

PARADOXES OF POWER IN COMPETITIVE YOUTH SPORT: FLORIDA JUNIOR
TENNIS

By

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To my Mom and Dad

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	4
LIST OF TABLES.....	9
LIST OF FIGURES.....	10
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	11
ABSTRACT.....	12
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	14
2 METHODS: YOUTH-CENTERED SENSORIAL AUTOETHNOGRAPHY.....	30
Youth-Centered Research at Home.....	30
Sensorial Autoethnography.....	35
Sensing Participant Emotions.....	36
Sensing the “Zone”.....	38
Sensing Pain, Fatigue, Self-Deprivation, and Burnout.....	40
Sensing Politics and Power Dynamics.....	42
Specific Research Techniques.....	44
Informal and Semi-Structured Interviews.....	44
Collaborative Narrative.....	45
Texts and Audio-Notes.....	45
Video-Analysis.....	46
Questionnaires.....	47
Participant Journals.....	47
Data Analysis.....	48
Ethics.....	49
Summary.....	50
3 EMBODIMENT THROUGH RITUALS OF THE JUNIOR TENNIS HABITUS.....	53
Junior Tennis as a Social Rite of Passage.....	54
Sport as Social Ritual.....	57
Communitas and Liminality of/in Rituals of Sport: Anti-Structure within Structure.....	60
Flow, as Liminality, to Achieve Communitas.....	63
Junior Tennis as Habitus.....	65
Embedded Rituals in Junior Tennis Body Culture.....	67
Periodization cycles.....	69
Tournament, match, and point rituals.....	73

Flow as the “Zone” in Junior Tennis	79
Bodily expressions of the zone	81
The zone as shared liminal experience (communitas)	84
Embodied Learning and Identity in the Junior Tennis Habitus	86
Embodied Learning	87
Constructive and Destructive Flow	93
“Becoming” the Self	99
Summary	107
4 RELATIONAL POWER AMONG PARENTS, PLAYERS, AND COACHES	114
Approaching Power	115
Technologies of Domination	115
Technologies of the Self	120
Governmentality	121
Foucault and Bourdieu	123
Technologies of Self, Technologies of Domination, or Both?	127
Governmentality and (Dis)Empowerment in Junior Tennis.....	132
The Power Molecule	134
Power Continuums	137
“Authority” role (parent/coach) power continuum	139
“Subordinate” role (player) power continuum	145
Relational Power Grid	150
Summary	154
5 PLAYER-PARENT DYNAMICS	161
Parent and Player Power Approaches	161
Nurturing-to-Coddling Dynamics	163
Collaborative Dynamics.....	164
Authoritative-to-Abusive Dynamics.....	167
Paradoxical Spaces of Player-Parent Dynamics.....	172
Paradoxical Spaces of Choice.....	172
Introduction to tennis.....	173
Goal-setting.....	175
Paradoxical Spaces of Supporting Dreams.....	180
Paradoxical Spaces of Communication.....	185
Paradoxical Spaces of Involvement	187
Exploitative tendencies	188
Abusive dynamics	203
Under-involvement.....	212
Paradoxical Spaces of Pressure	213
Overt pressure	213
Subtle pressure.....	219
No pressure	222
Summary	224

6	PLAYER-COACH DYNAMICS.....	227
	Coach and Player Power Approaches	227
	Nurturing-to-Coddling Dynamics	229
	Collaborative Dynamics.....	233
	Authoritative-to-Abusive Dynamics.....	237
	Paradoxical Spaces of Player-Coach Dynamics.....	242
	Paradoxical Spaces of Intimacy	242
	Paradoxical Spaces of “Chemistry”	249
	Paradoxical Spaces of Performance Enhancement	256
	Motivation: fear and anger	260
	Discipline vs abuse	266
	Defining coach abuse	272
	Paradoxical Spaces of Loyalty	280
	Summary	282
7	EMBODIMENT OF IDENTITY AND WELL-BEING: PAIN, POTENTIAL, AND MORALITY	286
	Paradoxical Spaces of Pain.....	286
	The Pain Boundary Concept	287
	(Over)Scheduling	288
	(Over)Dependence on Authority.....	291
	Physical Pain and Injury	294
	Emotional Pain and Burnout.....	295
	Existential Pain and Depression.....	298
	When sacrifice becomes self-harm	301
	Long-term effects of disempowering pain	305
	Paradoxical Spaces of Potential	307
	Early Specialization or the Road to Burnout?	311
	Academies: The Next Step or Hype?	314
	Paradoxical Spaces of Morality.....	319
	Work Ethic: Practice Makes Perfect or Perfectionism?	324
	Sportsmanship: Being a “Good Sport” or a “Weak Competitor”?.....	326
	Cheating: learning to cope with deception or learning to deceive?	327
	Management of emotions: productive aggression or destructive anger? .	337
	Confidence: individualism or narcissism?	338
	Summary	341
8	EMBODIMENT OF IDENTITY AND WELL-BEING: TENNIS AND NON-TENNIS SOCIAL WORLDS.....	346
	Paradoxical Spaces of Tennis Identity.....	346
	Friendships.....	350
	Education	358
	Family Dynamics	363
	Gender Differentiation	371

Peaking: biological truth or cultural construct?	374
Competitiveness or “cattiness”	375
Cute and thin, but strong	378
Female coaches	380
Racial/Ethnic Differentiation	382
American Junior Tennis and International Competition	388
Choice: “good for life, bad for tennis”	389
Drive: natural or innate?	392
Money and agents: opportunity or exploitation?	396
Summary	400
9 CONCLUSION	403
REFERENCES	419
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	438

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>page</u>
3-1 Comparison of liminality and flow characteristics	110

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>page</u>
3-1 Liminal pathways	111
3-2 Sacred boundary	112
3-3 Sponsor banners	112
3-4 States of flow	113
4-1 The power molecule	157
4-2 Authority (coach/parent) power continuum	158
4-3 Subordinate (player) power continuum.....	159
4-4 Relational power grid.....	160
6-1 Surveillance tower	345
6-2 Long view of courts.....	345

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	American Anthropological Association
HGH	Human Growth Hormone
IRB	Institutional Review Board
ITF	International Tennis Federation
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
USTA	United States Tennis Association
WTA	Women's Tennis Association

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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Competitive youth sport is often discussed as either “good” or “bad” for children’s personal development: “good” in the sense that it prepares children for adulthood; “bad” for the risk of physical injury, excessive competition, and emotional imbalances.

However, as my two years of doctoral fieldwork and thirty years of experience in the competitive junior tennis culture shows, the picture is much more complicated. Through daily performance enhancement rituals and the constant oscillation of power among coaches, parents, and players, youths embody the values of the sport culture as well as the larger society in both empowering and disempowering ways.

In my research, I used a “sensorial autoethnographic” approach as I trained regularly with junior athlete participants and used my own experiences as a junior player and coach to inform my inquiries. The power, that coaches and parents express with their positions of authority, falls along continuums. Likewise, the performance of power that junior athletes exhibit in response to parent/coach power falls along continuums as well. Junior athletes are seen as “liminal agents”, embodying their identities and power through training, as they transition between identities of child and adult, student and

master. They are both being managed by coaches and parents as well as employing agency in various forms that in turn affect the ways in which their coaches and parents train and manage them.

The power dynamics among the coach-player-parent triad, or *power molecule*, are described as constantly move back-and-forth along continuums within the larger context of the junior tennis culture. As a result, junior athletes as liminal agents experience *paradoxes of power* – being both empowered and disempowered – by their tennis experiences. These paradoxes affect their well-being and self-making processes in their development of morality, perception of identity, experience of pain, family dynamics, school, and social life. This research could contribute to, not only sport cultures, but other youth performance enhancement cultures (i.e. academics, the arts) as well as studies on health, gender, childhood, abuse, and human rights.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The competitive junior tennis environment in Florida is a site to behold. Below, my field notes portray a day at one of the most important tournaments around the world where several thousand of the world's most elite junior players have come to compete:

The sidewalks stream with players, anxious to start playing their matches. Players wish each other luck. Parents advise their players for their next match in various languages, some very intensely. Players converse in groups within their various teams. Their federation names brand the backs of their sweat jackets. Other players cross the language barrier and make friends from different countries, speaking in broken English sometimes when it is the only language they share. As Facebook and smart phones help players to keep in touch with each other between tournaments, some players squeal in excitement or give each other high-fives as they reunite.

Many players are waiting for their names to be called on the loudspeaker to come to the tournament desk to start their matches. Some older players sit at the benches with one headphone in an ear while the other one dangles, carrying on conversations with each other. Other players isolate themselves from the rest of the players and stretch in preparation. Some of the younger players play games on their phones and mini-tennis on the sidewalk, waiting for their matches to be called. Some players' bodies are bandaged and braced: knees decorated with black bands, thighs wrapped with bandages, ankles supported with braces, or shoulders bathed in ice wraps. Adults philosophize about players, game styles, a federation's decisions, the state of junior tennis in America versus elsewhere, the latest pro tournament, college recruitments, and professional contracts. Coaches share notes with other coaches about their players' next opponent: "She's young"; "She just won a big tournament last month"; "They had some long points." Parents talk about school: "What are the boys doing for school? Are they in school now?"

Walking out to the courts, past the players in waiting, the symbols of the competition environment become more apparent. Signs on the court doors command: "Please respect coach-athlete privacy. Permit the coaching staff to work without interference." This sign is reserved for practice time but the matches are going on now and it means the same thing to the players: no parental interference allowed. Signs with the names of various countries label the players' chairs. A sign on the mental toughness office door says, "War Room". College coaches branded with their school colors and names swarm the tournament site to scout for new talent.

The emotional ups and downs exposed on the courts are contagious among the players and spectators. Players moan in agony, trading off points as crowds clap in response to the players' efforts. A girl pumps her fist with a hissing "Yes!" in a tiebreaker while another girl yells at herself after making an error. Another player a few courts away screams in blood curdling frustration. Players grunt on the courts as they expel their breaths when their racquets strike the ball of each shot they hit. Some players yell out in anger while others yell out in exuberance. Some come off the court looking victorious, while others leave the court with their heads hanging low. A player sobs on the phone explaining to her coach or parent back home why she lost. The rocks crunch under players' feet as they walk back to the tournament desk, along the giant draws displaying each player's climb to the finish. One player after his match gives the tournament official the balls and says, "I won. When's my next match?" (Nov. 28, 2010 – Bradenton, FL)

This junior tennis environment is full of symbols and "social dramas" (Turner 1982, 1987), or "politically charged dramas that shape the rhythms of activity and the experiences and expectations of participants" (Mattingly 2010:43), unfolding simultaneously. The conversations and situations expose the many paradoxes of competitive junior tennis: player independence on the court and dependence upon their parents and coaches off the court, enthusiasm and self-destruction, parental motivation and abuse, fair play and cheating, surviving the elements and suffering injury, family bonding and sacrifice, cultural diversity and discrimination.

I pursued this research because in my years of playing and coaching junior tennis, I experienced and saw various forms of youth empowerment: enlightenment, encouragement, joy, friendships, respect, and confidence. But at the same time, I had experienced or seen various forms of detriment to kids' well-being: abuse, exploitation, burnout, injury, stress, unhappiness, self-harm, neglect, coddling. I wanted to understand why the disempowering situations happened and continue to happen in junior tennis (and the youth sport world, in general). But I also wanted to understand why they happen alongside, and simultaneously with, the empowering situations. As

such, I am following Coakley's 2011 lead to do “theoretically informed [research] of the ways that sports and sport participation can be organized...for the purpose of empowering young people to make choices about change-oriented civic engagement based on a critical awareness of the factors that negatively affect their lives” (318).

Youth sports, like junior tennis, are often advocated as good or necessary for kids to become adults and productive members of society (Dyck 2000). They encourage enjoyment, skill acquisition, physical fitness, social bonds, and “positive social values of sportsmanship and good citizenship” (Malina 2009:S1). Junior tennis players also have opportunities to travel, meet many different people from varied backgrounds, and to develop important personal qualities from a young age like resilience, independence, confidence, courage, self-regulation, and work ethic. Through rituals of training and competition – guided by their coaches and parents - junior athletes not only embody the values of the sport world, they embody the values of society¹. Competitive tennis is a popular global sport among middle to upper class families in industrialized countries², such as the United States. The values of individualism, competition, prioritization of performance enhancement, and goal-achievement often dominate values of free-play and identity exploration. Through their performance enhancement as good players in the “meta-game” (Blanchard 1995) of tennis, kids learn how to be good players in the game of society.

¹Since tennis is a globalized sport, these values tend to include individualist and neo-liberal principles. Smith Maguire 2012 notes this about other globalized sports.

²Although the United States Tennis Association has increased tennis participation to the public parks through their grassroots initiatives, it is still considered a sport for the middle- to upper-classes if elite level competition is the goal due to the expense of training, equipment, and travel.

On the other hand, many of the same values that are upheld as being good for youths' development are also targeted as being detrimental for their development³. The argument is that kids become *overly* competitive and are at risk of being injured or exposed to abuse when they over-train to enhance their performance in competitive sport; that sport actually stunts their development into adulthood *because of* their performance enhancement. In this sense, they are seen to be rushed into adulthood without the necessary psycho-social developments as “normal” teens⁴. There is a dark under-belly of junior tennis which can harm child athletes in their adolescence and adulthood on physical, emotional, and psychological levels. As Donnelly notes, “the children who become successful adult athletes in high-performance sport appear to be survivors rather than products of the current system” (Donnelly 1997:401).

This research contributes to the study of youth sport as a prime area for “anthropologists interested in the cultural dynamics of power and social life” (Dyck 2000:157). While spectators of competitive junior tennis marvel at the feats of these professionalized (or professionalizing⁵) adolescent athletes, the symbol of their participation is normalized without question: that the athletic training and disciplining of children from an early age (or the professionalizing process) leads to success and achievement. But the culture of youth professionalization, also known as “performance enhancement” or “development” within the junior tennis culture, is comprised of

³This concept can be seen in Coakley 2011, Malina 2009, and Wolff 2003.

⁴Many players say they sacrifice their childhood and “normal” adolescent experiences for their tennis dreams.

⁵The term “professionalizing” represents the idea that elite junior tennis players are in a transition process and are transforming into professional or “professionalized” players. I use these terms interchangeably.

*paradoxes*⁶ of power - both empowerment and disempowerment - that are constantly negotiated by youth athletes, their coaches, and their parents. These paradoxes exist in daily practice regimens and relationships performed to enhance athletes' physical and psychological skills as well as commitment to the athlete identity.

Well-being depends upon how strongly junior players (and their parents and coaches) attach their self-worth to their tennis-identities, which make and are made up of paradoxical experiences of power. Ultimately, youths are both subjects and agents of this power, both being made by others and making themselves into people and players. As a result, they are both subjects and agents of the junior tennis culture, or *habitus*⁷. Moreover, while they are developing their tennis identities, junior tennis players are also developing physically, emotionally, intellectually, and socially through their adolescence as people. These processes influence and are influenced by their training regimens. As Malina 2009 asks, "Where does sport fit into the process of 'growing up'?" (S1). The intertwining of these two transitions, through adolescence and junior tennis, is often neglected by many parents and coaches. With the best intentions, they tend to prioritize performance over holistic well-being when they view their youth athletes as "miniature-adults" (Malina 2009:S8) and mini-professionals instead of transitional, or liminal, persons.

⁶The concept of paradox is inspired by the works of other scholars (i.e. Bateson 1972, Mattingly 2010, Wacquant 1995), a conversation with Olympian and Dr. Megan Neyer, and from conversations with my committee chair Brenda Chalfin.

⁷Bourdieu (1977, 1990) describes *habitus* as a durable system of dispositions, perceptions, tastes, preferences, and activities. They are learned through socialization processes and regularly expressed by people as they make lifestyle choices and take action under certain social and material conditions.

I explore the professionalizing of youth athletes for potentially enhanced success in adulthood (whether it is for elite sport or other high-performance careers) as it relates to issues of power and well-being. These issues merit anthropological study as they raise questions about youths' experience of sport, training, adolescence, embodiment, health, well-being, and power.⁸ I build upon classic anthropological concepts about ritual (Turner 1969, van Gennep 1960[1908]), embodiment (Bourdieu 1977, 1990), and power (Foucault 1975, 1988) – as well as the work of feminist sport scholars who have used a Foucauldian approach (i.e. Brownell 1995, Jones and Aitchison 2007, Markula 2003, Smith Maguire 2002). By using the concepts of liminality and ritual process. I analyze the back-and-forth dynamic of power between adults (parents and coaches) and youths (junior players) in the junior tennis habitus. As junior tennis is a “meta”-game⁹ (Blanchard 1995), or games within games, it could be referred to as a form of “serious games” (Turner 1987, Ortner 1996)¹⁰. It involves performed metaphors of the dynamics

⁸While it is estimated by the National Youth Sports Safety Foundation that at least 45 million children in the U.S. play at least one organized competitive sport from as early as age 4, this research also has an important place in the physical education, education, childhood, and child studies literature.

⁹Bateson 1978 used the term “meta-communication” to define communication about communication. Other scholars have used the prefix “meta” to convey the idea of exponential meaning.

¹⁰Ortner 1996 defines “serious games”: “The idea of the 'game' is meant to capture simultaneously the following dimensions: that social life is culturally organized and constructed, in terms of defining categories of actors, rules and goals of the games, and so forth; that social life is precisely social, consisting of webs of relationship and interaction between multiple, shifting interrelated subject positions, none of which can be extracted as autonomous 'agents'; and yet at the same time there is 'agency,' that is, actors play with skill, intention, wit, knowledge, intelligence. The idea that the game is 'serious' is meant to add into the equation the idea that power and inequality pervade the games of life in multiple ways, and that, while there may be playfulness and pleasure in the process, the stakes of these games are often very high. It follows in turn

that result between authority figure (coaches/parents) and student (youth athlete) from sharing and struggling for power.

The concept of “serious games”, according to Ortner 1996, emphasizes individuals' intentional agency. Individuals are constructed, in large part, by the power structure (or habitus) in which they perform their agency, the competitiveness for power, and the idea that power roles are not necessarily reproduced due to individual agency (Ortner 1996:19-20). Along these lines, coaches' and parents' expressions of power fall along *continuums*¹¹, as do the performances of power that junior athletes exhibit in response to their coaches' and parents' power, depending upon the context of the situation. While they embody discipline and power through their training, junior players are simultaneously instructed, managed, and monitored by coaches and parents while employing agency themselves in various forms. This, in turn, affects the ways in which their coaches and parents train and manage them. As a result, junior athletes are liminal agents¹² being made and making themselves as they move back and forth between identities: between “child” and “adult”, “tennis player” and “normal kid”, “student” and “master” in their progression through junior tennis. As players perform power in these “power plays”, they embody values that are both productive and destructive to their

that the games of life must be played with intensity and sometimes deadly earnestness. As a final note, there is an assumption that there is never only one game, a point that will take on some importance as the discussion proceeds” (Ortner 1996:12).

¹¹The theoretical concept of continuums is used by Queerist sport scholars (i.e. Johnson and Kivel 2007) and feminist sport scholars (i.e. Theberge 1998).

¹²I use the term “agents” to emphasize the players' roles in the power play with their parents and coaches. This is more appropriate than using the term “subjects” which connotes only a top-down power dynamic from parent/coach to player rather than the two-way exchange of power between coach/parent and player in a power dynamic.

sense of well-being and self-making, which can work to reproduce and/or transform the junior tennis habitus.

In Chapter 2, I discuss my methods and the methodological frameworks that I use. I have been immersed in the competitive junior tennis culture over the past thirty years: as a player for ten years, a coach for fifteen, and a researcher for four. By becoming a member of the junior tennis culture again in my hometown, I was able to *re-*become a player and *re-*experience the highs and lows of junior tennis. Because I was training with players, they trusted me and I was able to form friendships with many people in the local junior tennis community. My research is inspired by an “auto-ethnographic” approach (Ellis 2004, Sparkes 2000) as well as a “sensuous” (de Garis 1999, Stoller 2004), or “sensorial” (Mattingly 2010, Pink 2011), approach. As children are marginalized in the anthropological literature (Chin 2007, Montgomery 2009), I emphasize the perspectives and experiences of junior athletes, while also involving parents' and coaches' perspectives of their junior players. I expand upon innovative participant methodologies employed by sport ethnographers (i.e. Bolin and Granskog 2003, Brownell 1995, Sands 2002, Wacquant 1995) who trained with their athlete participants using “experiential” approaches (Turner and Bruner 1986). My *sensorial autoethnographic* approach to youth-centered research uses my past experiences as a junior player and coach to inform my inquiries into the embodied experiences of junior athletes.

In Chapter 3, I explain the process of embodying power through daily rituals and interactions within the junior tennis habitus. I introduce my concept of *embedded ritual realms* where junior players make themselves and are being made through overlapping

and intertwined states of liminality. For most professionalizing junior tennis players, tennis is not just a game or an activity; it is how they define themselves. Through tennis, their bodies become a “basic tool of cultural realization of the self” (de Boeck and Plissart 2004: 238). Their senses become the most basic vehicle through which they perceive and experience their environment, its social orders, and its moral values (Geurts 2002). Much like the individuals in the work of sensorial anthropologists (i.e. Bledsoe 2002, de Boeck 2004, Geurts 2002, Pink 2011, Stoller 2004, Wacquant 1995), youths in junior tennis “sense” and embody social values and life skills. By age eight, junior players' daily training consists of performance enhancement regimens, techniques, and drills to habituate their movements, regulate their emotions, and automate their thoughts. This commitment to the requisite rites of passage of the *performance enhancement lifestyle* can entail obedience to tough coaches, constant pain and fatigue, emotional dependence, limited free time, and separation from childhood identities.

Professionalizing youth athletes have little time for non-sport peers and activities. They take classes on-line instead of in school and often leave home to train at academies with other tennis peers. As a result, junior players develop self-worth and self-knowledge through a tennis-based identity marked by intensive focus, pain tolerance, trust in authority and sport institutions, and expectations of unlimited athletic *potential*. This potential is a constant state of liminality. Players are constantly progressing through various transformative states to be maximally trained by their coaches in order to embody the junior tennis habitus and ensure achievement of athletic potential.

At the same time, they are “betwixt and between” (Turner 1969) childhood and adult status outside of the tennis environment. Their ultimate goal is to become independent, high-performance professionals in their sport which will, ideally, lead to success in other endeavors¹³, without sacrificing their sense of well-being in other aspects of their lives. As players and their parents come to realize, though, this ideal balance between the “tennis identity” and the “non-tennis identity” can be difficult to achieve. While these liminal experiences can result in progressing to higher levels of mastery, these transformations can have negative effects, as well. There are *various pathways of liminality* through these ritual realms¹⁴. States of becoming seem to be a perpetual state for junior athletes who are in this performance enhancement culture, and this has various beneficial and detrimental effects on their adolescent development.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 focus on the junior athlete’s body as a site of power, resistance, and transformation through these liminal experiences in rituals of training and competition. Power is eventually rendered a mode of self-discipline in which competitive junior players build their identity and develop conceptions of success and well-being. The power dynamics that result among parents, coaches, and players reflect and contribute to a win-at-all-costs sport ethic. This often accompanies a contradictory rhetoric that prioritizes sportsmanship, academics, child development, and well-being¹⁵. In Chapter 4, I lay the theoretical groundwork for my discussion of power between

¹³Many of my participants express this saying they want to become professional athletes to inspire and help others.

¹⁴For instance, players would say that winning would bring them relief instead of joy. They would emphasize that they still had to get up the next day and train for the next match to gain the approval of the coach, parent, sponsor, recruiter, peers, etc.

¹⁵Malina 2009 points this out as well.

players and parents in Chapter 5 and between players and parents in Chapter 6. I build on Foucault (1975, 1988), Foucauldian scholars who focus on his later work (i.e. Butler 1990, Hearn 2012, Hoy 1999, Ortner 2006), and feminist sport scholars who study adult sport (i.e. Brownell 2002, Cole 1993, Jones and Aitchison 2007, Markula 2003, Shogan 1999, Smith Maguire 2002). As sport scholars recognize a need to discuss sports as a site to view the simultaneous experience of oppressive power with technologies of self, I apply this work to the experiences of youth athletes and the power dynamics they have with their coaches and parents. This interaction of power dynamics within the player-parent-coach triad is what I refer to as the *power molecule*.

Within the power molecule, power moves along *power continuums* within the coach-player dynamic and the parent-player dynamic¹⁶, depending upon the context of the situation. I portray the micro-relational power approaches that parents, coaches, and players employ in a *relational power grid*. For instance, if parent/coach power is viewed as a continuum, then “coddling” approaches are at one extreme while “abusive” approaches are at the other. Likewise, player power is viewed along a continuum with approaches of “entitlement” and “submissive obedience” at the extremes. Within the relational power grid (Figure 4-4), the extremes signify power imbalances between “authority figure” (coach or parent) and “subordinate” (player).¹⁷ Between extremes are collaborative approaches where power is shared between coach/parent and player.

¹⁶There is also a continuum of power between coach-parent. But because this dissertation focuses on the child's experience, I have left it out of this draft and plan to add it back in for a publishable book.

¹⁷While I recognize the problems of assuming power as a top-down or bottom-up process. I complicate this essentialization in the following chapters. There is clearly a label of authority that adults have over youths in junior tennis, and society, in general. I will discuss how these labels get “blurred” in Chapters 5 and 6.

Collaborative approaches, I argue, result in collaborative relational power within the power molecule and are, ultimately, most empowering to youths in the development of both players and people. Liminality can be empowering for the player as these power relations move “betwixt and between” disempowering extremes.¹⁸ As power is constantly shifting among coach-player-parent, though, it is difficult to discern the spaces along the power continuums. Thus, paradoxical spaces of interaction and communication develop among parents, coaches, and players.

Chapters 7 and 8 describe some of the consequences of these paradoxical spaces to players' personal and social well-being. Chapter 7 focuses on how the empowerment and disempowerment along the power continuums can be expressed in players' sense of self and *personal* well-being (i.e. physical and emotional health). Aspects of self-identification and personal well-being include the paradoxes of pain (i.e. transcendence vs burnout, strength vs. injury), life lessons (i.e. work ethic, sportsmanship, coping with deception, pushing, perseverance, anger), money (i.e. opportunity vs exploitation), support (i.e. encouragement vs coddling, individualism vs narcissism), training (i.e. discipline vs abuse), sacrifice (i.e. self-discipline vs self-harm), education (i.e. cross-cultural training vs lack of academic exploration), and tennis-identity (i.e. commitment to tennis vs narrowed sense of self). Chapter 8 focuses on the development of players' sense of self and *social* well-being (i.e. friendships, family, perspectives of race and gender).

¹⁸Since power is dynamic and responsive, coaches, parents, and players are performing metaphors of power and life through their bodily and verbal performances on the tennis court. They are constantly sharing, struggling for, and relinquishing power much like the back-and-forth rally of a tennis point. This is how tennis becomes a performed metaphor or “metacommunication” (Bateson 1972) of power.

Power dynamics at the extremes of the power continuums seem to have more disempowering consequences while those at the middle, or “collaborative” dynamics, tend to offer the more empowering contributions to well-being and identity. As a result, I find that conceptions of well-being among junior tennis players (as well as their parents and coaches) often refer to notions of *balance* between extremes even though these concepts are not always adhered to in practice. Junior players emerge from the physical, social, and emotional demands of training and competition - and a conditioned commitment to the sport ethic - as *both* strengthened and weakened performers and people. Their (dis)empowerment depends upon the context in which they experience power (and pain) through the rituals of performance enhancement. This is especially important to recognize for emotionally dependent youth athletes who want to conform to the standards of the junior tennis habitus - and their coaches' and parents' expectations. They may not understand the difference between empowering pain, which extends the pain boundary, and debilitating pain, which may be unrecoverable and have long-term consequences.

Through the “sport ethic” (Hughes and Coakley 1991) or sport habitus (Coakley 2006), junior players learn how to stretch the boundaries of pain – emotional and physical - in order to attain physical achievement, personal and spiritual fulfillment, and maximal performance. Athletes are developed with collaborative approaches in environments that prioritize holistic personal well-being and pay attention to individual needs. These players learn to push the boundaries of pain and achievement with appropriate recovery time. The resulting sensations of mind-body-spirit connection and ultimate control of the self, as well as exposure to new people and environments, can

be empowering for these youth athletes.¹⁹ On the other hand, athletes are developed at the coddling and abusive extremes in environments that prioritize immediate performance over long-term personal well-being. Often, they are guided by coaches who are uninformed about the psychological, emotional, and physiological nuances of developing (pre)adolescent athletes and tend to push too far or too fast past the pain boundary with an “over-commitment to sport ethic” (Hughes and Coakley 1991), also termed “deviant overconformity” (Coakley 2006a). The result can be disempowering, producing physical or emotional injury, or “burnout”²⁰, as well as social isolation from peers, fracturing of family bonds, and development of stereotypical perceptions of others.

Because the differences are so subtle between the disempowering dynamics at the extremes and the empowering dynamics at the middle, disempowering (i.e. entitled/entitling, abused/abusive) aspects of the player-coach and player-coach dynamic are often normalized as part of the training environment by all junior tennis participants (i.e. athletes, parents, coaches, referees, spectators). Participants are often

¹⁹Positive psychologists (i.e. Csikszentimihalyi 1975) recognize that happiness, peak experiences and self-actualization are rarely achieved without hard work, dedication, resilience, and an ultimate source of meaning. From an existential psychological perspective (i.e. Nesti 2007), painful experiences such as failed expectations, immense pressure, financial matters, and injury can develop mental attributes and spiritual qualities of the athlete like courage and personality, which in turn make him or her more likely to succeed in their sport.

²⁰Burnout is discussed in youth sports in Coakley 1992, Gould et al. 1997, and Gould 1996. Burnout is also a term used by my participants to define mental and emotional exhaustion that entails a sense of dread towards sport, depression, and withdrawal. Just as playing on a physical injury can weaken a limb, playing through burnout can weaken athletes' spirit over time, even though it may be empowering in the short-term with immediate victories and performances.

aware of this normalization but feel that it is just a “normal bad part” (Theberge 2008) of what they have to do to achieve their potential.

As Chapter 9 concludes, my research supports the notion that although they can be empowered in many ways through sport, junior athletes are simultaneously vulnerable to the disempowering effects of intensive athletic discipline. This paradox impacts their overall social and athletic development²¹. The economic model of sport rewards coaches and athletes who have winning records, regardless of how they obtain them. As a result, the twin tendencies of disempowerment - culminating in a sense of entitlement and vulnerability to abuse - are often justified by coaches and parents using extreme power approaches as long as the athlete (and therefore coach) keeps winning. To maintain youth athletes' long-term well-being and understand the nuances of professionalized youth sport, this research highlights the need to view junior tennis players and all elite youth athletes as developing through simultaneous transitions of both adolescence and high-performance sport training.

For possible directions of future research, the habitus of junior tennis could be viewed as a training ground and microcosm of capitalist society²². This project also has a “gendered” thread running through it, and rewriting this project from the perception of women coaches, mothers, and girl players - across identities of culture, nationality, ethnicity, race, class, age and ability - would be a highly valuable endeavor in the study of youth sports. As concerns the field of anthropology, this research shows that the sports field, specifically the field of youth sports, offers anthropologists countless

²¹Coakley 2011 and Malina 2009 draw similar conclusions.

²²This follows Smith Maguire's 2002 lead.

opportunities to build upon theoretical concepts involving the intertwining of binary concepts that are, in fact, often paradoxical. It also offers a multitude of sites to explore aspects of nationalism, performance, power, embodiment, childhood, and education.²³ Other areas of possible research contribution are psychoneuroimmunology and children's human rights.

While deep ethnography of competitive youth sport is scant in the anthropological record of research on sport and children (exceptions include Dyck 2012, Fine 1978, Weiss 2000), this research fills a void in the anthropological field as a call to further analyze the long-term effects of youth sport training through rituals of power and discipline. It is especially timely with the recent public and scholarly scrutiny of youth sport for risks of long-term injury and abuse²⁴. Thus, my research on power dynamics in competitive junior tennis, and the resulting paradoxical effects they can have on junior players' self-identification and well-being, provides a structure to analyze and house these analyses and debates.

²³“Many clubs develop young players for the international market (soccer in Africa and South America, baseball in the Caribbean), and jobs may be offered to families of talented youth to bypass official regulations. There is even discussion of international legislation to regulate sport agents and clubs, especially those pursuing under-age players (BBC News 2007). Youth baseball coaches select adolescent teams are often labeled as brokers since they control access to college coaches. American high schools are, to some extent, a publicly subsidized (i.e. local school taxes) farm system for collegiate and professional basketball and American football and, to a lesser extent, baseball” (Malina 2009: S8).

²⁴One high-profile case that broke during the writing of this book was the sexual abuse of boys by Jerry Sandusky at Penn State. Another high-profile case was the physical and emotional abuse of players on the Rutgers University basketball team by coach Mike Rice. There are many other articles and books on athlete abuse (sexual and physical) including Brackenridge 2001, Coakley 2011, Gorman 2005, Malina 2009, Nack and Munson 2000, Nack and Yaeger 1999, Pennington 2005, Robinson 1998, Sokolove 2004, Sydnor 2012, and Wolff 2003.

CHAPTER 2 METHODS: YOUTH-CENTERED SENSORIAL AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Much of the research on youth sports leaves children out of the conversation about their experiences of injury, burnout, meaning, sacrifice, and power. Very few ethnographic studies have been done in the competitive youth sports field over an extended period of time (Brackenridge 2001)¹, almost none of which have been done with a child-centered perspective (Montgomery 2009). However, my research focuses on the experiences and perspectives of youth athletes in competitive junior tennis in Florida, the culture of my own youth development as well. Doing child-centered research (Best 2007) in the environment of my own development required a reflexive (Harrison 2008, Myerhoff and Ruby 1982) and autoethnographic (Ellis 2004, Richardson 2000, Sparkes 2000) approach to the fieldwork. I relied heavily on sensorial² ethnographic techniques (de Garis 1999, Geurts 2002, Mattingly 2010, Pink 2011, Stoller 2004) to better understand the experiences of junior players.³

Youth-Centered Research at Home

I have been immersed in the competitive junior tennis culture over the past thirty years⁴: as a player for ten years, a coach for fifteen, and a researcher for four. For fieldwork, I returned to the region of my own junior tennis training in

¹Exceptions include Dyck 2012, Fine 1978, and Weiss 2000.

²I take “sensuous” (Stoller 2004, de Garis 1999) to imply the same meaning as “sensorial” (Pink 2011).

³Clair 1995 might call my research “fenomenography”: the combination of feminism, ethnography, and phenomenology (Sangar 2003:35).

⁴I was a two-time national champion in junior tennis, ranked #5 in the U.S. and #1 in Florida. After playing collegiate tennis, I played professionally and, then, became a coach. My story is a common trajectory among professionalized junior tennis players.

Sarasota/Bradenton, Florida. The area provides many clubs and academies for the world's top junior players to train - most with goals of attaining top world rankings, college scholarships, and professional careers. Because so many elite players are in this region, it contains the ultimate pool of competition with an average of 12 tournaments a week to choose from across the state year-round. For two years (September 2009 - September 2011, plus December 2011), I trained daily with players, watched weekend tournaments, and interviewed over 200 players, parents, and coaches. My participants included current boy and girl players aged 9 - 18, as well as parents, coaches, officials, and former players. This included nine player-parent-coach triads with whom I trained and/or interviewed over the research period. Three years after meeting some of them, I remain in contact with some of them through email, Facebook, and texting.

In doing this reflexive ethnography of youths' experiences⁵, I took careful note of my own thoughts, emotions, and reactions to the current culture of junior tennis while I was participating in it. I tried not to confuse my own childhood experiences with those of my participants. As Best 2007 notes, "...although memories may be used to help researchers and teachers access informants on the margins, there is a great danger that they will be used to solidify the adult narrator's or the adult teacher's authority in relation to young informants" (252). I paid extra close attention to my recruiting, consent, and interview processes so that they were empowering, rather than oppressive, to youths (Best 2007, Fine and Sandstrom 1988). This meant getting consent from their

⁵The term "child-centered" does not adequately describe the participant population with which I worked since many of my participants were between 14 and 18. Since it is difficult to describe exactly what is meant by the term "child" (Montgomery 2009), I often refer to my research as "youth-centered".

“gatekeepers” (Leonard 2007) – parents, coaches, even lawyers⁶ - as well as being sensitive to the ways in which the interviews would affect them and their social networks. In doing so, I took care not to make them feel like they were obligated to participate by emphasizing that it was their choice to offer their perspectives or not to. At the same time, I was careful not to make assumptions about their vulnerability (Raby 2007) as well as my own “insider” status. I refrained from over-participating in junior players' activities for fear of being labeled a “wanna-be” (Best 2007:23). To accomplish these goals, used a the collaborative approach in my interviewing; similar to the power approach that I found to be the most empowering approach used by coaches and parents (described throughout the dissertation). As Best 2007 points out, “collaboration destabilizes power in research” (16), just as I found it did in coaching and parenting dynamics.

To embed myself in the community, I joined a club where there was a local academy of about forty players and a USTA adult mixed doubles league. As local juniors often train with local adults who “used to be good juniors”, this allowed me to be a part of the tennis climate within my own peer group alongside the junior player peer group. This way, I was able to avoid being labeled a “wanna-be” (Best 2007). My “former player” status was helpful in contacting coaches for opportunities to train with some of

⁶In October 2009, I approached my former coaches at a tennis-training site to ask if I could do my research there. They were supportive of it and told me that the academy needed this type of research because of the high rate of burnout, injury, and parental over-involvement they have seen for years. After several months of waiting, while starting research with other players outside the academy, I finally received approval. A week before starting, I was asked to sign a contract as an intern which would have relinquished my rights to my research. I decided not do my research there and had to depend on other field sites. This was actually a blessing in disguise since I probably would not have been able to get the rich data that I got from the smaller academies and local tennis scene.

their players. I often asked coaches their permission to approach their players' parents for interviews. As much as it was a benefit to have been able to use my “insider status” and junior tennis contacts for my research, it was also a challenge in some situations⁷. Because this is a highly competitive environment, some coaches may have thought I was trying to “steal” their clients or trade secrets. Parents may have worried that I would make their children reflect too deeply on their tennis experiences and interrupt their focus. Most coaches, though, who typically spend eight hours a day on the court or are physically injured themselves, seemed glad to have me compensate them with my hitting services as they often preferred having a hitting partner for their lessons. As players and parents were often looking for new people to hit with, they were more willing to talk to me when they saw that I was “one of them” (or at least had been) and that I could trade hitting sessions for interviews. I also compensated players by tutoring them and signing for their volunteer credits (required for school)⁸.

In training with junior players, I prepared for my own adult tournaments and exhibition matches⁹ in order to re-experience the training and competition rituals as a competitive player. I felt that training without a goal of competing would not be enough to understand the stress and expectations that junior players place upon themselves

⁷Raby 2007 warns that this can give false perceptions of commonality about views of social patterns.

⁸After a while, my schedule became unsustainable as my body started breaking down. I wanted to give participants power, but I also felt like I was being manipulated and taken advantage of sometimes by several participants who wanted more hitting or tutoring services from me than I was able to give.

⁹I was invited to play several professional doubles exhibitions in the area since many of the club professionals knew me from my competitive playing days.

when training for their tournaments.¹⁰ Within a couple of months, I was training several days a week with junior players which allowed me to observe the interactions among players, parents and coaches over time. I also showed up at local tournaments and started conversations with people by referring to my own tennis career, if the opportunity arose, in order to convey my competence of junior tennis culture. Sometimes, I volunteered for tournament directors. Overall, I trained with players three to five hours a day, four to five days a week, and went to about thirty weekend tournaments (one to two per month). This is the schedule the junior players had and I wanted to experience the simultaneous fatigue and excitement that comes with it. Not only did it help me write about the junior tennis training experience, it helped me maintain acceptance in the junior tennis community¹¹.

As I forged relationships in the field, participants used their interviews to vent or to ask my advice as a former player. I realized that I held a power position by having an impact on their lives just by the act of asking them to talk about their experiences and by their feeling comfortable to ask me for advice. This is not to be taken lightly as “reciprocity can backfire and magnify power relationships” (Sangar 2003: 34). But it is also not necessary to neutralize power imbalances to do research (Raby 2007:52). When they asked me for my opinion and about my experiences regarding decisions throughout their junior tennis career, I did not say, “I cannot tell you because I have to be an unbiased researcher.” Rather, I shared my knowledge from my experiences as a

¹⁰I found the training, exhibitions, and tournaments to be beneficial for my reputation as a player and researcher.

