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The Impact of Family Financial Investment on Perceived Parent Pressure and Child Enjoyment and Commitment in Organized Youth Sport

Ninety percent of American youth participate in some form of organized youth sport between the ages of 5 and 18. Parent involvement in this context has recently been characterized as a potentially harmful force in parent–child relations, leading to debate regarding the appropriateness and level of parent involvement in organized youth sport. Despite the rising costs associated with youth sport participation, little empirical effort has been made to examine the potential impact of family financial investment on parent involvement and children’s subsequent sport outcomes. The purpose of this study was to address how family financial investment in youth sport influences children’s perceptions of parent pressure, sport enjoyment, and commitment to continued participation. Data from a national sample of 163 parent–child dyads illuminated an inverse association between family financial investment and child sport commitment, mediated by children’s perceptions of parent pressure and sport enjoyment. The results indicated that family financial investment predicts child commitment through the sequential mediators of perceived parent pressure and child enjoyment. These findings draw attention to many

avenues for future research on the potential link among family investment decisions, parent involvement behaviors, and child outcomes in organized youth sport, which may collectively inform the development of parent interventions for youth sport leagues, administrators, and parents.

Ninety percent of American children participate in some form of organized sport between the ages of 5 and 17 (Bremer, 2012; Jellineck & Durant, 2004), and more than 44 million American children participate in organized sport each year (“Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance,” 2010). A breadth of research has therefore been designed to illuminate the positive outcomes of youth sport participation for children. In addition to the widely cited physical benefits (e.g., Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001; Frasier-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005; Melnick, Miller, Sabo, Farrell, & Barnes, 2001), participation has been positively correlated with adaptive psychosocial outcomes such as improved initiative and leadership, higher grades, and enhanced goal-setting skills (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Gould & Carson, 2008; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003). Despite these adaptive outcomes, there have also been costs (e.g., perceptions of low ability, injury, burnout, and associated fees and expenses) associated with participation in organized youth sport (Baxter-Jones & Maffulli, 2003; Brustad, Babkes, & Smith, 2001; Knight

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& Holt, 2013). In an effort to maximize the benefits and minimize the costs of youth sport participation, parents often commit high levels of instrumental, emotional, and informational support to their children's sport participation experiences (Peter, 2011; Turman, 2007). One potentially meaningful aspect of parents' instrumental support is the allocation of family financial resources to children's sport participation.

Because children rarely contribute financially to their own participation, parents typically assume the fiduciary responsibility of covering the direct and indirect costs of participation. Indeed, past research indicates that parents with children in sport allocate between 3% and 12% of gross (pre-tax) household annual income to their children's youth sport participation (Baxter-Jones & Maffulli, 2003). Moreover, these costs seem to be growing in recent years with the emergence of elite travel teams and private coaching (Hyman, 2012). To put this monetary outlay in context, the mean family savings rate in the United States over the past 50 years is 6.82% of gross annual household income (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2014). In light of the emphasis placed on sport participation and achievement by many American families, children's sport participation may represent a substantial outlay of resources and even become a financial burden for some families (Holt, Kingsley, Tink, & Scherer, 2011). Therefore, it is plausible that parents in families who invest heavily in organized youth sport may expect some form of return on that investment.

Past economic research has linked financial investment to variations in subsequent investor behavior (Baker & Wurgler, 2006). Economists suggest the mechanism driving these variations in behavior is emotion and that social and individual meanings associated with money are connected to consumer characteristics and their affective experiences involving financial decisions (e.g., fear and greed; Zelizer, 1989). In short, individuals tend to experience a high degree of emotion related to financial transactions (Lerner, Small, & Loewenstein, 2004; Shiv, Loewenstein, Bechara, Damasio, & Damasio, 2005), and this emotion potentially affects future behavior. In the financial literature this relationship is described as *investor sentiment* and is often manifest in reactionary financial behavior (i.e., buying and selling) that is frequently not

based on sound financial principles (Baker & Wurgler, 2006).

Indeed, investors often report entering or exiting the market on the basis of gut reactions or unrelated, subjective experiences, even those related to sport. For example, Edmans, Garcia, and Norli (2007) highlighted a change in consumer and investor behavior based on outcomes of local sporting events. To be specific, when local teams won, consumer dollars in that region flowed into the market; when local teams lost, consumer dollars in that region were withheld. Therefore, although enthusiasm for sport may appear tangential to market volatility, investor sentiment may in fact be partly driven by sport outcomes. When the investment is made into sport itself (as is the case in organized youth sport), individual and team performances can serve as a driving force behind microeconomic decision making at the family level. Although children are not financial commodities, infusing an understanding of investor behavior may shed light on family financial decision making in that setting.

