. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 11,* 487-496. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2010.06.008.

Lauer, L., Gould, D., Roman, N., & Pierce, M. (2010b). How parents influence junior tennis players' development: Qualitative narratives. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 4,* 69-92.

Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada. (2011). *Collaborative health research projects program*. Retrieved 2011 from http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Professors-Professeurs/grants-subs/CHRP-PRCS_eng.asp

Omli, J., & Wiese-Bjornstal, D. M. (2011). Kids speak: Preferred parental behavior at youth sport events. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 82,* 702-711.

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. (2011). *Connection Program*. Retrieved from http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-

financement/umbrella_programs-programme_cadre/ connection-connexion-eng.aspx

Smoll, F. L., Cumming, S. P., & Smith, R. E. (2011). Enhancing coach-parent relationships in youth sports: Increasing harmony and minimizing hassle. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching, 6,* 13-26. doi:10.1260/1747-9541.6.1.13.

Taylor, J. (2008). Prepare to succeed: Private consulting in applied sport psychology. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 2,* 160–177.

Tennis Australia. (2011). *Education policy*. Retrieved from http://www.tennis.com.au/players/parents/education-policy

Wiersma, L. D., & Fifer, A. M. (2008). "The schedule has been tough but we think it's worth it": The joys, challenges, and recommendations of youth sport parents. *Journal of Leisure Research, 40,* 505-530.

Wolfenden, L. E., & Holt, N. L. (2005). Talent development in elite junior tennis: Perceptions of players, parents, and coaches. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 17,* 108-126. doi:10.1080/10413200590932416.