¹¹My research methods are very similar to Wacquant's 1995 work with boxers in Philadelphia, Downey's 2005 work with capoeira artists, and Brownell's 1995 work with runners in China. I read their works after my fieldwork was completed.

player and coach as well as the information and research I had gathered as an anthropologist. By doing so, I hoped to help players and parents make more informed decisions along their journey and, thereby, “conduct research that empowers youth to improve the conditions of their lives” (Best 2007:9).¹²

Sensorial Autoethnography

Pink 2011 describes multisensorial ethnography as a way to get at people's different “ways of knowing”¹³ (267) and involving “learning in and as part of the world” (270). As Csordas 1994 notes, “the body is a set of individual psychological or sensuous responses and as a material process of social interaction...” (13). Since my research is reflexive about the junior tennis culture in which I grew up, and relies heavily on the senses which I and my participants felt during fieldwork, I call my methodology *sensorial autoethnography*¹⁴. As Pink 2011 informs, “Certain forms of knowledge cannot be understood simply by watching...[T]his involves a shift from looking at to being in and engaging in ways of knowing about the worlds and actions of other people” (271). I pushed my bodily and mental limits as a researcher in order to better understand the experiences of junior players who push themselves in the training and competition environment. Through my training and competing, I embodied both the exuberance and pain of being a player again. My field notes express this:

¹²This also proved to be a useful collaborative interviewing tool since participants felt free to ask me questions which would propel the interview further (Sangar 2003:38).

¹³This term was previously used by Geurts 2002.

¹⁴A combination of sensorial (Pink 2011) or sensuous (Stoller 2004) and autoethnography (Ellis 2004) is very similar to what Mattingly 2010 described as “narrative phenomenology” (7) as both a lens and a method to look at the personal and structural through the body using person-centered participant stories. I read her work after my fieldwork.

I'm transforming myself into a player again, and it feels good except my back, shoulder, neck, knee and thigh are angry with me right now. My back is twinged from my kick serve because I have to twist it for the kick. My shoulder hurts from serving and whipping my arm out. My knee collapses because the cartilage is gone. But there is something about tennis that gives me a deep sense of satisfaction. (April 24, 2010 – Sarasota, FL)

Stoller 2004 notes, "Sensuous ethnography, of course, creates a set of instabilities for the ethnographer. To accept sensuousness in scholarship is to eject the conceit of control in which mind and body, self and other are considered separate. It is indeed a humbling experience to recognize..." (822). From the moment I stepped onto the court to do fieldwork, it was challenging to organize all of the sites, feelings, sounds, emotions, conversations and intangibles I sensed. It was equally difficult to appropriately merge the experiences of the various junior tennis participants with, as well as separate them from, my own memories and experiences¹⁵. It was most challenging on a personal level to spend so much time in an environment that had both salvaged and scarred me. I had to "manage myself" (Brackenridge 1999) through my mixed emotions and experiences of exhilaration, dread, frustration, revelation, and exhaustion throughout the research period.

Sensing Participant Emotions

"Sensuous", or sensorial, ethnography emphasizes how power is shown through the body (Stoller 2004). For instance, as Geurts 2002 came to understand her participants' conceptions of the body through experiencing it herself with "intuition, emotion, imagination, perception, and sensation" (120), I came to understand my participants' physical experiences with training as well as the more psychological and emotional power dynamics they experienced with coaches and parents. My experiences

¹⁵Child researchers warn about this (i.e. Best 2007).

of empathy during fieldwork reminded me of Geurts' 2002 description of becoming sensitized to her participants' sensibilities. When I was talking to a former player about our experiences with an emotionally abusive coach, my neck tensed and I got a migraine several minutes later. This player noticed this, as I started to rub my neck, and said that she also feels the pain from her experience sometimes. Fifteen years later, she still has dreams about her experiences with him. My *physical* pain seemed to be the manifestation of her *psychical* pain. The shared experience of pain made us feel bonded even though we had never met each other before this interview¹⁶.

Similarly, I had several interviews with parents who became emotional during our interviews. One father started to cry when he spoke with regret about how he used to yell at his daughter after she lost matches. Another mother started to get teary-eyed when vocalizing the frustration she felt over the fact that her daughter was not happy playing tennis but was still compelled to keep training. Another mother broke down in front of me in a casual conversation, admitting to the tension in her home between her son and husband. I found myself often consoling people when this happened as it seemed the most natural thing to do. As my emotions and senses of other people's emotions took over, I became more focused on what the participants *felt* by paying close attention to their body and gaze rather than just listening to what they said.

At the beginning of the fieldwork, I tried to resist this urge in order to keep the interview more organized and structured. But as the research progressed, I realized that the richest information with which the participants provided me did not come in the form of an answer to my question. It usually came in the form of a question or comment

¹⁶We were introduced through a mutual friend.

posed by them. While I had a list of topics I tried to cover with everyone, I allowed my senses of participants' emotions to guide our conversations when it was apparent that they were passionate about certain topics. This also applied to topics that they did not want to discuss. If I sensed a reluctance to talk about sensitive issues (i.e. discrimination, abuse), I did not push. Overall, interviewing participants about their senses (i.e. feelings during competition, reactions to others, perspectives about training, frustrations about junior tennis) by using my own senses, was a methodology upon which I relied heavily.

Sensing the “Zone”

Some research¹⁷ uses quantitative measures to look at how athletes experience “flow state” (Jackson and Csikszentimihalyi 1999), also known as the “zone” among junior tennis players and sport psychologists (Leohr 1986)¹⁸. But through my own experiences of flow state, I was better able to understand its characteristics of emotional intensity, frustration, and “bipolarity”¹⁹. The experience reminded me of how addictive flow state is as it can be used as an escape from off-court pressures (i.e. with school or

¹⁷This research has typically been conducted by sports psychologists who have employed questionnaires that ask about athletes' experiences of flow, rating their responses to questions with one of five responses (i.e. “Strongly Agree” or “Strongly Disagree”) after the athletes have completed their competitive event (i.e. Jackson and Eklund 2004). However, this does not completely portray the experience of flow for several reasons. First, the questionnaire is meant to be given after competition, not the experience of flow. Since flow is only sometimes reached within a competition, it is likely that athletes answered the questionnaire based on their experiences of the competition, in general, and not the actual flow states within competition. Secondly, the questionnaire is based on the memory of experiencing flow. But memory loss or distortion is one of the characteristics of flow mentioned by athletes in my research. Thirdly, rating the experience of an intuitive experience such as flow with a quantitative methodology such as a questionnaire is counter-intuitive.

¹⁸These concepts will be discussed in Chapter 3.

¹⁹Junior players described the emotional turmoil they feel during matches as “bipolar”.

parents) as well as an opiate to mask pain²⁰, at least temporarily²¹. These experiences tuned me into the emotional expressions of players on the court, which often were connected to the power dynamics they had with their coaches or parents. For instance, several players' expressions of anger were often expressions of frustrations about their coach or parent instructing them during a match.

Understanding these inner experiences by progressing through my training for my own tournament competitions, reminded me of why players invest so much time, pain, energy, work, and money into this whole journey. Even though parents may be focused on the overall goal of junior tennis (i.e. college scholarships, gaining self-confidence, learning life lessons, getting physically fit), players' shared quest to perfect their games through these flow experiences kept them coming back to the court every day. My field notes express my own experience of flow during a tournament match I played:

In the zone, I don't get embarrassed. I don't want compliments. I don't get too excited. I don't get too down or too celebratory in the zone. I might say "Yes!" right away but I ground myself again. Being in the zone is, essentially, being neutral but at an elevated level. I have to focus on the specific bodily mechanics, not just the end result of hitting the ball in. I don't think about how big the point is or what will happen if I lose this point. I may be polite but not overly talkative. My grunts sound almost animalistic. I just go after it and something comes out of my mouth. I don't mean to be obnoxious; all my energy just goes into making that shot. I notice sounds, but I don't evaluate or analyze or translate them as words. I pull inside myself. I'm so insulated, so far away from other people even though I'm standing next to them. I'm so in it, so in tune with what my body needs to do...It just seems like the most real place, the most genuine state of my existence, of human existence. I'm exhausted but in a good way. My body

²⁰Jackson and Csikszentimihalyi 1999 and Pickard 2007 discuss the numbing of pain in the flow state.

²¹My own injuries were numb on the court but came back off-court.

is exhausted but my spirit is energized. It takes so much out of me. It is not just a physical endeavor. It is so mentally and emotionally draining. (May 29, 2010 – Sarasota, FL)

From these experiences, I also understood how players develop a higher sense of spatial awareness and bodily sensing than a non-athlete might (i.e. Wacquant 1995, Downey 2010). Coming out of my sedentary academic self, I regained my own bodily sensing and “continuum of bodily crafts” (Wacquant 2009) that I had learned before graduate school. Over time, I was able to regain the automaticity I had during my competitive playing days. In line with how Wacquant 1995 referred to boxers building their identity around the physicality and social world of boxing, tennis was not something I just did; it was (and still is) who I am. My field notes reveal this feeling of automaticity a year and a half after entering the field:

The more I practice, the more I can hit the ball without thinking about it. My body just knows what to do. My body knows how to hit it, where to hit, how much to turn, what kind of torque to use, how to contort, when to push forward, where to put my foot before hitting, what kind of spin to use, how high to hit it, how deep to hit it, and what pace to use. I am a player again. I feel most myself like this. (Feb. 23, 2011 – Sarasota, FL)

Sensing Pain, Fatigue, Self-Deprivation, and Burnout

In addition to the experiences of the zone - exhilaration, escape, mind-body-spirit connection - that junior players say they experience through tennis, I reached points of injury, exhaustion, frustration, and burnout. I was not prepared to experience the physical sacrifice I had made in my fieldwork, and even more unprepared to experience the mental burnout I faced. Even though I had not planned to do the research to this extent, I realize now how much I needed to push myself past my pain boundary²² in

²²This is discussed in later chapters. Pushing past the pain boundary can result in both enhanced performance as well as burnout and injury in the long-term.

order to relate to the paradoxes of pain, fatigue, and burnout that current players experience. In other words, through my own exertion I felt the paradox of power through pain that players experience in their self-making processes – the simultaneous extremes of torture and transcendence through overexertion.

It was also extremely helpful in gaining acceptance from the other junior players. When they saw me exerting myself past my comfort zone, “paying my dues” as Wacquant 2009 noted about himself in his work, they respected me more. They also kidded me about being “old” doing these drills with them which created camaraderie among us and gave them power. This helped blur the line between researcher and researched so that we shared power on some level (Best 2007). I also got burned out from doing the research and training, much like my participants talk about burnout. This was probably the most important reason (albeit unintentional) for employing this sensorial autoethnographic methodology. Below are several examples of this experience through my field notes as the fieldwork, and thus my burnout and pain, progressed:

Because I did the footwork...huffing and puffing with the players, they respect me more. I felt pain in my stomach, cramping, out of breath, and my knee starting to hurt. But it's a good pain. It's the kind of pain that feels good from working so hard that the endorphins kick in, a sense of accomplishment is achieved, and my level of respect from the kids has increased. (Sept. 28, 2010 – Sarasota, FL)

I'm just so exhausted. I woke up with a migraine this morning, had one yesterday too. Just feel tired, so tired, like really tired...I figure I'll get a few people to interview, but I'm really getting tired of interviewing actually. This is a way to get closer, still, to the player's actual lived experience as they are also constantly fatigued and in pain. (Dec. 16, 2010 – Sarasota, FL)

My shin, lower back, right shoulder/scapula, and neck are stiff and in major pain. I am just pulling inside myself emotionally and I almost don't care anymore. I just go through the motions and don't care what it looks like. I am just waiting for the time to pass during practice so I can get off the court.

I don't want to engage anymore. I am tired of seeing these players and coaches and just being in the junior tennis environment, in general. I'm ready for the research to be over I think. (March 16, 2011 – Sarasota, FL)

Sensing Politics and Power Dynamics

Through training with players and their coaches, I experienced the physical and psychological aspects and power dynamics of training as the coaches included me in their instructions as they would any other player. I sometimes sympathized with the players and the parents about their coach when, for instance, the coach was flexible about how the player should execute a shot. But I also sympathized with the coaches at times. As a hitting partner, coaches would tell me where, with what spin, how hard, and how many times to hit the ball in a certain drill. After some time, I became an assistant as well as a confidant of the coaches about players and their parents. I often felt caught in the middle when the coach, parent, and player argued or disagreed. Overall, I felt I could understand the power plays among players, coaches, and parents more so than a researcher that did not play junior tennis. I understood the language, momentum, and spectrum of emotions and goals of each participant of the triad. As Mattingly 2010 informs, "It makes sense to claim that at some moments knowing what someone is doing...does not require an investigation into the mysteries of someone else's mind, only an understanding of the social context, a more or less public assessment of behavior" (Mattingly 2010:50).

My multiple roles as former player, hitting partner, coach/mentor, and researcher were difficult to sustain due to exhaustion and the potential for participants to be suspicious of my research. However, I saw the benefit of playing multiple roles as I learned how to "change outfits" - figuratively and literally – according to the role I wanted to play. For instance, I wore my usual tennis clothes if I accompanied my regular players

to a tournament and focused on observing and interacting with them as part of my research with them. I was privy to “insider” information in this role and was able to take pictures and notes, watch full matches without seeming like a stalker, and ask deeper questions without being intrusive. If I wanted to get perspectives from the general tennis population, I wore jeans to go to a tournament alone. Most people recognized me in this outfit as “that girl who used to play and is asking questions for her research” if they did not recognize me as someone's hitting partner. This role allowed me to question various player-parent-coach triads at a tournament since I was not accompanying another player.

I negotiated the fine lines between being diplomatic and being unbiased, between being a friend to one person while also being a friend to that person's rival. Forging relationships in the field meant forging enemies or making certain people suspicious based on the friendships I made. Throughout the research, I had to be very careful about how my relationships with people would appear to others because of the competition among coaches and among players.

Being a woman player/researcher also probably helped me gain access to other female players, coaches, and mothers whereas it may be considered “odd” for a male researcher to talk in-depth for two hours to a teenaged girl. This is especially significant as tennis is infamous, at least among its participants, for condoning or ignoring sexual relationships between male coaches and their teenaged students. I did feel a little strange, though, asking an eighteen-year-old male player questions. Ultimately, my gender most likely had an effect on my dynamic with players, parents, and coaches as

much as my other identity markers did (i.e. white, American, thirties, grad student, former player at University of Florida).

Specific Research Techniques

My research techniques included informal and semi-structured interviews (Bernard 2002) sometimes involving collaborative narrative (Ellis 2004), texting and audio-recording, questionnaires, journal/essay writing (participant and my own), video analysis, and my own version of coding and brainstorming. Below is a more detailed description of the tools I used for each methodology.

Informal and Semi-Structured Interviews

In keeping with my IRB²³ proposal, I recruited participants for interviews through coaches and parents. Interviews lasted from thirty minutes to three hours in one sitting to eight hours over several sittings. They were conducted in person or over the phone and almost always audio-recorded with the participant's permission. Audio recording was necessary in order to document, not only what people said, but how people said it. It was especially important for recording how I responded to what people said so that I could reflexively analyze my own perspectives and responses. This is how I kept track of my reflexivity in my research. When appropriate, I shared my own experiences to make them feel comfortable about certain issues. I had a questionnaire from which I conducted the interviews to avoid asking redundant questions, but I rarely asked the questions in order. I allowed participants to go off on tangents and lead the interview.

²³Institutional Review Board at the University of Florida approved my research.

Collaborative Narrative

Sometimes, I interviewed players with their parents and with other players as a collaborative narrative. Some parents felt more comfortable being present in their child's interviews and would interject. Sometimes, players were sitting together and I would ask them if they both wanted to do an interview together. A couple of times, as people came to trust me and ask to be part of the research, a player would interrupt another player's interview to answer some of the questions too. I allowed the interview to continue when the participant whom I was interviewing welcomed it. I was flexible about this but refrained from asking sensitive questions to the original participant when this happened. The result was interesting, though, as close friends and parents would often finish each other's sentences and elaborate upon the other's answers. This provided more depth and detail to the topic we were discussing. On the other hand, it may have prevented me from hearing deeper details from a player if, for instance, a parent was sitting there. Players might not have felt comfortable telling me about their relationships with their parents if they were sitting next to each other which is why I would usually ask to interview players individually. Most parents, coaches, and players were amenable to that and seemed to prefer it.

Texts and Audio-Notes

I found that using my phone and iPod to take notes was easier and less conspicuous than paper and pen since it is relatively normal for players to be texting on their phones. An iPod and phone is just as much a part of the material culture of junior tennis players as is a tennis racquet. I did not want to hide the fact that I was a researcher, but I also did not want people to know when I thought something was significant by writing notes for fear of interrupting the flow of the event. I also used my

audio recorder by talking, instead of writing, my notes. I elaborated much more on details when speaking to myself while driving or at home than I did writing after a long day.

Video-Analysis

I video-recorded some of the junior players' trainings and competitions in order to more closely analyze the rituals that players exhibited on the court. This also helped me observe the external characteristics of flow state and the ways in which parents, coaches, referees, and spectators were situated and interacted on the court. It pulled me out of the training environment as a participant so that I could view it from an outsider perspective as well (Pink 2011). I used my still camera and cellphone to take short video clips which were easier to upload than files from my video recorder. I found that using the video camera, even though it is fairly small, makes the filming process seem more official and permanent.

Interestingly, filming was often viewed as a superstition. When players were being filmed and playing well, they wanted their parents or me to keep filming. But if players were playing badly and being filmed, they asked me or demanded that their parents stop filming. I would try to film players without the camera being seen, so as not to distract them, as long as they gave me permission beforehand. If I was filming and they were not conscious of it during their matches, even though they allowed me to beforehand, it did not seem to interfere with their confidence. I had to have good timing with video-recording because of these issues. I started to show the video footage to the players in private to see how they would describe themselves when I asked if they were experiencing flow state, but this became a cumbersome methodology. I used the footage during the writing phase, to help me describe the rituals and emotions that

players performed during a competitive match and the power dynamics between coaches and players during training sessions.

Questionnaires

I delivered a self-designed, short-answer questionnaire to players and parents at three major tournaments at the end of my fieldwork during the summer of 2011. I volunteered and put questionnaires in the players' packets when they checked in for the tournament, with the tournament director's permission. In return for answering this questionnaire, I offered to authorize volunteer community service hours for players who had to fulfill those requirements for schools, since this research is aimed at providing a service for the community. I found the questionnaire method to be less than adequate, however, as it was expensive, time-consuming, yielded a small number of respondents, and provided an incomplete picture of participants' experiences.²⁴

Participant Journals

I gave journals to the triad participant players and asked them to write every week about their thoughts and experiences regarding their training and tournaments. I gave them a few example topics to cover, but I allowed them the freedom to write about whatever they wanted. A few months into the research, I realized that they were not writing and I gave up on this method. Lack of time and motivation were possible reasons that this technique did not work. I was, however, given an essay by two different players about junior tennis that they had written for school.

²⁴It could be useful in future research on behavior and attitude prevalence.

Data Analysis

I categorized my notes, audio notes, and interviews into concepts throughout fieldwork and used different colors to highlight phrases based on their content and the participant. As my coding progressed further and more variations of the same concept arose, I chose different shades of each color so that they remained under the same color theme. As with brainstorming, I also used this kinesthetic approach to formulate my theory. I used a large bulletin board, about 10 x 5 feet and pinned post-its to it working up from the smallest concept to the broadest. Each concept had empowering and disempowering concepts to them and I formulated mini-continuums. I had many sub-concept continuums which I grouped under larger concepts and chapters. The actual process of moving three-dimensional objects to different places seemed to help me move them in my mind more efficiently than writing them down would have been.

I found that Mattingly's 2010 use of narrative phenomenology helped propel my writing and focus on the stories that my participants told me. Even though my dissertation is not a narrative work as a whole, it incorporates narrative to “reveal the contingencies of social life from multiple temporal perspectives” (Mattingly 2010:44). The dissertation oscillates from my voice as “researcher” noting the patterns of power among individuals to the stories, vents, ramblings, exaltations of those individuals whose perspectives form those patterns. Re-reading the transcripts of the interviews and listening to the raw audio footage helped me settle into the skin of my participants. I was able to “re-sense” what I had sensed during our interviews and organize them more effectively.

Ethics

As an anthropologist, I am bound to a Code of Ethics (AAA 2012) that is aimed to protect participants from exploitation in research. There were several ethical dilemmas, however, that I faced in the field. First, I found certain restrictions imposed by the IRB, established to protect participants, to have a potential silencing effect instead. For instance, some players may have wanted to be in the research, but if their parents did not want them to be, I was not allowed to talk to them. IRB characterizes minors as under 18 years of age, but most players by age 12 have very strong opinions about their lives. These youths are silenced if their parents prohibit their involvement in the research. It could even harm a minor if he or she wants to tell a researcher about abuse. The parental consent requirement is also inconvenient when working with 16- to 18-year-old players who do not drive to tournaments with their parents because they are old enough to drive themselves. Since I had to ask parents for consent first, and because parents of 16- to 18-year-olds were often not at tournaments, I do not have many 16-18 year-old players in my study. Lastly, the paper signature requirement made the interview seem more formal which may have intimidated players, or at least influenced the way they responded to my questions and presence. I revised the consent forms several times throughout the research in order to make them less intimidating and clearer to participants, following the specific regulations for minors.

Another ethical dilemma I faced involved researching youths. I feared influencing participants in ways they may not have been ready for in our interviews. I was hesitant to “plant a seed” that might make them ruminate about why they are playing tennis. Secondly, I did not want them to feel that I was another adult with whom they had to interact (Best 2007). Third, I worried about whether taking pictures of them was a form

of exploitation, even though they signed a consent form. Was I just another person using them to fulfill my own career? While my research aims to prevent exploitation of youth athletes, I sometimes worried that I may be contributing to it.

A third ethical dilemma involved supporting myself while in the field. To earn money while doing research (which was unfunded), I taught tennis lessons to beginners who were not in the research. By the time I got home every night after training with my participants and then teaching beginners, I was too exhausted to sit at the computer to transcribe notes. After a year of volunteering my hitting services in exchange for interviews, two research participants asked me to train on a regular basis - one was a coach who wanted to hire me daily to hit with his players, the other was a family who wanted to hire me weekly. I was conflicted about the ethics of being an employee to my participants, but decided that I had no choice if I wanted to finish the research. I knew that they were okay with the dual role I would play as both researcher and employee. I was also able to see how things changed over a longer period of time. Plus, I had already been hitting voluntarily for months and the coach insisted on paying me to keep me there as he had come to depend on my hitting abilities. However, it took time away from my writing and it may have taken money out of the pockets of other coaches. This could have caused resentment, although it was never brought to my attention that this was the case.

Summary

This youth-centered, *sensorial autoethnographic* methodology was inspired by several forms of ethnographic inquiry: 1) child-centered approaches that place the perspectives and experiences of youths at the center of focus for anthropological study (i.e. Best 2007, Chin 2007, Fine and Sandstrom 1988, Montgomery 2009); 2)

ethnographies that validate the body as not just a subject of study but a tool through which to study the body and its various contextually contingent senses (i.e. Bledsoe 2002, Csordas 1994, de Boeck and Plissart 2004, Geurts 2002, Mattingly 2010, Pink 2011, Stoller 2004; Turner and Bruner 1986); 3) ethnographers who use this sensorial, or experiential, approach in the sport field (i.e. Brownell 1995, de Garis 1999, Wacquant 1995); 4) reflexive methodologies in the field as well as in writing (i.e. Behar and Gordon 1996, Harrison 2008, Myerhoff and Ruby 1982), especially those who rely on autoethnographic perspectives (i.e. Ellis 2004, Richardson 2000, Sparkes 2000); 5) interpretive frameworks using “thick description” (i.e. Geertz 1977); and 6) visual anthropologists who helped me understand multiple perspectives even without a recording device in my hand (i.e. Pink 2011, MacDougall 1998).²⁵

I approached the field with intent to remain reflexive throughout the research given my familiarity with the field context. I wanted to be sure to use my personal experiences with this subject to inform my theoretical questions without letting it take over and smother the perspectives of my participants. Some individuals may assume that autoethnography is an easier route than entering a completely novel environment. This is certainly not the case. Because junior tennis was an environment in which I enhanced both my self-esteem as well as a hyper self-scrutiny, I found it challenging to distance myself emotionally from some of the issues and the insecurities that I felt in my

²⁵I had been inspired by some of these scholars before entering the field to which I was exposed by my professors in my graduate ethnography and methods classes: *African Ethnography* led by Brenda Chalfin; *Black Feminist Theory* led by Faye Harrison; *Sociology of Sport* led by Tamir Sorek; *Advanced Video Editing* led by Roger Beebe; and *Film Editing* by Mark Nygren.

own adolescence²⁶. And there were times when I felt that the research was just too draining and uncomfortable to continue.

At the same time, I felt at home in the tennis world and on the tennis court. I could navigate the culture just like I could the court. As challenging as it was to continue, it was also difficult to stop collecting interviews and going to tournaments to start the writing phase. I lost myself in the fieldwork and became a coach and player again. But, as my body started breaking down, I was forced to start writing. Once I did, I was faced with the ultimate lesson learned: do not collect too much data and just start writing. Since I had been unprepared for the time and energy it took me to transition from graduate student to field ethnographer and tennis player to writer, I found that reading ethnographies and re-experiencing the field from my computer by focusing on the interviews first was the catalyst to putting this mountain of data into a somewhat organized, yet nuanced, piece of work.

The following chapters focus on the processes through which power and learning is embodied²⁷ and the various dynamics and paradoxical spaces that power exposes. Stoller 2004 notes, “A fully sensuous scholarship not only propels social scientists to reconsider the analysis of power-in-the-world but also compels them to rethink their scholarly being-in-the world” (817). In this sense, my own body became a tool with which I was able to study “the body” as a site of learning and performance of power as well as the effects of that power.

²⁶Bourdieu 2003 alludes to this problem about autoethnographic methods.

²⁷Fors et al. 2012 also explores the value of “emplaced” sensing; that senses occur in context of the learning environment.

CHAPTER 3 EMBODIMENT THROUGH RITUALS OF THE JUNIOR TENNIS HABITUS

For most professionalizing junior players, tennis is not just a game or a career; it is the “core of their identity” (Woodward 2007). This tennis-identity is embodied through rituals of discipline in the performance enhancement lifestyle or culture¹ of junior tennis as “training goes into the body” (Schechner 1986:351). While they develop their tennis-identity, players are simultaneously “betwixt and between” childhood and adulthood as they experience the social development of adolescence with the expectations and aspirations of professionalism. Thus, junior players are liminal individuals as they transition back-and-forth between child and adult, as well as student and master, identities along their junior tennis journey.

I use classic ritual theory (Turner 1969, 1987; van Gennep 1960[1908]) and practice theory (Bourdieu 1977, 1988, 1990) to discuss the process through which junior players embody learning, identity, and power through their training rituals and interactions with parents and coaches in the junior tennis “habitus”² (Bourdieu 1977, 1990). While power relations and non-athletic identity will be addressed in detail in subsequent chapters, the main focus of this chapter is to explain the *process* through which that power and identity occurs in the dynamics among junior tennis participants (coach, player, and parent). The specific aims for this chapter are as follows: 1) to explain competitive junior tennis as a social rite of passage and, thus, site of liminality and *communitas* (Turner 1969); 2) to describe junior tennis habitus with its verbal and

¹Other work that has been done in the embodiment of identity through sport includes Brownell 1995, Downey 2005, Pickard 2007, Wacquant 1992, Woodward 2007.

²Coakley 2006b also refers to a habitus of sport in American middle- to upper-class childhood which is centered on sport participation and achievement goals and values.

bodily expressions through *embedded rituals* and *liminal pathways*; and 3) to discuss how learning and identity is embodied by junior players within the junior tennis habitus through various *constructive/deconstructive flow* experiences, pain, and potential. As liminal agents of their identities, junior players, thus, affect and are affected by the power dynamics in their interactions with parents and coaches, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

Junior Tennis as a Social Rite of Passage

Junior tennis, like most youth sports, is not just played for fun³. Youth sports are “serious games”⁴ (Turner 1987, Ortner 2006) for competitive junior players who share a strong sense of obligation, and even dread at times, in performing their training routines that bare names like “suicides” and “sudden death” to metaphorically represent the “seriousness” of competition. For these athletes, their sport participation is a major life cycle event made of ritual processes through which they embody cultural values of work ethic and social hierarchy. Most participants in my research have referred to their junior tennis participation as “work”, a “job”, or a “career”. They continue to compete, not just for the “fun” of it⁵, but for the goals they have set for themselves that usually include attaining a college scholarship to play tennis, to play for a top Division I team, and/or to

³This position is discussed as a detriment to youths' development.

⁴This point will be elaborated upon later in this section. Ortner (1996, 2006) also uses the term “serious games” in her discussion of power relations which will be the focus of Chapter 4.

⁵Many players say that tennis is fun because they “love to compete” or they “love to win”, and that it is not fun when they lose. This is said in the context of talking about tennis as a vehicle to achieve the ultimate goals of college and professional status, so tennis is not something that most players do for recreation, at this level, but to improve their social mobility.

play professionally. To make these goals, they obligate themselves to their training and competition routines, along with the obligations that their parents and coaches enforce.

In addition to the existential meaning that participating in competitive sport may provide for players (Nesti 2007, Pipkin 2008), social mobility and “social marketability” (Bauman 2007) is a central reason why junior tennis players and their parents invest so much time and money into tennis. At first, parents use sport as a socializing tool for their children to learn social values of teamwork, self-reliance, respect for authority, resilience, etc.⁶ But as their children start to show progress and “potential”⁷, parents and their children both start to think about what they could achieve with that potential. As their children get better, parents tend to invest more money and time into their sport⁸. This, in turn, makes children feel obligated to invest more commitment into it, which makes parents feel obligated to invest more money, and the cycle continues. By their teens, youth athletes often face burnout or injury but are reticent to leave their sport if they do so because so much has been invested in it.

Parents and their teen athletes, thus, often justify their commitment as an attempt to earn a college scholarship (if, as for most, a professional career is out of reach). Even if parents can afford college tuition, they still strive for a scholarship for its symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1990) as it is seen to enhance players' (and parents') social marketability. The symbol of the college scholarship, especially at a Division I school is seen to maintain or improve players' and parents social and employment status in the

⁶This will be explored further in later chapters.

⁷This will be elaborated upon in the last section of this chapter.

⁸Coakley 2006b discusses how parents invest in sport to be considered “good” parents in the sport habitus.

social world⁹. Thus, most parents ultimately spend the same amount or much more money for this symbolic capital in the form of payments for coaches, equipment, and traveling.

As will be discussed further in the final chapters, there are enormous personal investments made by the family for this symbolic capital, which are often not considered until far into the journey. These personal investments - which often overwhelm young players and prevent them from meeting their parents' and their own expectations - include family separation, pressure to succeed, isolation from non-tennis peers, narrowed identity formation, compromised academics, mental burnout, chronic injury, and exhaustion. But, despite the costs, they see sport – in this study, junior tennis - as a necessary investment of time, money, and energy in order to be competitive with their peers in tennis, and the larger social world. In short, parents and players invest in sport, to attain positive social values and marketable, competitive working skills to set themselves apart from the rest of their peers in order to have the chance at being more successful and fulfilled in their personal lives as well as in the workforce.

Thus, competitive sport, at least in the context of competitive junior tennis, is considered a necessary social rite of passage into adulthood involving numerous and various obligatory rituals through which players come to know themselves. To support this argument further, I briefly discuss the perspective (that has been debated among scholars), that sport can be considered a form of “social ritual” (Schechner 1986, Turner

⁹Usually the financial investment for tennis - often between \$30,000 and \$100,000 per year - is much more than the value of the college scholarship or professional career with which families are hoping to be awarded in the end. Training costs \$10,000 - \$70,000 per year depending on whether the player trains at an academy, a club, or with a private coach; traveling to tournaments costs \$10,000 - \$30,000 per year (according to my participants); equipment costs \$0 - \$5,000 per year depending on sponsorships.

1982). Then, I explain the relationship between liminality and flow as they pertain to the creation of *communitas* (Turner 1969) in sport and junior tennis, specifically.

Sport as Social Ritual

Sport can be considered a form of “social ritual” (Rowe 2008, Schechner 1986, Turner 1982) as it helps people make sense of themselves [by showing] themselves to themselves” (Myerhoff 1986:261). “Sport is a significant modern day ritual...reaffirming the values of social order” (Birrell 1981:355-356), exhibiting the performance of a range of emotions from elation to despair and the idealization of humanity through liminal moments of disorder and marginality. And as ritual incorporates “...a set of evocative devices for rousing, channeling, and domesticating powerful emotions such as hate, fear, affection, and grief” (Turner 1969:42), sport is a way to “domesticate” anger, frustration, aggression, competition, etc.

In the 1970s and 80s, many anthropologists and sociologists likened sport to ritual (i.e. Beran 1981, Birrell 1981, Cheska 1981, Dunleavy and Miracle 1981, Foley 1990, Gmelch 1971, Harris 1982, Kilmer 1976, Ness 1999, Womack 1979). But some scholars question the characterization of sport as a ritual because they see it as optional, secular and unpredictable while ritual was considered obligatory (i.e. Gluckman and Gluckman 1977). Even Turner 1983, who focuses on ritual theory, first characterized sport as having “liminoid” qualities while ritual had the pure liminal experience: “Liminoid is optional, liminal is obligatory”; the liminoid is “all play and choice, an entertainment”, the liminal is “a matter of deep seriousness, even dread¹⁰, it is demanding, compulsory...” (146). However, several years later, he sees the

¹⁰This pertains to when junior athletes “dread” certain training rituals.

“seriousness” of play, too, as he refers to play as “serious games”¹¹: “[W]hen play makes serious statements about the human condition, people take its outcomes seriously” (Turner 1987:137). He sees play become more “serious” and, therefore, a liminal social drama¹² that began to serve as a form of plural reflexivity¹³ (albeit secular) as the decline of religious ritual accompanied the rise of post-industrial society: “Play, paradoxically, has become a more serious matter with the decline of ritual and the contradiction of the religious sphere in which people used to become morally reflexive...The play frame...has to some extent inherited the function of the ritual frame. The messages it delivers are often serious beneath the outward trappings of absurdity...” (Turner 1987:124).

In essence, then, what is considered “playing” sports can also be considered as “working” sports - at all ability levels and across cultural, gender, racial, national, and socioeconomic identities - as people make their investment in these “serious games” as participants and spectators a large part of their lives and self-identification¹⁴. Sports are

¹¹Ortner 1996, 2006 applies the concept of serious games to social power and agency, as will be elaborated upon in the next chapter.

¹²Although, Turner 1987 still hesitates to call it a ritual, he also sees it as serious: “...play is for me, a liminal or liminoid mode. Play is neither ritual action nor meditation, nor is it merely vegetative, nor is it just 'having fun'” (Turner 1987:17).

¹³Many scholars have looked at the relationship and shared characteristics between sport and religion. Some classify sport as a religion (i.e. Novak 1992) while others see it as religion-like (i.e. Chandler 1992, Hoffman 1992).

¹⁴The Association for the Anthropological Study of Play (TAASP) and sport theorists have debated about how to define competitive sport, but agree that it can no longer be confused with recreational play (i.e. Huizinga 1938) and encompasses qualities of both play and work (i.e. Bateson 1978, Blanchard 1995, Guttman 1978, Schwartzman 1982).

meaningful “social dramas” because “human beings love to set up arbitrary¹⁵ obstacles to be overcome” (Turner 1987:126). They are “metagames” because people love to tell and watch “stories involving stories we tell about ourselves to ourselves” (MacAloon and Csikszentmihalyi 1977:377). Sports become a way for us to experience risk without “real” life and death consequences; a performance of the performance of life, or what Turner 1987 also calls “metaperformances” (107). However, the more serious sports become, the more potential for them to have actual “real life” consequences¹⁶, which is the ultimate paradox of sport¹⁷.

To the other ritual requisites - secularity and predictability - scholars have pointed out that some cultures do perform athletic contests as supernatural worship (i.e. Firth 1930, Salter 1970). As Harris 1982 points out, many researchers associate sport performance with a sense of cosmological power resulting from strong emotional experiences precipitated by the performance of sport itself. Sport incorporates a spiritual, transcendental dimension within the individual athlete as well as among the athletes, coaches, and spectators (Nesti 2007). “Sports are religious in the sense that they are organized institutions, disciplines, and liturgies; and also in the sense that they

¹⁵I think Turner uses the term “arbitrary” to mean that society could live without social dramas (such as sports). But because sports are a form of symbolic capital as well as monetary capital for many people, as a result of the growth of the sport industry since he wrote this, sports could not be seen as just “arbitrary”. I include this quote to show how Turner was trying to explain, perhaps to himself, why social dramas, if not necessary for survival, are taken so seriously. I think this contributes to the conversation about the “meaning of sport”.

¹⁶The following chapters outline the real life consequences – both empowering and disempowering - that participating in junior tennis can have on junior players' well-being and identity.

¹⁷I discuss, further, the paradoxes within sport in later chapters.

teach religious qualities of heart and soul” (Novak 1994 in Nesti 2004:144). But others see no need for a supernatural factor as a requisite for an event to be considered as ritual (i.e. Harris and Park 1982, van Gennep 1960). There is an intangible “magic” of the athletes' performances as well as the ways in which the fans and coaches have a role in that performance that provides a somewhat spiritual experience for fans and athletes. Thus, in social rituals of sports, regardless of religious or supernatural connotations or not, a *communitas* of “temporary, unstructured community of equals” (Turner 1968:96) is formed through liminal experience from which self-making and social transformation occurs.¹⁸

Communitas and Liminality of/in Rituals of Sport: Anti-Structure within Structure

Communitas takes place through the “performance of a complex sequence of symbolic acts” of a social ritual (Turner 1987:75). To briefly outline, this ritual process (Turner 1969, van Gennep 1960[1908]) is comprised of three progressive stages: pre-liminal rites of separation, liminal rites of transition, and post-liminal rites of reincorporation. The separation phase signifies the ritual individual or group's detachment from any prior social status or cultural conditions and everyday life activities, which can involve physical isolation from the normal community. The liminal stage of transition refers to the individual or social group as vulnerable and malleable with a temporary, ambiguous status. This is where *communitas* occurs as normally unacceptable activities become acceptable, and participants are free from usual social constraints and roles in order to coexist. After the liminal phase, the individual or group reincorporates into society with a new role or identity.

¹⁸Rowe 2008 makes this same conclusion in her in-depth analysis of Turner's discussion of the liminal and liminoid applied to sport as she concludes that sports are modern rituals with liminal phenomena.

As social rituals, sports have the predictable structures of which participants and spectators share a knowledge and understanding: rules, boundaries, shared knowledge of values, meanings, taboos, and “reaggregation”¹⁹ (Turner 1987) in the form of a winner and a loser at the end of the ritual. These structures house spaces of liminality and *communitas* (anti-structure) with the uncertainty of which athlete or team will reincorporate into society with which status (winner or loser) and the manner in which that decision will be reached. For instance, during the ritual process of a tennis competition, each player/team (along with spectators) embodies liminal status as they oscillate between winning and losing within the moment-to-moment playing of the match until the last point is won. While tennis players hit a ball back and forth and score points, they are trading liminal states of “winning” and “losing” until the end of the match. In general, as participants and spectators are comforted²⁰ by the predictable structure of the line boundaries, rules, traditions, scoring, and winner/loser roles of sport - a structure that communicates a shared message. They are, at the same time, held in a temporary state of suspense by the unpredictability of its outcome and the process of reaching that outcome.

Turner 1987 certainly sees how sport incorporates both structure and anti-structure: “The structure”, he says, “is akin to the rules of sport...” (133). “Thus, the dialectical nature of sport is “...from structure to anti-structure and back again to transformed structure; from hierarchy to equality...from the person to the individual; from systems of status roles to *communitas*” (128). And, as Bourdieu 1988 points out about

¹⁹The final stage of ritual is also known as “reincorporation” (Turner 1969).

²⁰Scholars note how structure of rituals can be comforting to individuals (i.e. Downey 2010, Harris 1982, Seligman 2010, Turner 1987). My participants noted this too.

sport's structure, there is “social diversification within the structure of sport” (155) as sport incorporates aspects of creativity, chaos, unpredictability, improvisation, interpretation (thus, play) – which Turner 1987 explains as “anti-structure”. Turner 1987 also recognizes the paradox of play (and thus sport) to be both inside and outside of consciousness and structure; involving an escape from reality while, at the same time, communicating something about ourselves that is “more real than reality” (Blanchard 1995).