Differences in investment size have also been associated with variations in investor sentiment (Baker & Wurgler, 2006). According to microeconomic principles, the size of an individual or family's financial investment is linked to variations in anticipated future returns. In other words, investors tend to behave differently depending on the amount of money they have invested, with more money typically associated with more negative investor sentiment, behavior, and subsequent returns. Fisher and Statman (2000) found that negative investor sentiment was inversely correlated with future returns; specifically, when investor expectations of return were high, they jumped in and out of the market emotionally and experienced lower financial returns than investors who purchased and held the same commodities over time. Similarly, Baker and Wurgler (2006) determined that when investors' expectations of return were low, the yield on the investment was greatest. When investors chase returns with more frequent trades, buying higher and selling lower than their counterparts with lower expectations, they become more liberal in future allocations of resources (e.g., Shiv et al., 2005). In light of these findings, investor sentiment appears related to both behavior and return. For the purpose of this study, we attempted to draw a parallel between investor sentiment and parent

involvement behavior as a function of family financial investment in organized youth sport.

In the sport literature, parent support is recognized in a variety of forms (e.g., instrumental, emotional, informational); has been positively associated with children's sport participation (Hoyle & Leff, 1997); and has been linked to adaptive developmental outcomes, such as child enjoyment and enthusiasm, autonomy, and greater self-perception of sport skill (Gagné, Ryan, & Bargmann, 2003; McCullagh, Matzkanin, Shaw, & Maldonado, 1993). It is important to note that children's perception of parent support has also been linked to children's enjoyment and commitment in various sports and across ages. In an observational study of young adolescent tennis players, Hoyle and Leff (1997) found that players' success and enjoyment in tennis were statistically correlated with high parent support. Similarly, in an observational study of young female gymnasts in various age groups, Weiss and Weiss (2007) found that athletes who reported higher levels of parent support also reported greater levels of commitment to their sport. In the present research we focused on the financial aspect of instrumental support and its potential to influence young athletes' perceptions of parent pressure and, subsequently, their own enjoyment of and commitment to sport participation.

Parent pressure in sport is defined as "directive and controlling parental behaviors designed to prompt athlete responses and outcomes that are important to the parent" (O'Rourke, Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2011, p. 400) and is often manifest as criticism, punishment, or love withdrawal in response to performances that do not meet parental expectations. Children's perceptions of parent pressure have been linked to maladaptive outcomes such as child negative affect and discontent with sport performance, child perceptions of a more threatening performance environment, performance anxiety, and burnout (Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes, & Pennisi, 2006; O'Rourke et al., 2011; Sagar & Lavallee, 2010). Gould and colleagues (2006) queried young tennis players regarding their parents' roles in their sport success. Although nearly 60% of the sample indicated that their parents had been supportive, 36% indicated that a parents' overemphasis on performance and winning had hampered past performances. Similarly, Sánchez-Miguel, Leo, Sánchez-Olivía, Amado, and García-Calvo (2013) surveyed youth in

Spain participating in a variety of sports and found that higher levels of perceived parent pressure were associated with lower levels of enjoyment and commitment to continue in sport. In the present research we focused on young athletes' perceptions of parent pressure and the potential for these perceptions to affect their own enjoyment and commitment to sport participation.

With the myriad costs and benefits associated with organized youth sport participation, and in light of compelling evidence linking investor sentiment to future behaviors and returns, a greater understanding of the potential impact of family financial investment on the youth sport experience deserves attention. The present study was designed to address this gap, elucidating the relationships among family financial investment, children's perceptions of parent pressure, and child enjoyment and commitment in organized youth sport. This work is theoretically grounded in Scanlan and colleagues' *sport commitment model* (Scanlan, Simons, Carpenter, Schmidt, & Keeler, 1993). We used this theoretical lens to frame our interpretation of the impact of parent involvement (i.e., support and pressure) on child outcomes (i.e., enjoyment and commitment) in organized youth sport. The sport commitment model suggests that a child's sport enjoyment is a strong predictor of her or his intention to continue participating (i.e., commitment). Note also that social constraints (e.g., peer expectations, perception of pressure, feelings of obligation) and personal investments (time, experience, money) are thought to predict one's sport enjoyment.

