

The Fathering Effect: The Effects of Physical and Perceived Father Involvement on Children's Long-Term Team Identification

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50-minute poster presentation
(including questions)

Becoming a sports fan is a social process. Individuals are influenced by various socializing factors, one of the most prominent being the father, in terms of both his children's socialization into participation in sport and their identification with a sport team as fans (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; Melnick & Wann, 2004). James (2001) showed fathers play a primary role in the socializing children into sport spectatorship, and Spaaij and Anderson (2010) found children identified with their favorite sports team primarily due to the influences of their fathers. Previous research has echoed these findings, but what has been given little consideration is the decrease in the amount of time fathers spend with their children, as well the decreased involvement many fathers have in the lives of their children today (Jones & Mosher, 2013). The current study examines the effects of amount of time a father spends with a child and the perceived level of the father's involvement on an individual's future team identification.

The rise in divorce rates and children born out of wedlock has led to what Marsiglio and Cohan (2000) call a "fragmentation of fatherhood" (p. 78). A fragmented family is a family in which one or more parents are less involved in the family than is normally expected, or where the parents are not traditionally committed to one another through marriage. On average, these fragmented families significantly reduce the amount of time a father can spend with his children. Bauserman (2002) showed children of divorced parents with joint custody were better able to adjust to their surroundings than children in sole-custody settings, and later research showed this is in part due to increased parent-child contact (Aoki, 2011). It is plausible the physical availability of the "secondary" adult (usually the father) determines the relative effects of the fragmentation on the child (Wallerstein, Lewis, & Blakeslee, 2000). In a sport context, without a father, it is likely children will not form strong personal norms involving sports. The time fathers spend talking about and watching sport around their children is instilling in those children a personal norm, defined as an internal standard of conduct (Schwartz, 1973). These personal norms are strong influencers of behavior, but research has shown this is only the case when the norm is personally important and involve extreme attitudes (Chandon, Smith, Morwitz, Spangenberg, & Sprott, 2011; Kallgren, Reno, & Cialdini, 2000). Without a father's time investment in making sport fandom a strong personal norm for his child, the child may not develop a strong team identification. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

H₁: Greater amounts of reported time spent with a father will positively affect the child's identification levels to their favorite sports team.

It is not just the amount of time spent with a child that can decrease due to family fragmentation, but also the child's sense of the father's involvement in the child's life. While time and sense of involvement may be correlated, involvement looks more to the quality of the child's relationship with his or her father as opposed to the quantity of time spent building it. Father involvement correlates with better socio-emotional outcomes in their children (Cremades, Donlon, & Poczwardowski, 2013; Lamb, 2010), exemplifying the positive impact of fathers. When looking at fathers of children from fragmented families, researchers have found that noncustodial fathers tend to take on the roles that are more recreational and social rather than economical (Furstenberg & Nord, 1985). This would suggest that father figures involved in some way in a child's life may still positively influence the development of a sport team identity while not being as influential or involved in other areas of the child's life. In a sport-related context, fathers tend to engage in more stimulating and arousing play with their children than mothers do, which makes them especially important to the socialization of their children due to their unique influence (Day & Lamb, 2004; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 2002). Therefore, we propose the following:

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H₂: Higher levels of perceived father involvement will positively affect the child's team identification levels.

A survey was distributed online to users of the websites Facebook and Reddit. The online survey incorporated two widely used scales: Finley and Schwartz's (2004) Father Involvement Scale (FIS) and Wann and Branscombe's (1993) Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS). The FIS was developed to measure the perceived involvement of fathers throughout their children's lives from a retrospective point of view. Father involvement is a phenomenological construct based on the long-term "residue" the child retrospectively perceives of his father (Finley & Schwartz, 2004, p. 145). This phenomenological approach has been successfully used to study the impact of perceived parental involvement on children's psychological and behavioral involvement in previous studies (e.g., Barton, Kogan, Cho, & Brown, 2015; Rodriguez Ruiz, Carrasco, & Holgado-Tello, 2016), so it might be assumed its use can be extended to sport fandom, as well.

A total of 501 surveys were collected from participants ranging in age from 18 to 65. Ninety-nine incomplete surveys were eliminated from the sample, leaving 402 usable surveys in the sample. Snowball sampling was also utilized in this study, which is a chain-referral technique using existing social networks. While snowball sampling may produce a biased sample (Heckathorn, 1997), this methodological approach allows researchers to reach otherwise elusive subpopulations (Anderson & Calhoun, 1992; Bhutta, 2012; Browne, 2005). As this study attempted to include a substantial number of participants with little to no relationship with their fathers, the researchers determined the use of snowball sampling to be appropriate for this study.

As was done in Finley and Schwartz's (2004) original study using the FIS, 20 unique items were organized into three distinct subscales: Expressive Involvement, Instrumental Involvement, and Mentoring/Advising Involvement. Each construct is measured using a five-point Likert scale. The residual scores were used to adjust for differences in desired and actual involvement of fathers and father figures. Adopting this child-centric definition of father involvement and relying on what is important to the child over time allows father involvement to be determined by the one person who is directly affected by the actions of the father. The amount of time a father spends with his child becomes irrelevant because it is now the quality of the interactions that are being determined instead of quantity.

Wann and Branscombe's (1993) SSIS was then used to measure team identification levels of the survey participants, which has shown good reliability in previous studies as well as good internal consistency and construct validity (Theodorakis, Tsigilis, Wann, Lianopoulos, Al-Emadi, 2016; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). This index consists of seven items using an eight-point Likert scale ranging from low identification to high identification.

Data analysis is currently on-going. It is our hope this study will illuminate the effects on future team identification levels of fathers' physical presence in their children's lives as well as the psychological impressions fathers have on their children. This analysis will help our understanding of what aspects of a father's relationship with his children are most important to nurture in order to promote greater future team identification in younger generations. The results of this analysis will be presented when completed.

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