This duality of structure and anti-structure in sport is what Turner refers to, then, as liminality and *communitas*. Social rituals work through *communitas* – reached during the liminal stage of the ritual process (Turner 1969) - to transform society and, thus, the individuals involved in it. Individual bodies are both subjects and agents of ritual transformation, and as such, ritual is “a transformative performance revealing major classifications, categories, and contradictions of cultural processes” (Turner 1987:75) which can work to either transgress or reaffirm social norms and power structures²¹. And as Turner 1987 in his later work writes that liminality is “...a continuous, dynamic process linking performative behavior art, *sports*²², ritual, play – with social and ethical structure: the way people think about and organize their lives and specify individual group values” (9), it is evident that he saw how sports engage in this transformative process.

²¹Power dynamics will be the focus of the following chapter.

²²Italics are mine.

Flow, as Liminality, to Achieve Communitas

As liminality is a state of being both inside and outside of consciousness, the individual experience of “flow” (Csikszentimihalyi 1975) can be considered a liminal state. Both liminality and flow inspire communitas which communicates a message to its participants. For instance, junior tennis matches communicate social values - of competition, adversity, life lessons, and life metaphors of struggle and self-empowerment – through the liminal suspension of not knowing who the winner will be for the communitas (the social group of players, parents, and coaches). Flow has been studied in athletes by Jackson and Csikszentimihalyi 1999 as an experience of complete control over the body and environment without having to *take* control. Athletes describe it as a temporary experience where performance feels automatic and the sense of identity is detached from judgment or criticism. A comparison of liminality (as described by Turner 1969), and flow (as described by Jackson and Csikszentimihalyi 1999), can be seen in Table 3-1. Thus, liminality and flow are very similar.

Turner 1987 sees this relationship in the context of drama, which I extend to the sport context, in that flow is defined as a state a person experiences when,

Action and awareness are one and there is loss of the sense of ego, and secondary processes, where cognitive discriminations are made, that constitutes the distinctive quality of performative genres. The actors [i.e. athletes], to do their work well, must be in flow; but the ‘script’, ‘scenario’, or ‘message’ [i.e. the game] they portray is finally shaped by discriminative reflexive secondary processes – the author’s [i.e. coach’s] metastatements are powerfully animated by the actor’s [i.e. athlete’s] absorption in primary-process...The script [rules of the game]...usually comments on social relationships, cultural values, and moral issues. But the actors [i.e. athletes] do not take part in the formulation of the author’s [i.e. coach’s] messages; what they do is to activate those messages by the ‘flow’ quality of their performance – a flow that engages the audience [i.e. parents, peers, spectators], as well, impressing on its members the ‘message’ of the total production (Turner 1987:124).

While flow can be a technique for achieving *communitas*, Turner (in his early work) was unconvinced by the idea that flow could be used as a synonym for *communitas* as he saw it within the domain of structure (Turner 1974:162-163). In other words, he saw flow as something that can be prepared for. However, flow has been recently studied as a phenomenon that occurs *spontaneously* among groups of sport participants: as a form of social cohesion among teammates, or “team flow” (Mugford 2009); among spectators as “emotional contagion” (Stromberg 2013), and as *communitas*²³ in spectatorship (Ingham and McDonald 2003:28). Late in his career, Turner 1987 even described “*communitas* [as] ‘shared flow’” where “rules crystallize out of the flow rather than being imposed on it from without” (133). Both flow and *communitas* “have a holistic quality about them, involving the ability to see the totality of the situation all at one time...[without need to] pay attention to the plethora of roles and statuses which one normally occupies in society” (Harris and Park 1983:21). In other words, liminality and flow can be applied to determine individual transformation as well as group transformation through *communitas*.

As Turner saw liminality as a technique for achieving *communitas*, and discussed flow in a similar fashion to liminality, I see liminality and flow as having a metaphorical relationship, perhaps even a metonymical one, whereas flow state could be an extreme liminal state: a state in which individuals/groups involved in transformation experience heightened states of ecstasy as well as destructive states of depression, anger, or withdrawal. I see flow as providing the same function in sport: to achieve *communitas*

²³Communitas can be economically exploited by governments as harmonious “community” (Ingham and McDonald 2003).

among participants of social ritual, such as junior tennis (i.e. parents, players, and coaches) and its *embedded rituals*²⁴.

Junior Tennis as Habitus

As explained above, junior tennis is a site where *communitas* is created through shared liminality, or transformation, among players in the junior tennis culture. This culture can be considered a form of *habitus*, or the “the ordering principle of dispositions...found in the body schema [that] is capable of orienting practices in a way that is at once unconscious and systematic” (Bourdieu 1990:10). In other words, the shared understanding of inscribed bodily practices that serve as the “structuring structure” of “common sense” is *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990:54-55). Within *habitus* is a “practical logic...able to organize all thoughts, perceptions and actions by means of a few generative principles, which are closely interrelated and constitute a practically integrated whole...” (Bourdieu 1990:86). Sport anthropologists have used the concept of *habitus* in their analyses of sport cultures. For instance, Coakley 2006b applies the concept of *habitus* to show how youth sport in the United States involves a belief system and lifestyle that is influenced by material conditions and historical practices that constitute family life where parents are morally responsible for introducing their children to activities (such as sport)²⁵. Brownell 2000 applies Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* and Mauss's 1934 “techniques of the body” to her concept of “body culture”, which she describes as the entire repertoire of things that people do to and with their bodies and

²⁴This is described in the next section of this chapter.

²⁵This is elaborated upon in Chapter 4.

the elements of culture that shape their doing²⁶. This includes daily practices of bodily performance, including “methods for training these practices into the body, the way the body is publicly displayed and the meanings that are expressed in that display” (Brownell 2000:51). And as Mentore 2000 explains, the individual body acquires its agency and moral values by being made into a social person through these techniques of culture.

Bourdieu's 1990 notion of habitus is through “unconscious” embodiment, as “practice excludes attention to itself...is unaware of the principles that govern it and the possibilities they contain; it can only discover them by enacting them...” (92). Ritual practice entails behaviors “outside the control of logic” and “fulfills functions that are not purely cognitive” (Bourdieu 1990: 94). But as Downey 2010 asks, “why is [Bourdieu] so emphatic that transmission must not be conscious when we can observe in many forms of bodily training that the body must be brought into and out of consciousness in order to focus upon a technique before it becomes automatized?” (S26).²⁷ Following Downey's 2010 lead, I apply Bourdieu's habitus to the junior tennis culture, or “body culture” (Brownell 2000) as habitus is reinforced and challenged in the space of *communitas* within the “unconscious” and conscious rituals of junior tennis. Building on Rowe's 2008 position of sport as a social ritual and Turner's 1969 “ritual process”, I explain my conception of the rituals that comprise the junior tennis habitus as a network of *embedded rituals* involving seasonal, tournament, match, and point rituals. Then, I

²⁶These terms may be used as synonyms in this dissertation as “body culture” is meant to imply a sport habitus.

²⁷Downey 2010 takes Bourdieu's conception of habitus further by showing how “transformation of the habitus is not simply changing an underlying 'structure' but altering the organic architecture of the subject” (S27).

discuss the experience of flow as “the zone”, the term used by junior tennis participants, and by showing how the zone is evident in the junior tennis “body culture” (Brownell 2000).

Embedded Rituals in Junior Tennis Body Culture

With a highly ritualized lifestyle, junior tennis players can be seen as liminal individuals constantly progressing through *embedded rituals*, performing rituals within rituals, as they progress through the rite of passage of competitive tennis. For instance, the structure of tennis can be seen as ritual performances built upon ritual performances where points make up games, which make up matches, which make up tournaments, which make up seasons, which make up a career. A point is the anti-structure within a match's structure, as the point is the unknown liminal space where players can be free to create and improvise with spontaneous shots and, perhaps, reach a flow state. The match is the structure that houses points as it provides a set of rules (i.e. score, time, processual guidelines of where to start the next point and when to change sides) and clear boundaries (i.e. the lines on the court to denote when a ball is “in” or “out”, the fence that distinguishes the players' space from the parents). Junior tennis participants understand the structure of a junior tennis career and how it progresses through stages of development, age divisions, and other lessons learned as families continue their journey through the junior tennis career. But there are many variations²⁸ (i.e. as seen in the multitude of training philosophies) of how people progress through this journey and it is unknown what is waiting for them in the end, even though they hope to live up to their potential for a college scholarship or professional career.

²⁸Pointing to Bourdieu's 1990 statement that there is “social diversification in sport” depending on participants' social status, class, ability, etc.

Turner (1987:74-75) noted four stages of social drama between parties: 1) “breach” of norms in social relations; 2) “crisis” that widens the breach, when liminality begins; 3) “redressive action” to try to bridge the gap (still liminal); and 4) “reintegration” of the two parties as united or “return to crisis” where the irreconcilability between the parties involved is socially recognized and legitimated. Similarly, junior players progress through similar stages, or what I call, *liminal pathways* (Figure 3-1). Junior players ultimately “reintegrate” into society with a sense of self-mastery in order to move on to the next training or competition ritual, “return to crisis” to re-engage in repetitive liminal transitions until they achieve self-mastery, or withdraw from the ritual entirely either emotionally (by “going through the motions”) or physically. The pathway they take depends largely upon the manner in which junior players are trained and guided by their coaches and parents through the liminal phases of the various rituals embedded within the junior tennis habitus. Equally important is how they interpret, internalize, and enact their experience as liminal individuals.

Thus, the post-liminal/reincorporation phase of one ritual is also the pre-liminal/separation/initiation phase of the next ritual as they “bleed” into one another. There is a blending of ritual realms as junior players “become” better during the liminal phase, and therefore move onto the next ritual realm to continue their enhancement through junior tennis. On the other hand, they may get worse (or maintain their skill level) and start the ritual over in an attempt to master it so that they can move on to the next ritual (i.e. practicing a shot over and over until they master it; playing an opponent over and over until they win). If they do neither, players may also quit. But the point to make here is that mastery is a process of various pathways of which success, failure and withdrawal

are all a part. By the end of their junior career, players form their identities based on these ritual pathways driven by both external (i.e. rankings, comparisons to other players, coach feedback) and internal goals (i.e. achievement of personal goals, overcoming psychological and physical challenges). By progressing through these liminal pathways, or realms of liminality - improving, starting over, quitting – players are essentially in a constant state of “becoming” as they pursue their potential and, thus, transform in constructive and destructive ways.

Contemporary “periodization”²⁹ training practices in competitive junior tennis involve a complex of embedded rituals and liminal pathways. Below are some examples of rituals *realms* – or the temporal space in which specific rituals are performed – through which junior players progress through in order to affirm or transform their status in the junior tennis hierarchy. They include the annual and weekly periodization cycles to the daily and minute-to-minute rituals within these training and tournament cycles.

Periodization cycles

As mentioned earlier, players, parents, and coaches see the junior tennis career as a socializing tool and a rite of passage into college and the adult working world; a necessary investment of time, money, and energy in order to raise a child to stand apart from the rest of their peers and enhance their social marketability (Bauman 2007) through the enhancement of their tennis performance. Several “periodization” cycles – training and competition schedules - make up a player's annual schedule, and several annual cycles comprise a junior tennis career. For instance, training schedules for

²⁹“Periodization” is a term used by most coaches to discuss training and competition schedules. It is also discussed as a method of power in Denison 2007, which will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

players during weeks that do not include a tournament generally involve about three to six hours of practice, six days a week.³⁰ Training includes group and private instruction on the court, conditioning in the gym or on the track, and mental toughness training for some players. During tournament weeks, weekends are reserved for tournaments, unless there is a national tournament which lasts for a week. On average, players play two or three tournaments a month. Typically, the higher the competition level, the more tournaments players play, the more they travel, and the longer the tournaments tend to last. The goal for most players is to play as many tournaments as they can to accumulate ranking points, so that they can get into the bigger tournaments where there are more points awarded per match, more opportunities to improve ranking, and more chances to be seen and considered by top college coaches, sponsors, and agents at the national and international levels.³¹

As such, training and tournaments are carefully scheduled in “periods” of preparation and recovery in order for players to “peak” at a certain time in a tournament, a season, and their career. To peak for a tournament at the end of the week, players use the first part of the week to do technical drills, the last part of the week to play points, and the day before the tournament to play a minimal amount in order to be ready to peak for the weekend. Sometimes, certain tournaments are used as part of the periodization process in order to peak for a major tournament season. Most players follow these periodization schedules as coaches know that players cannot be expected

³⁰Depending on whether players go to school or do on-line schooling at home, which is becoming more common in the junior tennis culture, players spend four to seven hours of day on school work.

³¹Burnout and injury are acknowledged as chronic problems in junior tennis by the parents and coaches because of this cycle.

to peak for several weeks in a row. In fact, coaches usually advise players to play no more than three tournaments in a row so that they can have time to recover and develop certain skills and peak for the long-term. Coach Linda, who was also a grand slam player, describes it this way:

What I have found is the best way to peak before a tournament is to taper off, and you want to make a schedule...Let's say the player is playing three tournaments in July, and you want to establish what tournament they want to play in, what's the most important tournament. So for example, if they want to peak at that second tournament that they entered of the three, then the first tournament is a warm-up tournament. So you don't focus on results as much, just getting a lot of match play, and getting enough rest, hydration, getting good food in them so that they have a lot of energy, and train at that tournament that they want to peak at. So basically everything that month before the tournament should be geared towards peaking at that tournament a month before the tournament, training that first week. Maybe three weeks before the tournament, start tapering off, still do a lot of fitness, but maybe focus on incorporating the strategy into it. The second week, you want to do match play, and the week before the tournament, they're getting match play and the fine-tune things that are for the tournament.

Nina describes her daughters' weekly training ritual this way:

We don't do medicine balls or anything [that could] pull muscles on Friday but we still do fitness. We still train just as many hours on Friday. Sometimes we'll take a Monday or Tuesday off, or a couple of half days if they've gone all the way through a big tournament. Say they won the singles and doubles, then you gotta give them a rest during the week. But normally, if we're not playing tournaments, Sunday's the day we do nothing because they just rest their bodies and recover. No fitness, no tennis.

“Peaking”, like the zone or flow state, is a concept related to “potential”³² that is referred to throughout the junior tennis community when speaking about optimal performance in a match, a tournament, a season of tournaments, the junior career, and the tennis career beyond juniors. Therefore, much like the stages of ritual process, periodization cycles are based on a structure of preparation (pre-liminal/separation),

³²This is elaborated upon later in this chapter.

peak (liminal), and recovery (post-liminal/reincorporation) stages. For instance, to train for a tournament season, some players leave home to train at an academy or tournament, which would be considered a separation phase. As rites of passage deconstruct selves so that they may be reconstructed in a new status (van Gennep 1960), players are “broken down” by coaches through liminal phases in order to be built back up in various ways³³ through daily practices within the periodization cycle over time. Coaches all have unique ways that they implement these rituals - warm-up rituals, various drilling rituals, and cool down rituals - but they all follow the warm-up-drill-cool down routine with the intention of instilling automatic behavior that eventually becomes self-instilled by the players themselves.

The separation of players from their non-tennis identities (i.e. home, peers, and school) also aids in this breaking down process of their original status in order to “become” better players. The reincorporation phase depends on the liminal pathway through which the player progresses. If players improve through the season of training and competing, they “reintegrate” into the tennis community (as well as their communities outside of tennis) with a sense of mastery and ability to progress to the next level of training and competition. If they get worse or stay the same during this liminal training season, they start the training and competition schedule over until they master it. If they do not improve or continue to repeat their training, they may remove themselves by emotionally withdrawing by just going through the motions of training,

³³Coaches may “break down” their players through yelling at them or gently consulting them, but they all have the intention of molding their players through ritualized behavior in their own way. This has many expressions as will be discussed in following chapters.

starting a different type of training, or withdrawing completely by quitting tennis altogether.

Tournament, match, and point rituals

I see these pathways in the realms within the training season such as the tournament ritual, the match ritual within those tournaments, and the point rituals within those matches. Through the repetition of playing competitive matches in tournament after tournament, players learn to automate performances as part of the junior tennis habitus with rituals that every player comes to know as “the way it's done” in a tournament.

Tournament rituals. Tournaments are ritual processes. They are prepared for through periodization training, begun with pre-liminal opening ceremonies, comprised of a liminal week or weekend of match-play, and completed with post-liminal award ceremonies by which each remaining player is reincorporated into the tennis community with a new status. During the ceremony for the National Girls 12-and-Under Tournament, there was an introduction ritual where players walked out to the court with their region written on name tags, much like the Olympics opening ceremony. This made it official that the tournament had begun. It brought the girls together to remind them that they are all a part of a community where they are all starting on an even playing field, or *communitas*. The players' party was another ceremony that brought the players together and functioned to remind players and parents that they are members of a social community as well as competitors. At the end of the tournament, the winner and runner-ups were celebrated as achieving higher status than the rest of the players

These tournament ceremonies symbolize professionalism to all of the junior tennis participants, further connecting them in *communitas* under the same shared set

of values and meanings that incorporate long-term goals of winning, college tennis careers, and professional tennis careers. This is communicated through the material culture of the ceremonial setting: trophies sitting on a table by the tournament desk reminding players of the long-term goal of winning; umpires wearing uniforms to represent the organized structure of rules; corporate logos on players' bags and banners representing the commercial and media aspects of professionalized youth sport; and plaques on the walls displaying past winners who became professional stars and represent the legends in tennis that help perpetuate the culture from generation to generation.

Tournament match rituals. The tournament matches that make up a tournament ritual involve the stages of ritual process (pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal) within the structure of the tennis court which provides the well-defined spaces where ritualistic behavior takes place. Players prepare for a match with a preliminal, or separation stage, play the match in a series of points (described below) as the liminal stage, and reincorporate into the player community after the match with a new status as either “winner” or “loser”³⁴.

Before a match, some players chat with friends to quell nerves while other players isolate themselves from other players to begin the transformation into playing mode, or to put on their “competitive masks”. They do this with visualization/meditation, listening to music on headphones, taking a run or stretching away from everyone else. As former player, Don, expresses,

³⁴This identity becomes official when the first question players ask each other is if they won.

Everything had to be a certain way... when I get in the right frame. And once I'm in it, I am in. I can do it. But if I didn't start the right way, I couldn't get into it.

Once players cross the “territorial passage” (van Gennep 1960:15), or sacred boundary (Figure 3-2) of the court's gate, they have five minutes of rallying and a coin-toss to complete the pre-liminal stage of the match ritual. Once players have crossed that boundary, they temporarily leave behind the guidance of the coach and parent to start the match ritual on their own as parents/coaches are not allowed to communicate with their players once on the court. Nina, a mother of two players, describes it:

[I tell my daughters] “The second you walk through that gate, it doesn't matter if you're playing your best friend, you're not their friend when you step on the tennis court.”

However, this rule is not always followed as parents commonly shout out words of support or disapproval to their player's on-court during matches. The tennis court becomes a “magic circle” Huizinga 1944[1960]: a sacred space where normally unacceptable behavior is accepted during the liminal progression of a tournament match and where rules and taboos³⁵ are adhered to depending on certain spaces of the court³⁶. This is why junior players often show behavior of rebellion against their parents through yelling back or simply ignoring them. They also exhibit behavior in the liminal space of the court that they normally would not show off the court such as signs of both flow state and dissociative state (described later in the chapter). One coach, Henry,

³⁵The taboos associated with match rituals are talking to each other, showing emotion, and taking a bathroom break to change the momentum of the match.

³⁶For example, structural rules include hitting the ball so that it bounces inside or on the lines, switching sides to start the next point, etc. It is taboo for players to stand on the service line while returning serve even though it is not against the rules, to grunt loudly even though it helps keep them in flow state, etc.

describes the space of the court as a metonym of junior tennis where players can escape the complexities of their lives and lose themselves in their game:

The court was sort of my home. It was my common space. So that's why I teach tennis. The only thing I can weave any consistency in my life is tennis. So it's very comfortable for me. It's a safe place.

Point-play. The playing of points within sets within games symbolizes the liminal period, and the handshake symbolizes the end of the match or post-liminal reincorporation stage of the match ritual. During the match, players create points within the scoring structure and physical boundaries of the court³⁷ by exchanging rallies, or physical exhibitions of power, between each other. The point can be seen as a ritual in itself as the time between points could be seen as the separation phase before a point (as players generally go to the back fence away from the backline of the court) as well as the reincorporation phase as they recover from the last point to prepare for the next. In this way, the separation and reincorporation phases of consecutive rituals can be seen to “bleed” into each other and show how the liminal realm of the between-point ritual can exist within the structure of the point ritual process. For example, the beginning (pre-liminal phase) of the point is marked by the server bouncing the ball just before she serves, the liminal phase of the point is the exchange of strokes between opponents as they oscillate between offensive and defensive plays, and the reincorporation phase is when the last ball of the point is hit and the players are inscribed with a winner or loser status for that point.

³⁷This is elaborated upon in my unpublished master's thesis.

Between-point rituals. The between-point rituals³⁸, which players exhibit in various ways but following similar structures, could also be seen as a ritual process in itself. Within this limited time structure, there is creativity, variability, and individuality in how players perform their between-point rituals within the twenty-second time limit. The most professionally trained players have defined rituals that they perform between every single point, and before and after every single match. They may not be the exact same rituals or be done in the exact same way, but most players have a routine. In general, players react to the previous point during the pre-liminal phase of the between-point ritual, which is the initial reaction after a point has ended. Depending on the outcome of the point, they may pump their fist, yell, throw their racquet, turn their back towards the opponent, or walk toward the back fence. This is followed by a few seconds of recovery and reflection – the liminal phase of the between-point ritual – which may include toweling off, fixing the strings, and talking to themselves. This is followed by a few seconds of composing, resetting, and reincorporating into the game to play the next point by, for instance, walking to the baseline to get ready for the next point, jogging in place, or bouncing the ball before a serve. Players even have mental rituals, such as described below by former player, Don:

I was a different player on the court. Sometimes I'd get out there and do different things, and I was thinking like I gotta play the point like this [and say to myself] "Okay go to the towel, and talk into the towel", and, "Come on!", talking to myself. Some matches I'd be almost at the point where I wanted to cry walking back to the baseline. I literally felt like I just wanted to cry. Or [I felt like] I could not break that racket into more pieces. [I'd say] "This is gonna go through the ground." Sometimes it was like "I'm done!" But when I was doing the right thing, I would walk the line back to the

³⁸Between-point rituals are the things that players do between the playing of points to "keep their head in the game" and stay focused. Sport psychologists help tennis players use this time to stay in their Ideal Performance State (Loehr 2011).

baseline, back to the towel, [telling myself] “Make that shot, let’s go, next line.” Like, constantly in my head, speaking to myself, like, just trying to feed myself the right shot, like, “Let’s go, let’s go, make that shot!...” I never cut that conversation in my head between points. It was like “Take your time right here. Let’s go. All right, you know how to play this point. Let’s go, you’re making three good balls cross- court. Play a solid point. Let’s Go!” I would fight and compete in a match. I wouldn’t get caught up in anything. The second I would let that go, then it would be the emotions.

Game switch-overs. The between-point ritual at game switchovers - when players switch ends of the court and have a ninety-second break to drink water, eat, and sit down – has a ritual process with certain taboos and symbols. During the pre-liminal phase of this ritual, players leave the court boundaries (but stay inside the fence) and walk to their chair at the side of the court, usually placed a few feet from their opponent's chair facing toward the court. During the liminal phase, players recover and calm themselves down by reflecting on the match, drinking water, eating, checking their equipment to keep themselves busy, or just by sitting silently sometimes with a towel over their head to help them stay calm and relaxed. During the reincorporation phase of the switchover ritual, players leave their chairs, change the score on the score post perched upon the net post between them, and walk back to their respective lines on opposite ends of the court in order to start the next play.

Post-match rituals. Once players shake hands and walk off the court, they begin to reincorporate into the tournament community. This stage is also used for recovery with post-match rituals such as reporting the score, talking with the coach/parent, hanging out with peers, or going off by themselves if they lose. Rituals vary depending upon the player and how the match went. Players' status as “winner” or “loser” is established once peers ask them, as they walk toward the tournament desk, whether they won or lost. Usually, it is apparent if a player lost by their body language and the

winner is the one carrying the balls back to the desk. Thus, the player at the end of a match either “reintegrates” after a win or “returns to crisis” after a loss.

Flow as the “Zone” in Junior Tennis

It is important to discuss how “the zone” fits into this discussion as it is the most common term to describe flow within the junior tennis habitus. The experiences of flow and performing “in the zone” that athletes and spectators experience - which are often used interchangeably by sport psychologists (i.e. Loehr 1986) and sport participants - have the same characteristics (outlined above). Turner 1969 refers to liminality in a state of *communitas* what Csikszentmihalyi 1975 refers to as “flow”. Performance psychologists use the terms “peak” (Maslow 1964) or “ideal” (Loehr 1986, 2012) performance states, or simply “the zone”³⁹.

Flow is described by positive psychologists in the sport context in the following way:

It appears that spiritual notions like selflessness, disinterestedness and passive receptivity are the precursor, and there is an internal logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part...We experience it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which we feel in control of our actions [with little effort], and in which there is little distinction between self and environment; between stimulus and response, or between past, present, and future.... all one’s awareness gets tied up with performing, and when the athlete comes out of this state, he can feel amazed at the time that has passed (Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi 1999).

Flow is where the individual can see the effects of her actions (i.e. hitting a shot perfectly), when things happen automatically as the analytical mind takes a backseat to bodily sensing, when there is no distraction (i.e. noises and movements of the crowd

³⁹Junior players, parents, and coaches used the term “the zone” to essentially describe flow state within the liminal state of the match. But outside of the match, they did not refer to any of these states.

are folded into the experience without causing distraction), and when the possibility of failure rarely enters the mind, even if it is the end result (Jackson and Csikszentimihalyi 1999). To reach flow, the task must be sufficiently challenging relative to the skill level as a challenge that is too easy bores the individual while a challenge that is too hard makes the individual anxious (Jackson and Csikszentimihalyi 1999).

Similarly, Dr. Jim Loehr (performance psychologist, Human Performance Institute, CEO) in conversation with me, October 2011, refers to “the zone” as the state of achieving optimal mental focus and being equal to the state of flow while participants referred to the “zone” to describe flow.⁴⁰ In their interviews about experiencing the zone, they reiterate notions of bodily sensing and feeling as they describe the zone as a state of mind where they do not have to think about things; they just do it automatically, letting their body take over. They are not distracted by things going on outside the court, and are not worried by how others are judging them or about the end result. They focus on the point, the shot, their breathing, and things they can control.

The experience of playing in the zone is similar to flow as, players say, that it is the “greatest feeling in the world” and that it is a “bubble” they want to stay in. They know that it is often a temporary state of feeling in control that they, ironically, cannot control. This applies not just to a match, but to a tournament, a season, and their career as the zone is easier to stay in through continuous repetition and movement⁴¹. Moreover, most players say that they feel they have gone through a transformation as

⁴⁰The characteristics players describe about the zone are similar to my own experiences as I trained in my junior career as well as in my research.

⁴¹This is an aspect of the zone that players also refer to as “momentum” in the junior tennis habitus.

they learn something about themselves with each match they play. They feel they can more easily access and maintain the zone as they practice their preparatory and recovery rituals and expose themselves to challenging drills and competition, even though flow happens spontaneously and unpredictably. Further, they characterize the zone as a space to be playful and creative with their instructed and practiced skills but also as a space of self-destructive behavior and thoughts⁴².

Bodily expressions of the zone

Evidence of the liminal training and competition space of flow, or “the zone”, is in players' body language and game styles, which express players' mentality⁴³ and transformations of mentality throughout a match. For instance, if players are aggressive and fearless, they approach the net leaning forward and follow-through with their swings without hesitating. If fearful, they stay deep in the court behind the baseline with their bodies more upright and stop short of following through with the swing completely. If angry, they make rash decisions in shot-selection and rush to the net without properly setting up the point.

Players exhibit the zone during their training sessions and tournament matches with their facial expressions, grunts, self-talk, acknowledgement of pain, sportsmanship, and reactions between points. For instance, while in the zone⁴⁴, players' facial expressions are more neutral immediately after a point, and usually throughout the

⁴²This is explained in the section below about constructive and destructive flow.

⁴³I asked players what they were feeling after a point or game they played against me when I noticed a change in their bodily comportment.

⁴⁴I asked players once they were at a resting point if they felt like they were in the zone. I also replayed video footage to corroborate what I had seen.

between-point rituals and point rallies. They seem to be performing without judging themselves because there was no hesitation in their speech or movements. They seem to become less self-conscious about the intensity of their grunts when they make contact with the ball. Grunts that sound guttural and primal⁴⁵ are often a sign of being in the zone and often attract spectators who recognize the signs and sounds of a heated climactic point in a match. Players in the zone often refrain from talking to themselves between points except for short phrases like, “Come on!”

Players who are not in the zone tend to talk to themselves in complete sentences like, “Why did you do that?! I can't believe your backhand sucks so bad!” Furthermore, players in the zone seemed to ignore their pain⁴⁶. For instance, I watched as one 17-year-old player vomited in the back of the court during a heated battle and continue to play, seemingly unfazed by his pain. Players who were not in the zone tend to play with their bandages or look at their injury more often, as if to blame it for a missed shot. Lastly, players in the zone display sportsmanship in a subdued way (i.e. clapping the hand against their racquet strings to applaud a good shot), while players out of the zone either show poor sportsmanship (i.e. making a sarcastic remark about why their opponent hit a winner) or show too much sportsmanship (i.e. praising the opponent for every good shot).

⁴⁵I realized this about myself, as well, and how good it felt to not care what people thought about these sounds of effort I was putting forth.

⁴⁶Players often said how they did not feel their injuries during a match. I experienced this, as well.

I experienced the zone myself as I trained with junior players, sensing feelings, bodily sensations, and spatial awareness⁴⁷. For instance, my footwork became more like dancing: unaware of my feet until it felt right to put my foot down in a certain place at a certain time. I would feel the need to skip around more with several little steps, while taking my racquet back, in order to take one big step to strike the ball. It was intuitive and automatic. As I trained more and more, I felt I could turn my brain on when I needed to change a strategy or adjust a stroke technique and keep it off to stay automatic. I re-learned (from my own competitive playing days) how to breathe for endurance: breathe in when the ball bounces, breathe out as my racquet makes contact with the ball. My rhythmic breathing and footwork danced together with the ball- bounce to climax at the moment my racquet hit the ball. There was a certain frequency of breaths depending on the pace of the ball being hit so that I could tell the rhythm of the point with the pace of the ball. Overall, I felt that I regained my “feeling for the game [that gave me] a sense of future direction” (Bourdieu 1980:81-82) as I spent more time practicing. I was not in the zone when I was worried about the outcome of my shots or others’ expectations of me, instead of focused on my senses, and when it “just didn’t feel right”, as put by many players.⁴⁸

Since the mind and body influence each other (i.e. Denison 2007, Downey 2010, Seligman 2010, Turner 1987), players learn to increase their chances of accessing the zone by consciously changing their behaviors from out-of-zone behaviors to in-the-zone

⁴⁷This is like Guerts' 2002 work on sensing.

⁴⁸In my study, players say that it is hard to play in the zone when the pressure increases from believing they “should” beat an opponent or decreases when they “shouldn’t” beat a player based on ranking, parental and coach expectations, and what peers say.

behaviors. By consciously changing their thoughts and behaviors, they affect their mentality which perpetuates the cycle of performance. As they consciously practice these behaviors in training, their performance becomes more automatic in tournaments, although some days “it's just not there” as participants said. Practicing “zone” thoughts and behaviors through rituals of disciplinary training – keeping facial expressions neutral, allowing grunts to be naturally expressive, keeping self-talk to a minimum and always positive, hiding acknowledgement of pain, and keeping sportsmanship behaviors to a minimum but positive - can increase a player's chances of reaching and maintaining the zone, or constructive flow state⁴⁹. However, by practicing the non-zone behaviors over and over, players more often access a destructive state where their bodily expressions and emotions spiral into self-destruction (i.e. negative self talk, self-hitting). This usually negatively affects their playing performance, and thus, makes them feel angrier and out of control.⁵⁰

The zone as shared liminal experience (communitas)

Parents, coaches and spectators share this experience, albeit vicariously, through the players. Parents watch their players and are usually separated, each on their own end of the court. They know that their own separation from the opponent's parents will give their players more support. Parents and players, thus, feel bonded in that they are competing against the opposing player (and parent) together: the parent

⁴⁹Dr. Jim Loehr at the Human Performance Institute in Orlando, FL calls this “Ideal Performance State” and provides a system of rituals for people to access it (Human Performance Institute 2011).

⁵⁰The ways in which behavior affects psychological and physiological changes in the body is beyond the scope of this project, but is discussed in Downey 2010 as a neuroanthropological focus.

as spectator and the player as performer. For instance, one player I interviewed over a two year period expected his mom to wear her “lucky” bracelets. She told me this as she mentioned that she was afraid to move from her spot on the bleachers for fear it would “jinx” his match. She even said that her husband had not moved from his chair at home as she was texting him about the progress of the match. Parents can even tell when their players are in the zone by their body language. One mother, Carol, notes, “Her pony-tail swings side to side as she struts back to the fence. Her shoulders are back and she just has an energy about her.” Another mother of a former player, Susan, remarks about her daughter’s expression of the zone: “She just looked strong and focused. You just don’t see any doubt. Those times were just so joyous to watch.” And, Nina, a mother of three players, describes her daughters’ performance of the zone in this way:

They just constantly move their feet. They’re not looking around. They’re not looking at the parent. They don’t look at us. They don’t look at the coach; they don’t look at the other player. They just sit down and put a towel over their head, or look down and think about what they’re gonna do the next point. They’re totally focused.

Carol can also recognize when her daughter is not in the zone:

[When she's not in the zone] she bounces her racket talks to herself. And she'll start speeding up when she gets mad, start going 100 mph. Like walk up the line and blast a serve, no bounces, but she always bounces it like 3 times normally. She just gets out there and bangs it. You can tell she gets frazzled and works herself up. It's almost like a panic attack sometime.

Nina adds,

When they get out of the zone, they get upset and start looking around. Then they get time to say, “What’s happening? What am I doing here? I can’t believe I’m losing.” I find more when they’re seeded high, they have a tendency to get more out of the zone because they’re like in disbelief that they’re not winning, that they didn’t hold up to their seed, versus if they’re going through the seeds unseeded, they stay more zoned in because they’re so pumped.

Parents seemed to mimic their players' emotions and flow along with them, sometimes, as they flinched, looked down, shook their heads, clapped, pumped fists, leaned forward in suspense, breathed sighs of reliefs after the suspense, sat still in reflection, withdrew (emotionally) or left the court entirely.

I see sport as forming a *communitas* between athletes, coaches, and spectators. This *communitas* occurs throughout entire matches, but it is most apparent and visibly noticed through the body language of players, coaches, and parents during the liminal experience of reaching flow, or playing in “the zone”. The terms “flow”, “the zone”, liminality, and *communitas* all connote a period of vulnerability where change is certain but the type of change is uncertain. Thus, comparing the characteristics of flow and liminality, we can see how flow, or “the zone”, can be likened to a liminal state – even an extreme liminal state as will be explained in a moment. So, while ritual shows ourselves to ourselves (Geertz 1975, Turner 1986), the sport ritual does the same thing as players and spectators engage together in journeys filled with elation and despair.

Embodied Learning and Identity in the Junior Tennis Habitus

As Seligman 2010 points out, “The self is fundamentally embodied and the cognitive and bodily aspects of self are mutually constitutive...information does not enter the brain directly, but, rather, through the body” (298-299). “What is 'learned by the body' is not something that one has...but something that one is” (Bourdieu 1990:73). Thus, players learn to build their identities through their experiences along various liminal pathways and flow experiences within embedded rituals of training and competition. As described above, the embedded rituals and experiences of “the zone” in the junior tennis culture create a perpetual state of liminality that involves various liminal pathways along their junior tennis career.

As shown in the previous sections, flow and liminality have a metonymic relationship in achieving *communitas* among participants in the junior tennis culture as well as within *individual* participants. This section shows how individual junior players learn through their bodies and transform themselves in the process. Through various liminal pathways and flow in their training rituals and lifestyles, they transform in constructive and destructive ways. They build conceptions of themselves based on these bodily experiences of constructive/destructive flow, which I explain as “extreme” liminal states. These extreme states incorporate interpretations of their “potential” and the pain that accompanies that pursuit.

Embodied Learning

Junior players embody knowledge through their experiences of liminality and flow through embedded bodily⁵¹ rituals in the habitus, or body culture, of junior tennis: intentional training regimens that involve direct guidance from coaches as well as mimicry of coaches, professional players and peers. Learning the movements of junior tennis affects players' personal kinesthetic style, social interactions, and perceptions (as also seen in Downey's 2005 analysis of capoeira), both in and outside the tennis court and general environment.⁵² Rituals within the junior tennis habitus are unconscious and conscious. Some rituals may be unconsciously absorbed and mimicked by junior players through their interactions and observations of peers. For instance, the

⁵¹“Bodily” also refers to mental as the mind is within the body and affects visible bodily performance.

⁵²While Downey 2010 explores the neurological evidence of embodied knowledge and enculturation, this is not the purposes of this dissertation. However, it is important to consider when discussing the experience of liminality as a tangible, “sensuous” (de Garis, Stoller 2004) or “sensorial” (Nakamura 2013, Pink 2011) experience for both junior tennis participants and myself as researcher.

body/verbal language and material culture that players use is often an unconscious absorption of the environment. Metaphors uttered during training rituals become analogies of, for example, life and death (i.e. “you gotta live and die by the serve”), success (i.e. “you gotta take two steps back sometimes before you can step forward”), and morality (i.e. “keep the ball well inside the margins”). Symbols of superstition (i.e. lucky charms, outfits, hairstyles, jewelry, towels) and discipline were also described by players. Former player, Don, describes this:

[My coach] would really stress anything you want; make it anything but have little things that in your mind are strictly you're doing just to discipline yourself, and that's all it is. I mean he even had this... PVC pipe which in reality [was] something he used to stretch a shoulder, but he called it his stick of discipline. I just made one, like I never used to stretch my shoulder, but I had that in my bag and it was something that I would just look at when I was playing matches, and things like that help me to go back to my mind just to be disciplined.

As Bourdieu 1988 writes, “...sport practices are among those practices in which comprehension is (essentially) corporeal...[C]ommunication...is entirely oral and visual, or better, mimetic” (160-161).

Other rituals may be taught to the player by the coach as a conscious act, but then be automated through the repetitive rituals of training and competition. They, thus, become unconscious. Habitus can be seen as comprised of practices that entail the moving in and out of conscious and unconscious learning; the result being a transformation of self and of habitus itself.⁵³ Much like *communitas* becomes a site of individual and social transformation, Bourdieu 1990 says of habitus,

The corrections and adjustments the agents themselves consciously carry out presuppose mastery of a common code; and undertakings of collective

⁵³As the athletic self changes, so does the non-athletic self (i.e. school, social, and family) as discussed in later chapters.

mobilization cannot succeed without a minimum of concordance between the habitus of the mobilizing agents...and the dispositions of those who recognize themselves in their practices or words, and, above all, without the inclination towards grouping...(59).

Thus, transformation of habitus occurs through a social group of liminal individuals in *communitas*.

As a result, tennis training and learning involves, relies on, and transforms the individual player's sensing⁵⁴ of the body, the space around the body, and time as imprinted on the body. This “embodied learning” (Alkemeyer 2002, Downey 2010, Wacquant 2009, Bourdieu 1990, Foucault 1975) interacts with a player's experiences of flow, and the zone, to incorporate a kind of altered state of consciousness or, an “introspective awareness of a different mode of experiencing the world” (Hood et al. in Nesti 2004).⁵⁵ As mentioned earlier, the transpersonal and transcendental experiences of sport often involve feelings for the individual of being part of something much bigger than oneself and even the world” (Nest 2004:142). The paradox of flow state, or the zone, is that it involves perceptions of complete control accompanied by a sense of the self disappearing (Mugford 2009). Flow can be likened to Bourdieu's 1990 concept of “practical logic” when he says, “Real mastery of this logic is only possible for someone who is completely mastered by it, who possesses it, but so much so that he is totally possessed by it...” (14). Because flow state requires a balance between the individual's

⁵⁴See Chapter 2 for a more complete description of the work on sensing. It applies to my methodology as well as the junior players' conception of self (i.e. Alkemeyer 2002, Downey 2010, Fors et al. 2013, Wacquant 2009).