Our general prediction was that parents who allocate family financial resources to their children's sport participation would demonstrate behavior similar to investors; specifically, we hypothesized that parents who reported investing a greater percentage of the family's pre-tax household income into the youth sport participation of their children would also be perceived as exhibiting more pressure in the sport domain. Furthermore, because parent pressure has been inversely associated with youth sport enjoyment and commitment, we also predicted a negative indirect influence of family financial investment on youth sport enjoyment and commitment via parent pressure. In short, we anticipated that families who invested more financial resources in the youth sport participation of their children would demonstrate higher levels of parent pressure, resulting in lower levels of athlete

enjoyment and less commitment to continued participation in organized youth sport. Understanding the link among these variables will allow parents to make more informed decisions regarding sport-related financial allocations; moreover, it will allow researchers to translate findings into sensible solutions for practitioners and policy makers who wish to structure organized sport such that youth remain positively involved over the course of childhood and adolescence.

METHOD

Participants

Utilizing G*Power (Version 3.0.10) we determined that a sample size of 82 parent-child dyads would be necessary to detect a moderate effect size (i.e., r^2 or $\kappa^2 = .20-.30$), assuming statistical power of .80 and an alpha of .05. Based on typical response rates close to 20% for our past online survey research, we recruited roughly 600 families, representing all 50 states. From those invitations, a final sample of 163 parent-child dyads participated in the present research, yielding a response rate in the present study of 27.2%.

The nationally distributed sample represented 42 states and the District of Columbia. In total, 78 fathers and 85 mothers participated, ranging in age from 27 to 59 years ($M = 41.0$, $SD = 5.6$). Parents represented athletes' biological ($n = 154$), step- ($n = 4$), and adoptive ($n = 2$) parents. Three parents (1.8%) did not specify their relationship to the child. The sample represented a primarily educated, middle-to upper middle class cohort of sport parents; 40 parents (24.6%) had an advanced or professional degree, 88 parents (53.9%) had a college degree, 25 parents (15.3%) had completed some college, and 8 parents (4.9%) had completed high school only. Two parents (1.2%) stated "other." Concerning employment status, 122 parents (74.9%) were wage-earning employees, 23 parents (14.1%) identified as homemakers, 13 parents (8.0%) were self-employed, 2 parents (1.2%) were students, and 3 parents (1.8%) answered "other." Reported gross annual household incomes ranged from \$20,000 to \$485,000 ($M = \$120,685$, $SD = \$66,885$). The sample comprised a fairly representative racial subset of parents: 100 parents (61.3%) identified as White or Caucasian, 31 parents (19.0%)

identified as Black or African American, 15 parents (9.2%) identified as Asian, 9 parents (5.5%) identified as multiracial or "other," 2 parents (1.2%) identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 6 parents (3.7%) did not indicate their race. One hundred forty-four parents (88.3%) identified as White (not Hispanic or Latino), 10 parents (6.1%) identified as Hispanic or Latino, and 4 parents (2.5%) did not indicate their ethnicity. The number of children participating in organized youth sport from each home ranged from one to five ($M = 2.0$, $SD = 1.0$).

The 163 athletes who participated were 126 males and 37 females drawn from a variety of sports, including American football ($n = 37$), basketball ($n = 24$), baseball ($n = 23$), soccer ($n = 23$), track or cross country ($n = 15$), volleyball ($n = 15$), wrestling ($n = 7$), softball ($n = 4$), swimming ($n = 4$), tennis ($n = 4$), cheerleading ($n = 2$), golf ($n = 2$), gymnastics ($n = 2$), and triathlon ($n = 1$). Although athletes and their families were recruited through individual sport leagues and associations, 121 of the 163 athletes (74.2%) reported having participated in two or more sports during the 12-month period prior to the study. Athletes ranged in age from 8 to 18 years ($M = 16.2$, $SD = 2.4$). Because the developmental level of the child has been shown to play a role in the expression of sport parenting practices (e.g., Holt, Tamminen, Black, Mandigo, & Fox, 2009), we attempted to sample the breadth of the developmental transition from recreational participation to competitive participation.

Procedure

Subsequent to institutional review board approval, we conducted an Internet search of non-school-based, organized youth sport leagues in all 50 states. We then contacted directors of these travel and recreational leagues via e-mail to seek permission to contact coaches of teams across a range of competitive levels. This strategy afforded a nationally distributed subset of leagues for recruitment. After obtaining permission, coaches were e-mailed to explain the details of the study, and permission was requested to survey parents and athletes on the respective teams. If permission was granted, a letter of information and a link to the online survey was disseminated to potential participants via e-mail. Parents self-selected as participants

after receiving recruiting e-mails and were asked to inform their children of study purposes.