⁵⁵Downey 2010 notes that “...skill is not simply the 'embodiment' of 'knowledge', but rather physical, neurological, perceptual, and behavioural change of the individual subject so that he or she can accomplish tasks that, prior to enskillment, were impossible” (S35).

skill level and the challenge being attempted, flow does not necessarily result in optimal performance and can often accompany an athlete's loss (Mugford 2009).

As mentioned earlier, players use rituals to help them access and maintain flow, but it does not always work. If flow does occur, it does so spontaneously, intermittently, and temporarily. Junior players say that performing rituals of practice and preparation, even if they do not elicit "the zone", helps them learn to deal with the pressure they are under.⁵⁶ These rituals might be dismissed as forms of superstitious behavior, but they are still seen as techniques to attempt access to flow state and to *feel* in control: "...if these behaviors help focus the athlete's mind and provide a sense of control over the activity, then they can actually serve the purpose of achieving the focus necessary to enter flow" (Jackson and Csikszentimihalyi 1999:139). Flow state is what makes learning easier and more fun: "Every teacher...is aware of how important it is for the kid to experience flow while learning because that would make them want to learn more..." (Csikszentimihalyi 2008). Thus, as rites of initiation provide structure and predictability to a society (Turner 1969, van Gennep 1960), so do rituals of preparation and training provide comfort to players; although they perform them and are affected in varying ways.

One father, Ted, explains how ritual helps his children feel more comfortable in their surroundings, especially during stressful situations:

I think routine is important for anything in a child's life. I think when kids are bounced around all over the place, I think it's pretty easy to get distracted and unfocused if they don't know what they're doing on a sort of a timely basis...You know, even particularly between points; this is particularly true for [my son] who's very emotional about things. But I'm getting him to have

⁵⁶This is true for on-court and off-court pressures as many players comment that school pressures are easy to handle compared to pressures they face in tennis.

certain routines between points so he doesn't rush, or he doesn't get distracted, or get upset with the opponent.

And former player, Don, describes the sense of confidence he felt through practice rituals:

Repetition with just hitting balls I think, naturally, just gives you confidence. Practice, if anything, repetition with discipline, helped me feel like I was more professional, so I would act more professional. And when I was acting more professional, I would do better on the court with like competing the right way and not getting caught up with other side garbage.

By feeling secure with rituals, players feel a sense of control in their drills which can lead to self-mastery of the skills they are practicing. A twelve-year-old player, Skye, describes it: “If you practice something long enough, you might be able to do it right, after. Do it, like, perfectly.” But the practice of rituals can also be taken to an extreme level of perfectionism as several coaches, like Henry, describe: “[Rituals can provide a] relaxed flow. But it can definitely get you obsessive, it can go too far.”

Thus, learning is embodied through liminal states of flow, or the zone, and elicits some kind of transformation as it is a reflexive process where individuals become aware of the fact that they are feeling or sensing something, and adjusting their behavior according to this sense. As this awareness interplays with the bodily experience, it becomes a “double signal” (Damasio 1995 in Seligman 2010). For example, if a player senses she is “playing on the defense” during a point, she can move one step closer towards the ball as it bounces inside the court, turn one more inch before swinging, or choose to hit open-stance to save time and turn a defensive position into an offensive one. In this way, she can transform her liminal status of “losing” into winning. If she practices her footwork, agility, coordination, and training over and over, she will be more

likely to do it automatically in a liminal state of flow⁵⁷. In other words, tennis is about getting the opponent off-balance and out of time to reach the next shot. If a player can hit the ball faster and recover faster by optimizing footwork and balance, then she is one step ahead of the opponent – literally and figuratively - and has a better chance of getting the opponent off balance.

Similarly, in the realm of the life cycle of a junior tennis career, if a player can “sense” that she is approaching injury or burnout before it occurs, she can rest in order to allow herself a longer career. But the player who does not rest before injury and burns out⁵⁸, as a result, “uses up” (Bledsoe 2002)⁵⁹ her physical and mental energy for her tennis life. There are many players in competitive junior tennis, who get “used up” early in their tennis lives, so that they may quit before college and many quit playing tennis entirely immediately after college. As coach Linda put it,

[A burned out] player is just unable to get through a practice for several consecutive days, you can see it in their face or hear it in their voice, so it's not motivation, it's inability to get the energy to perform. They just don't have anything left in the tank – that's when they need to rest...Some parents are just putting their kids in a tournament every week, some of those kids are going to just die and hate tennis.

⁵⁷This is discussed below.

⁵⁸Chapter 6 discusses in more detail how burnout and injury occur and affect players. Here, the discussion is just related to the ways in which injury and burnout are ways in which players sense themselves.

⁵⁹Bledsoe's 2002 work shows how Gambian women viewed time as contingent upon their reproductive lives, instead of their reproductive lives being contingent upon chronological age. The more children they have, the “older” and more “used up” they become. The same thing is true for tennis players. Time goes “faster” and retirement comes earlier as the body gets used up over the course of more physical and emotional trauma to the body.

Despite warnings of burnout, players often do not like to take time off because it does not “feel” right and that it “takes too long to get a groove” when they return from several days of rest. They also feel an intense pressure to stay ahead of the competition as they know that this is a year-round sport. If they are not practicing, their rivals are. It is a culture of constant training with no off-season. One mother, Nina, discusses a coach's warnings about her daughter playing too much at too early an age while another coach advised her to go to Florida. He told her that coaches are less likely to judge a parent for training a young player and more likely to encourage it there:

[A coach told me] “You’re burning out your kid. You’re destroying her. She’s playing too much tennis!” I said, “She loves it. She doesn’t wanna get off the court! [Another coach] said, “Take her to Florida where all the kids are that way, a majority of them are. She’ll just thrive in Florida.” Everybody plays everywhere. There’s no holiday. There’s no day off in Florida because you got everybody from all over the world. There is no holiday in Florida.

Constructive and Destructive Flow

While I have discussed flow as a state of enlightenment and mastery within liminal stages of competition rituals, Grimes (1995 in Harris and Parks 1983) asks, “How are ritual processes manipulated for the purpose of abuse and oppression, [and] what are the symptoms of a ‘sick’ ritual?”. Sometimes positive self-disciplining rituals get lost or morph into self-punishing rituals, and a player’s behavior reaches a destructive state that is opposite of the flow state that Csikszentimihalyi 1975 described. But both states occur in a liminal transition and can be considered states of liminality, just with opposite effects. As players are liminal both on and off the court, they are constantly oscillating between the extremes of autonomous master and struggling novice, between offensive player and defensive player, between exaltation and devastation.

While some players in my study have credited the zone for an ability to be playful and creative with their skills, it is also a period of self-destruction in the form of misbehavior and negative-self-talk. This highlights another common quality between flow and liminality: that they result in *either* a heightened *or* lower status, with creative or destructive consequences. With this in mind, flow state actually could be considered more of a metonym than a synonym of liminality – an “extreme” liminal state. States of flow (Figure 3-4), thus, incorporate *constructive* or *destructive* extremes of liminality. In other words, moments of concentration can elevate players with “constructive flow” to higher levels of performance and sense of self. On the other hand, they cause players to self-destruct and dissociate with “destructive flow” so that they lose control of their performance, judgment, and ultimate well-being. Players often oscillate between these extremes in a matter of moments.

Liminality within a match can leave junior players vulnerable to both the negative, and positive experiences of a competitive match. This is also true in the larger realm of the junior tennis career as players are formed by the positive and negative factors of junior tennis, in general. For instance, they learn to self-regulate, to be independent, to respect authority, to be self-motivating, and to work in a team. But they are also open to the negative factors of junior tennis when they are vulnerable to agents and coaches who exploit child-athletes for their talent; escape from learning social skills and the demands of academic pressures; ignore the need for having a fallback plan aside from tennis (as optimal performance is thought to require); ignore signs of illness or injury; exhibit negative self-talk, self-abusive behavior; and develop low self-esteem because of the pressure they put on themselves. Junior players who have learned self-regulation

skills tend to play their matches with control of their emotions and view their matches as a part of their lives instead of the center of their lives. Those who have not learned self-regulation rituals often have little control over themselves and their emotional responses and can be seen as acting out family problems, pressures they feel, and their strong identity development around tennis.

Emotional outbursts occur when a player's emotional regulation has not caught up to the level of pressure they endure. For instance, some players, in this state, throw tantrums, yell at themselves, throw their racquet, hit themselves, cheat, get into arguments with the opponent, parents, etc. In these cases, some coaches told me that this is a sign of true passion and self-discipline. Others say it is a form of self-abuse, especially if done every day over several years.

In one situation I witnessed, a twelve-year-old player named Taylor seemed to reach a level of consciousness that was out of his control during a tournament match. He exhibited a destructive flow state during a match marked by sobbing and yelling at himself after every point. This was something that this particular player was known for doing after losing a point, even if winning the match. Some said he may have been acting out pressure imposed from his father, a former professional athlete, or from the national team who was recruiting him for the national team. His coach told his mother that this was a sign that he really wanted to be a good player and that he would transform this behavior into a healthy competitive fire as he gets older. But other coaches, including myself, wondered about the amount of damage he was doing to himself psychologically. Was he making himself stronger by criticizing himself so

harshly, or was he abusing himself to the point of burnout or depression?⁶⁰ Was he “building up” or “using up” himself? Below are my field notes from a day when I watched Taylor disintegrate on the court. They highlight the constant oscillation between constructive and destructive flow that Taylor seemed to exhibit in a bipolar⁶¹ way:

One mother says Taylor has a split personality. Another player says that she knows what he feels like and that it's as if he's bipolar because that's what it feels like to her. Taylor's mom says he's psychotic. He goes from being okay to having a look of fear and trauma. He looks scared. My friend, who is a mother of a player there, says that the federation likes how Taylor gets as emotional as he does. They say that Federer used to cry in fear like that, and they want him to do that. It means he's gonna be a good player, that's why they like him. He is in the end of the third set against another player who is also being recruited by the federation. They are both eleven. Taylor is losing his sanity on the court next to me as I hit with a player whom I'm coaching. He screams to himself, “You hit every ball in the net!” The next point the opponent hits a winner and he yells out “GOD!” in an anguished, guttural scream. He whimpers to himself at the back fence, “Hit the ball!” He sobs in between points and grunts out of desperation during the points with each shot. He looks like he's fighting for his life. But when he wins a point, he yells, “YES!” with both fists pumped by his sides as he directs his fury at his opponent. His “pumped up-ness” is so much greater than the opponent's. That's why he's losing the match. He sounds like he's crying out in pain as he loses another point. His crying is obvious with an “Ah-uh” as if he is trying to let out his cries but stifle them at the same time. Taylor yells at himself in the second-person: “You suck! Every ball in the net!” as if talking to a different person; a schizophrenic-type behavior. But no matter how upset he gets, he steps up to the line ready to play the next point. Still, whether he ends up winning or losing a point, happiness still seems to evade him. Losing provides despair while winning only seems to provide relief. He physically abuses himself on the court when he loses the point: slaps his head, slaps the ground with his hand, hits himself in the leg with his racquet, screams, “No! What are you doing? What are you doing?!” (Dec. 20, 2011 – Miami, FL)

⁶⁰Psychoimmunological research has shown a link between chronic stress in youth and problems with PTSD, depression, and auto-immune disorders in adulthood. This may also be likened to Bledsoe's 2002 notion of being “used up”.

⁶¹The term “bipolar” was often used by players to describe other players or themselves when they felt like they were out of control emotionally on the court.

After the match, Taylor reincorporated with a “return to crisis” into the tournament community as “loser” of the match:

Taylor loses the match on a short aggressive play from his opponent. He can't get to the ball in time and he smashes it over the fence when he gets to it on the second bounce. The referee has to duck out of the way. Taylor then bounces his racquet on the ground and cries out the loudest yet, “GOD!” and smashes his racquet on the ground on the way to shake hands with the opponent, which is only a quick touch of fingers because he can't bring himself to do a full shake and say, “nice match”, as is expected of players. He turns around and walks to his bag at the bench and throws his racquet on the bag and is sobbing when he continues to talk to himself but in the first-person now, as if to cry out for help, “I can't play tennis for my freaking life! I'm so bad at tennis!” and picks up his stuff and walks to the door to leave the court. He passes his mother and throws his water jug against the fence. She follows several paces behind and picks it up. This is a common theme where the mother has to manage her child's emotions after losing a match: a combination of enabling entitlement mixed with intense pressure. (Dec. 20, 2011 – Miami, FL)

Seligman 2010 shows how individuals deal with suffering by “creating experiences that match the individual's former suffering in their intensity, but do not have the same negative valence (i.e. being isolated from friends and family) and by keeping the individual's attention from being directed at previous suffering” (305). She gives examples like “seclusion from the everyday world and learning techniques involving intense focus away from self-consciousness and onto rhythmic and repetitive stimuli” (305). Likewise, I see players, who have been coached to do so, focusing on the ritual of healing through positive self-talk between points in order to divert attention from the symptoms of their pain (i.e. losing). But for those who have gone deep into a destructive flow state, like Taylor, self-abuse (physical and emotional) often gets expressed regardless of how much the junior player has been trained to do otherwise. Tina describes her frustration with her daughter's lack of control over her emotions:

She has an anger problem and we are trying to deal with that on the court. So, we just went to the sectional and she didn't do well at all because she

doesn't handle emotion well. She gets very angry. Now, as her mom, I question if she's not emotionally stable enough to handle that; [if] we shouldn't continue to encourage her to go on...the one thing I told her is that the way she acts and the things she says, we know her mannerisms...I said, "I know how your feeling by your mannerisms on the court." She gets into this really fast talk thing...she'll do this like "Come on!"...but, it's not like a "Be happy! Come on", like "I just hit a great shot." It's still negative. I told her, "When you stop going through whatever you're going through on the inside, whatever you're doing there, the outside won't change...You can't mask this...because when you do, then it really becomes an explosion. You have to be calm. [But] just saying that doesn't work.

These examples show that flow state can be destructive as well as constructive.

Reaching a constructive flow state can be an escape for kids from over-controlling parents and coaches, a way to learn how to concentrate intensely, to be creative within a given structure, and a way to experience mind-body-spirit connection. Reaching a destructive flow state can lead players to burnout, withdraw, and identify themselves as "bad" people. Players must reach these extreme liminal states in order to know themselves. to think through the body, and learn to turn off the analytical mind at certain times while turning on the body sensing system (i.e. the sense of space around the body, the emotional sense of body pain, the sense of time and rhythm). Without reaching a liminal phase over and over again with exposure to repetitive training and competition, players cannot reach these levels of body sensing and maintain them for long periods of time⁶². Junior players, in this sense, may acquire this ability more so than other youths that do not play sports or engage in other physical activities at an elite level. They have the capacity to know themselves through their bodies, when and how they approach their limits, and how long they can sustain themselves and their bodies outside their limits.

⁶²I discuss this with the pain boundary in a later chapter.

“Becoming” the Self

“Through sport, the self becomes conscious of the body, the self is embodied, exteriorized. Not only bodily practices, but the body itself becomes a sign of the self” (Rail 1991:747). Not surprisingly, junior players typically say that they “become a different person when they step onto the court” to play. One twelve-year-old player, Hope, says,

I’m not a nice person that would be, like, talking to someone during the break and I concentrate on my own tennis. But when I step off the court, I’m like a teddy bear.

Her mother says that she taught her daughters to be like that:

[She and her sister] are taught to be “blank like a bitch” when they walk on the court. [She laughs] and they get off and they better be a teddy bear again; but I better not see anything but being a nasty pit bull as they can be on that court. They’re not to talk to anybody, they’re not to give in to anybody.

Interestingly, though, many players also say that their “true selves” come out. Perhaps this may mean that their liminal, tennis selves *are* their true “real” selves while their non-tennis selves are only roles they play; that they embody their tennis performance as their true identity and as more real than “real life”. There is often a blurring of the lines between tennis and non-tennis identities. Players build their self-conceptions based on their bodily knowledge through the junior tennis body culture as well as through their interactions with parents and coaches.

The ways in which players see themselves are also influenced by the manner in which parents and coaches praise or criticize players, and whether they are doing so while the play is in flow or not. For instance, a coach’s or parent’s scrutiny gets internalized by the junior player who becomes self-critical as a result. There is a fine line between constructive self-judgment and destructive self-criticism. Low self-esteem can

come from negatively scrutinizing coaches (as opposed to constructively scrutinizing) with the constant commentary upon which kids become dependent in forming opinions about themselves. Players learn how to see themselves by how their parents' and coaches see them. Leaving the parents to attend an academy and/or relinquishing control to coaches can help players improve away from the comforts of home and their "child" identities. But it can also open the door to abuse of power by coaches if they forget that they are molding malleable, vulnerable adolescent people and not just playing machines. As a mother of a former player says, "That's the biggest danger: you're trying to perfect a machine when you're really dealing with a child."

It may also be that players internalize parents' and coaches' judgments more deeply while performing a physical drill during flow state, for instance, than while resting. In other words, the criticisms and praises of a coach/parent are more deeply absorbed by a player as her own self-criticism or self-praise while she is actively performing a drill; learning "with the body" (Alkemeyer 2002) rather than sitting on the sidelines. This is why coaches tend to yell commands to their players across the net about how to adjust their strokes while they are hitting rather than, or in addition to, just explaining to them how to hit their strokes before the drill starts. This applies to strategy-training during matches too. One coach recognizes this liminal state of players as he says, "You have to strike while the iron is hot." He is referring to the need to coach players while they are playing matches (which is currently not allowed in junior tennis).

Players support this theory when they say they find it frustrating when their coach stops practice frequently to tell them how to do something rather than let them continue the flow of the rally. They seem to learn more easily while they are moving rather than

sitting and listening, most likely because highly accomplished junior tennis players rely on their kinetic senses to learn. This supports Csikszentimihalyi's 1975 view that learning is easier in flow.

Therefore, making adjustments to technique, strategy, and self-thought is more easily accomplished during bodily movement. However, this also may make players more vulnerable to criticism and judgment⁶³. As they are molded by their coaches' and parents' judgments, praises, and criticisms during training activities, players could be more prone to internalize these judgments to form their own judgments about themselves. They, become themselves through others' judgments of them, especially when engaged in bodily movement. This “doubling” process has both empowering and disempowering effects on well-being⁶⁴.

Embodiment of identity through pain and potential. Pain and suffering is a necessary part of the transformation process during ritual; there is something in the liminal phase where we meet our threshold⁶⁵ to sustain pain, focus, and fatigue and stretch that boundary in order to extend our level of endurance and, thus, power. As Turner 1986 said,

The creation of a detached, still almost sacred liminal space allows us to search for such sources. One wellspring of this excessive meta-power is clearly the liberated and disciplined body itself, with its many untapped resources for pleasure, pain, and expression (42-43).⁶⁶

⁶³This is a theory that I am developing, but further research is needed to verify it.

⁶⁴This will be discussed in the final chapters.

⁶⁵The “pain threshold” is also discussed in Pickard 2007 among gymnasts.

⁶⁶Turner 1986 is referring to theatre here, but I see the same holding true with the experience of pain through sport.

Junior players progress through various liminal pathways with excessive self-criticism which can lead to enlightenment, self-destruction, or withdrawal. As seen in the case of Taylor outlined above, many players deride themselves verbally and even hit themselves when they miss a point. Seligman 2010 in her discussion of dissociation in Candomble self-healing rituals, discusses how awareness of embodiment (mentioned above as the “double signal”) can become “hyper embodiment”, or an over-awareness of one’s bodily processes or perceptions which can result in a distancing from that person’s experience. In other words, an awareness of one's embodiment, or experience of the zone, can absorb the individual into the activity but hyperawareness can pull the individual out of the activity altogether.

Seligman 2010 is referring to the experience of pain and says that in order to deal with pain, losing oneself in a spiritual activity may regulate arousal and influence autonomic control. In this way, destructive flow state could be seen as a kind of dissociative state for junior players when they lose themselves in their suffering (emotionally and physically) as a result of making a mistake or losing, for instance. On the other hand, constructive flow state could also be seen as a kind of dissociative state as they lose themselves in the ecstasy of winning. It could be said that they might learn to enjoy suffering and feel more complete when they suffer on the way to winning; that winning is sweeter through sacrifice⁶⁷. In both constructive and destructive flow, players can show a detachment of emotion in addition to the moments of ecstasy and demoralization. Intertwined with extreme emotional outbursts are also moments of feeling outside the body, or what Seligman calls, dissociation. This supports the point

⁶⁷This is elaborated upon later as players often say that they gladly sacrifice for their tennis enhancement.

that “dissociation is frequently associated with situations in which individuals find it desirable to shift attention away from ordinary self-awareness, *either to expand the social possibilities of self or to escape its psychological and emotional burdens, or both*”⁶⁸ (Seligman and Kirmayer 2008 in Seligman 2010:304).

As dissociation can be addictive (Seligman 2010), junior players can become addicted to liminal/flow states and the escape it provides from the world outside tennis. This can be constructive for players on the tennis court where a simple rally provides shelter of a flow state⁶⁹ away from any tensions they may experience at school or at home. It is a way to become someone different for a while and to access their best self even for just a moment. But it can also be a security blanket that allows players to hide from dealing with real world responsibilities like studying for a test or thinking about having a back-up plan to tennis if the professional dreams do not come true. Dissociation can also be performed by quitting or apathetically “going through the motions”, as I saw many players do in the field when they were tired, frustrated or rebelling against a coach.⁷⁰ “Dissociation is a very common defense mechanism where your brain just goes, ‘You know something? It sucks here. I’m not gonna be here’,” as Dr. Mitch Abrams (sports psychologist) said in a conversation with me, January 2011.

At the same time, dissociation can be an enlightening experience that can help individuals deal with pain – not just physical, but emotional and existential pain. For instance, physical pain is endured through injury and exhaustion. Emotional pain is

⁶⁸Italics are mine.

⁶⁹A rally can be a relaxing, meditative activity.

⁷⁰This is also discussed in Denison 2007 as an expression of the space between compliance and resistance, as will be discussed further in the following chapter.

endured through burnout, losing, punishment from the coach or parent, and loneliness from lack of intimate friendships. Existential pain refers to the questioning of identity as an athlete and the deeper meaning that is felt through one's participation in sport.⁷¹ "Establishing the experiential boundary between emotional pain and physical pain is difficult when both are experienced in the body....the lines are seldom so clear phenomenologically, especially when considering pain that lasts and lasts" (Jackson 1994:223).

As Jackson 1994 emphasizes, a *communitas* of pain facilitates mutual understanding among those who are in pain about their pain⁷². As players constantly strive to become better players, they develop their tennis and non-tennis identities around their experiences with pain. At the same time, these identities are often at odds as they experience sport in both empowering and disempowering ways. Thus, junior players transform and come to know themselves through the paradoxical yet powerful experience of pain. These are all forms of pain which youth athletes can interpret, simultaneously, as torture and transcendence depending on the context in which the pain is experienced. It is this paradoxical experience of pain that allows discipline to be embodied through embedded rituals for the sake of building and meeting one's "potential".

⁷¹The boundary between physical and emotional pain cannot really be established since both occur in the body (Jackson 1994:223), but I distinguish them here for the sake of emphasizing the various ways that pain can be interpreted and embodied in order to build identity.

⁷²This work was focused on patients in a hospital, but I see the same thing in how athletes valorize injured athletes, and how those injured athletes form their own community among themselves.

I see potential as a liminal space “betwixt and between” having been and being along a liminal pathway.⁷³ It, ironically, can never be “reached” as a destination because it is a perpetual state of becoming. Because of the emphasis placed on reaching it, the general environment is full of symbols of potential and performance enhancement, such as sponsor banners (Figure 3-3). Players conceive themselves and build their identities around this concept of potential as it becomes a unit of measurement by which their performance is judged by their coaches, parents, peers and themselves. Much like Bledsoe 2002 saw aging as “contingent” upon an individual's accumulation of traumatic experiences, aging in the junior tennis habitus becomes contingent, not necessarily upon one's chronological age, but upon one's potential. The more potential one has, the more “life” a player has left in her tennis career. As potential fades, the closer she is to “death” or retirement. A player becomes “used up” (Bledsoe 2002) as she progresses through the highs and lows of pain along her tennis life but, at the same time, maintains her status as “accomplished athlete” or “former athlete” in the social context *because* of the pain she has endured.

Through the repetitive performance of these bodily rituals, and thus the experience of pain and potential⁷⁴, junior players embody skills that contribute to their overall self-making⁷⁵. This self-making, in turn, contributes to the reaffirmation and/or challenge of the junior tennis habitus (i.e. the value of potential over personhood) which constantly seeks to survive through the individual body (Mentore 2002).

⁷³This is mentioned earlier.

⁷⁴This will be discussed in Chapter 6.

⁷⁵As Downey 2010 notes, this self-making influences the individual at the neurological level as well.

Through this “sport ethic” (Hughes and Coakley 1991), liminal youth athletes learn how to stretch the boundaries⁷⁶ of pain during training and competition rituals in order to attain physical achievement, personal and spiritual fulfillment, and maximal performance. At the same time, there is a paradox inherent in the experience of pain from pushing past their pain boundaries as adhering to the habitus of sacrifice, risk, potential, and a “no-pain-no-gain” sport ethic can take players out of the habitus if pushed too far to the point of injury and burnout⁷⁷: “By placing their bodies at risk, they also risk those routines of their habitus that have become part of their own bodies; by going to the limits of their personal abilities, they extend the boundaries of the cultures in which they grew up” (Alkemeyer 2002:7).

My research shows how athletes developed in environments that prioritize personal well-being and pay attention to individual needs push the liminal boundaries of pain and achievement with appropriate recovery time⁷⁸. The resulting sensations of mind-body-spirit connection and ultimate control of the self and environment can be empowering for youth athletes. But athletes developed in environments that prioritize immediate performance over long-term personal well-being, or guided by coaches who are uninformed about the psychological, emotional and physiological nuances of developing (pre)adolescent athletes, tend to push too far or too fast past the pain

⁷⁶“Boundaries are where battles take place...” (Bourdieu 1990:228).

⁷⁷This is elaborated upon in the final chapters.

⁷⁸This is elaborated upon in the final chapters.

boundary within an “overcommitment to sport ethic” (Hughes and Coakley 1991) which can have destructive consequences for overall well-being.⁷⁹

Summary

Turner 1967 notes that liminal subjects,

are submissive to their instructors and are told that they are in the presence of things from the origins of society and that they are being filled with mystical power...this allows them the ability to take on tasks successfully. The communication of the sacra teaches them how to think about their cultural position and environment and transform them from one being to another (108).

In this sense, junior tennis players can be seen as “submissive to their instructors” who fill them with power that will “allow them the ability to take on tasks successfully” (i.e. learn new skills and win tennis matches). With this “communication” of knowledge, junior players learn how to “think about their cultural position and environment” based on their performance in tournaments and the training environment. They are constantly “transforming from one being to another” each time they win or lose a match, play a point, recover between points, survive a tough drill, or master a new skill. As rituals are performed by players, either consciously or unconsciously, they achieve flow state in constructive and destructive ways, even for just temporary, intermittent moments. These rituals of training and competition are performed by junior players for the purposes of self-mastery or self-discipline and often originate as commands by their coach or parent.

But as players adopt the discipline and judgment of an adult authority as their own, they become *agents* of their own training and discipline (Shogan 1999), and thus, identity. Just as the liminal, ambiguous subject of Turner’s ritual process “plays” with the

⁷⁹The result can be disempowering, producing injury, burnout, and overdependence on the coach or sport, in general, for identity. This will be discussed in the final chapters.

boundaries of what is considered normal and right, so does the junior tennis player. Junior players perform rituals of performance enhancement under a coach's guidance while applying creative license to them within the boundaries of the lines on the courts and the rules of the game to acquire new skills or status, as winner or loser. Junior players are, then, constantly oscillating, between roles of creative experts with skills that often surpass those of the coach and parent, and roles of students seeking guidance and acceptance. They are also independent agents making split-second decisions (as well as life decisions) and dependent children who need guidance and acceptance from adults.

As a result of the embedded rituals through which junior players progress, there are changes taking place. These changes occur within the player, within the player-parent-coach dynamic, and among other player-parent-coach dynamics within the junior tennis environment, much like the cultural change with which Turner credits *communitas*. Depending on the progression through these embedded rituals and various liminal pathways, junior players are empowered and disempowered by these transformations. They are embodying the tools of, and the scars from, their perseverance through and endurance of long periods of stress and challenge. These transformations are a perpetual process as players are in a constant state of "becoming", or "potential", and are commonly judged based on their potential to "become" a professionalized tennis player. By the end of their junior career, players learn to self-identify based on external motivators like rankings, comparisons to other players, and coach feedback, but also through their body, especially in relation to their potential and pain.

Child studies scholars note that defining the child as “becoming” an adult rather than “being” an individual can disempower them and devalue their present experience in society (i.e. Best 2007). Not taking their transitional status into account can be equally disempowering as it portrays them as mini-adults who are affected by stress like adults and who have adult expectations placed upon them. This could raise their risk of exploitation, at least in the youth sports world (David 2004). I see youths, then, in a paradoxical state as both *being* “kids” and *becoming* adults. The focus on “potential” can ultimately contribute to the prioritization of junior players as performers rather than people. This can lead to a devaluing of holistic well-being as a priority, as the following chapters describe.

Junior players are, as a result, most able to reach personal heights, and at the same time, most vulnerable to abuse and exploitation - by parents, coaches, and the junior tennis industry - during training and competition rituals due to their status as transitional human beings. Experiences of liminality through positive and negative flow make this even more possible. Empowerment of competitive junior players most likely results when they are viewed, not as just objects of performance enhancement looking to make returns on their parents’ and coaches’ investments, but as liminal agents building their life skills, improving their personal well-being, and transforming overall through the rite of passage of junior tennis. As junior players embody the junior tennis habitus through embedded rituals of training and competition, they make and are made by the relations of power within that environment, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Table 3-1. Comparison of liminality and flow characteristics

Liminality (Turner 1969)	Flow (Csikszentimihalyi 1975)
At the <i>limen</i>	Outside the norm
An <i>automaton</i> proceeding in a trance	Automatic performance
Fusing of mind and body	Effortless mind-body control
Feeling of control, guided by instructor	Feeling in control w/out trying
Full immersion in the present	Total absorption/focused attention
Timelessness	Transformation of time
Loss of a sense of identity	Loss of ego and self-consciousness
Ambiguous state of ecstasy/uncertainty	Heightened awareness and joy
Achieved through repetition	More easily accessed w/practice
Reassembling culture in new ways	Applying skills in creative ways
Unacceptable becomes acceptable	Unacceptable becomes unacceptable
Period of transformation	Become different person but true self
Temporary state	Can come and go
Creative as well as destructive	Can result in a win or a loss
The new and novel becomes norm	Heightened states become normalized
Status is "betwixt and between"	Status fluctuates b/t winning/losing
Tolerance of pain/sacrifice	Tolerance of pain/sacrifice

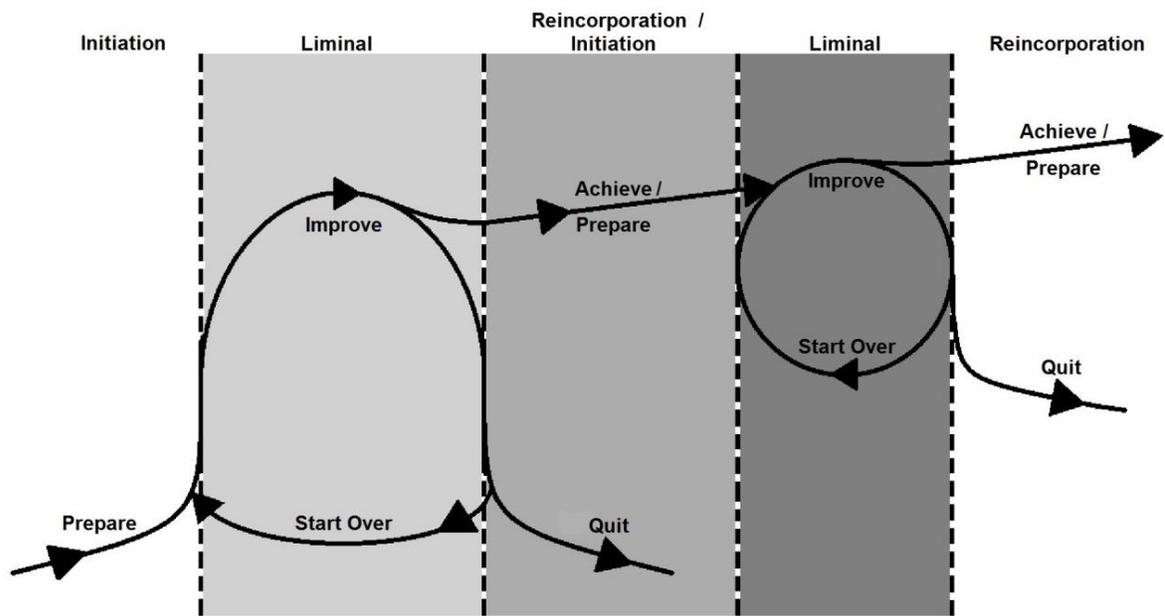


Figure 3-1. Liminal pathways



A) Photo courtesy of Jennifer J. Fiers



B) Photo courtesy of Jennifer J. Fiers

Figure 3-2. Sacred boundary. A) Of professional tennis court, B) Of junior tennis court.



A) Photo courtesy of Jennifer J. Fiers



B) Photo courtesy of Jennifer J. Fiers

Figure 3-3. Sponsor banners. A) Of potential. B) Of performance enhancement.

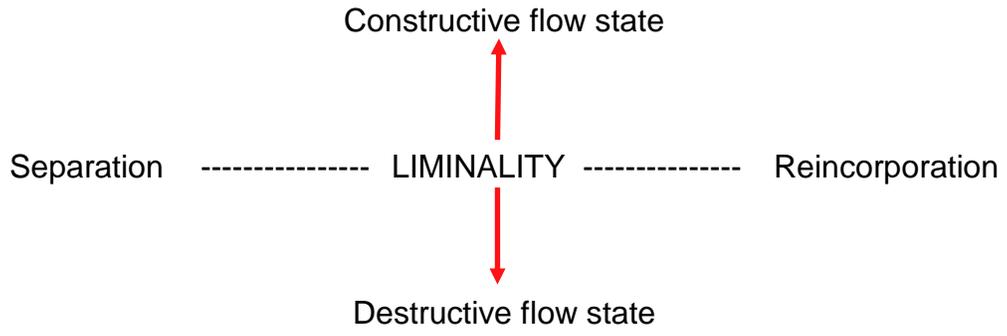


Figure 3-4. States of flow

CHAPTER 4 RELATIONAL POWER AMONG PARENTS, PLAYERS, AND COACHES

Hall 1996 appeals for research “to focus on sport as a site for relations of domination and subordination...resistance and transformation” (31). Fulfilling this call, this chapter (and the next two) highlights the power dynamics within junior tennis. Chapter 3 establishes that junior players can be seen as liminal agents being made and making themselves through their training and competition rituals in the junior tennis habitus. As Ortner 2006 shows how habitus applies to the ways in which people habituate their power roles and create the power structure in which they perform their power, the next three chapters extend the discussion of liminality to the embodiment and performance of power. In this chapter, I show how I approach an analysis of power in junior tennis and go on to explain the various ways junior players experience power in their dynamics with parents in Chapter 5 and coaches in Chapter 6.

Using a Foucauldian¹ approach to “treat sport as primary, rather than peripheral, in the social order” (Smith Maguire 2002:293), I discuss the junior tennis player's body as a site of authority and (dis)obedience through training and competition rituals while exploring the various ways that power dynamics, or “power shifts” (Ortner 2006), unfold among players, parents, and coaches. I show how the authority and discipline administered by coaches and parents - representing the standards of the sport as a whole – are embodied, normalized, and transgressed in a variety of ways by junior

¹I am aware of those who do not agree with a Foucauldian approach to power (i.e. Terence Turner 1994). But I align myself with sport scholars who recognize that “a Foucauldian analysis of sport is concerned with how relations of power target and shape the body through different types of practices, forms of knowledge, and sets of norms in order to produce specific bodily capacities and particular attitudes towards the body and self...” (Smith Maguire 2002:293).

athletes. In this chapter, I explain how I use power theory to develop my conception of the *power molecule* (Figure 4-1) among players, parents, and coaches and how power among them is performed along *continuums* (Figures 4-2 and 4-3) in a *relational power grid* (Figure 4-4).

Approaching Power

Before I begin this discussion, it is important to trace my own transformation in thinking about and applying theoretical perspectives of power to junior tennis dynamics. I began fieldwork for this research using Foucault's 1975 perspective of "docile bodies" and "means of correct training" to specifically trace junior players' embodiment of "discipline" – or "formulas of domination and integration into the social order...to train bodies for optimal efficiency" (Rail and Harvey 1995:376). But through fieldwork and writing, I realized that Foucault's 1988 work on technologies of the self applied to junior players' experiences as well. I recognized an interplay between these technologies of power – what Foucault referred to as governmentality (Smith Maguire 2002) - and it is often difficult to discern between them.

Technologies of Domination

I started fieldwork using as a lens Foucault's 1975 early analysis of power which focuses on "technologies of domination"² - or the practices by which "institutions, knowledge and practices target the body to enable and discipline its productivity" (Smith Maguire 2002:293). From my own experiences as a player and coach in the junior tennis world, I viewed the training process of junior players as involving technologies of domination that depended upon players' self-monitoring practices to affirm and

²Smith Maguire 2002 points out that Foucault was likely influenced by Elias's 1939 notion of the civilizing process and Douglas' 1966 concept of bodily symbolism.

normalize certain behaviors as normal, even if deviant or “overconforming” (Hughes and Coakley 1991). Through the objectification of the individual, technologies of domination work in both individualizing and totalizing modes that rationalize optimization (performance enhancement) through normalization³: “individualizing” in that the state (i.e. coach) relies on individuals to maintain social order (i.e. performance), and “totalizing” in that the state (i.e. coach) directly monitors the population (i.e. player) productivity (Smith Maguire 2002:299).

I initially saw power as delivered in this one-way, top-down manner by authoritative coaches and parents to liminal subject players who internalized and automated instructions and social values. For instance, Foucault 1975 explained that, “Discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, ‘docile’ bodies”⁴(138) and that these docile bodies are “manipulated by authority...of useful training...of dependence on the master” (155-156). This characterized for me⁵ the description of some players as they are trained with authoritative “discipline” and can often be “manipulated” by authority (coaches and parents) to reach their goals of becoming an elite tennis player. Some participants in my research were so young when they started training that they had not yet even formed goals (at least consciously). A former player, Katie, acknowledges this:

³John Hargreaves 1987 notes this in his work on physical education.

⁴Shogan 1999 points out that docile bodies are not necessarily passive bodies and that they are productive, but that many authors have not seen it this way. Thus, she says, “docile” is a problematic term” (13).

⁵This is true at least in part, based on my own past experiences and observations as a junior player and coach.

I never had as a goal in my mind going to anything like being number one in the world. That was just sort of what we did: come home, do school work, go play tennis, repeat.

Foucault 1975 also pointed out that “exercise is that technique by which one imposes on the body tasks that are both repetitive and different, but always graduated...thus, assur[ing], in the form of continuity and constraint, a growth, an observation, a qualification” (161). I recognized this in junior tennis as it is a system through which coaches and parents “observe”, instruct, and guide players through “repetitive” and “graduated” bodily tasks in order to get them to the next level of competition, while judging them based on their progress (or “growth”) and placement in the ranking system. Sometimes, this progress is at the risk of developing other important personal characteristics. Katie emphasizes how tennis development can often contradict personal development:

It's the exact opposite of what you want to be as a human being, but exactly what you want for a tennis player to be successful, and there's a major conflict there.

One father, Bill, also recognizes this:

If you want to go pro don't go to [a place where] they will teach you to go to college and do the right things in life: how to build a human being, not a human tennis machine. If you worry about just building a human tennis machine, you ain't gonna get the rest.

Moreover, Foucault's 1975 concept of “correct training” was especially relevant to the ways in which junior players are trained through embedded rituals (as Chapter 3 discusses) by coaches who observe and prepare them for competition: “Discipline makes individuals [and] is the specific technique of power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise...[with] hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment...and examination” (Foucault 1975:170). Foucault 1975 says that “the details of surveillance were specified and...integrated into the teaching relationship”

(175) and “the examination [i.e. tennis tournament] enabled the teacher [i.e. coach] to transform his students into a whole field of knowledge through constant repetition of rituals of power” (Foucault 1975:187). I applied this to the “coaching” relationship.

Through daily training rituals, many coaches “teach” players by constantly observing and controlling players' lives in both the tennis and non-tennis environment so that they eventually “coach” themselves. For instance, many coaches have strict guidelines for their players about what they eat, when they should go to sleep, and how much socializing they should do with peers. Furthermore, a key factor in the reproduction of the junior tennis habitus is the way in which coaches judge players as better students the more malleable or “coachable” they are. This makes players strive to be more coachable by giving coaches more power. Foucault says that “the freedom of the modern individual [] is contingent upon knowing, monitoring, and improving oneself...we become our own rulers” (Smith Maguire 2002:298). Thus, coaches train/discipline their players to become their own self-disciplining, or self-monitoring, coaches.

Through Foucault's 1975 early work, the junior player can be seen as an “actor in a ritual designed to confirm the behavioral norms” of the junior tennis culture as well as society, becoming “enticed into participating in, and hence, confirming the validity of” the training of discipline process (Hutton 1988:126).⁶ One of my participants said that his coach tells him what to do and how to do it on the court. Whether he wins or loses, his coach is upset if this player does not do as he says. The player welcomes this

⁶John Hargreaves 1987 also applied Foucault's 1975 perspective of power on physical education and how it is a form of domination used to reproduce the class, gender, and race relations through “rigorous interests of efficient performance” (263).

constraint. The player is highly dependent on his coach for his performance and identity as a player (and subsequently, person). He normalizes his coach's technologies of domination as it saves him from having to make his own decisions. After all, with freedom comes more responsibility and work.

Furthermore, the objectification of junior athletes' rankings and signs of potential reaffirms their place in the social order as well as their coaches and parents positions in the social order. When coaches and parents attach their status to the performance of their players, it is often looked down upon (even though it is quite common). One parent, Clark, discusses this:

A lot of coaches are the problem. Even parents who are coaches. The problems with coaches are the same ones with parents. That is, they judge their own performance on the outcome of the child. They should be put in a mental institution.

A well-known coach adds, "A lot of [parents] already have their tickets booked at Wimbledon for their twelve-year-old." As players become more focused on their own individual bodies and potential, they are more likely to stay focused in order to be accepted by the general junior tennis society. The norms of junior tennis center on the concept of "potential", specifically in terms of performance enhancement. Players are, then, less likely to question the ways in which those norms have been produced the more they focus.

Consequently, performance enhancement of the junior tennis industry (including the coaching industry, the national federation, sponsors, etc.) relies on performance enhancement of individual players. This involves the "totalizing" regulation of the player population through the acceptance and rejection of normalized performance, and the "individualizing" of discipline and responsibility

to be in control of performance enhancement practices (or else suffer the social, economic, and psychological consequences). As a result of normalizing performance enhancement goals (i.e. collegiate and professional tennis careers) and strategies (i.e. hiring a coach, moving to an academy, doing on-line schooling), the authority position of coaches and parents is reaffirmed and players focus more on their self-management and self-discipline with less reflexive, critical analysis about the dynamics in which they are involved.

Technologies of the Self

Through my fieldwork and writing, I recognized that the degree to which players perform agency in response to their coaches' and parents' discipline, also aligns with Foucault's 1988 later focus on individuals' "subjectification" (self-management through self-regulation) with "technologies of self", or the practices and knowledge by which individuals "affect by their own means...their own bodies and souls...so as to transform themselves" (18).

In order for individuals to be entrusted with their own management" (or self-discipline), they must recognize themselves within the social order so that they enact their freedom appropriately...Recognition of oneself as both governed and self-governing is contingent upon knowing and defining oneself in certain ways that are historically specific to modern, non-coercive societies (Smith Maguire 2002:302).

Foucault 1988 himself admitted to taking a similar journey in his thinking through power as he said, "Perhaps I've insisted too much on the technology of domination and power. I am more and more interested in the interaction between oneself and others and in the technologies of individual domination, the history of how an individual acts upon himself, in the technologies of the self" (19). I realized that an analysis of sport practices as only

technologies of domination without incorporating technologies of self into the equation, and how the two interact, implies a deterministic view of sport.

This awareness of self and self-knowledge, or subjectivity through technologies of the self, occurs within a structure not necessarily of individuals' choosing.

“Subjectivity is not an ascribed structure, but we do not make ourselves simply as we please” (Smith Maguire 2002:303). In the case of junior tennis, players make their own performances, but within rules and traditions not of their choosing. They exercise agency within the limited bounds of the junior tennis social order. Players are trained by their coaches in certain ways to become their own coaches in order to be creative with shot selection, strategy, etc. within the bounds of the lines of the court and the rules of the game. But the ways in which players become their own coaches (or subjectification) is largely dependent upon the initial training regimens of the coach. For instance, players who are coached by coaches who emphasize a “no pain, no gain” philosophy, often adopt it in their own self-disciplining mentality. Twelve-year-old, Gary, says,

Even when you're rolling around the court in agony, it's something of a good feeling. Because you know you're getting better. You voluntarily do it. If you don't put a little pain into it, then you're never gonna get anywhere.

Creativity is allowed and encouraged by some coaches as long as it is within the bounds of the coach's guidance and physical and moral boundaries of the game.

Governmentality

As they are often difficult to distinguish, technologies of self and technologies of domination not only need each other to exist, they work together in their co-existence:

Technologies of domination and technologies of the self do not work in mutual isolation. Rather, they are deeply interconnected, each forming the condition for the other. Without the support and participation of free subjects, disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms devolve into oppression. Without the resources and rules of institutions and bodies of knowledge,

self-managing subjectivities would not be formed (Smith Maguire 2002:306).

It is this interdependency, at the everyday level, that reaffirms the perpetuation and reproduction of the social order:

The point of contact between technologies of domination and of the self – between discipline and self-discipline, regulation and freedom – is ultimately what gives shape to the social order and ensures its reproduction. That is, the social order rests on the self-managing individual choosing to act in a way that reproduces the status quo (Smith Maguire 2002: 307).

This is what Foucault called governmentality: “How we choose to regulate and improve ourselves lies at the heart of the social order, and its potential transformation” (Smith Maguire 2002:307).

While Foucault's 1975 conception of discipline as using normalization rather than oppression to affirm power, social values, and social hierarchy is still relevant to the junior tennis context, junior players – not just coaches and parents – contribute to this normalization process, reproduce it, and also destabilize it. As Foucault 1978 says that power is omnipresent (everywhere and circulating through everyone), “mastery, the consciousness of one's own body, becomes positive only through the invasion of power...[But] what gave power its strength becomes the way by which it is attacked” (28). Along these lines, I see power as more of a two-way street, or “relational” (Smith Maguire 2002:294). Foucault's 1983 concept of governmentality shows how technologies of domination and technologies of the self interact: To “understand what power relations are about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate these relations” (211). An analysis of technologies of domination focuses on an external source disciplining bodies through surveillance and self-surveillance. Technologies of self are used by individuals to form themselves into

selves they “want” to become - despite and because of technologies of power.

“Foucault's concept of governmentality weaves these threads together” (Smith Maguire 2002:294).

Foucault and Bourdieu

This is where I recognize a similarity between Foucault's (1975, 1980, 1988) theory of power and Bourdieu's 1990 theory of habitus, explored in Chapter 3. Foucault focused on how bodies are socially constructed through surveillance and self-surveillance while Bourdieu focused on how this occurs through daily bodily practices. As I looked for scholars who had linked the two, I found that Hoy 1999 agrees when he says, “Bourdieu deepens Foucault's concept of subjectification as being constituted through power relations by providing the details through habitus” (11). Foucault 1988 recognizes that individuals relate to themselves (his concept of subjectification) through power and knowledge derived from outside themselves. This is the interiorization of the outside - as “the double”, or “a folding of the outside force that relates it back to the self” (Jones and Aitchison 2007: 56). Bourdieu 1990 also recognizes how “internal dispositions [as] the internalization of externality enable the external forces to exert themselves, but [he added] in accordance with the specific logic of the organisms in which they are incorporated” (Bourdieu 1990:55). This is what he calls “habitus”.

In this light, junior players can be seen to “internalize” the social values and norms, as well as the judgments and expectations coaches and parents place on them. The daily bodily rituals of “practical logic”, in turn, affect the ways in which they perform these daily rituals. This is relevant to, for example, how coaches and parents yell at players and how players learn to normalize this. As former player Katie puts it, “It just seemed like if you want to be good, it's natural that someone is yelling at you

somewhere because that's what everyone else is doing.” Hoy 1999 also points out that Foucault and Bourdieu do not believe we are predetermined. *Habitus explains* agency since choice is always within a structured situation that is structured through habitus practiced by individuals: “Our perceptions of possibilities are narrowed down to a range within which we can comport ourselves with enough play to feel as if we are choosing freely and meaningfully” (Hoy 1999:15).

Bourdieu 1990 says, “Through the habitus, the structure of which it is the product governs practice, not along the paths of a mechanical determinism, but within the constraints and limits initially set on its inventions” (55). This applies to junior tennis players (and athletes, in general). The technologies they employ to empower themselves within the junior tennis habitus (i.e. becoming “the best” for social mobility) may be reproducing their oppression (as technologies of domination) instead of freeing them. They are still under the structure which oppresses(ed) them in the first place (i.e. where “the best” may entail sacrifices that cause disempowerment). This is evident in some of my participants' interviews. One mother, Susan, recognizes in retrospect the elusiveness of reaching potential:

It was always trying, you know, [figuring out] what's the next thing?...It was never good enough [though]. It was never quite enough, never quite the one...that was gonna make the breakthrough...It was about chasing that elusive goal.

Moreover, Hoy 1999 shows that Foucault's 1975 concept of normalization applies to Bourdieu's 1990 view of habitus as conservative and difficult to transform through social agency because we tend to reinforce (normalize) what we have learned through our early experiences and are resistant to change in order to protect ourselves from crisis. But, according to Hoy 1999, both Foucault and Bourdieu leave room for the

possibility for change: Foucault 1988 through “technologies of the self” and critical self-care and self-reflection, and Bourdieu 1990 through “critical resistance” and the plasticity of the habitus. Bourdieu 1988 said, himself, of sport that “sporting practice...always presents a great elasticity, thereby allowing for very different, even opposed, uses [which] can also change meanings” (158). As Hoy 1999 emphasizes, “Power can be productive if it opens up new possibilities, but it turns into domination if its function becomes entirely the negative one of shrinking and restricting possibilities. It was not uncommon for players to emphasize the below sentiments in interviews:

I hated going out there to those tournaments...It wasn't a comfortable, fun environment for me. I hate the culture of tennis!

If I didn't play tennis, who would I be? But I didn't really have a chance to explore that because I had always played tennis.

Critical resistance will, thus, involve using the very mechanisms of power to destabilize and subvert domination” (10).

By combining Foucault's 1988 subjectification and Bourdieu's 1990 practical logic of the habitus, individuals are free to resist and transgress the dominant discourse, but *complete* transgression is very difficult to do. Adding Turner's 1969 explanation of ritual process and *communitas*⁷, these spaces of resistance and transgression happen through ritual bodily practices within *communitas* and liminal experiences, although transformation may be temporary, unexpected and spontaneous. In other words, action takes precedence over *only* agency or determinism. There is a back-and-forth, a dualism, between the two. It is through habitus that we both adhere to powers of domination as well as appropriate and replace them with what Foucault calls

⁷This is discussed in Chapter 3.

technologies of the self. Bourdieu's 1990 habitus is the umbrella under which Foucault's power relations between dominance and resistance takes place, but as soon as resistance overcomes dominance, it becomes the dominant power. Habitus is what makes power relations comprehensible and what makes the "invisible" visible through the practice of power.

One scene I observed exemplifies the visualization of often invisible pressures that junior players face in the competitive atmosphere of tennis. Upon losing a tournament match, a nine-year-old girl walked off the court and burst into tears saying, "I hate tennis! I hate tennis!" She dropped her bag at her mother's feet and her older sister followed her to a hidden area behind the court away from other people. About an hour after this display, she said in her interview, "I love the competition. It makes me stronger." Within the habitus of competitive tennis, players are often conflicted between their love of and resentment toward tennis. They love it for the visible progress they make with their physical growth and abilities, their capacities to solve problems, and their social status and peer relationships. They resent it for the amount of sacrifice it requires on physical, emotional, and social levels. Former player, Don, summed up this paradox in one of his interviews:

I never hated tennis...but playing junior tournaments isn't fun at all a lot of times. There's nothing fun about it. It's a terribly stressful environment. There's so much going on around you. You're constantly competing.

Habitus, as incorporating embedded ritual realms⁸, can also be seen to incorporate the concept of "embedded agency" or "serious games" (Ortner 1996:13) where socially constructed individuals perform agency and compete for power within the

⁸This is discussed in Chapter 3.

power structure in which they were created. Ortner 2006 sees technologies of self as still controlled by the “serious game” where individuals may perform agency but always within the dominant game or habitus. As Ortner 2006 puts it, individuals

are always involved in, and can never act outside of, the multiplicity of social relations in which they are enmeshed. While all social actors are assumed to 'have' agency, the idea of actors as always being engaged with others in the play of serious games is meant to make it virtually impossible to imagine that the agent is free... (130).

In other words, agents are never really free from the influence of the social and can never be considered a homogenous group⁹ as agency is mostly unequally distributed (Ortner 2006:151-152). We must read practices within the context, or habitus, in which they occur. “Playing the game,” Ortner 2006 says, “tends to reproduce both the public structures of rules and assumptions, and the private subjectivity/consciousness/habitus of the players, and thus, that playing the game...almost always results in social reproduction” (149). But the game changes - as Bourdieu points out about habitus and Foucault points out about the self – because of an “entry of some externality that cannot be digested” (Ortner 2006:149) or the elasticity of habitus (Bourdieu 1990).

Technologies of Self, Technologies of Domination, or Both?

Through my fieldwork and writing, I argue that the *paradoxes of power* in the junior tennis culture involve this interaction of power technologies. It is often difficult to discern between technologies of domination and technologies of self. This difficulty is emphasized by the few scholars who apply Foucault's concept of technologies of self to sport (i.e. Jones and Aitchison 2007, Markula 2003, Smith Maguire 2002). Scholars (i.e. Jones and Aitchison 2007, Markula 2003, Markula and Pringle 2006, Shogan 1999,

⁹Ortner 2006 also points out how agency takes two forms: one involving the domination/resistance against someone, and the other being focused on the pursuit of goals (152).

Smith Maguire 2002, Rail and Harvey 1995) who apply this interaction of technologies of domination and of the self to adult sport and the “sportization of the body”¹⁰ (Dostie 1988:225 in Rail and Harvey 1995). I build on their work in order to conceptualize power in competitive youth sport. The individual agency performed by high-performance athletes because of, and in spite of, this sportization of the body creates and is created by the discourse of sport as well as the body (Shogan 1999).

Specifically, feminist sport scholars use Foucault to show how sport normalizes male power over women with training regimens that expose bodies to constant surveillance by coaches and peer athletes. In this way, sport disciplines women as docile bodies to mold themselves into feminine figures according to the dominant ideal athletic form (i.e. Cole 1993, Johns and Johns 2000, Markula 1995, Rail & Harvey 1995). But some of these same scholars, and others, show how sport can be used as a tool to resist dominant power which frees individuals from oppressive ideological forms through self-transformation as empowered subjects, or as a technology of the self (i.e. Jones and Aitchison 2007, Markula 2003, Smith Maguire 2002, Theberge 1991). Thus, power can be *both* controlling and productive through the constraints of sport training practices: “power is a network of practices, institutions, technologies – not just coach over athlete – where coaches exert power; but athletes are free because of that power (through the mastery of their skill) to resist it (Shogan 1999:10).

If sport practices are empowering individuals to succeed under the dominant ideal of success, these practices may not actually be transformative when they are

¹⁰This is the process through which the body becomes a sporting body and acquires the characteristics and skills that are favorable for maximal performance in the sporting context.

reproducing the dominant ideal of femininity, success, athleticism, etc. They may act more as “coping mechanisms” - a *defense* against power instead of a conscious embodiment of the self through activities to *overcome* power - to meet the requirement of the dominant discourse (Johns and Johns 2000, Markula 2003). Sport practices can be *both* a form of coping and transgression.¹¹ An example of this would be cheating, which is very common in junior tennis. Players cheat to avoid being dominated as well as to cope with the pressures of winning that are placed upon them by their coaches, parents, and overall habitus. As one parent exclaimed, “Welcome to junior tennis! Cheat or be cheated. Which will you be?” But, in the long-run, this does not overcome oppressive power dynamics and reproduces the culture's philosophy of winning at all costs.

Does this mean that coping practices are disempowering, nonetheless?¹² Foucault 1988 points out that when cultural practices of resistance provide a sense of empowerment to individuals as well as involve critical awareness - ethical self-care, self-stylization and critique of the self and external social environment - they could be considered as technologies of the self in that they consciously challenge the dominant discourses of power (Jones and Aitchison 2007, Markula 2003). Practices that are intended to have empowering effects can have disempowering effects when they are performed without applying a critical analysis of *how* they will be empowering. For

¹¹Jones and Aitchison 2007 point out how triathlon is a strategy of resistance as well as a technology of self which can ultimately be both a process of freedom and imprisonment for women athletes. And Chapman 1997 described the sport of rowing as a “contradiction” because it is a simultaneous site of domination and opportunity to create a feminine self for women athletes.

¹²This is a question I address further throughout the dissertation through examples of paradoxical spaces of power.

example, forms of external discipline can become abusive at the point coaches and parents stop considering the long-term, overall well-being of the child and when they devalue their own coaching philosophies and methods compared with the “way things are supposed to be done”. One parent of a former player offered her wisdom to parents embarking on the junior tennis journey: “That’s the biggest danger. You’re always trying to perfect a machine when you’re really dealing with a child.”

Likewise, forms of self-discipline can become self-harming when players stop putting their own well-being over the values of the sport culture – referred to as “overcommitment to the sport ethic”¹³ (Hughes and Coakley 1991) or deviant overconformity (Coakley 2006a). They tend to devalue their own personal needs, game styles, training styles, and intuitions compared with the way coaches and parents want them to do things. However, even when disempowering practices are acknowledged as disempowering, they may be continued, anyway, as they may provide an immediate *sense* of empowerment to players. Forms of abuse and self-abuse can sometimes be interpreted by elite athletes and the sport ethic as “necessary” to achieve ultimate mastery of sport, and thus empowering. One parent exemplifies this when she says, “It would be considered abuse here to where it’s not in foreign countries, and those kids are so disciplined.”

As Bordo 1993 notes, in their efforts to become ideal women and athletes, girls and women can become “hooked on the intoxicating feeling of accomplishment and control” over their bodies through disordered eating (148). From my experiences in junior and collegiate tennis, disordered eating is prevalent among female athletes in

¹³Overcommitment to sport ethic refers to the unquestioned commitment to participating in sport through injuries and eating disorders (Hughes and Coakley 1991).

forms of restrictive calorie intake, bingeing, and purging. And as Messner 2003 notes, boys and men build their male identities around violence. Athletes also can also feel agitated and depressed when they refrain from training for a few days. “What had made power strong becomes used to attack it” (Foucault 1980:56). In other words, what makes bodies strong at first – self-disciplinary training techniques - can also be the same factor in their injury and illness in the long-run. As Smith Maguire 2002 notes:

The bodily capacities of strength and speed produce results such as better and faster performances, but they also expose the body to new problems, injuries, and risks. Technologies of the self (such as the self-discipline involved in training) are not reducible to technologies of power (the established training techniques), and the effects of power are never fully predictable. The contradictory effects of training – virtuosity and vulnerability – create the possibility of athletes challenging the ends to which their competence is put, and directing their capacity for self-management towards ends and goals quite different from those originally intended (Smith Maguire 2002: 304-305).

This makes it difficult to discern between empowering technologies of the self and disempowering technologies of domination that keep junior athletes in the cycle of exploitation and self-exploitation for their sport.

“While authorities may hope to use an individual's subjectivity as an instrument of social management, technologies of the self are also, always, a potential means of resisting that social management” (Smith Maguire 2002:304). Likewise, when junior players reflexively follow certain regimens to enhance performance, they may become capable of employing the very knowledge they gain through their training to critically analyze that training (i.e. whether it is to their benefit or detriment). Sport can be seen as a technology of domination through training and disciplining bodies and, at the same time, an ethical technology of self that aids self-management: “...discipline and training generate 'solutions', which then generate new and different problems” (Smith Maguire

2002:304). There is a fine line between empowerment and disempowerment in junior tennis as the outcomes of disciplinary power can be contradictory, unpredictable, and paradoxical. The paradox is that in order to reconfigure the discursive power relations, junior players must learn how to “play the game” and form themselves through technologies of self in ways that are first harnessed by technologies of domination. These technologies of self lead to a “critical attitude towards the very codes and norms” through which players form their identities and a skepticism about what they consider as normal and natural (Shogan 1999).

Governmentality and (Dis)Empowerment in Junior Tennis

As junior tennis is both a matter of regulated and autonomous bodies, junior players do not play tennis because they are necessarily “duped” into it or because they have some natural desire to. Sports performance enhancement reinforces a discourse of personal improvement which can act as an “opiate” and foster ignorance or apathy of the systems behind the social order (i.e. distract attention from protesting against exploitative coaches or training practices). But it can also act as a tool to develop greater self-awareness which could, in the end, enable individuals to become *more* aware of the social order and junior tennis. It may encourage questioning the ultimate goals of performance enhancement for which players are training their bodies (and minds). This further supports my view of junior tennis practices as having paradoxical effects on individual player power and well-being, but also on how these practices can both reproduce and challenge the social order.

The paradox of junior tennis occurs “at the intersection” of “top-down” regulation of players by coaches and parents through technologies of domination (surveillance) and “bottom-up” autonomous self-regulation through technologies of the self (Smith

Maguire 2002:310). The paradox is that junior players can come to question the effects of their training and competition, through the qualities they develop *from* their training and competition, and how their autonomous decisions contribute to social management and the perpetuation of social goals. The “body culture” (Brownell 2000) of junior tennis can provide the tools (i.e. self-discipline, determination, analytical thought, competing against opponents, adversity) for social disruption and resistance to the social order of junior tennis. This intersection could be called the liminal space where society and selves are transformed to either reinstate or breakdown the social order and their individual status. In other words, through rituals of discipline and embedded realms of liminality¹⁴ experienced at the micro-level (within individual players as well as within the junior tennis context), the social order of junior tennis becomes reinforced or broken down. The empowerment of both individual players and the social system of tennis is dependent upon the manner in which technologies of power are employed and interpreted in their cultural context by the junior players themselves, their parents, and their coaches.

As will be shown in subsequent chapters, players are disempowered when they, their coaches, and their parents approach practices and interactions with each other in ways that neglect the holistic well-being of the player as well as the coach-player-parent triad. Players are empowered, though, when they, their parents, and their coaches apply constant, reflexive analysis to their daily practices. Most importantly, junior players can be empowered in one context while disempowered in the next, thus, experiencing a *paradox of power*. As it is often difficult to discern between technologies of power and

¹⁴This is explained in Chapter 3.

of self (Markula 2003, Ortner 1995), it can be difficult to discern when sport practices are empowering or disempowering for youths.¹⁵

Chapters 5 and 6 look at the paradoxes within the *power approaches* performed by parents, coaches, and players with each other within the power molecule. These power approaches can be visualized along *continuums* of power for each the authority figure (parent/coach) and the subordinate figure (player). The *power relations* between these two entities show how these power roles can be transformed, reinforced, and abused causing paradoxical spaces of power within the parent-player and coach-player relationships¹⁶. This research, then, answers Smith Maguire's 2002 call to study power in the sport environment by using Foucault's concepts of governmentality – the interaction between technologies of domination and technologies of self - in ways that allow them to interact and respond to each other.

The Power Molecule

For Foucault, “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault 1978:95). Power exists, necessarily, between free individuals where freedom implies a degree of self-management and choice; otherwise, the dynamic transforms into a dynamic of domination and violence. But freedom does not necessarily imply equality or rebellion to authoritative power: “All relations have some degree of domination, and in some cases, the ability to resist is limited. But it is important to remember that resistance is not only refusal to obey or revolution; it is a matter of choosing one's response to the influence of

¹⁵It depends on the context, although some practices are generally considered disempowering by most junior tennis participants.

¹⁶There is also a dynamic between parent and coach but there is no room to explain it in this project. However, it would complete the analysis of the ways in which power works in the power molecule.

another” (Smith Maguire 2002:295). Power is relational and positive as it acts upon the *actions* of others, rather than directly onto people (Smith Maguire 2002:295). As such, the parent-player-coach triad is a site to observe power.

Hearn 2012 notes, in his recent theorizing of power,

We need to be able to distinguish between power in the physical sense of energy embedded in substances and power in the social sense of the coordination and mobilization of feelings, thoughts, and actions towards ends...At the same time, if we are too stringent in this distinction, we lose track of underlying connections, and miss something important (5).

What he is saying is that power should not be seen as an object of possession because this implies that it can be held onto permanently. However, it might be useful, at times, to see how power is enacted when people do have it even if just for brief moments. Thus, I see power as a form of energy that may be shared, distributed, relinquished, converted, struggled for, and perhaps even hoarded in the creation of power dynamics among individuals. Much like a molecule is made up of electrons sharing, receiving, and distributing charges of energy among themselves and the nucleus, the *power molecule* (Figure 4-1) of the parent-player-coach triad is the sharing, receiving, and distributing of power among them. Power molecules of parent-player-coach triads are shown as yellow triangles in within the USTA Junior Tennis community. Subcultures are formed by players, shown as purple circles, parent subcultures as red circles, and coaches shown as blue circles outside their respective triads, or power molecules. As molecules make up an organism, power molecules make up the junior tennis habitus. As power shifts among members of each power molecule, power shifts among power molecules in the junior tennis culture as well as between power molecules and the habitus.¹⁷

¹⁷This includes the governing body of the United States Tennis Association, but this dynamic is not a focus of this project.

In the junior tennis environment, there is an assumed binary - between parent and child and between coach and student - given the cultural power hierarchy that places adults as having authority over children. For the most part, adults are generally officially inscribed with the authority to guide, discipline, and punish children rather than vice-versa. But as there are “intricate webs of articulations and disarticulations that always exist between dominant and dominated” (Ortner 1995:190), this binary presupposition is also more complex, especially as children gain more power over their parents as they succeed through junior tennis. While this dynamic establishes adults as “authority” and youths as “subordinate”, it also allows for child resistance against this adult power which establishes the back-and-forth power play that is seen between them. And, as Ortner 1995 points out, an essentialized binary view of power and resistance is constantly changing as those who are dominated are not homogeneously dominated, just like those who dominate are not a homogenous group.

There is conflict within groups of power players, and there is also conflict within each individual power player. Furthermore, resistance is often hard to define because it is sometimes submission in disguise. However, it is still useful to use resistance as a category because it highlights the power play that is in most, if not all, relationships. As Ortner 1995 says, “...one can only appreciate the ways in which resistance can be more than opposition, can be truly creative and transformative, if one appreciates the multiplicity of projects in which social beings are always engaged, and the multiplicity of ways in which those projects feed on and well as collide with one another” (191). Thus, this research explores the variety of instances in which power can play out between “authority” figures (parents and coaches) and “subordinate” figures (junior players).

Power Continuums

In an effort to complicate the power-resistance binary within the power molecule, I see power performed along continuums: an authority (coach/parent) power continuum (Figure 4-2) of coaching and parenting behavior, and a subordinate (player) power continuum (Figure 4-3). This power constantly moves back-and-forth along the continuums depending on the approaches individuals take towards each other.

Influenced by a queer theory approach, I use a continuum¹⁸ approach as Johnson and Kivel 2007 describe a need to apply queer theory to sport studies:

Queer theory encourages researchers to combine diverse subjectivities with multiple theoretical utilities, studying phenomenon such as leisure and sport in ways that challenge normative discursive ideologies and arouse political activism in an effort to eliminate injustice and create social change; a social change that can be galvanized through the research efforts of leisure and sport studies scholars (103).

Queer theory was initially conceptualized for political mobility and social change in the context of gender and sexuality identities. As Johnson and Kivel 2007 explain,

As a form of identity (Queer), a system of thinking (queer theory), and a means of action (queering), queer subverts the privilege, entitlement, and status obtained through compulsive heterosexuality and questions how heteronormative behaviors enacted by both heterosexuals and homosexuals function to maintain heterosexuality's dominance (102).

The continuum concept can be applied to power dynamics, in general. Power is performed along continuums based on the context of the situation in which it is being performed – the individuals performing power with each other, the culture within which the individuals are influenced, the culture within which the situation is taking place, etc. A continuum releases the concept of power from a static, binary oppositional state to a dynamic, transformative energy that moves between, around, through, and among

¹⁸Theberge 1998 applies a continuum approach to gender in women's ice hockey.

individuals, even though there are titles of authority and subordination to which members of society adhere. My research employs the continuum to articulate power in the junior tennis world and supports Johnson and Kivel 2007 when they say,

In conjunction with Foucault's 1983 conceptualizations of power relations in social contexts, leisure and sport studies, scholars might use queer theory to extend our examination of leisure and sport constraints to explore how power relations reflect issues of negotiation (control and evading control) in leisure and sport (103).

The power approaches exhibited by parents and coaches influence and are influenced by the power that players express in response to that power, as well as the context of their interactions. Like a tennis rally, there is a back-and-forth of power exchanged among parents, coaches, and players. This constant “influxness” of power among players and their coaches and parents contributes to the concept of the liminal junior athlete. As Chapter 3 discusses, power is delivered, embodied, resisted, and performed through ritual and the liminality in various ways. As liminality is the experience of fluidity between two points of status, I see paradoxical spaces in this liminality of power exhibited in the coaching and parenting approaches toward their players and vice versa. There are many philosophies, priorities, behaviors, and attitudes articulated by participants that are sought, avoided, and exhibited.

Since there are no distinct lines between parenting/coaching types or between player learning types, the continuums show how the power approaches they use can “shift” from one approach to the next depending on the power dynamic. In other words, the concept of the continuum is meant to show how approaches bleed into one another.¹⁹ But for the purposes of this project, I designate these areas along the

¹⁹This is like the pre-liminal and post-liminal phases of embedded ritual processes, as also discussed in Chapter 3.

continuum in order to show how individuals can use approaches along the continuum instead of labeling the individuals themselves as “types” of parents and coaches.

Essentializing an individual as being a certain type of person neglects the contextual factors influencing why individuals behave the way they do. The continuum focuses on approaches that individuals use instead of trying to label individuals themselves.

“Authority” role (parent/coach) power continuum

The approaches that parents and coaches take, as having a position of authority over their children and players, involve a continuum of approaches: *coddling* at one extreme, *abusive* at the other extreme, and *collaborative* approaches in the middle of these extremes. Between collaborative approaches and the coddling extreme are *nurturing* approaches, and in the other direction, between collaborative approaches and abusive extremes are *authoritative* approaches. The middle of the continuum shows the “zone of optimal empowerment”, where power is more balanced between parent/coach and player. This zone - incorporating nurturing, collaborative, and authoritative approaches - tends to be the most empowering approaches for the parent/coach player dynamic. Building upon Foucauldian sport theorists who explore the relationship between technologies of domination and technologies of the self, and the difficulty involved in distinguishing between them, this zone involves paradoxical spaces where empowerment and disempowerment are hard to discern. The “disempowering extremes” show the approaches that tend to be the most disempowering for youths' overall well-being. Below, I briefly describe these approaches as they move along the continuum from the coddling extreme to the abusive extreme.²⁰

²⁰Chapters 5 and 6 go into more detail.

Coddling. When coaches and parents use permissive approaches with their players/kids, they favor the individual player's needs and desires over the needs of the family, team, or group. Sometimes, coaches and parents coddle their players to this extreme with false praise, encouragement of arrogance, avoidance of accountability, and may even teach them to cheat. Coddling approaches often involve a parent's or coach's excessive dependence on their player's tennis performance for their own identity. Players may feel they are above the rules of the coach/parent, the team or training environment, and, perhaps, of junior tennis rules. These approaches tend to foster an excessive amount of dependence in players upon coaches and parents to take care of players' responsibilities and to bolster their self-esteem and sense of superiority. Examples of coddling approaches, according to players in my research, are when parents do their children's homework for them, buy them the latest equipment, or carry their bags for them at tournaments.

By giving too much power to the players, these coaches and parents often disempower their players in the long run with a sense of entitlement (or a sense that they can treat people poorly or have poor work ethic without consequence), learned deceptiveness, anarchy, and social deviance²¹. Some players respond to their parents' suggestions with yelling, cursing, complaining, and blame. In response to this, their parents often stay silent or try to correct their own behavior in order to avoid upsetting their child further. Coakley 2006a shows how “deviant underconformity” to the sport ethic through ignoring or rejecting norms of the sport ethic, such as abiding by the authority of coaches and parents, can lead to “anarchy” for the individual as well as the

²¹Hughes and Coakley 1991 called this “positive deviance”.

social system (159). Thus, extreme permissiveness of players' actions and attitudes by coaches and adults can lead to anarchy within the power molecule and eventual disempowerment for the player's overall and long-term well-being.

Nurturing. Parents and coaches who use nurturing approaches may be using approaches similar to coddling approaches and allow their player to lead the decision-making and rely on self-motivation. But parents and coaches in this case do not take care of the player's responsibilities, and they are less dependent on their player's tennis for their identity. Parents and coaches are in the figurative “passenger seat” while their players take the “driver seat” on the road to junior tennis success. I see nurturing approaches as being empowering for players as well as parents and coaches. For instance, some parents say that they wish their children were not so driven with their tennis so that they could have a “normal” family life and relax on the weekends. These parents support their children to pursue their goals, though, allowing their children to dictate the family's schedule.²²

This approach is very similar to collaborative approaches except that players guide the parents and coaches. This is often the case as players get older and are seen as more capable to take on responsibilities for themselves as parents and coaches adjust their approaches from coddling or authoritative behaviors to approach a more collaborative dynamic. On the other hand, the nurturing approach can easily become an extreme coddling approach when parents and coaches are reluctant to put restrictions on players' behaviors and attitudes or when players are not reflexive about the support

²²This has ramifications for siblings which will be discussed in Chapter 8.

their parents and coaches provide. If used in the direction of the collaborative middle, this approach is considered within the “zone of optimal empowerment”.

Collaborative. At the middle of this continuum are collaborative coaching and parenting approaches where coaches/parents acknowledge that their job is to train their players with independence and enough self-esteem to eventually be their own coaches on the court during competition, and in life. Coaches and parents that use these approaches nurture players with confidence and respect for their authority through strict but fair guidelines and behaviors without intimidation or threats. By sharing power with players, they maintain respect, not by dominating or coddling them, but by demanding of them their best effort. They also communicate with them about tennis-related decisions as well as about their lives outside of tennis and prioritize the well-being of their players over just their performance or their own reputations. They equally take into account the players' needs outside of tennis as well as inside, and they recognize a balance between the well-being of the group and coach, or the family and parent, with the well-being of the individual player. This dynamic promotes a sense of democracy and team effort within the power molecule as the coach and parent include the player in the decision-making about their future goals and the best way to attain them.

A good example of collaborative approaches is when coaches ask their players for their constant feedback about goals and training techniques. This helps ascertain that they are both “on the same page”. One coach made a point to ask in his lessons how his students felt about the drills they were doing or how they interpreted it during drills and water breaks:

Coach: I like that one...extend....low center of gravity...better...much better...control your balance...control....low center of balance...show us

these last few balls how low you can get...wide-stance...get low...low...low...there you go!...get low...just like you're jumping rope...low...that's the way...perfect [clap]...how do you feel with that?

Player: Good.

Coach: You feel like you have more control with that?

Player: Yeah.

Coach: Is it hard to remember what you need to do?

Player: Sometimes.

Coach: Are you really tired?

Player: No.

Coach: Okay, we'll get a drink when you're really tired...control the ball with more top edge please...get lower...stay lower...stay in it...oh...let's get a drink. Doing okay?

Player: Yeah.

Coach: Feeling alright? Tell me your thoughts. [Walk back to water jugs again.] Tell us your feelings. Tell us your thoughts. We're not mind readers. We're pretty good at it but not perfect [smiles].

Player: I think I'm playing really well, and I think in general when my backhand goes in, then my whole game fits together.

Taking into account the player's perspective and emotional/physical states on a daily basis helps prevent injury and burnout in junior players. This approach would correspond to what Coakley 2006a referred to as the "normally accepted range of conformity" (159) which I see as the zone of optimal empowerment for players' overall and long-term well-being. Because the traditional form of coaching often involves coaches demanding players to perform tasks in order to succeed, without asking them to contribute to the decision-making, any approach moving toward this collaborative ideal could be seen as a technology of self.

Authoritative. Players and coaches use authoritative approaches when they lead the decision-making process and motivation of players. Authoritative approaches can be very similar to collaborative and nurturing approaches in that parents and coaches do not excessively rely on their players for their own identity. Opposite to nurturing approaches, however, authoritative approaches show the coach/parent in the “driver's seat” while the player is in the “passenger seat”. An example is when parents and coaches instruct players to follow a strict guideline of behaviors inside and outside of tennis (i.e. diet, training, social life, sleep schedule) but doing so in a respectful way that still values players as people, not just performers. In return, coaches and parents who use this approach retain their respect from players by demanding players to put forth their best effort without demeaning them. I see the authoritative approach as still being empowering to players' well-being overall and in the long-term. Authoritative approaches can be a tool for parents and coaches to gain more control of their dynamic with players. However, they can be transitional phases into abusive approaches if coaches and parents are not reflexive about their positions of authority.

Abusive. On the other extreme of the continuum are abusive approaches where coaches and parents exert their authority over players with oppressive treatment in their methods of discipline and training regimens²³. Coaches and parents who use these approaches attach their identities to their player's performance. They do not take into account the player's voice in their training regimens and blame the player for any failures during training and competition. Abusive extremes involve verbal, emotional,

²³Training regimens that harm players physically could be considered an indirect form of physical abuse. Direct forms of physical abuse, such as punishing players by hitting them or threatening to, starts to bleed into another continuum of violence.

psychological, and physical abuse²⁴ through training exercises that harm players rather than strengthen. Some examples of this approach are critical yelling, ignoring, humiliating, ignoring, throwing objects at, and mentally manipulating players in order to gain and maintain complete control over them.

Coaches and parents who exhibit these behaviors often tend to prioritize their own reputation by prioritizing the outcome of their players over their well-being. Instead of giving too much power to their players, these coaches and parents do not give them enough in order to maintain dominance and control over their players. This approach would be incorporated into what Coakley 2006a refers to as “fascism” or “overconformity” to sport ethic (159). Players are usually disempowered through this extreme approach because, as in the extreme permissive approach, they often develop long-term detrimental effects of abuse and an over-dependence on their coach or parent for guidance and identity.²⁵ Abusive approaches are the clearest form of technologies of domination.

“Subordinate” role (player) power continuum

Like coaches and parents, players perform power in various ways depending on their background, resilience, relationship with the coach/parent, mood, goals, personality, family dynamic, culture, etc. As such, the approaches that players use, as having a subordinate position to their coaches and parents, involve a continuum of approaches from *entitled (disobedience)* approaches, at one extreme, to *submissive*

²⁴Once physical abuse becomes direct (i.e. hitting), these behaviors bleed into a continuum of violence.

²⁵Power does not equal violence; power is influential, but inflicting or threatening bodily harm is violence (not power) (Smith Maguire 2002:295). The far right of the continuum can be considered to bleed into an abuse continuum.

(*obedience*) approaches at the other extreme, with *collaborative* approaches in the middle of these extremes. Between collaborative approaches and entitled disobedient approaches are *resistant disobedience* approaches. In the other direction, between collaborative approaches and submissive approaches are *guided obedience* approaches. The middle of the continuum shows the zone of optimal empowerment, where power is more balanced between parent/coach and player – resistant disobedience, collaborative, and guided obedience approaches – and tend to be the most empowering approaches for the parent/coach player dynamic. The disempowered extremes of the continuum shows where power is extremely imbalanced - where the player is controlled more by the parent/coach (submissive obedience) or where the player controls the parent/coach (entitled disobedience). Below, I briefly describe these approaches that players use with their parents/coaches as they move along the continuum from the entitled disobedience extreme to the submissive obedience extreme.