E-mail contact was made during the final 4 weeks of the sport season to enhance participants' ability to offer valid responses based on experiences during the current season. Data were collected from families using a two-part, Internet-based questionnaire targeting participation from one parent and one child from each household. Each participating parent was asked to fill out the parent portion of the survey in a private, quiet location and to allow the same opportunity to her or his responding child. Parents provided informed consent for themselves and their child via an online interface. Children also provided assent before participating. Parents responded to 8 items tapping family financial investment in sport and 15 items tapping parent, child, and family demographic information. Children, independently from their parents, responded to 10 items tapping their perceptions of parent pressure, 4 items tapping sport enjoyment, and 4 items tapping commitment to continued participation.

Measures

Family Financial Investment. Participating parents were asked to report pre-tax annual household income, as well as the category (e.g., team registrations, equipment and uniforms, travel and lodging, lessons and instruction, and camps or athlete schools) and allocation (in dollars) of the investment. To standardize financial investment across families, a variable was created that represented the percentage of each family's reported gross annual income allocated to the youth sport participation of the responding child.

Perceptions of Parent Pressure. Children's perceptions of parent pressure in sport were measured with the Pressure subscale of the Parental Involvement in Activities Scale (Anderson, Funk, Elliott, & Smith, 2003). The original 10-item subscale was designed to measure children's perceptions of their parents' involvement in their extracurricular activities. In the current study, items were adapted to tap children's perceptions of parent pressure in organized youth sport. Within each family, the child was asked to report on the parent who was also participating (e.g., "My mother would be upset if I dropped out of this sport."). All items were rated on a 4-point scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). In the present

sample, the internal consistency reliability score was .76.

Children's Sport Enjoyment. Children's sport enjoyment was measured with the Enjoyment subscale of the Sport Commitment Model (Carpenter, Scanlan, Simons, & Lobel, 1993). The original subscale items were developed to measure the underlying concepts of positive affective response to sport and generalized feelings such as pleasure, liking, and fun. For each item, children were asked to rate the extent to which the statement reflected their enjoyment of sport. Items were rated on a 5-point scale that ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). Items were designed to reflect child perceptions of sport enjoyment (e.g., "Did you have fun playing this sport this season?"). In the present sample, the internal consistency reliability score was .94.

Children's Sport Commitment. Children's commitment to continued participation in organized youth sport was measured with the Commitment subscale of the Sport Commitment Model (Carpenter et al., 1993). The original subscale items were developed to measure children's psychological resolve to continue sport participation. For each item, children were asked to rate the extent to which the statement reflected their sport commitment. Items were rated on a 5-point scale that ranged from 1 (*not at all dedicated*) to 5 (*very dedicated*). Items were designed to reflect child perceptions of sport commitment (e.g., "How dedicated are you to playing this sport next season?"). In the present sample, the internal consistency reliability score was .87.

Individual and Family Demographics. Parents were also asked to respond to multiple demographic questions; specifically, the questionnaire asked parents to report parent and child age and sex, child's grade in school, parent's relationship to the child, parent relationship status, parent education and employment, child's current and past sport participation, parent ethnicity and race, and the number of children in the home and how many of those children were active participants in organized youth sport over the preceding 12 months.

Data Analysis

We conducted a path analysis using Mplus (Version 7; Muthén & Muthén, 2012) software to

examine six direct relationships and five indirect relationships in the hypothesized model. Path analysis is an appropriate analytic technique when “theoretical, empirical, and commonsense knowledge of a problem” offers a plausible chain of associated variables (Cook & Campbell, 1979, p. 307). In the present study, we specified an a priori model based on previously established theoretical and empirical relationships. The model was specified on the basis of the hypothesis that pressure and enjoyment would act as sequential mediators in the relationship between family financial investment and commitment to continued participation in organized youth sport.

Several goodness-of-fit indices were examined, including chi-square, the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), the standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the non-normed fit index (NNFI). A nonsignificant chi-square indicates that the model fits the data. MacCallum, Browne, and Sugawara (1996) used .01 and .05 to indicate excellent and good fit for RMSEA and SRMR values respectively, and Byrne (2012) suggested .08 as the cutoff for acceptable fit. In general, CFI and nonnormed fit index values between .90 and .95 are representative of adequate fit, and values above .95 represent good fit. Values below .90 are considered to indicate a poorly fitted model (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

After establishing efficacy in the hypothesized model, we examined six direct paths, from: (a) family financial investment to parent pressure, (b) family financial investment to child enjoyment, (c) family financial investment to child commitment, (d) parent pressure to child enjoyment, (e) parent pressure to child commitment, and (f) child enjoyment to child commitment. We also examined five indirect paths, from: (a) family financial investment to child enjoyment via parent pressure, (b) family financial investment to child commitment via parent pressure, (c) family financial investment to child commitment via child enjoyment, (d) family financial investment to child commitment via parent pressure and child commitment, and (e) parent pressure to child commitment via child enjoyment. As a final step of data analysis, we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance using SPSS (Version 21) to address the potential impact of parent and child sex on