Entitled disobedience. Players using approaches at one extreme of the player power continuum, entitled disobedience, tend to overpower their parents and coaches in the decision-making process even though parents and coaches are inscribed with an “authority figure” label as adults. Entitled disobedience can be a response to and a catalyst for a coddling approach used by parents and coaches. This approach is often in the form of yelling, snapping, or insulting their parents or coaches directly (often in public) in a verbal manner or through body language, such as eye-rolling or walking

away²⁶. Several times, I saw players throw their water jug or towel at their parents. I also saw some players yell at their parents from the court. It is also exhibited by ignoring (or doing the opposite of) coaches' and parents' suggestions altogether. For instance, one player refused to hit his forehand and continued to move around the ball to hit his backhand in a drill despite his coach's instructions.

Players who use entitled disobedience approaches do not acknowledge or respect the authority role that parents and coaches have, even if those parents and coaches use empowering nurturing or authoritative approaches. These approaches can be considered technologies of the self and/or coping mechanisms depending on the context in which they are being used. Players may be empowered by technologies of the self through entitled disobedience approaches when they are used in response to abusive parenting/coaching approaches. Entitled disobedience may also be used as a coping mechanism to survive in an oppressive environment. On the other hand, these approaches may be disempowering if players use them in response to parents/coaches who use coddling or nurturing approaches. Players may learn to disrespect and take their coaches/parents for granted if they show little appreciation for their support and for taking care of their responsibilities. This approach coincides with Coakley's 2006a view of "deviant underconformity", or the ignoring and rejecting of norms (159).

Resistant disobedience. Moving toward the middle of the continuum, players who use resistant disobedience may exhibit similar behaviors of disrespect towards parents and coaches as an entitled disobedience approach. But they do so in response to what they may see as excessive power from the coach/parent who may be using

²⁶Amanda Holt 2012 introduced her work on "adolescent-to-parent abuse" during the time of writing that shed light on this dynamic.

authoritative or oppressive approaches. Unlike entitled disobedience, resistant disobedience can be a productive form of rebellion that may move the coach-player or parent-player dynamic towards a collaborative relationship. This provides an example of power that transgresses traditional power roles. For instance, one father told me he did not speak to his daughter for four days after losing a match in a big tournament. He felt that she had disrespected him by not giving her best effort. But when she responded to his “silent treatment” by saying she was quitting tennis, thereby taking matters in her own hands, he realized his mistake of pinning his identity onto her performance. He started welling up with tears when he told me this. Since then, he has completely changed his approach to his daughter's tennis and said that her game even got much better after that. Overall, players exhibit more power (or try to) than their parents and coaches, in decision-making processes with this approach. If this approach is used in the direction of the collaborative middle, it is within the “zone of optimal empowerment”.

Collaborative. At the middle of the continuum, or zone of optimal continuum, is a collaborative approach, where power is shared and balanced between coach/parent and player. The coach/parent and player work as a team to form goals, make decisions, and discuss solutions to problems together. This incorporates a relationship based on communication and freedom to ask questions without being criticized. This type of dynamic is devoid of coddling or oppressive behaviors from parents and coaches as well as submissive and entitled behaviors from players. Players are deeply involved in the process of becoming players and work with their coaches to form and execute goals and plans together. This can sometimes move along the continuum in either direction when the sharing of power becomes a struggle for power. The idea of collaboration

suggests a balance of power, even if temporary. I see this as the most empowering place along the continuum for players because they are at peace with their coaches/parents as well as learning through them. When players share power with their authority figures rather than overpower or be overpowered by them, they feel secure and confident to move forward. As mentioned above, Coakley 2006a would view this as the center of the “normally accepted range” of conformity (159).

Guided disobedience. Toward the abusive extreme, are guided obedience approaches which are also productive forms of player power. In this approach, players are in the “passenger seat” while their parents and coaches are in the “driver's seat”. Players follow instructions willingly and respect their coach's and parent's authority role when they use empowering approaches. This is empowering for players who need help learning self-sufficiency, self-discipline, and eventual independence. This is much like the collaborative approach in that players are often enthusiastic about their coach's or parent's leadership and follow instructions without complaint. Unlike collaborative approaches, players have less power in the decision-making process. The approach is common for younger players or players just starting the junior tennis journey who need more guidance.

For example, coaches tell young players how to hit a ball or what they need to do to become elite players in terms of sacrifice and hard work. Players respond with guided disobedience when they follow their advice and instructions without complaint or rebellion. Players may exhibit power in similar ways to submissive obedience (below) in this approach, but in response to an empowering power approach by their parents and coaches instead of an oppressive one. If using this approach moves the dynamic in the

direction of the collaborative middle, instead of towards the oppressive extreme, it can be considered within the zone of optimal empowerment. But if it reinforces parental power, it might be considered a coping mechanism rather than a technology of the self.

Submissive obedience. At the extreme end of guided disobedience approaches are approaches of submissive obedience where players have no or little control in the decision-making process with their parents and coaches. Players submit, in response to and as a catalyst for, their coaches' or parents' oppressive/abusive power. Generally, players who respond in this way have no room to make mistakes without consequence. Players who perform these approaches tend to show signs of emotional abuse. They may seem despondent, quiet, act out with self-deprecating comments, or just go through motions²⁷. One player noted that she started using drugs to cope with a coach's verbal abuse but could not bring herself to rebel against the coach directly. Abuse is often well-hidden as will be discussed further in Chapter 7. This is usually disempowering for players as they develop a fear to create, a sense of helplessness, and lowered self-esteem (Bandura 1997). This would fall under Coakley's 2006a concept of fascism or "deviant overconformity" (159) and Foucault's 1975 concept of technology of domination.

Relational Power Grid

Wolf 1989 used the term "structural power" to show how "power shapes a field of action so as to render some kinds of behavior possible while making others less so..." (587). Later in his career, he said,

Social categorizations involve variabilities in access to power, power equalities or differentials are at work in defining who can address whom, and from what

²⁷This is also a form of "dissociation" as Chapter 3 describes.

symmetrical or asymmetrical positions. The grid formed by these rankings and positions, in turn, sets up the contexts for how things are said or performed and codifies how they are to be understood (Wolf 1998:7).

Having visualized the dynamics of power as moving along continuums within power molecules, I see how some approaches that coaches and parents use may elicit certain approaches from players more than others, and vice-versa. A Foucauldian approach to power within the power molecule helps me see how power can be laid along these continuums of approaches in a *relational power grid* (Figure 4-4):

This grid portrays how more overall empowerment (of the player, the parent, the coach, and the overall dynamic among them) results when both authority figure (i.e. coach or parent) and subordinate figure (junior player) work together toward a collaborative dynamic within the zone of optimal empowerment. More disempowerment results at the extremes where power is imbalanced. The lines connecting certain power approaches with others in the grid are some of the dynamics that can be seen in junior tennis and have been discussed above. But there are many dynamics between authority figures (coach or parent)²⁸ and subordinate figures (player) that occur within the relational power grid depending on contextual factors (i.e. individual personalities, culture, time, family dynamic, level of ability). This grid is not meant to predict behaviors within the power molecule as *always* having these combinations. It is only meant to conceptualize power as contextually contingent and the ways in which power dynamics are formed, reproduced, and challenged. Approaches moving along the continuum

²⁸Parents and coaches also have their own power dynamics between them which influences the power molecule's relational power. But for this dissertation, I focus on those dynamics that directly involve the junior player as this is a child-centered project. Future research should include all three dynamics for a more complete picture of how power circulates through all three participants of the power molecule.

sometimes, even, involve a range of these approaches within one dynamic. I use it to show how parents/coaches and players may become “stuck” in a disempowering power dynamic if they each use the same approach with the other. But if one uses a different approach, it can “shift” the dynamic.

A shifting dynamic may move towards a collaborative power relation (ideally) if an individual in a power dynamic shifts her approach to make the dynamic move toward the collaborative center. An example would be if a player used resistant disobedience instead of submissive obedience to transgress the oppressive power of a coach. That would be considered a technology of the self, attempting to move the dynamic to the zone of empowerment. On the other hand, if a player continues to use submissive obedience, it can move the dynamic more towards the abusive extreme. Another example of this would be if a coach used more abuse to counteract this player's move to a resistant disobedience approach. Empowering coaches/parents tend to adjust their approaches depending on the responses of their players without approaching the extremes of the relational power grid. Disempowering coaches/parents tend to sustain one approach for all players all the time, regardless of player individuality, even if the power relation is at an extreme of deviance²⁹ (on behalf of the coach, parent, player or all three). Likewise, players (and their power molecule with parents and coaches) experience overall empowerment when they exhibit power that makes the dynamic between player-coach or player-parent approach the middle of the continuum. But player power that makes the dynamic approach the extremes of the continuum, disempowers the player and power molecule overall. Empowered players are not

²⁹Coakley 2006a and Hughes and Coakley 1991 discuss deviance at the extremes of conformity (underconformity and overconformity) to sport ethic.

always obedient and disempowered players are not *always* disobedient (or vice versa). Rather, empowered players (like empowering coaches and parents) show agency that attempts to equalize the coach-player or parent-player power dynamic.

This model is also meant to show how the extremes might be performed within a power relation between parent/coach and player. For instance, at one extreme, a coach or parent's oppressive/abusive power generates and is perpetuated by a player's submissive obedience. On the other extreme, a coach's or parent's permissive/coddling approach generates and is perpetuated by a player's entitlement.³⁰ In some situations, both extremes of the player power continuum can co-exist. Players can both feel entitled to/by their sport and, at the same time, resent it for the abuse they endure. Some players may feel entitled *because* of the abuse they endure. Others may act entitled outside of the environment they feel abused in (i.e. training) as a form of resistance, as if to escape their abused self for the power they feel of an entitled self. Both abuse and entitlement can result in and be perpetuated by “positive deviance”, or “an overcommitment to sport ethic” (Hughes and Coakley 1991).

Although, power is often normalized in the authority roles of coaches and parents, showing power approaches with this grid emphasizes the notion that power is *constructed* (even though the coach holds a title of power through payment and the parent holds a title of power by guardianship). It is constantly shifting back and forth between individuals. When one side holds power for too long, the dynamic shifts along respective continuums from the empowering middle where collaboration occurs to the

³⁰Coakley 2006a uses the terms “anarchy” and “fascism” to describe his parabolic continuum of deviance in sports at the extremes of these continuums. Along the lines of this political metaphor, collaboration could be seen as “democracy”.

disempowering extremes where entitlement or abuse occurs and back again. As power increases for one individual, freedom of choice decreases for the other in a dyad power relationship. Power, when shared, results in a mutual building of coach/parent and player rather than at the expense of the other's freedom.³¹

Summary

Conceptualizing power with a relational power grid of power continuums within power molecules of coaches, players, and parents shows that power is always shifting as individuals use different power approaches with each other. Power continuums help to visualize how it can be shifted from one extreme to the other along a variety of approaches between them depending upon the context. This complicates the binary oppositional dynamic between “authority” and “subordinate” figures. In other words, approaches are used by coaches, parents, and players with each other in a specific context. As these approaches become repeated daily and over time, dynamics among them become normalized as the habitus of the power molecule, which as Bourdieu 1990 said is difficult to transform. But these dynamics can be transformed through the agency of one individual to shift their power approach. When this happens, it causes a shift in the approach of others and an eventual shift in the dynamic.

Relating back to the beginning of the chapter, technologies of domination are used to constrain choices of individuals at the coddling or abusive extremes of these

³¹In a triad, such as the power molecule, the third member outside the dyad usually joins one side or serves as mediator between the two. For instance, if a parent yells at his child for losing a match or not trying hard enough, the coach will serve as mediator by talking to each the parent and child separately about how to handle the other. If the coach does not do this, he or she may simply join the side of the parent or the child. The coach may decide to ignore the situation, but this is not likely as it will affect his relationship with them both if they do not say something to at least one of them. This dynamic will be elaborated upon in future writings.

continuums. Technologies of the self are used to shift power relations along the continuum towards the empowering collaborative middle, or zone of optimal empowerment. Distinguishing power approaches as technologies of domination, coping strategies, or technologies of the self depends upon the context of the power relation between authority figures (coach/parent) and subordinate figures (junior player) as well as the perspective of the individual doing the distinguishing.

Power approaches can be seen as technologies of the self if they require reflexivity, constant self-evaluation and re-evaluation on the coach's/parent's behalf about the state of their relationships with players, and vice-versa. The zone of empowerment is achieved through the constant shifting of power approaches along the continuum without reaching the extremes. The disempowering extremes of the continuum show where power is imbalanced and where the parent/coach is excessively controlled more by the player or where the parent/coach excessively control the player. I see these extremes as technologies of domination as they do more to reproduce power dynamics between coach/parent and player and, ultimately, empower one over the other. But, again, this depends on the context³² of the approach and who is judging the approaches in that context.

It is difficult to label certain power approaches as *either* technologies of the self *or* technologies of domination since the consequences of using certain power approaches depends upon their context. Individuals' agency may have empowering effects on their well-being in some aspects of their lives but not others. However, power approaches and the practices performed within those approaches could be considered

³²An example of context is the direction that approaches takes along the continuum.

as empowering technologies of self in the context of the power molecule. That is, they are intentionally employed in order to move a dynamic towards empowering collaborative dynamics. Likewise, power approaches can be viewed as technologies of domination in the context of the power molecule when they maintain a normalized imbalance of power that results in deviant³³ relational power dynamics between coach/parent and player.

Overall, players experience both empowerment and disempowerment at once, or paradoxes of power. When taking into account players' holistic well-being – including well-being within and outside the tennis environment – power relations at the zone of optimal empowerment of the relational power grid are the most empowering. Those at the extremes are the most disempowering to overall, long-term well-being for both the individual player and power molecule. Chapter 5 focuses on some of the ways in which these power dynamics are performed between players and parents. Chapter 6 focuses on some of the ways in which power dynamics are performed between players and coaches. The various consequences of these dynamics to players' empowerment or disempowerment will be discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

³³“Deviant” is used here in the sense that Coakley 2006a refers to - underconformity or overconformity to sport ethic (159).

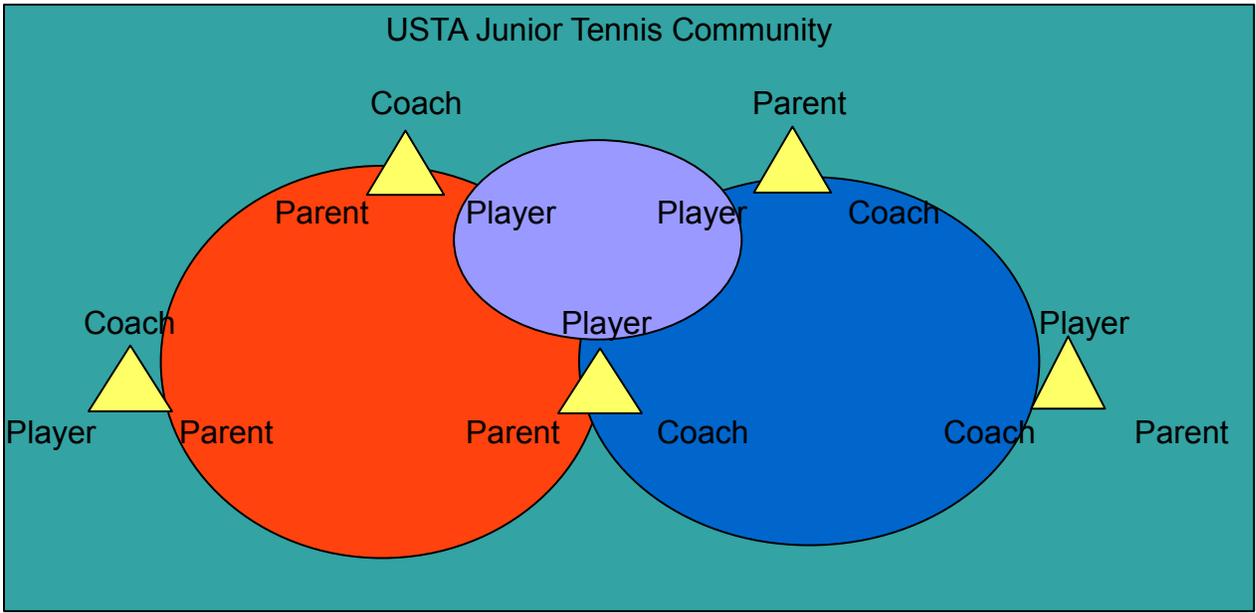


Figure 4-1. The power molecule

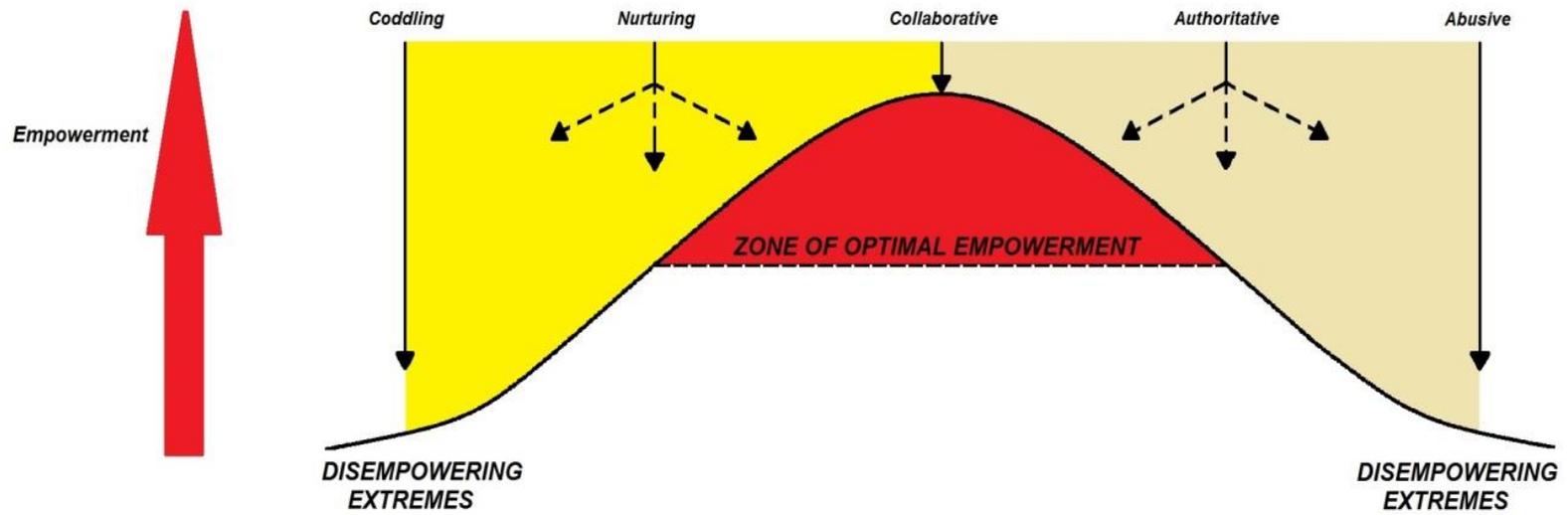


Figure 4-2. Authority (coach/parent) power continuum

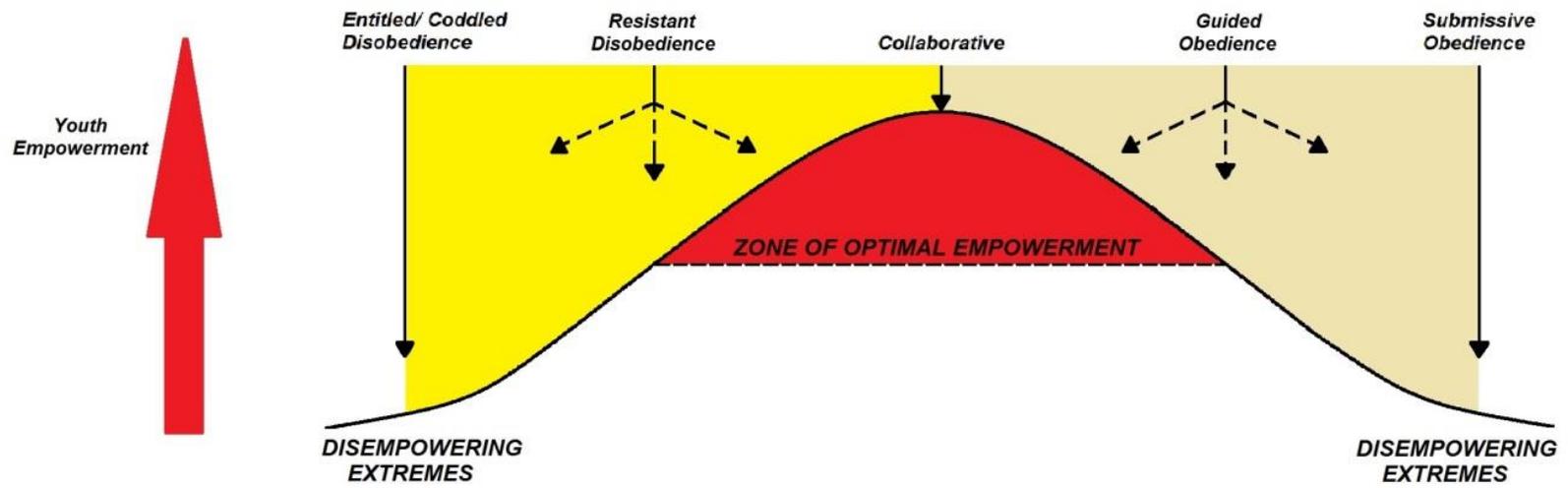


Figure 4-3. Subordinate (player) power continuum

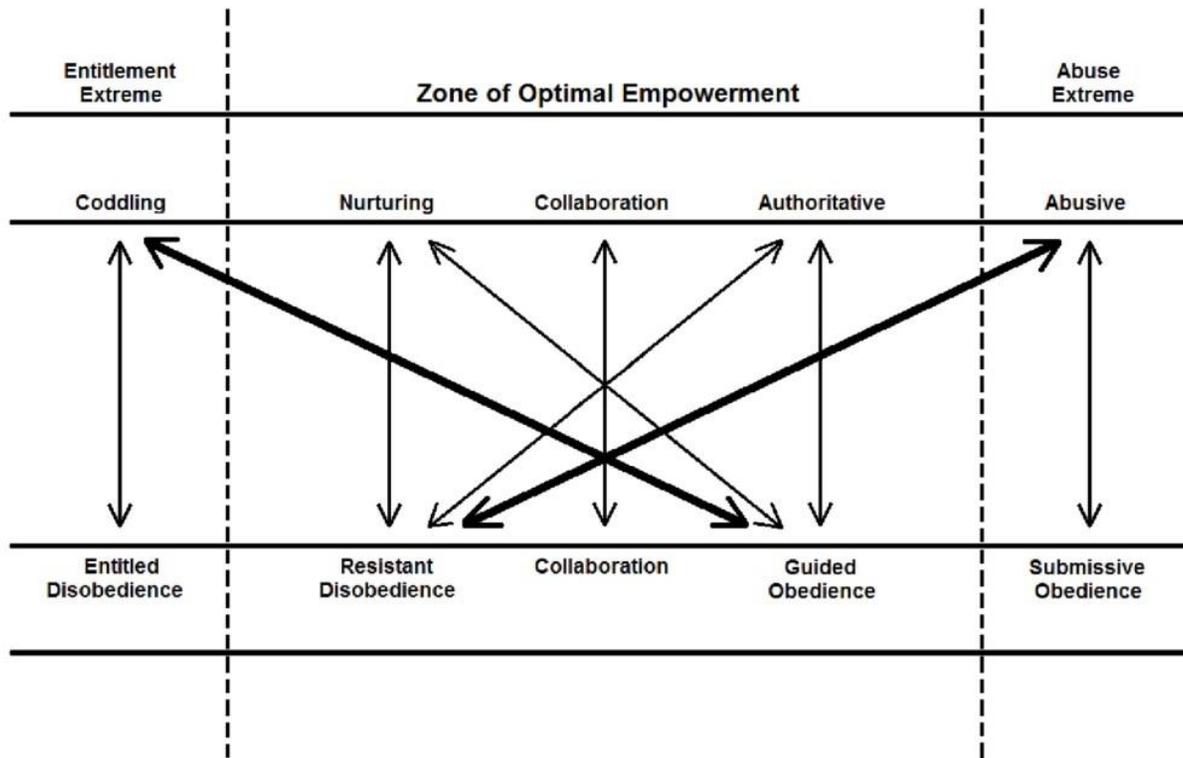


Figure 4-4. Relational power grid

CHAPTER 5 PLAYER-PARENT DYNAMICS

In this chapter, I build upon Chapters 3 and 4 to show how the liminal identities of players and their parents fall between their “subordinate” and “authority” roles as they use power approaches with one another along their power continuums. I elaborate upon my discussion of relational power to focus on the power dynamics between parent and player¹. First, I introduce the power approaches that players and parents use with each other. Then, I discuss the paradoxical spaces of the player-parent dynamic, using examples from interviews and observations.

Parent and Player Power Approaches

There are various “positive” and “negative” behaviors of junior tennis parents at the elite level and there is no one correct way to parent a junior tennis player (Gould et al. 2005). There are various contextual factors involved in parents' use of approaches along an authority (coach/parent) power continuum (Figure 4-2), as discussed in Chapter 4. These approaches include coddling, nurturing, collaborative, authoritative, and abusive approaches along the continuum². Some of these factors include the parent’s personality or mood, the player's mood, the desire to model his/her own parents’ behaviors or the opposite of his/her own parents’ behaviors, the need to counterbalance the coach’s approach, to please the coach or the player, and to be considered a “good” parent (Coakley 2006b). Likewise, as discussed in Chapter 4,

¹Several large studies have focused on junior tennis parents (Gould et al. 2005, Gould et al. 2006, Gould et al. 2008).

²Holt et al. 2008 provides a similar continuum of parental verbal reactions in youth soccer contexts ranging from “encouraging” (what I would call “entitling”) to “derogatory” (what I would call “oppressive”) comments.

junior players use power approaches in a variety of ways across the player power continuum: entitled disobedience, resistant disobedience, collaboration, guided obedience, and submissive obedience in response to and as a catalyst for their parents' suggestions, instructions, attempts to communicate, and/or demands. Ideally, a collaborative dynamic forms within the zone of optimal empowerment between player and parent. This involves parental approaches that range from nurturing to authoritative and player approaches that range from resistant disobedience to guided disobedience. On the other hand, approaches at the extremes have more disempowering consequences.³ These include coddling or abusive parenting approaches and a player's entitled disobedience or submissive obedience. Players, as liminal individuals, affect and are affected by their dynamic with parents depending upon the approaches used by each.

It is often difficult to discern between empowering and disempowering aspects of an individual's behaviors, thoughts, and attitudes. Reiterating Chapter 4, Foucauldian technologies of power can only be judged by taking into account the context within which a dynamic between individuals develops. Technologies of the self are empowering for individuals, and often the dynamic between/among individuals, because they prioritize ethical self-care and self-stylization in order to transgress, or overcome, oppressive power dynamics. Coping mechanisms are similar to technologies of the self because they seem empowering, and perhaps may be, but reproduce the power dynamic instead of transgressing it. Technologies of domination are, generally, disempowering because they reproduce oppressive power. They are often camouflaged

³This is similar to what Coakley 2006b called "deviant underconformity" and "deviant overconformity", respectively.

through processes of normalization that makes them seem as part of the “natural order of things.” Power relations among individuals are both reproduced and challenged through these processes of normalization within rituals of training and competition (including daily conversations), thereby, generating and being generated by the liminal identities of junior players, as highlighted in Chapter 3.

Nurturing-to-Coddling Dynamics

Parents may use a more nurturing approach because they have a laid back personality and choose to have a low-stress environment for themselves by using a no-pressure approach with their children. They may use a nurturing approach the day after a big match or after having used an authoritative approach for several days and see the need to back off a little. They may use a nurturing approach because that is what they were parented with and that is how they learned to parent or, on the other hand, they were parented with an authoritative or abusive approach and learned not to use that approach. They may also be trying to compensate for their child’s coach who is using an authoritative approach, or they may be trying to appease the coach who wants them to be more nurturing. They may not want to be labeled as an obnoxious “tennis-parent” by other parents in the community. Nurturing approaches are very similar to what Gould et al. 2005 viewed as parental qualities that promote smooth transitions through junior tennis: keeping tennis in perspective while being supportive, controlling their own emotions, relinquishing control of players to allow them to be independent, and effectively communicating through emotionally intelligent discussions.

A nurturing approach, however, may approach a coddling extreme if parents are not reflexive about their power dynamic with their children. If the coddling parent approach is paired with a player's entitled disobedience, the dynamic can reach a

disempowering extreme⁴. Coddling approaches refer to parenting approaches who exhibit little to no control over the decision-making process with their child players. The players, in this case, who use entitled disobedience do whatever they feel like doing despite parents' insistence to do otherwise because they may feel entitled by their success in junior tennis to do so. In this dynamic, players are sometimes seen snapping at their parents at tournaments and at practices to get them more water, and to complain that they forgot to bring something. The parents often do not respond to this and may feel guilty for upsetting their child. During an international junior tournament, one player told his mom to shut up twice when she said, "Come on, stay positive." She told me that she does not like that, but she felt like it was her fault for saying something. After the match, she suggested he take an Advil and he snapped, "You can't boss me around!" She said she did not like being talked to that way but that she does not know what to do about it. Some former players look back on the way they spoke to their parents and regret it. Former player Don admitted:

I would really sort of channel my anger toward my mom when she was watching me play tournaments. I would yell at her on the court like it was her fault...I regret ever, like, punishing her.

Collaborative Dynamics

When players and parents collaborate with each other, there is generally a shared goal and sense of how to accomplish it. Each depends on the other to make the dynamic work: the player depends on the parent to stay supportive and help manage things without basing his/her identity on the player's performance. The parent depends on the player to stay self-disciplined and self-motivated. Parents and players who have

⁴This is portrayed on the relational power grid (Figure 4-4).

a collaborative dynamic share the power of successes and failures together without placing blame on each other, or the coach for that matter. Winning and losing become peripheral to the process of developing into a tennis player. Players who have this dynamic with their parents are, in my view, the most empowered as they learn to be reflexive and responsible for their own needs as well as hold themselves accountable for the ways they impact others, especially their parents. A former Grand Slam player, Terri, describes this below:

I put a lot of pressure on myself to do well in those tournaments. The good thing about my mom and dad is that after a match, whether I won or lost, they would always treat me the same. It was never like, "Oh my god, you played so well and we're going to go buy you this." And if I lost, it wasn't the end of the world and major depression. It was always an even keel and that made me normal and stable, where the other kids were so high if they won and if they lost, it was depression time. So that was the main thing for me, and why I stayed out there for so long, because I had that stability, and I would say that the majority of the kids did not have that.

Collaborative parenting approaches often elicit collaborative player approaches. Below is an example of a collaborative parenting approach that elicited a collaborative player response in order to maintain a positive and communicative relationship between mother and son. While Don's dynamic with his mother was not always communicative, and was sometimes volatile as each struggled for power, he notes that they were able to equalize the power imbalance through positivity and communication:

Just talk about working through things, what I was working on, when I would figure things out, even if it was as simple as something like a little thing I was doing on my forehand and now I'm doing it better. That was fun to sit and talk about. And when I was frustrated trying to get somewhere, my mom was always so positive and she could know when I was frustrated. I was working hard to try to do it but I was spinning my wheels, and she'd feel my pain with that and she'd help me and tried to like help me figure out what to do.

Parents also realize there is a need to balance power approaches between the coach and parent. One often takes an authoritative approach while the other counterbalances with a nurturing approach in order to empower the child's tennis and development. One mother, Nina, explains:

If the coach is being strict, the parent has to be the nice guy by the court. And then if you're being hard on the kid then the coach has to lighten up a little. If you both tear them up on the court, if they're hitting six hours a day, they're just gonna fall apart. So somebody's kinda gotta be the nice guy and somebody's gotta be the tough one, then you gotta follow that whole tough thing off the court if they're gonna make it.

One of the most important aspects of the collaborative approach was an avoidance of prioritizing results, as player Terri notes about her father when she was competing:

[You have to] be supportive during a loss, too. You have to be there for your child. My dad would always tell me, he was happy sometimes when I did lose. I know that's weird, but he'd say that sometimes you learn more from a loss than from a win. I'm not saying he was happy, but he'd turn it into a lesson and say I'd have so many more matches to play that this one won't even be significant, so don't worry about it.

The collaborative dynamic between parents and players is ideal and can be considered a technology of self when it prioritizes concern for the player as a whole person. In other words, when parents and players collaborate with each other while prioritizing the player's well-being as well as the player's performance in tennis, it is a technology of the self. It puts ethical self-care and self-stylization, rather than adhering to traditional modes of training that do not prioritize self-care. However, when a collaborative approach is used to, say, "keep the peace" between parents and players in order to reach tennis goals, it might be considered a coping mechanism. The context of the approaches matters when making these judgments.

Authoritative-to-Abusive Dynamics

On the other hand, there are various reasons for parents using authoritative approaches. I see authoritative approaches as having similar characteristics as some of those highlighted by Gould et al. 2005 in what helps foster smooth transitions through junior tennis. With authoritative approaches, though, the parent retains control over most situations (whereas the player controls most situations and decision-making when parents use nurturing approaches). This could be beneficial if the player responds with guided obedience but detrimental if the parent moves towards an abusive extreme. Sometimes authoritative approaches can entail pushiness and yelling but in a manner that is demanding of the player's performance rather than demeaning the player's personhood.

Parents may have a personality that is intense and angry, which can sometimes act as a positive motivating intensity depending on how parents use these approaches. They may like a high-stress environment for themselves so they provide a high-stress environment for their kids. They may use an authoritative approach the day after losing a match that their child should have won or after several days of being nurturing with them. They may have been parented by authoritative parents and that is how they learned to parent. Or they may have been parented by nurturing or coddling parents and decided not to parent their kids that way. They may also be compensating for coaches who are coddling their kids, or they may be trying to please authoritative coaches who want them to parent that way too. Some parents who use the authoritative approach may try to "look the part" of "tough parent" by equating "tough" with "success" without question. These parents also may not want to risk losing respect of their kids and other parents in the tennis community.

Sometimes, this approach can become an abusive approach, though, if parents take their intensity too far⁵. For instance, parents who use excessively authoritative approaches or abuse often do not understand the fatigue and pain that their child players go through. They may think their child is lying or just complaining, not realizing that tennis is mentally and physically grueling, with more work waiting for them at home afterwards (i.e. homework). Sometimes, players are not given enough credit by their parents who may blame them for not trying hard enough. These parents often feel that success is a given and losing is not an option. If players respond with resistant disobedience approaches, the dynamic could be brought back to the collaborative zone of empowerment as shown on the relational power grid (Figure 4-4). This would be an example of what Foucauldian scholars describe as power that transgresses, highlighted in Chapter 4.

Player responses. Resistant disobedience is sometimes used by players when the parent displays an authoritative to abusive approach. Players using this approach are direct with their parents about how they feel when their parents are becoming overly involved in their tennis (i.e. coaching them during their matches, interrupting their coach during practice, making suggestions about their tennis). One player politely but succinctly put his mother in her place when she continues to tell him to move his feet. He responded with a smile, “I’d like to see you come out here and do all this work. I’m doing all the work here. I wonder how you would deal with it.”

Sometimes, the resistance is not so polite and comes in the form of yelling as a coach and former player (Linda) describes:

⁵This is discussed later in the chapter.

I used to yell at my mom. I don't think I ever said "Fuck you" or anything like that, but I only had yelled at my mom to be quiet, stop this stuff or whatever...My mom wasn't my coach, so that was a whole other issue, because she was trying to coach me.

Some players use excuses and humor as a form of resistant disobedience to disguise anguish in hopes to change their parents' behavior. In another instance recorded in my field notes, a player I hit with made excuses for his missed shots and jokingly told his dad that he might hit him with the ball if he did not stop criticizing him from the sidelines. Making excuses for why he is making mistakes and jokingly threatening his dad was a safe, or justified, way for Gary to take back power:

Gary is getting cranky because he's tired. He's starting to make excuses about why he didn't hit a certain shot. But I really just think he is too tired to concentrate anymore and making excuses is his way of trying to take power. He says he hates coming to net and is not comfortable there at all. I'm trying to give him the tools to turn a defensive position into an offensive. But his dad is on the sideline calling his serves out. Gary says, "You know I could accidentally shank this ball at you." He jokes, but part of him is serious. His joking is a way to take back power. (April 20, 2011 – Sarasota, FL)

Sometimes, players vocalize their resistance against dominating power from the parent, but project it onto the coach who may be using a collaborative or nurturing approach. Here, Linda talks about how her player took her frustrations with her parent's pressure out on her:

[My player] had so much pressure on her shoulders, and guess who she let it out on? Me! I was the punching bag. Her dad wanted to do it, and I was the punching bag, and I'm supposed to be the coach. So that was a very awkward situation and didn't help the dynamic at all.

Resistant disobedience can be considered a technology of the self, as it is an approach that prioritizes ethical treatment of self and others. I see it being used by players to transgress traditional power dynamics with their parents that may be oppressive.

Consequently, it transforms these dynamics into more empowering forms of collaboration. Through resistance can come collaboration.

However, when a parent's oppressive approach is paired with a child player's submissive obedience, this can result in a dynamic that reaches the abusive extreme of the relational power grid. This dynamic exemplifies the Foucauldian concept of technologies of domination as it reinforces oppressive parental power. Submissive obedience approaches are when players respond to a dominating parent with fear and subservience. Players who find themselves in this imbalanced power dynamic with their parents are often involved in domestically abusive dynamics with their parents, in general, which makes it difficult for the USTA to control. Unfortunately, most participants have a story of witnessing this dynamic at least once in their junior tennis careers. I talked to several former players who had this dynamic with their fathers.⁶ Some stayed with their fathers throughout their professional careers, but others, like Andrea, left as soon as they got old enough:

My father was one of the worst of the worst. My relationship with my father is the worst. I haven't spoken to him since I was 18. He never cared for me. He made that very clear growing up...He had mental stability issues. I had to get a restraining order because he has the tendency to become very violent...Once I got old enough, I took action on my own....I think he would have been like that anyway, but tennis provided the outlet for that to come out more frequently.

Another former player, Rita, exemplifies submissive obedience in her childhood as she emphasized how children are often not able to recognize, let alone articulate, their unhappiness in an abusive parenting situation. Children want to please their parents and they often do not want to admit their parent is abusive, even if they recognize it:

⁶Most abusive tennis parent-child dynamics seem to be father-daughter relationships which could be due to a gender ideology that is perpetuated in some families, cultures, and the sport context (Coakley 2006b).

Kids won't tell you when they're unhappy, tired, they don't want to play anymore, etc. They don't want to disappoint the parents...It's not in our nature to say, "My parent is shit." You don't want to admit that's just part of your life. It's very hard to say that your parent is not a good parent. We are brought into this world to love our parents, and that is the role that most parents abuse. You can get away with a lot more towards your kids than you can with anybody else. I see the way some parents talk to their children and I think, "You wouldn't talk to your worst enemy that way!" In sports, that's the thing.

But authoritative approaches are often not taken to these oppressive/abusive extremes and are used by parents in an effort to maintain a collaborative dynamic with their players who may be using guided obedience approaches. Parents often manage their players' tennis "careers" - a term used by most participants - by scheduling the tournaments, the practices, the social lives, the academic lives, and most aspects of their children's lives, in general, without much consultation with the players. If players have the same goals as their parents in these circumstances, they often follow their parents' lead. While guided obedience infers a collaborative agency, it also infers a power dynamic between parent and child which puts most of the decision-making power in the hands of the parent. Since players are mostly consumed with the details of their tennis training - stroke mechanics, fitness, nutrition, and place in the peer hierarchy - they often leave the managerial components of their career up to their parents without complaint in this scenario. Players may not develop a sense of responsibility in planning schedules and choosing training environments, but this may also remove the burden of having to make these decisions off their shoulders leaving them free to just focus on their games.

This type of dynamic – authoritative parenting approach paired with a player's guided disobedience – can be seen as a technology of the self because it empowers players to focus on self-improvement. However, this dynamic may also be an example

of technologies of domination as it may encourage players to focus on their bodies and game management but blind them to the grander scope of their lives and the power their parents have over them (Rail and Harvey 1995, Shogan 1999). For instance, a former player, Todd, below discusses how he loved playing but hated the pressure. He quit at twelve-years-old when he could not go along with it anymore:

When I was twelve, I wasn't really playing for myself. I was just kind of playing because I was good at it. Other people were telling me to play... It was a lot of pressure from outside sources, I didn't really care that much about it. But it was all about winning. It was just – “You have to win!” Then after I quit, and came back, it was more for me, because I like to play.