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix for Study Variables*

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Investment	—			
2. Pressure	.20*	—		
3. Enjoyment	-.21*	-.53***	—	
4. Commitment	-.08*	-.45***	.75***	—
Range	0–100%	1–5	1–5	1–5
<i>M</i>	1.22%	2.14	4.59	4.39
<i>SD</i>	1.35%	0.73	0.79	0.82
Minimum	0.00%	1.50	1.50	1.25
Maximum	10.28%	5.00	5.00	5.00

Note. *N* = 163. Investment was computed as the percentage of gross household annual income spent on the child’s organized youth sport participation.

p* < .05; **p* < .001.

family financial investment, perceived pressure, child enjoyment, and child commitment.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Variable ranges, minimum and maximum values, as well as means and standard deviations are included in Table 1. Participating families reported investing a mean of \$1,583.89 (*SD* = \$2,214.49), or 1.22% (*SD* = 1.35%) of their gross annual income, on their child’s sport participation. This mean value increased to \$2,292.42 (*SD* = \$2,554.54) or 1.84% (*SD* = 1.55%) when the sport participation of all sport-participating children in the household were considered. The reported percentage of gross household annual income invested in youth sport ranged from 0% to 10.28%, and the relationship between income and investment was not linear. Overall, 59.5% of families invested less than 1% of their gross annual income, 22.7% of families invested between 1% and 2%, 14.7% of families invested between 2% and 5%, and 3.1% of families invested 5% or more. On average, families reported allocating 34% of financial outlay to registration and league fees, 27% to lessons and camps, 24% to equipment and uniforms, and 15% to travel and lodging. Athletes reported moderate pressure from parents (*M* = 2.14, *SD* = 0.73) and relatively high levels of enjoyment (*M* = 4.59, *SD* = 0.79) and commitment to continued participation (*M* = 4.39, *SD* = 0.82).

Bivariate correlations are also displayed in Table 1. These values reflect statistically significant relationships in theoretically expected directions. Perceived parent pressure was negatively correlated with both child enjoyment and commitment ($r = -.53, p < .001$; $r = -.45, p < .001$, respectively), showing that youth who perceived more parent pressure reported lower levels of enjoyment and commitment. As expected, youth enjoyment in sport was positively correlated with commitment ($r = .75, p < .001$), showing that youth who reported higher enjoyment were more likely to report higher commitment to continued participation in the present sport.

Path Analysis

Model Fit. Inspection of fit indices yielded an acceptable final model ($\chi^2 = 6.94$, RMSEA = .09, CFI = .98, and SRMR = .03), which indicates that family financial investment predicts child commitment through the sequential mediators of perceived parent pressure and child enjoyment. To assess the relationships among study variables, we analyzed both direct and indirect effects, as well as the proportion of the maximum possible indirect effect that could have occurred in the indirect effects, in the hypothesized model (see Table 2; cf. Preacher & Kelley, 2011). We also report measures of explained variance via the r^2 statistic for each of the six direct pathways.

Direct Effects. The first direct relationship examined was between family financial investment and perceived parent pressure. Increases in investment predicted modest increases in pressure ($\beta = .20, p = .010$); 4% of the variance in pressure was explained by investment. The second direct relationship examined was between family financial investment and child reports of enjoyment. Investment did not statistically predict enjoyment ($\beta = -.11, p = .101$); less than 1% of the variance in enjoyment was explained by investment. The third direct relationship examined was between family financial investment and child reports of commitment. Investment did not statistically predict commitment ($\beta = -.09, p = .090$); less than 1% of the variance in commitment was explained by investment. The fourth direct relationship examined was between perceived parent pressure and child reports of enjoyment. Increases

in perceived pressure predicted reductions in enjoyment ($\beta = -.50, p < .001$); 25% of the variance in enjoyment was explained by pressure. The fifth direct relationship examined was between perceived parent pressure and child reports of commitment. Perceived pressure did not statistically predict child commitment ($\beta = -.08, p = .172$); less than 1% of the variance in commitment was explained by perceived pressure. The final direct relationship examined was between child reports of enjoyment and commitment. Increases in enjoyment predicted increases in commitment ($\beta = .73, p < .001$); 53% of the variance in commitment was explained by enjoyment.

Indirect Effects. Five indirect relationships were examined to assess the efficacy of the mediation models embedded within the full path model as well as the proportional effect sizes of those indirect effects (Preacher & Kelley, 2011). For the purposes of the present analysis, we considered Cohen's (1988) small, medium, and large effect sizes of $\kappa^2 = .01, \kappa^2 = .09$, and $\kappa^2 = .25$, respectively. The first indirect relationship examined was between family financial investment and child reports of enjoyment via perceived parent pressure. The indirect effect was statistically significant and of medium effect size ($\beta = -.10, p = .006, \kappa^2 = .11$), indicating mediation in the investment–enjoyment relationship. The second and third indirect relationships examined were between family financial investment and child reports of commitment via perceived parent pressure and child enjoyment, respectively. These indirect effects were not statistically significant ($\beta = -.02, p = .229, \kappa^2 = .02$ and $\beta = -.08, p = .090, \kappa^2 = .11$), indicating a lack of mediation in the investment–commitment relationship via pressure or enjoyment. The fourth indirect relationship examined included the entire model from family financial investment to child reports of commitment via child perception of parent pressure and child enjoyment. The indirect effect was statistically significant and of medium effect size ($\beta = -.08, p = .018, \kappa^2 = .13$), indicating a combined mediation in the investment–commitment relationship via pressure and enjoyment. The final indirect relationship examined was between perceived parent pressure and child commitment via child enjoyment. The indirect effect was statistically significant and large in effect size ($\beta = -.37, p < .001, \kappa^2 = .38$), demonstrating mediation

Table 2. Standardized Model Results Associated with Each Direct and Indirect Path in the Specified Model

Effects	β	SE	<i>p</i>	r^2
Direct				
Investment on pressure	.20	.08	.010	.04
Investment on enjoyment	-.11	.07	.101	.01
Investment on commitment	.09	.05	.090	.01
Pressure on enjoyment	-.50	.07	< .001	.25
Pressure on commitment	-.08	.06	.172	.01
Enjoyment on commitment	.73	.04	< .001	.53
Indirect				
Investment on enjoyment (via pressure)	-.10	.04	.006	.11
Investment on commitment (via pressure)	-.02	.01	.229	.02
Investment on commitment (via enjoyment)	-.08	.05	.090	.11
Investment on commitment (via pressure and enjoyment)	-.08	.03	.018	.13
Pressure on commitment (via enjoyment)	-.37	.05	< .001	.38

Note. Table values are standardized model results based on *Mplus* STDYX standardization.

in the pressure–commitment relationship via enjoyment (see Figure 1).

Sex Differences

Results of the multivariate analysis of variance indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in family financial investment based on child sex, $F(4, 158) = 5.91, p < .001$, Wilks's $\lambda = .87$, partial $\eta^2 = .13$. To be specific, family financial investment was higher for sons than it was for daughters in the present sample. Furthermore, the relationship between sex and age of the child was not statistically significant, and parent sex did not statistically affect the multivariate model, $F(4, 158) = 0.92, p = .455$, Wilks's $\lambda = .98$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$.

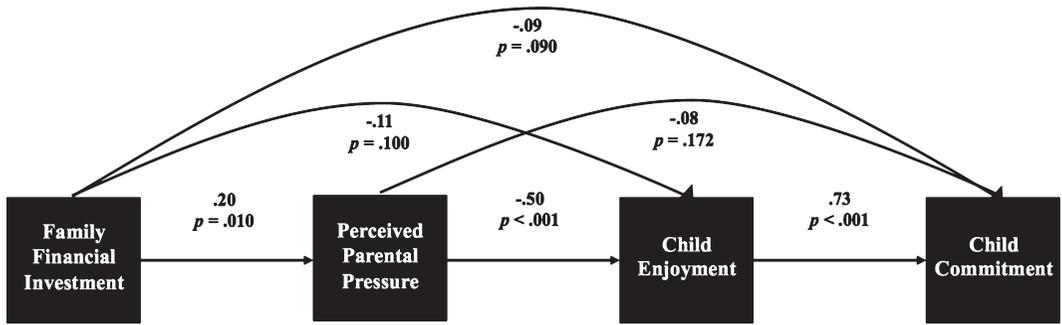
DISCUSSION

In light of the potential for organized sport participation to spur positive youth development, many factors that motivate children's involvement have been examined (e.g., Bremer, 2012; Jellineck & Durant, 2004). However, a dearth of research has addressed the potential impact of family financial investment on these developmental outcomes. Of specific concern in the present study were the direct and indirect associations among family financial investment, children's perceptions of parent pressure, and children's enjoyment and commitment in organized youth sport. Data were gathered from a nationally distributed sample of families who reported participation in a variety of organized youth sport settings.