Paradoxical Spaces of Player-Parent Dynamics

In this section, I show through interviews and observations the paradoxes of power involved within dynamics where parents use approaches that span the parent power continuum in both empowering and disempowering ways. Rituals of interaction involve both reproduction and challenging of power roles which create and are created by the liminal individuals interacting; here, parents and players. Transgression of these roles can occur when one individual breaks the pattern of interaction. Thus, paradoxical spaces of choice, support, communication, involvement, and pressure are created within player-parent dynamics.

Paradoxical Spaces of Choice

Junior tennis requires players and parents to make many decisions. Children are usually introduced to tennis by their parents, but once players have been playing for a while, decision-making about which goals to make and how to pursue those goals becomes a daily process. The long-term goals are taken into account when making daily decisions about where to train, with whom to train, which tournaments to play, which type of game to develop, and many more decisions. The manner in which the

decision-making process is approached depends upon the power approaches used by players and their parents.

Introduction to tennis

Tennis is rarely initially chosen by the child. In the beginning, no matter what approach they take, the parents have all the power. Some players express this with pride, others express this with resentment. Former player Rita points out that the only reason she liked to go to practice was the time she spent with her Dad afterwards:

Tennis wasn't something that I wanted. It was something I got pushed into...I played an hour a day from age four to seven...My favorite part of that experience was having a Coke afterwards. It wasn't the playing; it was spending that time with my Dad.

This is not an uncommon introduction to tennis as most parents in my study exposed their child to tennis by age six, and some by age three. But there are several reasons why parents introduced their children to tennis and, subsequently, involved them in tournament competition. The most common reasons fell into the following categories: the parents coached or played and wanted to share their love of the game with their child, somebody else recognized potential in their child's tennis, or they forced their children into it. A rare answer, but one that did come up a couple of times in the interviews, was conceiving a child for the sole purpose of training him or her to become a professional tennis player.

For instance, several players said they were introduced to tennis just by hanging around the courts where their parents coached. While some parent-coaches forced their kids to play tennis, some waited for their kids to ask to start playing knowing that the motivation to play would last longer if it was internally-driven. Below, former player Terri,

who achieved a top-50 world ranking, discusses how her father exposed her to tennis without forcing her to play:

I remember always being near the tennis courts because that was what my dad did - it was his profession - so it was going to see him at the court and being around it. I would say the first time I picked up a racquet, I was probably three. I got my first formal lesson at three from my dad. I played because I loved it...My parents exposed me to tennis, and then it was up to me to decide if I wanted to play.

Often, parents get their children involved because they play themselves. When their child shows some ability, they see it as either an extension of themselves or a way to keep the child occupied. Former player Katie explains:

My dad played and was, like, "Maybe my daughters will want to play tennis, maybe I should coach them"... And then I think he found a lot of joy in just hanging out with us and seeing something that's totally different from his day job. So after work, we'd go play tennis with him... And my sisters were three and six years older, so I just wanted to hang out with them and be with them, and it just started becoming this family activity after school.

Sometimes, parents do not realize their child has "potential" - the slippery slope where parents start to over-identify with their child's tennis – until somebody points it out to them. One mother, Sue, said:

I remember when we first took her to [a coach]...as parents, we saw this glint in his eyes, like, "My God, this kid can actually hit!" We were so thrilled. Somebody was recognizing our child's potential!

Some parents introduce their children into junior competitive tennis by making the decision before they are even born. Parent Nina describes how she had children for the sole purpose of making them tennis stars:

They were bred. We wanted two tennis players and we both had the genes [she laughs]. We didn't care, girls or boys, they were bred for tennis. We knew when they were a year old...they just were so coordinated and fast and hand-eye coordination. We always hung a ball up and they slapped at the ball in their crib. And when they sat in their little chairs on the tennis court all day, we always had one hanging down from the awning. So they would just slap it with their hands... We were on the tennis court all day so

they sat in their playpens from when they were born, from a few weeks old on, so they always had tons of tennis balls in the play pen, and they just, it was the first thing they ever threw, the first thing they picked up.

But some parents not only plan to have their kids play tennis, they use an oppressive approach to force them to play even when the kids do not want to. They use tennis as a technology of domination, and children often submit to parental demands out of fear. Former players, who had physically and emotionally abusive fathers during their junior tennis years, described what it is like to have oppressive or abusive parents. As Rita admits, "Tennis wasn't something that I wanted. It was something I got pushed into...I felt like it took my childhood away." Former player Andrea explains further:

"You can quit playing if you want, but you won't have a family or you will no longer be welcome in this house." This is something he's telling a 6- or 7-year-old. It was really bad....When you're young you don't know any different. You don't know that you're not happy. I remember being 7, 8, 9 and everyone was like "Oh my gosh, you're so good! Do you really love tennis?" And of course, I'd be like, "Yeah, uh-huh," but inside I'd be like [to myself], "You big freaking liar." I knew it. I didn't enjoy it for a very long time. I don't even know that when I turned pro I even enjoyed it then. I am a really driven individual and I wanted to succeed and that was the environment I was thrown in.

Goal-setting

Parents and their children who have an unbalanced power dynamic between them - where parents and players approach disempowering extremes of the power continuums - typically have different goals between them. But parents and players in a collaborative power dynamic have similar goals and share the responsibility of making decisions about their junior tennis journey. One of the most important conversations that parents say they have with their children is the establishment of goals and dreams and how to pursue them. One of the first questions I asked parents was, "What are yours and your child's goals with junior tennis and beyond?" This question would often

be met with one or several of the following answers: a professional career, a collegiate scholarship, and personal developmental benefits. Sometimes, parents and players work to create their goals together in a collaborative approach, sometimes parents make the goals for their players with an authoritative approach, and sometimes parents follow their players' lead with a nurturing approach. These can all be empowering approaches unless parents obsess over their players' goals or expect them to achieve goals that are too high for their abilities but punish them if they fail to reach them. This would be considered an abusive approach. On the other hand, parents who make their players feel that they could reach high goals without testing them, tend to coddle and entitle their players at the other extreme.⁷

Parents often have goals of a college scholarship for their child's tennis, even from their first exhibition of “talent”. While some parents do not take the child's goals into account, collaborative parents balance their child's goals with their own. Former players are often better at recognizing the need to do this because they have either experienced or witnessed authoritative and abusive parenting during their own competitive playing days. Rita, as a former player turned mother, explains how she balances her goals with her own child's potential goals:

I'm praying [my daughter] chooses something else [besides tennis]...The sad thing is there are a limited number of sports for girls that offer a career after...I want my girls to earn a scholarship in college because that helped me learn to be well-rounded pretty early. But I want them to have a passion for what they're doing, not to be forced into it.

The stresses of being a female athlete (discussed in Chapter 8) are paired with the benefits of having more opportunities than male players to earn college scholarships.

⁷Another scenario is the parent who does not make goals for their players and lets them play for fun. But at the competitive levels, this is not a common occurrence.

The parent below, Ted, describes how he used an authoritative approach to establish goals for his children when they were younger and moves toward a collaborative approach by transferring power to them as they get older. In his interview, he elaborated on this parenting philosophy and explained that he helps set high goals for his children so that they will have higher outcomes:

I always felt that it was better to shoot high and score a little short of a high goal than exceed in a local... That was always my philosophy, just to have a high goal. And then even if you shoot to be top 10 and you come in 15 it's still pretty good... The goal is to gradually transfer that power away. My transfer of authority from the parent to the child as they mature and grow up. You know, [it's] pretty easy to just let the kid, [if he] doesn't want to do something, you say "Okay, you don't have to do that today." Sometimes you just have to say, "Oh well, you're gonna do it"... by 14, or at the latest 15, if they're not showing the desire to do it themselves, then I think you just have to let it go.

Some parents use an authoritative approach throughout their children's tennis journey. Parents who use this approach often make goals for their children, instead of making goals *with* them. In some of the cases I witnessed, parents using these approaches lived somewhat vicariously through their children's tennis or depended on them for financial support or social status. Nina, the mother who said she "bred" her daughters for tennis, noted that the goals of professional and collegiate careers are what separate the competitive junior players from the recreational players. For her, parents must drive their children to set high goals:

[With] competitive tennis, you can just go so much further. It's the only way to go if you have high goals. To go to college, pro. Just to play recreation, obviously the parents have no drive, the kids have no drive, they're just happy to play a match in a local tournament... It's a whole different level than turning into the competition level.

But an authoritative approach can sometimes become abusive when parents start to over-identify with and rely on their players' success for emotional and economic stability.

Sometimes, this leads to physical and emotional abuse. Former player Rita discusses her experience of abuse by her, who forced her into tennis, and his dominance over her goal-making. This shows how parents can use tennis as a tool of domination:

There's a difference between pushing your child to get them over a hump and pushing them to where it's not healthy. I do wish tennis had an off-season, then at least the kids could be in other sports and enjoy it. I swam and did gymnastics and had so much fun, and I remember thinking, "Why can't I bring this joy into tennis?" But it was the pressure. And in every sport I played, the coach came to my parents and said, "We would love for her to be on our traveling team and start competing at nationals." So, I know I had athletic ability, but my parents never gave me the choice. As soon as I had interest in playing something else, my parents would pull me out. Other sports teach kids other skills. Being able to play sports without pressure is heaven. That's the purpose of sports – to release [pressure].

On the other hand, though, some players are self-motivated from the moment they pick up a racquet. They talk about loving tennis from the start and never feeling like they were pushed into it. Former player Terri's father, having been a coach for many years, probably knew of the dangers of forcing a child to play. Because he did not force her, she felt she had control over her own tennis. Consequently, tennis was a technology of the self for Terri during her childhood:

I loved the challenge of it. I loved hearing the ball come off the strings of my racquet when I hit it well. I loved the challenge of just trying to get 100 balls over the net. I set goals for myself each time I'd go out. I'd start out at 50, then I'd go to 75, then I'd want 100 balls over the net. I just loved to see my improvement over time. That's what I really strived for, to say, "Wow, I've really gotten better!"

While some parents welcome their child setting their own goals, some parents feel conflicted about it. Although, they would not show it to their children, they would confide in me about their concern by asking (themselves more than me), "What if he/she doesn't make it?" Several parents actually told me during informal conversations that they wished their child would quit so that they could have a "normal" family again and

“do nothing on the weekends”. The sacrifice is not only that of the player's but the parents' and the family dynamic, as well. But, these parents use a nurturing approach to continue to let the child have the power to decide whether the family will spend the weekend at another tournament, spend more money on training, and even move across country to attend a training academy. Sometimes these approaches can move toward the coddling extreme of the parent power continuum when players begin to take their parents' sacrifices for granted.

For instance, I had a conversation with one mother, Deb. While Deb says she is not the type of mother who pushes her son to play tennis, she allowed his tennis to control the fate of the family. This increases the amount of pressure on her son to succeed even though she says she would be happy with him either way. She gives her son all the power in the family as they moved from another state, sold their home, left their family and friends, and invested over \$50,000/year in his training, to live in Florida where he could pursue his dreams – a common scenario in junior tennis. She talks about how her son's development and pursuit of dreams is her biggest priority, but that his inability to recognize the possibility that he will not reach them is her biggest concern:

The right thing, like for every other teenager, is to have big dreams. And it's important for when the time comes that he recognizes that he's not having fun with it anymore or that it may not happen. And I wish that when he realizes this, that it won't be so tough for him to say “bye-bye” to tennis. [That he'll say] “I can play with my friends and do something else.” It's really important for a young kid to recognize the moment where he would need to find any more the strength to build his [identity from tennis]. This is my worry. Maybe I should just go with the flow and see what will happen, but I really wish I would recognize this and give him good advice that he would not be so disappointed when the time comes because this is the problem with the parents - having bigger dreams than the kids. I'm not going to be disappointed [if he quits] because as the moment comes when he says, “I'm

not in tennis anymore”, I’m ready... If you have a parent that’s pushing and this is their dream, then they are in trouble.

Paradoxical Spaces of Supporting Dreams

Once goals have been set in the player - parent dynamic, pursuing them through years of training and traveling to tournaments becomes a full time job for both the player and the parent who accompanies them to the court while the other parent usually is left to earn the money to pay for the tennis expenses. Players and parents engage in a variety of power dynamics throughout these years depending on the context of the interaction. Some parents want their kids to feel secure and do not want them to be exposed to a militaristic environment and motivational techniques based on fear. As Rita expresses it,

I think that’s the most important thing. A child knows that they’re loved unconditionally. You have to take risks. The greatest players feel like they can walk on the court with no fear. And to be able to achieve that no-fear [mentality] is that you got to come from a place where you’re really secure in something else.

As some parents are positive and enthusiastic about their child’s tennis, especially immediately after moving to Florida from another state, the potential of new possibilities is exciting. Below, Deb describes junior tennis for her son a month after moving from another state for his tennis. She is conflicted, though, because they moved their entire lives, so that he could attend a world-famous academy, but he decided to quit a month into it. They found a coach to train with, instead, but did not get the \$20,000 they had paid for the semester of training refunded. Despite Nick’s decision to leave the academy, Deb is positive about his training:

Energy. Energy! Isn’t it? Nick doesn’t like to hear [this] from me, but I like it [there]. I come there and I literally feel the energy. Even if I’m old, I’m not playing tennis, the energy lifts me up. I come home and I’m happy. Also, I would say, happiness. Happiness. Like they’re able to achieve something

more because they all come with the thinking of “what am I going to do?” Even when they practice with the coach, and they want to show their best, they’re happy when they’re doing great. And also, I would say, competition. Competition, that it drives them. Because you have to have energy and something that drives you, and this is the competition, because there are so many good players out there, aren’t there? So many good players... Whatever the thing you want will involve hard work. You have to work hard.

Some parents see it as their job to be constantly present, supportive and flexible for their kids’ dreams. Below, Deb further describes how she chose this life with her son even though it is difficult and her friends advise her to consider her own happiness:

He wasn’t even nine when he started, and since then, I was driving him all the time every single day. Every single day. And on the weekends, sometimes Ken would come, and ... no. I’m just like always there for him. This is the best stuff that you have in your life. Instill in your kid’s good moral values and good academic knowledge and experience and everything. And then the saddest thing to be old and sad when it’s your kid... like, if your kid is unhappy and he doesn’t know what to do with himself when he’s thirty, that’s an adult. You can’t help any more. Now it’s time to help. How many times you are tired and sick and you have a headache and you’ve been sitting there for 3 hours and waiting for his practice to be done? And you know what, I said to myself, “I have a book. I can read. If I want to watch, here is my place. This is my child. I have nothing that’s more important.” So, I know that some parents are burned out because my neighbor next-door said to me once, I was driving Nick [to tennis], :”Deb, don’t do that. It’s a waste of your money and time.” and I said, “I don’t look at this. I’m happy that I have money and time to do something that he likes now. I’m not looking at 5 years [from now]. [I’m concerned about] now.” I’m happy I can support him.

But she said this at the beginning of moving down here. As the year of training progressed, she seemed to become progressively more depressed because of the tension her son’s tennis was creating in the family. Looking back on this time, I realize that what had started as an empowering guided obedience approach by the son with his parents had become disempowering entitled disobedience by the end of the year. One day, Deb showed up at practice but did not say much until I asked her what was wrong. She started to cry as she told me about the fighting that was taking place at home

between her and her son and husband. She was worried that Nick was dictating too much of their lives because everything had to revolve around practice and every tournament loss resulted in his sulking and dwelling on it. When the child's tennis dictates the home environment, it can become extremely stressful for the parents.

These parents were experiencing the way in which nurturing can become coddling when their child responds with entitled disobedience. As their training progressed, tennis became less of a technology of the self and more of a technology of domination for the entire family. It was not so much that Nick was oppressive toward his parents, or vice-versa. It was that the demands of the tennis habitus were oppressive for the entire family dynamic.

Taking a nurturing approach to the extreme, parents can start to coddle their kids with a sense of entitlement and a fear of challenging themselves. Parents that take these extreme approaches often protect their children from losing instead of helping them learn *through* losing. Parents who use nurturing approaches are always present with their children at home-schooling, practices, and tournament matches, which can be a great bonding experience between parent and child. But kids run the risk of being sheltered from experiences that can help them cope with positive stress and performances of their abilities in front of others. The difference between coddling and nurturing support is subtle. For instance, Deb, who mostly parents with a collaborative-to-nurturing approach, says we have to try to make the best for our children's futures and that we cannot be negative with them. Sherri, who parents with a collaborative to authoritative approach, says that we have to make our own lives and that we can only do so much for our kids. Deb thinks she should do everything for the child and be there

for him and gives him all the power. Sherri says that they need to take care of themselves and be responsible for their behavior. Deb says that she needs to be there for Nick and give him every chance possible, but Sherri says that she does not want Shilo to think her whole life revolves around him. As a result, Shilo seems to respect Sherri more than Nick respects Deb. Nick snaps at his mom, but Shilo never does in front of me.

A well-known coach, Frank, who has been coaching juniors and collegiate players for forty years, says this about tennis parents:

We try to microwave our talent instead of nurture it. You're supposed to take talent and cook it on the back burner, turn up the heat, turn down the heat, add spices, and nurture it. But now people try to microwave it. Parents want it right away...Kids learn through failing. We never like to see out kids fail, so very rarely do we put them I failing situations...the best cultures challenge kids.

When parents use coddling approaches to encourage their children, they often allow their children to disrespect them in the process with entitled disobedience. This dynamic was apparent when a player complained that her mother did not put ice in her water jug, when another player dropped his racquet bag at the feet of his mother expecting her to carry it, and when another player told his mother to "Shut up!" from the court. These parents responded by getting the water jug to fill it with ice, picking up the bag, and slinking away to sit on the bleachers. Other players who see these interactions recognize these players as spoiled. For instance, Katie says,

I remember multiple tournaments where the kids were like, "Shut up, mom!", and I couldn't believe she just said that. If I even said the word "shut", I think I'd get slapped on the head, but I've never tried it and don't plan on it.

Former player Rita reiterates this sentiment:

I think it's great to accomplish, to feel that you're better than everyone else in something, but maybe we're not supposed to feel that way because the flip-side is that some of these kids are so egocentric and nasty. I know, for me, if I won a tournament, my parents would give me anything. If I lost, they wouldn't give me "jack". If I won everything, what I primadonna I'd be.

One coach said that this generation of parents has created "excuse makers". This is often because the parents, themselves, were coddled as children and developed a sense of entitlement to disrespect the rules of junior tennis, for instance. Another coach said that the father of the player he coaches often calls him up to say that his player is not going to school today and asks him to come out for tennis. This teaches the kids that they are above the structure of "normal" childhood that most kids who do not play tennis have. Players can sometimes learn, as a result, that they do not have consequences because there is enough parental protection behind them to clean up their mess. Several participants, like Rita, point out that tennis breeds narcissism and egocentrism because of it:

Tennis is bad for life. [Players] are insecure and [entitled]. They think that they should be able to do what they want because they were really good at this one thing. They think that everyone should be at their beckon call. And they treat people like shit. They are very egocentric. I think sports bring it out in people, especially tennis because it's such an individual sport. You have to be very egocentric...that egocentrism isn't part of a healthy life. It's not part of a healthy marriage. It's not part of a healthy relationship with children. Those are not skills that you want someone to have if you want them to have a successful life, period.

This lack of skill development for later in life at the entitled extremes is an example of how tennis can become a technology of domination. If tennis does not provide players skills that can be transferrable to their lives outside and after their tennis careers, then tennis becomes a "means to justify the ends". This means that tennis training may distract children from developing life skills instead of helping them develop those skills.

In general, because of these power struggles, the time commitments, and the sacrifices their families make, parents often experience burnout. Some mothers started welling up with tears while they talked to me about their schedules, exhaustion for managing their players' emotions and schedules, the effect of junior tennis on their family dynamic, and frustrations with junior tennis, in general. Others joked about how wonderful it would be to stay home on the weekends.

Paradoxical Spaces of Communication

Communication is cited as one of the most important factors in making the relationship work between many parents and players. In other cases, some players find it oppressive or smothering when their parents want them to communicate constantly about tennis and their feelings about tennis. Players often say that they do not like it when their parents start lecturing them about the match the moment they come off the court. Players say they need time to “come down” or to be by themselves before they talk about the match. As Chapter 3 explains, players are seen as experiencing liminal phases in their matches. The post-liminal phase often requires a time of separation before they reincorporate into the junior tennis community off the court. Coaches, like Linda, also advise parents to give kids space at home and refrain from talking tennis in that “safe space”, like the dinner table or wherever they relax:

It's important for the child to have a break from tennis when they get home. They have to have a safe place. I always had that with my students – I told them, especially when I'm sharing a room with my players, that you need to feel like you have a safe place. So when we're in the hotel room, we don't talk about tennis unless we talk a quick strategy or game plan or you want to ask me a question real quick, most of the tennis, hopefully 90 to 99 percent, is outside of the hotel room. Because they need to have that break as well. So that's where burnout comes out, too. When they're constantly

bombarded with information. I think that's a big thing for parents to recognize.

I asked some parents if they thought that their children say things just to make them happy. Some parents acknowledged that they might, but other parents were confident that their kids would tell them if they were not happy. I asked one mother how she would know that her son would want to play anymore, even if he did not. She said he was very open and that they would know. She said they tell him all the time that he is doing this for himself, not them. Even though parents say this, their children see their parents making sacrifices like moving and making enormous time, money, and emotional investments. They feel the pressure even though their parents say that they do not care if they win. Some players express that they “do not want this all to be a waste of time”; that they want it to be “worth it in the end”. So, parents sometimes do not communicate enough with their children, assuming that everything is fine unless their child says otherwise. Many former players say that communication has to be constant among player, coach, and parent. According to Bonnie, a former player whose mother often uses authoritative approaches with her currently playing little sisters,

Parent coach and player should come together. When the player is young, it's hard for them to express what they're thinking because they don't really know. It's hard. But I think, all three needs to be involved [in communication]. The coach needs to know what's going on at home. The parent needs to know what the coach is working on with the player.

Terry, whose parents used collaborative approaches in their communication with her, says,

I think if you have an open communication with your child and you're really asking them how they feel, it gives you a better idea of what they want to do, because a lot of parents, they don't ask and they just assume that the kid wants to play if they don't. They don't communicate about how they're feeling and it is a lot of pressure...If you don't talk to your kids, you're just not going to know what they're feeling.

Paradoxical Spaces of Involvement

There are also paradoxical spaces of involvement where parents try to stay involved and engaged with their child's tennis. Sometimes, parents confuse their own liminal status with their child's by being overly involved. There are many instances where parents exhibit their power over their child players in an overly involved manner. They feel they are being supportive without becoming "over-involved" in their child's tennis, or involved to an extent that overshadows their child's identity formation through tennis with their own identity and purpose. But their over-involvement is expressed in subtle ways: interrupting their child during a lesson, answering for their child when a coach would ask a question, sitting on the sidelines during a lesson while barking commands or suggestions at their child, emphasizing ranking, and reiterating to the coach (in front of their child) what their child does not do well and needs work on. Usually, this degree of over-involvement is a result of an authoritative to abusive parenting approach.

Parents who use approaches that fall along the authoritative side of the continuum tend to focus on results of their children's performance rather than on the way they played and the effort and attitude they put forth. Most participants point out that this is one of the ways parents misuse their power. Clark, a father of two top-ranked junior players said,

[Parents] concentrate way too much on results instead of the process...My biggest advice to all parents is twofold: it needs to be about the kid, not about you...her loss is your loss? No. So many adults are little kids in big costumes anyway. So, I mean, if you literally judge them on something they have control over, that's the thing. They're very sensitive to your judgment, they want your criticism, that's called discipline. But you have to judge them in life on things they have control over. The result of the tennis match they don't have control over. That's the end result. That's what happens. But putting in the effort, preparing right, making sure you eat.

Below are my field notes about an exchange that occurred between a player, Gary, who had a self-defeating attitude, and his father who was derogatory towards his son. The quotes are paraphrased, but I audio-taped my thoughts as soon as we were done hitting:

Gary's dad told me in front of Gary that he hit about forty balls in the net during his match this weekend. When I asked Gary if he noticed that in the match, Gary said he hadn't and in a somber voice said, "for some reason when I play a tournament I become a complete idiot and can't think. I asked Gary if he did the same thing the whole match, but his dad answered for him in an accusatory tone, "The whole match! Right to the last point!...I think we identified that the second he gets tight, where does it go? Bang, bang, bang! In the net! That's why he's gotta eliminate that! This has gotta end now! Leave your game forever!" Gary mumbled something like, "I'm just stupid." Gary's dad just kept talking while Gary looked down on the ground: "He did not change his game plan at all." (March 10, 2011 – Sarasota, FL)

The above excerpt exemplifies how parents become over-involved with an authoritative approach when they answer their child's questions for them and give unsolicited advice. Over-involvement can also be the result of parents swinging back and forth between coddling and abusive extremes. In this type of family dynamic, the parents disempowered their child by being simultaneously coddling and abusive by instilling a sense of entitlement and, at the same time, tearing him down. Gary seemed to feel overpowered by his parents in this situation but exercised his agency by either agreeing with his parents (guided obedience) or by looking down at the ground and not saying anything while his parents reiterated what he did wrong (submissive obedience).

Exploitative tendencies

Some of the parents in my research who used authoritative approaches used either excessive surveillance over their players, overly identifying with their players for their own identity, financially dependent upon their players, reliving their own athletic

stardom pasts, using their player to live out their dream of being a coach, or a combination of these factors.

Excessive surveillance. The temptation of a professional career can lead parents into an overly involved approach to parenting where their own identity gets wrapped up in their children's successes. They can become authoritative to the point where they become overly controlling and scrutinizing of their children's lives. The following interview excerpts exemplify how parents start getting excited about their children's potential to the point where they feel having a successful, professional career is a real possibility. Below, father Clark talks about his son's potential:

I think that because we have a son who is on the pro track we believe he may be the real thing and we don't say that about many – this guy is unfreaking-believable. He's 11[in the state] and he hasn't even hit puberty. He's had [famous coach], who is the best developmental coach in the world, for mechanics. He is one of the few that catches the ball early. He doesn't wait until the ball comes to him. He hits the ball. Most of the kids wait for the ball, but at the highest level you can forget about that. You know what I mean? If you're hitting a ball in the middle of the court, you're just waiting for it, you're not gonna make it on the tour, make money.

When an authoritative parenting approach starts to move towards the abusive end of the continuum, surveillance of the child's non-tennis life becomes more prevalent as a technology of domination⁸. Below, Clark tells me how his children are under "constant monitoring", in order to insure their performance in the "top 95 percentile" both on and off the court. While parents rarely articulate it as such, he describes what many parents actually do with their competitive tennis-playing children:

Our goal is top 95 percentile both academically and athletically. Well the goal is 99%, but if we fall short and get to 95%, we can live with that. Okay. But if you don't have such a goal, you end up where you fall. You know

⁸This is discussed in Chapter 4.

what I mean? That takes constant monitoring with objective testing, you know, it takes a lot of things.

He goes on to define his control as “loving” and labeling kids who do not have controlling parents as “losers” (thereby labeling his children as superior to others who “whore around at the mall” and, perhaps, granting a sense of entitlement while using an authoritative/controlling approach (a paradox which is discussed later):

Our idea of all of it is that they learn life skills...People have poor moral codes. Most people, they let their kids go out unsupervised. [for instance] do I know if my daughter has had sex or not? Of course I know. I have complete supervision. She’s a great kid but we don’t let her go whoring around at the mall at age 14 with a bunch of losers. ‘Cuz we’re not idiots...obviously, there’s outliers to all that, but generally speaking.

As former player Rita emphasizes, many parents use tennis as a substitute for parenting and a way to monitor their children:

My parents used tennis as a reason for why I couldn’t do [normal childhood/teenage] stuff. They used it as a form of parenting. Instead of saying, “You can’t do this because we don’t want you to,” it was always, “You can’t do that because you have a tournament,” or “You’re gonna get hurt [and therefore reduce your tennis ability], you can’t do it.”

Below, Nina exemplifies the overly controlling approach she takes with her daughters:

There’s always a driving force. One parent that’s with them 24/7 all the time, seven days a week, to get them to do what they need to do. You can’t just depend on the coach. A coach isn’t gonna do it unless you got millions to hand a coach, you know, where he’s gonna take over your kid’s tennis and make them a professional. They’re still not gonna do that if they go home and the rest of the family’s lazy.

As we continue to talk, Nina stresses the importance of the parent as the driving force for the child to reach their potential; that if the parent is “lazy”, the child will never reach his/her potential. This is what Coakley 2006b refers to when he identifies parents who push their children in order to ascertain their “good parent” status. Her approaches range from collaborative to authoritative (overly involved) most of the time, bordering on

abusive through possible water deprivation. Nina feels that other parents who do not take these actions are lazy themselves:

I want them, the time that they're on the court, to be giving 200% and not being taking breaks to pick up balls, and getting drinks. We hydrate before we go on the court, and I pick up balls on the court. So they don't have all those break times. If they're doing drills with a couple more kids, I still pick up the balls so they don't have the break time. So it's a commitment that most people [won't make]. Most people who can afford tennis, the parents don't want to get their fingernails dirty and they don't wanna pick up balls.

Over-identification. Coaches often tell me they know how to spot the “problem parents” by those who use the pronoun “we” instead of “he” or “she” to talk about their child’s tennis. This is a clear indicator that the parents are attaching their identity too tightly to their children’s tennis, or embodying their child's identity as their own. Clark is an example of a parent who uses “we” without hesitation or self-reflection: “We may play him in another 16s super-series if we need the points to get into the sectionals.”

And as former player Terri points out:

But when you get the “we won today” thing with the parent and child... Or “we played well”... That's clear that you're playing through your child and you're trying to play through your old dreams. Or things you just wish you had.

As parents learn more about tennis and travel to all of the tournaments with their child, they often come to feel they have earned the right to coach their players and help guide them in the training process and the match analysis.

While parents invest an inordinate amount of time, emotion, and money into their child’s tennis, they often tend to base their own identity, reputation, and self-worth on their child’s performances. In this sense, parents might be seen as liminal agents along with their children. They may feel that they are transitioning in certain ways which are dependent upon the performance and status of their child. As their children embody

their tennis identities, so do the parents. A former player, Bonnie, acknowledges that her mother was overly involved in her tennis and is the same way with her little sisters, building her identity on her daughters' tennis performances:

She's not going to change. She gets so nervous and all worked up...because she doesn't have anything [else]. I can see why it stretches to that point. It happens to a lot of parents. That's how the [tennis] world is and I don't see how it can change. If all of them are like that, if all of them are under that much pressure, they aren't gonna act rationally.

This is why parents who become overly involved in their child's tennis - with an extreme nurturing-to-coddling approach or authoritative-to-abusive approach - become ecstatic when they win and incensed when they lose. It is not just their child's identity that is at stake, it is their own. It can be difficult, though, for parents to avoid living vicariously through their child's sport when they are at all the tournaments and practices and when they are the ones scheduling and paying for everything.

Some parents recognize the problem of attaching their identities to their children's performances while not hiding it very well. They describe how tennis benefits them rather than how it benefits their children. After admitting how much of themselves she and her husband put into their daughter's tennis, seemingly cognizant of the mistake of doing this, one mother admitted that she and her husband probably got more out of the tennis experience than their daughter did. Sue says:

To me, a downside is you put your self-worth, whether you don't mean to put pressure on, but, even as parents, your whole self-worth is wrapped up in a win or a loss, which is so ridiculous. And the travel, and look, we saw the world... tennis is a great sport. It's opened so many doors for me, in terms of friends and experiences that I would have never had without tennis.

Interestingly, some parents talk about other parents in a derogatory way for being overly involved or pressuring while they perform the same behavior themselves. They

are aware of parenting approaches that move towards the extreme of the continuum, but often do not realize they perform them. This is a main reason why parents use approaches at the extremes of the power continuum, or technologies of domination, which disempower players in the long run.

Financial dependence. Social mobility is a factor in parents using authoritative approaches that become abusive approaches. It is not just their identity that becomes dependent on their children's successes, but their ability to pay their bills and/or move up the socioeconomic ladder as well. Former player Bonnie expresses how burdensome this was in her family dynamic and how it can create tension within the family:

It was a burden to support my family since age 14. But at the same time, I wanted to play professionally...The pressure to support the whole family. That creates a lot of , I don't want to say "problems", but stuff you have to deal with in the future...Maybe there are certain issues and things you deal with and you realize it's because of the past. So that, I think, is what happens in a lot of families where the player ends up being successful. So that's definitely a down side of it.

A stereotype prevalent in the junior tennis community (elaborated upon in a later chapter) is how this type of parenting is more common in countries whose recent past has included war and widespread economic distress. As former player Katie says,

There are crazy abusive parents because they're just crazy and abusive, and the reason behind it could be that they're living their childhood dream or their dream for their child or as an adult that they're going to be the parent of a successful tennis player. But then there's also that this child needs to be successful so they can bring us out of this situation, which I think are two different things. The former you might find more in the US than the latter, you might find in my fellow friends of Bosnia, Croatia or Russia. Or in the academies down in Florida...

Reliving the past. Other parents used to be collegiate or even professional athletes. While being a former athlete helped some parents understand what their

children were going through, and most players who had a former athlete for a parent said that they helped them with confidence and focus, being a former athlete sometimes backfired for these parents and their children. Some former-athlete parents were careful not to impose themselves in their kids' tennis, but others felt this status entitled them to impose themselves even more. One coach discusses the latter situation:

I don't know what happened, she was just mentally not there. So her father took that as a sign that he had to start taking charge. So he started taking charge of coaching, and he told me what he thought she should be working on. When we went to tournaments, we would travel together with the father, and he started telling her, "when you're eating breakfast in the morning, I want you to visualize that the egg is your opponent's head, and I want you to fucking rip that head off – I want you to eat the head..." And I didn't know what to say. I was like, what am I hearing, is this a movie? Is this for real? And I don't like swearing at all, but I have to repeat it word for word to get the facts in. And she's looking at him like, yeah, ok. She had so much respect for her father, she would do anything for him, but in my opinion, that is not the way to coach her. That girl had so much pressure on her shoulders... I don't know what you want to call it – the former athlete father?... The problem is that he had a goal for his daughter, and she didn't...So it was his dream maybe, or his motivation for his daughter.

And, sometimes, this former-athlete status makes it difficult for the child to compete with the father's own ego. The situation below, from my field notes, exemplifies the ego that a former-athlete father can have and how it can make him view his child as inferior:

A mother was saying, "Come on!" after every point. "It's your game!", but her son couldn't hear. She and the father were complaining and the father said, "Leave it up to him to give the game away" in a derogatory, and sarcastic tone. The mother said, 'I'm going down there' and the dad snapped at her, "Don't you go anywhere! He can figure it out for himself!" They almost got in a fight over it. I was sitting right there. One of the other moms later asked them, "So you moved down here for tennis?" The dad says "For quality of life," and she asked how business was going. He said, "Yeah, business is good! It's going better than my son's tennis!" (Oct. 9, 2010 – Orlando, FL)

Another former player reiterates a common parent-child dynamic in junior girls' tennis in the 1980s. Parents saw the success that Jennifer Capriati had by age fourteen and they

wanted to emulate her father's methods, regardless of how abusive they may have been. These former players had parents who were actually a cross between financially dependent parenting and former-athlete parenting approaches. Former player Andrea remarks:

[My dad] was a soccer player and had dreams of playing professionally, and it never came true for him. After that he just wanted to live a lifestyle of an athlete, so he put me in tennis. When I was five, that was about the time Capriati started to do well when she was fourteen and made that huge splash on tour and she was making all this money. He wanted me to support him by the time I was fourteen so that he could quit working and travel the world with me.

As former player Rita says, "It wasn't just a sport [to my dad]. He wanted to play professionally...so, when I was born, that was his goal.

Coaching dreams. Whether the parent was an athlete or not, it is hard for many parents to know for many parents how to navigate the line between parenting and coaching once they learn more about the game. When, where, and in what manner parents deliver information to their child-players affects the response with which players approach their parents. While many parents try to navigate these lines, some parents cross it completely and establish themselves as their child's coach. Sometimes, these "parent-coaches" are former players themselves, other times they are "coach wanna-be's", or as one former player put it, "...there are parents that like to pretend they're coaches, even though they're not." Some players seem to thrive with their parents being their coaches, but most players say that these situations are not ideal because they want their parents to just be their parents and their coach to do the coaching⁹. They

⁹Adie et al. 2010 looks at parent-coaches in soccer and finds that most of their participants had positive experiences with their parents as coaches of their team, but it depends on the dynamic between parent and child.

prefer it when their parents filter advice through their coaches. When players have more than one voice of authority, it can make them feel pressured and ganged up on.

Overly involved parents often interfere with the coaching process by complaining about their children's match set-ups, by giving instructions about stroke technique, and by interfering with the coach's long-term plan. It is important for parents to be involved in their child's tennis life and to communicate with the coach about the decisions they should make, but some parents do not let the coach do the job that they hired the coach to do. For instance, a father was harping on his daughter about her forehand, saying "We need to fix this because it's a problem!" But when he and the coach were talking to her at the same time, it was too much scrutiny at once. Having more than one person giving instructions or suggestions, no matter how nurturing or collaborative the approach, can feel overpowering and oppressive to players. Sometimes, a peer or a sibling teaming up with the coach can be better received by the player than a parent and coach together because the sibling and peer is perceived by the player as being on an equal power level as they are. Over-involved parents want to exercise their power past the boundary of the tennis court and overpower the coach's decision-making. The player gets caught in the middle, as a result, and this affects his/her dynamic with the coach as well as with the parent. Players get defensive if they are being told what to do by people other than the coach because the power dynamic is different when it is coming from the parents who have power over them as their child in other aspects of life.

Being defensive with resistant disobedience is one form of agency that players use against parents who become overly involved by giving suggestions about tennis

related performance. This is shown by ignoring the parents, complaining, doing the exact opposite to what is being suggested, and fighting. Below is a description from my field notes of a player and her mother arguing on the court in public during practice one day:

Ana and her mother are in a fight on the court. Her mother used to be a tennis player and she's constantly yelling commands at Ana from court-side while her coach is just standing there feeding balls. Her mother is constantly shouting, "If you use that grip then you're just stupid!" I asked another player at the club if she thought Ana enjoyed playing tennis and, she said "I don't know. I think so. I think she'd like it better if her mother wasn't so into it." (Feb. 3, 2011 – Sarasota, FL)

As one coach and former top-ten world player, Carl, says:

These kids are doing extraordinary things, trying to do even more extraordinary things by winning, but they are already doing extraordinary things by putting the work in, and they don't need the parent to be barking down their throats while they're doing it.

Another former top player and coach, Mac, emphasizes that these parents often have the best of intentions:

They are all great dads. Unfortunately, those dads want to become a tennis coach, and they'll just kind of regurgitate what they hear or whatever, and their daughter's already so far down the road, it doesn't matter who coaches them. They want probably not just most of the money but more of the glory, too. And that's unfortunate. But at the end of the day, those guys are always great dads, and they've always had their daughters' best interests. It's just unfortunate when they don't know how to be the psychologist, because they're looking at their daughter as, the daughter looks at them as dad, not as tennis coach.

Former player Todd discusses the frustration, confusion, and rebelliousness he felt when his father tried to coach him:

It's very confusing. It's very, you second-guess, you start thinking that one coach is worse than the other... You stop listening to your parents and you stop listening to your coach... It definitely hurts. At this point, not only in tennis, but in anything. Just because of the 12-and-unders, I don't listen to anything my dad says. If my dad tells me to do something, I'm going to do the opposite.... It's happened

recently. He's grilling me about colleges, or he tells me to look at this college... I'm just like, yep, not going to that college. It's automatically taken off my list.

But Todd adds that his father learned from the mistakes that he made with him and, now, uses more collaborative approaches with his younger brother in his tennis career. This could be an example of a dynamic that transgresses traditional power roles. Still, his father tries to be the coach instead of supporter:

But I think for [my brother who is still in tennis], it's different...He's been very up close and personal with [my brother's] tennis. I think for [my brother], it's been alright, but I don't think my dad understands that the coach should have the say. I think my dad sometimes tries to take it into his own hands...Especially in the role of a parent, there shouldn't be a criticism. I think that's what you have a coach for. A coach is going to tell you what you need to work on. A parent should tell you what to do about it. And you're paying a coach, you're paying him to coach your kid. So why tell him to do it?