In the present study we hypothesized that parents who reported investing a greater percentage of the family's pre-tax annual income in organized youth sport would also be perceived as applying more pressure to their athletes in that domain. A negative indirect influence of family financial investment on child commitment was hypothesized via parent pressure and child enjoyment. The efficacy of the hypothesized model was supported, as greater levels of family financial investment were associated with higher athlete perceptions of parent pressure and decreases in children's enjoyment and commitment. In line with study hypotheses, greater levels of family financial investments were not statistically associated with lower commitment, but the indirect relationship became statistically significant when mediated by perceptions of parent pressure and child enjoyment. These findings share stark similarity to that of transient investor behavior and the associated poorer investment portfolio performance (Fisher & Statman, 2000).

In line with past research (e.g., Baxter-Jones & Maffulli, 2003), parents in the current sample reported devoting up to 10% of their pre-tax income to the athletic participation of their child. However, 81.1% of parents in the present sample reported allocating less than 3% of their pre-tax income, and less than 1% of parents reported allocating more than 10% of their pre-tax income to the athletic participation of their child. In light of these discrepancies, it is possible that parents surveyed in the Baxter-Jones and Maffulli (2003) study represented a more competitive cohort of youth

FIGURE 1. DIRECT EFFECTS AMONG STUDY VARIABLES BASED ON MPLUS STDYX STANDARDIZATION.



sport participants and therefore allocated more financial resources to the sport participation of their children than parents in the present work. Despite the differences between these samples, we draw a parallel between investor behavior and parent involvement as a function of family “financial investment” in organized youth sport. Researchers interested in investor sentiment have documented negative behaviors (e.g., market timing, late entrance, and premature sell-off) and outcomes (e.g., return) displayed by investors in association with the size of the investment and past performance (Baker & Wurgler, 2006). In comparison, families in the present study who made greater financial investments in a child’s sport participation had children who perceived greater levels of parent pressure, as well as decreases in enjoyment and commitment. These findings correspond to past research linking parents’ financial outlay to young athletes’ perception of pressure (e.g., Harwood & Knight, 2009) and dwindling child enjoyment in sport (e.g., Gould et al., 2006; Sagar & Lavalley, 2010). Finally, it is interesting to note that the relationship between family income and percentage of household income spent on youth sport participation was neither a statistical predictor nor linear.

In the financial behavior literature, investor sentiment has been associated with transient investment behavior in search of investment returns (e.g., excessive buying and selling) and poorer investment returns (Baker & Wurgler, 2006, 2007). In addition, individuals have been found to change their investment behavior when sport-related emotions are considered (Edmans et al., 2007). However, despite the fact that family financial support and parent involvement

in organized youth sport have been positively associated with children’s continued commitment to participate (Green & Chalip, 1998; Hoyle & Leff, 1997; Weiss & Weiss, 2007), our results indicate that greater financial outlay may not result in greater levels of enjoyment or commitment. It is therefore plausible that, similar to transient investor behavior, transient sport parenting influences children’s perceptions of pressure to achieve some type of return (i.e., scoring, winning, earning a starting role, getting a scholarship). In fact, despite parents’ best intentions, high levels of financial outlay may result in maladaptive outcomes, namely young athletes’ decreased enjoyment of or commitment to participate in organized youth sport. Nevertheless, because these pathways have yet to be studied longitudinally, allowing for causal inference, and in light of past research linking personal investments to children’s enhanced enjoyment and commitment (Scanlan et al., 1993), it is important to further address the role of family financial investment in organized youth sport.

Although this study enhances knowledge of the potential outcomes of family financial investment in organized youth sport, it possesses limitations that should be acknowledged. As a result of the cross-sectional design, the relationships depicted in the path model cannot be interpreted as causal. Despite our theoretically supported assumption that family financial investment indirectly affects child enjoyment and commitment via parent pressure, it is also plausible that one or more of the associations work in the opposite direction. Indeed, it is feasible that young athletes’ sport enjoyment and commitment decrease parent pressure and incentivize parents to invest

more liberally in organized youth sport experiences. To highlight the mediation or direction of these effects, future studies could examine the development of parent behaviors and child outcomes over time or across developmental periods; specifically, future work could be grounded in Côté and colleagues' *developmental model of sport participation* (Côté, 1999; Côté & Frasier-Thomas, 2007). Using this lens to frame future work would allow researchers to address potential discrepancies in parent involvement behavior and child outcomes across the sampling, specialization, and investment stages of organized sport participation. Such work could help untangle the potentially confounded trajectories of family financial spending, child development and opportunity, and performance focus found in organized youth sport. Despite this limitation, the present findings do provide preliminary evidence of potential mechanisms that may be better understood by tracking parent pressure, sport enjoyment, and sport commitment across a single season (or multiple seasons) in light of the family's initial and continued financial investment (e.g. fees, equipment, and accumulating travel).

A second limitation of the present work lies in the relatively diverse sample that made sport-specific comparisons impossible. We chose to sample families from a range of organized youth sport settings because it afforded the opportunity to cut across a wide swath of parent and child experiences and provides a foundation for broad inference. A future large-scale sample would allow researchers to test potential mediators and moderators such as gender, socioeconomic status, number of children in the family, the child's developmental stage, number of sports in which the child participates, and the particular sport in which the child participated. In the current study, "investment" was measured as a percentage of pre-tax annual household income allocated toward sport participation. An alternative design might target a larger sample from a variety of sports, using subjective measures of the perceived costs of participation, including time away from work and family and the perceived financial strain of sport investment on the family. Such a study would further illuminate the potential link between financial investment in sport, perceived pressure, and the developmental outcomes that stem from youth sport involvement. Future research should also aim to compare and contrast American and

non-American families in diverse sport contexts while controlling for variations that may occur in different sporting contexts. These studies might also include measurement of participants' ascribed importance of both sport participation and financial investments. Data from such studies would provide valuable information for future scholars or practitioners designing generalizable educational programs for parents of young athletes.

Despite these limitations, the present work provides preliminary insights into the relationship of family financial investment and youth sport participation. It also offers a unique perspective of investor behavior surrounding family leisure time (e.g., organized youth sport) spending choices. In extending the present findings there remains ample opportunity for researchers to examine the impact of family financial investment on both parent involvement behavior and children's developmental outcomes. To be specific, future qualitative studies could be designed to examine the role of parents' views on, and athletes' concepts of, money and financial stress as it pertains to youth sport participation. Such studies would best be couched in a social constructivist epistemology, and they could be designed to address the impacts on youth development stemming from changes in family financial investments in youth sport over time, the role of sibling experiences in dictating family investments in sport, and parents' views on money and transient behavior surrounding performance in various achievement domains. Because children's participation in organized youth sport has shown the potential to foster positive youth development (Barber et al., 2001; Eccles et al., 2003; Gould & Carson, 2008; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003), while simultaneously serving as a financial burden for some families (Holt et al., 2011), it will be important for future researchers to address the steps that can be taken to make the context more beneficial and the opportunity more readily accessible for children and young adolescents.

In light of the present findings, there are a number of applied recommendations that should be considered by scholars and practitioners. A specific aim of these professionals should be to reduce the financial burden on organized youth sport families. Models of such an intervention can be seen in Sweden, where government at the federal and local level offer subsidies for

sport participation (Swedish Sports Confederation, 2002), and in Canada, where the federal government provides a sizable tax credit for families who have children registered in organized youth sport (Spence, Holt, Sprysak, Spencer-Cavaliere, & Caulfield, 2012). Such interventions may save governments money in the long term because of the potential acquisition of lifelong physical habits that are often manifest in an enjoyable youth sport experience (Browne, 2011). In addition, extending children and adolescents' participation in organized youth sport offers an opportunity to realize the positive developmental outcomes often associated with organized youth sport participation (Frasier-Thomas et al., 2005).

A second specific aim of researchers and practitioners should be to translate current research into practice at the league, team, and family levels; specifically, family and sport researchers, youth league administrators, coaches, and parents should use the growing body of empirical knowledge to create more developmentally appropriate sport settings for youth. Such implementation would potentially lead to a clearer understanding of the developmental considerations that shape different levels of organized youth sport, the role and mechanisms of parent support, and the potential (positive and negative) impact of parent communication in organized youth sport (Dorsch, Smith, Wilson, & McDonough, 2015; Holt & Knight, 2014).

This study offers a deeper understanding of the relationships among family financial investment, perceived parent pressure, and child enjoyment and commitment in organized youth sport. It is important to note that our data suggest an indirect link between family financial investment and child sport commitment via the sequential mediators of parent pressure and child enjoyment. In making this contribution our study answers calls for a strengthened understanding of the potential mechanisms that influence parents' involvement in organized youth sport (Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2009; Fredricks & Eccles, 2004) and provides a foundation for meaningful future research on families in sport. From a practical standpoint, this work suggests that parents should remain cognizant of how spending money on their children's organized youth sport participation may affect their children's perceptions of pressure in that domain as well as their subsequent enjoyment and commitment. Parent involvement can

be a good thing, and if mothers and fathers can appropriately support their children's athletic participation, a host of positive developmental outcomes can be achieved.

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