Parents often use opposing approaches between each other to balance out the resulting power dynamic. For instance, a common scenario is for the mother to using a nurturing approach to balance out the father's authoritative approach, thereby, adhering to traditional gender roles. Todd continues:

[My mom is] very non-existent in the tennis environment. And in that case, it's good, because she understands what a coach is. [My brother] knows better than her about tennis, and she knows that. She definitely lets [my brother] do what he thinks is right. I think there needs to be a medium point between my mom and my dad for a perfect tennis parent... If [my brother] wants to drop shot every single shot, my mom would be fine with it because she truly thinks that whatever he wants to do is the perfect thing to do. But I think that when my dad sees that, he's like, "Fuck! [He's] drop-shotting every ball!" But I think because my mom doesn't say anything, he's going to keep doing it, but when my dad says it, he's scared. So he won't do it ever. Or he'll get tentative when he does it and be scared to do it. He'll hit it short or something.

Coaches, who are parents themselves, are also aware of the lines that are crossed when they coach their own children. Many decide to have someone else train their children even though they may be perfectly capable of doing so themselves. Too

many coach-parents destroy their relationships with their children when they coach them because the power is doubled (coach and parent power) and it makes it more difficult for the player to exercise agency. Some parent-coaches tend to take the credit for developing a successful player, thereby, devaluing the player's role in his/her own identity formation and status. Former player Rita explains how strained her relationship with her coach/father was when she decided to "fire" him as her coach:

I had told my dad, "This isn't your life anymore, this is mine. This is my career so I'm gonna get the coach I want." So, my Dad stopped speaking to me [because I didn't want him as my coach anymore]. It was bad. So, by then, it was my choice to play. For the first time in my life, I was really putting the focus and everything in my life into my career...He would still get upset if I lost, though, even when I got a new coach. But if I had done really well on the tour, we probably never would have mended because he wanted to take responsibility for my success.

Many coaches, such as Will, express the below sentiment:

It's impossible to stay emotionally detached. You would yell at your own kid way more than you would yell at anyone else. The level of comfort is too great there. [They] pussy-foot around with the club player that's paying \$950/month but he'll rip his daughter a new ass. He recognized it. [Another coach-parent I know] is brilliant too. He has a seven-year-old and a nine-year-old I'm working with because he didn't want to cross that line.

To prevent themselves from becoming overly emotional and involved with their child's tennis, many parents learn to keep a distance by either dropping their children off at practices, sitting further away from the court during their matches, and trading off with spouses to travel to tournaments. One player I interviewed said that he had to tell his dad not to travel with him to tournaments anymore because he felt like his wins or losses controlled his father's moods. At the first tournament, to which his father did not go, he got to the finals while his father spent the weekend with friends doing activities he enjoyed doing. This player told me he felt so much better that his dad was enjoying himself rather than watching him play because he did not like the fact that he had that

much power over his father's emotions. Coach Frank, who has been a coach for forty years, thinks this is a better solution than having the USTA get involved in parent-child abuse:

[I] don't interfere when parents yell at their kids. I don't believe in rules against parents yelling at their kids, unless they're beating them. But I don't think parents should be even be allowed at tournaments. They should drop the kids off...Kids need to figure out how to solve problems for themselves.

Parent fan-atics. Parents' over-involvement bleeds into the tournament match. It is not uncommon to see parents talking to their players between points (either illegally coaching them or legally motivating them), dispute a line call made by their child's opponent, complain to a referee, tell their child whether a ball was out if they are not sure, or try to correct the score if the players lose it. Parents are not allowed to talk to their players or interfere with the match in any way, but they do. Some parents tend to admonish their child from the stands when they lose a point, or on the other extreme, clap or cheer emphatically when they win. Both extreme behaviors are distracting and embarrassing to most players. Former player, Bonnie, describes how her over-involved mother would get into arguments with other parents on the sidelines:

Parents are over the top. Parents should not get over-involved with other parents. That's the biggest mistake that they do. I think the best thing they can do is before the match, go off, have them in the corner, stay away from everyone, and then get out of there as quick as possible because the hanging around and getting involved in all the drama is just ridiculous. But I think the parents like it. They feed off it. It's their social life. They just live through the kids. Of course you have to support your kid. But you have to know how much is too much. It's such a fine line with everything in life...You need to help them and be rational about things. My dad was rational – he was less involved so he could stay calm. But my mom, absolutely not. She was in your face with everyone. Screaming at the court, just crazy...It made me mad. Our family was so dysfunctional. She was just not in reality anymore. In her own little world.

Most players say they feel more empowered when they feel their independence on the court without their parents getting too involved, exerting too much power¹⁰. Below, former player Don describes how a parent should and should not behave during a tournament match:

[The crazy parents] are the parents that are trying to play the matches for the kids. Like they're standing on my base line calling my balls. Every error of mine they're clapping... The ideal parent to me is somebody who is strictly a parent. Like, you're there because you're supporting your kid. Like, how a mom would go watch a kid at a high school basketball game. She sits in the stands, maybe with some other moms, they talked and watched the game, they're invested in the outcome, there cheering, when something goes wrong, they're like "Come on!". But, they're not coaching at you, they're not yelling at you for your mistakes, they congratulate you when you do well, when you come off the court they say "Great job, honey. That was fun!"

Current player Skye reiterates this point:

Parents should clap for their kids, but I don't think they should scream at their kids' opponent, or something. And I don't think they should coach. I just think they should clap and say good shot.

Even parents who use authoritative approaches know that these taboos should not be crossed. Nina, whom her daughter says still seems overly-involved in her little sisters' tennis, describes what parents should and should not do. Perhaps she learned from mistakes that she made in the past or perhaps she is just saying this in the interview. As one coach and former top-ten world ranked player points out, "What people say and what they do are two different things." But, as I watched Nina at tournaments, she seemed to follow her own advice about staying out of her daughters' matches by

¹⁰Knight et al. 2010 study of junior tennis players' preferences for parental behaviors show that players prefer parents to give practical advice without being too technical, respect tennis etiquette, and to match their nonverbal behaviors with supportive comments.

watching them from behind the fences. She seems to understand the importance of letting them be their own players when she says,

They need to just let the kids play tennis. It's a match. They have to learn how to deal. That's what makes them mentally tough. If the parents are interfering...all these parents think they're helping by coaching the kids and telling the score. Yesterday, the mom's sitting [on the sidelines telling her daughter who's on the court] "Call it out, call it out!" but it hit the line. But um, parents need to stay out and just clap for good shots and let the kids play. Just leave them alone and play. Parents now are teaching [kids] how to change scores and it's just out of control.

Handling over-involved parents. I asked coaches how they handle parents who try to exert their power over their children during the training process or over the coaches themselves. One coach, Mac, who works with top juniors, makes the distinction between players who have talent and players who do not. Those who have talent often have the most authoritative parents because they know the potential careers that their children could have. Mac makes the point that the parents that the tennis world knows as "abusive" have the best intentions at heart for their daughters. This shows how authoritative parenting approaches can be motivated by love but can become abusive the more involved in the tennis training that the parent becomes:

I just think the parents should support and they should be motivating, and always encourage, because it's a journey. It's junior development. It's not like junior final destination. Everybody gets go plugged in with all this stuff, and I know you have to be serious, engaged and stuff, but what matters is, when you're seventeen, you're gonna make a decision: "Am I gonna turn pro, am I going to college?" It's not a race to the finish line because everybody matures differently. Everybody has their own timetable...It's a long, slow, and painful journey.

Some coaches and academies do not want parents anywhere near the practice court. Coaches say that this helps students feel less pressure from their parents and helps them focus on the coach's instructions. It also allows players to develop a sense of independence on the court. One academy even has a sign posted on the fence that

only coaches and players are allowed past the gate. However, if parents stayed away completely, they would not be able to assess whether their child was being mistreated or not by their coaches. Parents have to walk this line between being protective and over-protective, involved and over-involved. They are sensitive to the fact that they need to give their children space with the coach, but they are also sensitive to other people telling them to stay away. Below, mother Tina makes a point to say that she does not “hover” but at the same time emphasizes how frustrating it is that the coaches seem to look down on her emotional involvement in her child’s matches. She does not want to be considered a “crazy” parent, but she does not want her child to be taken advantage of or mistreated either:

We've been here a while now and...I don't hover. Usually I'm in doing school work with her but there are times like this morning where I will sit out there and watch. I interact with them. She's my kid. I do want to know what is going on...

Abusive dynamics

Parenting approaches that are abusive take many forms: verbal abuse (i.e. name-calling, screaming), public humiliation (i.e. after losing a match), physical abuse (i.e. hitting, slapping, hitting balls at), and psychological/emotional abuse (i.e. constantly criticizing).¹¹ Below, former player Rita describes how her father abused her and that she, now, consciously avoids recreating her childhood for her own kids:

My dad was very strict. I had to go through a lot of therapy to be okay with it and move on. But I've always sworn I'd have a different upbringing with my children...My dad was so nasty to me, but tennis gave me the opportunity to have some great coaches that were my support. They were my saviors. They were more mentors to me than my parents were...I used to get whacked with racquets if a tournament was lost, or I wasn't giving enough

¹¹Abusive dynamics also occur between parents of opponents at tournaments (i.e. Nack and Munson 2000), parents of the same child, and parents and other people's children.

effort in practice. And it was humiliation too. And because my dad was a pro, I'd come off the court and he would go off on me because I wasn't having a good day at practice in front of everyone at the club. I ran off the court one day to my mom in tears, and she said, "You need to go apologize to your dad." And I remember thinking, "God that hurts even worse than my dad hitting me. To think that she sees the scenario and I need to apologize to him because I can't hit a stupid ball between three lines over the net."...He was just doing what he knew. He just wanted a better life for us...we bonded, when I became a parent and realized that I wanted more for my children, and part of that meant that I was going to be a better parent, a more aware parent.

But she does not view the whole experience as negative. Even though he was negative most of the time, he also gave her confidence and self-esteem. Rita's experience highlights the paradoxes involved in abusive parenting approaches and the ways in which technologies of domination and technologies of the self are often intertwined:

What a coach can get away with is more than what a parent can get away with. What a parent says to us really hits the core faster than what a coach can say to us. But no one came close to hurting me more than what my dad had already said to me...[But] when I look back on my tennis and everything, I think I have an overall happy life...And I realized that my dad gave me a lot of attention. I knew that if I stopped tennis, I knew he wouldn't do that for me. I remember the things he would teach me while we were on the road together like reading a map. Things like that that he taught me was part of the attention he gave me and part of the love that he gave me. Even though there was negative, I also felt like there were positives. My dad gave me a lot of confidence and self-esteem through tennis too. And that is something, to this day, that I'm grateful for...Some of [the abuse] made me tougher. Like [in my career], I would endure verbal abuse I would feel like I was back on the court except it was a walk in the park this time....And I'd love to pass on those aspects without it having to be through something. I just would love to be able to pass on the parent-child relationship, not the parent-child-coach relationship...

But another former player, Andrea, who played at the Grand Slam level says that while her father's abuse helped her be "tough", it debilitated her overall:

I think I could have done much better. Truth be told, he did make me pretty tough, but at the end of the day I was battling so many issues and so many problems due to his treatment of me. It held a lot of my potential back. I could never let go of it. The only time I could play well was when I rid myself of those thoughts. But that rarely happened. I wasn't able to do that much of

the time. So I was really a tormented player much of the time for a long time. For the last year or so, I finally just said, "Screw this. If I lose I lose, if I win I win. I'm just gonna try." But that was 20 years of playing with all that crap. So, no, it definitely did not help me.

Abusive parenting, however, is rarely labeled as "abusive" by participants. If it is, it is something that participants have a hard time accepting. Even when accepting it, they still make excuses for it. Below, former player Katie excuses her father's abusiveness (a term she has only recently gotten comfortable using), as a factor of the culture in which he was raised:

I think it's worth it, because I think I'm still very much in denial of the fact that it was at all an abusive relationship. My therapist would agree with me, which is why I still find myself making excuses as to why we would sit on our heels for an hour and a half or two hours getting lectured over and over again about why that match was bad. But to me, it's just part of [our] culture...yeah. I think they were much like many immigrant parents, they were very much about "trying your hardest" and "don't slack off"; it was just part of the package of the way you're supposed to be. Your parents come all this way to see this new successful future, and it's all up to you if you achieve that.

Coach Linda discusses how a player (now one of the most famous tennis players in the world) and her dad fought on the court while another player was physically abused by her mother. This coach represents the widespread belief/stereotype in junior tennis about the authoritative/abusive approaches that pervade Eastern Europe. Many in the junior tennis community attribute these players' success to this type of approach. Some recognize, at the same time, how certain players may have had a better shot at success without the abuse. Below, Linda mentions both types of scenarios in almost the same breath:

There was a lot of yelling...I know that they fight a lot. I heard that they fight a lot now on the tour, and I don't think that he's traveling with her anymore... Another player, her mom would hit her and yell at her on the court, like really hit her and hit balls at her and yell at her.

And while parents stereotype eastern European and Russian parents as “abusive”, they reflect on their own parenting approaches and whether to emulate this “Russian” parenting style for potential glory in their child’s tennis. Father Clark expresses this:

[American parents] literally don’t have any concept of the tiger mother. Let’s face it. Even her standard, which was softened by being an American, would be considered a little bit soft compared to her homeland. We could also make the point that America is at the middle of the pack and heading down the pack because we need a few more tiger moms around. You know we need moms to be moms and parents not be best friends. A lot of parents in this country want to be their kids’ best friend more than their parent.... I believe that less than 50 years ago in America, it was more like their [Asian] model. We’ve just become soft for whatever reason. We could say certainly that [our parenting is] destroying the family.

Clark then questions if parents should consider refraining from that style to maintain their relationship with their children:

[But] I don’t know what’s good or bad. We could argue that the Russians, the way they push their kids, is abusive. But they could argue from the other side that if they didn’t do that, they wouldn’t be where they are...The bottom line for me is that at the end of the day, it has to be about more than just tennis. If by pushing them, [my kids] don’t want to return my phone calls in life, I guess we’d have to agree that I failed. [Russian] culture may not agree to that. To me that’s a no-brainer.

When not attributed to cultural differences, abusive parenting is normalized by the drive to succeed through sports. The “sport ethic” (Hughes and Coakley 1991) is apparent when players, parents, and coaches explain abuse with the “sacrifice to be the best”, while at the same time recognizing the long-term detriment it can cause. Coach Linda puts it like this:

So going back to these kids, their parents are yelling and screaming and hitting them, it's to get them to a better circumstances in their life or improve in their sport because their parent sees it as a great thing, financial stability, to be a world-famous tennis player, you have to sort of sacrifice to be the best, but what other baggage does that bring if you actually achieve it? There are definitely some mental problems if you get beaten and hit and yelled at your whole life, you can't be happy.

Parents like Nina use authoritative-to-abusive approaches as she condones her eight-year-old daughter being hit in the face with a ball if she fails to move out of the way of it in time:

You gotta stand at the net and have teenagers and adults hit as hard as they can, and you gotta be willing. If you want your kids to make it on the pro tour, and they got a chance, and if it breaks your nose, you know what? You should've had your racquet up and being ready for the next ball. And my kids have never ever gotten hit in the face because their racquet's always ready. My oldest one, I remember one time, she had the wind knocked out of her by a high school boy. She was 8 years old. She just jumped right up and went at it again. And she never not had her racquet up. She was always ready and never got her face broke. The kids came up with that "break your face" drill where they just try and break their face, hit as hard as they can at their face, and see if they can break their nose. But if you got your racquet ready, you won't get hurt. But a lot of parents, recreational players, are like, "you guys are crazy". But it's a different level. You have no choice. If you're gonna play the pro level, you better take that ball at 170 miles an hour at the net at your face. It's a different level than recreational high school level.

According to some, this would be an unnecessarily harsh drill that borders on exposure to abuse and the reproduction of the male-dominant power dynamic that girls learn to normalize through their tennis training¹².

Dealing with abusive parents. Coaches often find themselves in a bind when a parent appears to be using abusive approaches with their children and often take it upon themselves to counterbalance the abusive approach with their own nurturing approach while still maintaining some discipline. Sometimes, though, coaches said they would have to refer their players to other people if the parenting became too overbearing or abusive. No coaches said they would report a parent whom they saw hitting their child. This is still the "Magic Circle" (Huizinga 1944[1960]) of sport where

¹²This is elaborated upon in Chapter 8.

behaviors are acceptable in the tennis environment when, otherwise, they would not be.

Fights even break out between parents of opponents. Former player Tracey notes,

Police had to break up a fist fight between two parents at a 10-and-under tournament at [a local club] a few weeks ago...Junior tennis is like a boxing match with your parents on the sideline, watching, screaming, cheering you on...it's one-on-one, head-to-head, it's a battle.

Below, Coach Linda navigates the hypothetical situation of dealing with a parent who exhibits abusive approaches to his child. She says she probably would not coach a child whose parents were physically abusive but then considers playing a mediating role between parent and child if the child was a player who showed real potential to be a top player. She tries to explain to me, and herself in the process, how she would toe that line between discipline and abuse:

Obviously I think my players are good, they've really become awesome, but as far as a Sharipova or a Nadal or Federer like and exception, I haven't had that, and I don't think I want to be a part of that. It's so hard because I do want to coach and I want to help players, but I feel like if I don't want to do it if it comes to that. Maybe if I get in that situation ever, I'll change my mind, if that player's really that good, we can talk about it or work things out or I could be the mediator or the diplomat....If you come across a player who's going to be number one and the parent is going to be really tough on them, maybe there's a way you can negotiate, you just have to find a way to tell them you have to do whatever it takes for a player to win and be successful... Every player requires something else. Some players feed off negativity, some feed off positives... My personal approach is positive but with discipline. So you have to have discipline, and if they don't, then they need to be punished but it doesn't have to be a beating or screaming. It can be take away tennis or take away privileges. Take away a tournament and see how they react. But I don't like that other stuff.

“Seeing” abuse. Applying Korbin’s 1981 research to sport, even though some behaviors would be deemed abusive by outsiders, athletes who push too far past the pain boundary may think they are doing what is best for themselves and parents may think they are doing what is best for their child. Former players who were abused by their fathers discuss how the abuse never occurred at tournaments where the USTA

may have been able to do something¹³. But even if it had or they had told someone, they felt that no one would have believed them (what many victims of abuse feel, according to Brackenridge 2001). Rita describes how conflicted she felt about telling someone about her father's abuse:

My dad never did anything at tournaments. But the whole car ride home was yelling at you. If anything, I wish my parents' friends could have said something to him. I didn't see the USTA in that role...my dad was very charming with people at tournaments and he would talk to people. That was the one thing about my parents. People would always comment about how wonderful and charming and how lovely they were. And I felt like I saw a different side of them. But it was like, who was going to believe me. Or people would just turn a blind eye.

Former player Andrea explains how telling can often make things worse for the child at home:

It would be nice [if USTA got more involved in abusive parenting situations], but at the end of the day, what can they do. They have helped, at times, when I needed it. But, it's such a delicate matter. They can't do a whole lot...the player has to do something first. They are wonderful, they truly are. But what's anyone gonna do about it...Their hands are tied. But, truly, what are they gonna do?...It has to be all or nothing...If you do something, and it's a very bad situation, it's gonna get worse because the person is gonna take it out on the victim....unless you can find a way to get the child out of that situation completely. But the child is often too young to know what to do. If you take them out of the situation, they're gonna be bereft.

Parents and players are aware of abusive parenting approaches in the junior tennis environment but do not interfere when they witness them. Most participants, in fact, have at least one story of witnessing or hearing about a parent abusing their child in the training or tournament environment. Sherri, a mother who witnessed abuse, said,

I knew this girl...[the father] used to torture that child so much. I would practically see him beating her, hitting her, and smacking her. He would humiliate that child in the middle of a match. He would say something to her, and he knows it's the only time she has freedom away from him, when

¹³They are not empowered to do anything unless someone files a grievance, which can make domestic violence worse.

she's out there playing where she can do what she wants to do. But he still wants to interfere from the side and he would pass remarks, and when she ignored him, he would say something to insult her to get her attention. I was there one day. He said something in our language like, "Do you want to go to the restroom?" She was double-faulting twice, and he was shouting this. Can you imagine how embarrassing that is for her? She gave up tennis. She never really wanted to compete anymore. Now he's taken her little sister; he's off with her now.

And former player Terri describes some incidents she saw while on tour:

I saw abuse, I saw firsthand a girl that I played in juniors with, and after she lost, her father took her behind the bushes and slapped her. Another girl's mother took her hair and pulled it and screamed at her, and at that point, I realized how lucky I was to have normal tennis parents and normal parents in general, because it's much needed in the sport, because it's very difficult. It's very stressful for the kids, especially that young. This should be fun, but it's already becoming a job and pressure when you involve that sort of situation.

Unfortunately, parenting approaches that are universally considered "abusive" by parents, coaches, and players often do not get reported or even interfered with by tournament officials if they occur out of sight by officials or off the grounds of the tournament. Former player Tracey remembers what it was like playing juniors

Parents are absolutely crazy because girls wanna go pro and the pressure comes from the parents. Parents would be screaming and cursing at their kids in a different language across the court, making them cry and stuff, hiding in bushes to coach or scold them...

Former player Don remembers another violent scene in the parking lot:

The van came flying into the parking lot, the kid was waiting to take that, the dad got the car, walked over to the kid and literally dropkicked him, picked him up, chuck them into the van, and then just flew out of the parking lot. probably like 12 or something. It was pretty disgusting....it was at a local tournament.

However, some players try to help each other when they know their friend has an abusive parenting situation. Below is an example of a twelve-year-old girl, Hope, who is one of the top players in the world in her age group. She describes how she helped her

friend perform resistant disobedience - a cooperative form of resistant disobedience - when she protected her friend from potential parental abuse. This can be considered a performance of technologies of the self and power that transgresses oppressive dynamics, as discussed in Chapter 4. Markula 2003 says, "By focusing on self-care, the individual begins to care about others" (108). The fact that she felt she needed to do this at her age speaks to the commonplace occurrence of abusive parenting approaches in the junior tennis culture. She even says so:

Hope: [It's] kind of, like, sad, because they should just let the kids play. Like, kids can't play their best if they're having their parents like right on the fence and screaming at them and stuff. There was a girl at nationals and her dad got really pissed off at her, and he took her out to the parking lot and me and my friend went out to the car and I was standing there with her because he is, like, really mad at her. She's like one of my good friends; like I just stayed with her because I didn't want her dad doing anything.

JF: You thought he might hit her, or something.

Hope: Uh-huh, Yeah.

JF: So, did he just yell at her and stuff?

Hope: Yes, and I was just standing there so he wouldn't [do anything else]. I kind of felt bad for her.

JF: Do see a lot of that at tournaments?

Hope: It's kind of like something you see a lot of. But not, like, everybody can win a match.

Another mother, Susan, admits she was conflicted about her husband verbally abusing their daughter while she was a junior player but did not interfere:

[My husband] was to the point where he was verbally abusive [to my daughter] after bad matches...He was angry, and he would just bore into it, over and over and over again, in the car ride home...He would just not let it go. Two hours. Sometimes, he'd call her an idiot.

Parents who are prone to using an abusive approach towards their kids have even used this approach on their kids' opponents. As a player, I remember a parent of an opponent telling me I was a loser through the fence while I was beating his daughter. We were ten- years-old. Since referees are roaming, there are often no real consequences for these parents' behavior. Skye tells of similar experiences:

A parent yelled at me. He told me to zip it. I told the referee what he said and the referee said just ignore him and just play and have fun. I ignored everything that he said.

Under-involvement

While a common taboo of parents is to be overly involved with parenting behaviors that approach coddling and abuse, some parents are under-involved by placing an abundance of trust in their coaches. While this does not always end in disempowerment of players, it is perceived by participants as the first step towards it. Coaches have more time, interaction, and interdependence with their players than many parents do with their own children. With many hours of practice a day and many weekends of traveling to tournaments, often with the same coach, players develop a close bond with their coaches. On the one hand, this can provide a positive mentorship for players, especially if players have an abusive parent. But some male coaches take advantage of this bond and groom their students. When parents take themselves out of the training environment entirely, this gives coaches with bad intentions the opportunity to abuse their power. This is why some parents tend to overcompensate their involvement to prevent things like this from happening.

Despite the fact that many parents become overly involved and under-involved, there are many who have a balanced approach to involvement. "Good" parents are described by parents, coaches, and players as those that know how to be supportive,

understanding and providing structure (not coddling), but also letting the coaches do their jobs. Coach Tim explains what a “good” parent is in junior tennis:

I think the good parents are the parents that want the best for their kid, but really mean it. Because you will hear every parent say that, but I don't think a lot of parents do and it might sound shocking. I don't think they do it on purpose I just think that they have their own ideas of what their kids' junior career should be like or how the kid should go about it instead of leaving in the hands of the kid, or the coach that you have hired to work with your kid. You know, I see a lot of parents hire these coaches and pretty much want to tell the coaches what to do...You know, if you're gonna trust someone enough to hire them and work with your kids, then let them do their job. So, I mean a good parent is somebody who understands how much pressure these kids have just walking out on the court. Not to coddle them or baby them, but to understand that they need support just as much as they need for you to be strict or firm...But it's hard for parents to get it in their head [to focus on development instead of points] because, like I said, they want their kid to win. Every parent wants their kid to win... they don't understand the pressure these kids have.

Paradoxical Spaces of Pressure

Players embody their identities through liminal experiences of pain and potential, as explored in Chapter 3. These identities are intertwined with the ways in which players and parents engage in dynamics that become ritualized. The consequences of these interactions involve varying degrees of pressure.

Overt pressure

Parents who exhibit balanced involvement reward effort and attitude without spoiling their players. They do so by doing something un-related to tennis after their matches, regardless of outcome, as long as the players' attitude and effort are good. When parents make rewards based on things the players can control, like sportsmanship, the results are usually in players' favor because there is no pressure to win. Some, parents worry that their players are wasting time when they have too much fun. But, as parents like Ted know, fun is a key aspect to the decision to keep playing:

They want to be successful, and being successful means they have to work hard at certain things. It doesn't mean they can't have fun doing it. But there's got to be, you know, if you're gonna do something, if you're gonna keep score, then you're gonna want to try to win. If you want to win then you need to, you need to apply yourself.

Mothers Sherri and Deb emphasize the same points and that it is not the end of the world when their players lose:

Sherri: [I don't] emphasize winning. Just to make them have as much fun as possible. Just have fun. You're only going to have one childhood. Just don't take that away from them.

Deb: I agree, absolutely.

Sherri: Today he lost, [and I said], "So what? it's just a game, for God's sake. You ruin your day or your life over a game of tennis? It's not the end of everything. You just have to learn to go with it and go with the flow and enjoy. Take it as it comes. It's the worst that could happen? Okay, so you don't make it to the top, so what? It's still your life. You're still going to live."

Deb: And there are so many things to do to enrich your life... as the coach says: "If they feel disappointed, it's healthy in a certain amount because you know that they really like tennis and that they are looking to grow even more into practice more and to learn more to achieve more.

As ten-year-old player, Hope, succinctly puts it, "They should be happy that their kids win or lose as long as they give 200% and try their best."

Pressure can be productive for youth development as it prepares kids to handle it as adults (Baron 2007). As Gould et al. 2005 point out, parents who incorporate "optimal push" motivate players to do what they need to do "to be successful while at the same time not pressuring or inappropriately making the child do things against their well-being" (15). But there can be a power imbalance between parents and their kids when parents either put too much pressure on their kids with an authoritative approach or, on the other extreme, place no expectations on their kids to achieve goals with a

coddling approach. As coach Brandon says, it is a “fine line” between putting the right amount of pressure on kids that inspires them, and too much or not enough:

We’ve had some kids burnout. It’s such a fine line...It’s a fine line. In hindsight, if I look back at my childhood - not necessarily tennis - in general, if I literally had a choice to do things, when my parents said, “Hey, do you wanna do this or not wanna do this all the time,” there are literally about thirty things I would never had done that I would have regretted today if I had [stopped]...You have to push but you can’t push too much It’s a fine line. Kids are kids. Sometimes they’d rather be home talking on the phone or playing video games. So you have to push. But if you push too much you push them right out of the sport.

Some parents force their children to play junior tennis. Parents do this because they want to make sure that their children stay active in a productive activity while learning life lessons and avoiding “bad influences” in the process. But when kids want to stop, parents are torn between the decision of letting them quit or forcing them to keep their commitments to play. Former player Andrea emphasizes the difference between teaching children to keep their commitment and forcing them to play:

Pushing is a delicate word. If the kid wants to quit two days into it, that’s not really fair. You have to be like, “You made a commitment, and you have to keep going.” But it [should] not be pushing for the parent, it should be for personal growth...And the other thing to remember is that sport comes and goes. The most important thing is the relationship with the child...If I had had that relationship with my father, I would have been more motivated to do well. I would have wanted to make him proud. But I didn’t have good results because I was scared of him.

Junior players who have played tennis from a very early age sometimes decide to quit tennis during their high school years for a team sport in which they can enjoy the camaraderie of teammates. Tennis can become too individualistic and a pressure cooker for some players, while a team sport can often be a good option that pleases the parents because at least they stay in a sport. Some parents solve this dilemma by making a pact with their child to commit to the sport for a certain amount of time and

communicate every year about whether they want to keep doing it. This allows the child to learn to keep commitments while at the same time giving them the space to decide to choose a different sport or another activity entirely. For instance, a mother of a sixteen-year-old girl told me about how her daughter had to make a decision the previous night about hanging out with friends or getting to bed early to be ready for her morning match. She made the commitment to play the tournament, but wanted to hang out with friends instead. The mother let her make her own decision. She said,

I let her go to Busch Gardens last night, but I know it's not the best thing for her tennis. But she's sixteen and has to learn for herself and experience what it's like to go to Busch Gardens and get up the next morning for an 8:00 match. Then she'll know in the future, "Hmmm, maybe I shouldn't go to Busch Gardens."

Another mother talking loudly about her son, who did not want to play the tournament at all, said he "tanked" his match on purpose so that he could go home. But she said, "If he thinks he's gonna go home as soon as he loses, he's in for a big surprise because we're gonna sit here and watch the rest of the matches!"

The first mother empowered her daughter by using a nurturing approach, letting her make her own decision instead of making the decision for her. Her daughter "learned the hard way" about making choices as she lost that match. This is an example of Foucault's technologies of the self, highlighted in Chapter 4. The mother used critical self-reflection about the power she had in the role of "parent". There are not many parents who do that in junior tennis because they want to see their children win so badly, often for their own status, and they take it personally when their children lose. They are often more upset about losing than their child is.

The second mother tried to teach her son a lesson about commitment using a more authoritative approach. He made a commitment to play the tournament, so she

made him finish playing the tournament. This can be empowering for players, as well, so that they do not become spoiled and entitled. Coaches often cite as a huge problem parents letting their kids default their matches in the consolation rounds because they do not feel like playing after losing in the main draw. Forcing players to play the consolation teaches them that they can redeem themselves even after losing, and it teaches them respect for the tournament director and other players who may not want to win through default. As it may seem like a technology of domination on the surface, it actually teaches players to reflect on the ethics of their behaviors and, thus, develops as a technology of the self.

However, when parents force kids to play beyond their will, sometimes it is not for such noble causes. Some parents force their kids to play injured, sick, and burned out. Others force their kids to play because they do not want them to fall behind others in the race towards point accumulation. Others simply say they do not want to waste the money they spent on traveling to the tournament or entry fee. It depends on the situation, but forcing kids to play can be both a life lesson in teaching commitment and an abuse of power by parents over their children. Not forcing them to play can be either the humane thing to do, or it can be granting kids a sense of entitlement and teaching them they do not have to keep their commitments.

As Chapter 4 highlights, pressure is both a tool of domination and a technology of self, depending upon the context of the situation, how it is used, and who is using it. Too much pressure from parents who use abusive approaches can lead players to burnout and withdraw from tennis completely, explored with the concept of liminal pathways in Chapter 3. Some acknowledge that pressure is good to motivate and

inspire players to perform at levels higher than they ever thought they could achieve. But once that pressure moves from authoritative to abusive, it is unsustainable and the detriment to players bleeds into the non-tennis aspects of their lives. Some parents realize, after the fact, that they put too much pressure on their kids to win. Mother Sue says that her adult daughter told her she felt “oppressed” by her dad’s pressure when she was a junior player, and chooses to parent her own kids differently by not putting pressure on them: “She’s not as tough on [her kids]... because she said...not knowing or meaning to, she felt oppression [from her dad].”

Another parent, Susan, admits that her spouse put too much pressure on their daughter’s tennis but that he did so out of love of sports and love for her. She seems to struggle with the amount of pressure he put on her, and their other children. At the same time, she justifies it by saying that he is a highly motivated and accomplished person and that he would apologize if he was too harsh. While it caused some family dysfunction at the time, their daughter is now a successful business woman. Below, Susan’s response to my question, about how much pressure to put on kids to achieve, exemplifies the negotiation involved in answering this question and whether the short-term power imbalance justifies the long-term potential for career success:

There’s no question that, [my husband] was definitely the pressure. He has an MBA from [Ivy League school]. He’s very intellectual. He’s very extremely creative mind...But his older sons, [he would say], “You don’t do it right, I’m throwing the ball at you.” And he was to the point where he was verbally abusive after bad matches...But it was too much pressure. And we were very dysfunctional on the tennis court because he would get upset. I tried to...I got in the middle. [My daughter] says, “Why am I not more screwed up than I am?”, and I said, “Off the tennis court, when it had nothing to do with a tennis court, well, for one, he would always apologize if he felt that he’d been unfair.” He would always apologize. A lot of people don’t ever do that. He would always apologize. Off the tennis court, every day, physical affection, every day, verbal affection. Every day. “You can do

anything you want to do in life”, every day. He’s the most amazing person in the world. “You have all this potential, not just in tennis.” So there were all these positive aspects to our lives...and she thought she could make it because it was her...she was right there.

Subtle pressure

There is also subtle pressure, of which players are aware, when the parents invest their time, money, emotion, and identity formation into their players’ tennis development. Some parents who use approaches that range from collaborative to authoritative tell their kids how much money and time they are investing in their tennis. They often use guilt as motivation to train harder. Mother Tina reveals that she does this but does not seem to recognize her behavior as a “guilt trip”:

I just told my daughter that I don't want you wasting time. That means you're wasting my time and money. It means the coaches time. It means the other parents and the other kids' time. Someone else doesn't get to hit the ball or learn because you are disrupting, then we have problems. So, I've always held her to that higher standard.

This is not necessarily a bad thing as it can teach players to respect the value of a dollar and to respect other people’s time and efforts. But some parents feel it is unfair to put that burden on their kids. Below, mother Sherri makes this point and discusses how she benefits from her son’s participation in junior tennis anyway:

It’s a sacrifice for me. But it’s a bittersweet kind of thing. I’m going to ask myself if I don’t, what else would I do. What would I do? Yes I could do X, Y, and Z, but at this present moment, it gives me more happiness than anything else to see him doing so well. It’s a lot of things, it’s a lot of experiences. I get many people...it’s not such a bad thing you know? It all depends on how you look at it, you know?

She then says that it is not a burden on her and she does not have to do it if she does not want to. So, on the one hand she acknowledges the sacrifice she makes, but she enjoys it and anything else she would be doing for her sons would require effort on her part anyway. She adds that she is able to put forth the effort towards her child's tennis

because she does not work as her husband is back in their home country making the money.

But even when parents try to avoid putting direct pressure on their kids, the investment is obvious to players who put the pressure on themselves to succeed as a result. For instance, even though she describes how she does not put direct pressure on her son, Sherri's response exemplifies how parents build their identity around their child's tennis identity. She says that she does not make him go to practice if he does not want to go, but in reality, she does because she likes being a "tennis-mom" and he knows it. It makes it much harder for children to feel that tennis is their own and to quit if they want to quit because there is so much inner pressure to maintain their parents' identity and happiness. Just knowing how much their parent cares about their tennis makes children feel compelled to play, often at the expense of exploring other avenues of his/her own identity. But, many players come to adopt the goal of tennis as their own. Perhaps this is to justify to themselves the amount of time and effort they have put into it, or to gain power over their tennis as their own. They become themselves as they become tennis players, as Chapter 3 explains.

Below, former player Katie says she felt like she had no other options than to play tennis but then came to realize that what used to be her parents' dream then became her own:

I didn't really ever feel throughout my entire junior days that I was being pushed by my parents. I really enjoyed going to those tournaments because these people that I saw every weekend became my friends.... where I became good friends with people I only saw one day a week. It was like I looked forward to playing these different tournaments and competing and testing my ability of what I've been working on and seeing what I can play. I'm sure there was a period of time where I wasn't winning as much and then it was like I didn't want to do this anymore, but...I never

felt like it was a real option that I could not play, yet there was something going on where it didn't feel like I was being pushed to do it. And I think the first time I woke up from all of that was when I thought that I had the opportunity to go and travel to these places as young as 11 years old. That was just so cool because no one else was doing it, and it was such a great opportunity as opposed to [thinking], "My parents want this for me and I have to go do it."

This expresses how players' tennis development merges with their social development through the liminal experiences of junior tennis training and competition as well as adolescence.

Sometimes, parents give mixed messages that in one moment show concern for their child's well-being and in the next moment, admonish their tennis performance.

Below is an excerpt from my field notes:

A mother is talking to me while watching her son play and says, "I don't care if he wins or loses. I just want him to play well." In the next sentence, she says to herself, "Why did he do that?! He is so lazy!" Then says to me, "It's so hot out there; I don't know how he does it." And then, "He's so sluggish; why is he doing that?!" This is a good example of how parents are extremely conflicted when it comes to their child's performance and their well-being. With this mom, it's a tug of war between her concern and appreciation for her son's effort in the harsh conditions (summer Florida heat) and disappointment in his decision-making. Even though she is aware that the conditions are probably causing it, she blames his "sluggishness" on the heat but, in the next breath, blames it on his being "lazy". (June 13, 2010 – Brandon, FL)

Pressure is also self-induced, which is often a result of the surrounding environment of junior tennis. Even if parents do not exhibit overtly authoritative or abusive approaches, players understand the symbols and values involved with winning in the dynamics with their parents, their coaches, and most importantly, the culture of competition and performance enhancement. Coach Linda discusses how she and other players handled self-pressure as junior players:

[One girl I knew] struggled with the pressures, like from her father, because he expected her to win everything. So she was a good junior player, lived here in Florida, she started to play pro and she's a very high-strung person

anyway, so everything is life or death for her. Very passionate. So when she lost, she had a lot of trouble handling the losses. She couldn't regroup from them, where I took it more in stride. I looked at it long term as opposed to having to do it now, I have to achieve it now.

Former player Terri also expresses this:

I remember all that the pressure in juniors, I put so much pressure on myself, I remember that. The drive came from me, to be perfect practice and to win, I really did not like to lose.

No pressure

While some parents put too much pressure on their children by using authoritative to abusive approaches, parents using nurturing to coddling approaches put little to no pressure on them. When parents put no pressure on their players, it can be interpreted in various ways. One parent, Charles, says he puts no pressure on his sons to play because he trusts their decision-making abilities:

You can see parents that really push their kids. You know there's a lot of different ways you can push. You can push by physically telling them to get out there and go do it. You can also push by saying you've got to get a scholarship, you've got to go to college...And, so there's different motivators that parents put out there that will create burnout that we've always tried to avoid.

Coach Linda says her parents put no pressure on her because they would have rather her not play professionally, but this allowed her to find her own desire and self-discipline to play rather than being burned out in juniors like other players who had pressuring parents:

I think that playing a lot of tournaments in juniors helped. I wasn't burnt out like the other kids. I had no pressure because my parents were just supporting me. They had fun going to tournaments with me, and definitely starting later helped me not burn out. So I was super-eager to play every weekend and I loved tennis. I didn't want to hang out with friends anymore because it was so much fun. I still lived a full life, I was with my friends all the time, I was with family, I went on family trips, so I felt balanced. I felt really lucky that I had that childhood and balance and maybe that did help me. So, when I was 18 and done with school, I could travel and play. It's

what I wanted to do. It's not like I was trying to get away from tennis like other kids because now they finally have freedom and they're like, "Let's go party, have fun..."

She actually makes the case that having no pressure put on her by her parents helped fuel her fire to prove to them that she could make it professionally:

It definitely fueled my fire. It would've helped sometimes, because we had a lot of fights. But it definitely did fuel my fire...I was stubborn and determined to do what I wanted to do.

While she views the lack of pressure her parents put on her as what motivated her to do better, she also interprets it as a sign that they did not believe in her abilities. The paradox of putting no pressure on a player is that it can be interpreted as lack of faith or caring instead of giving the player freedom to act.

Parents who use collaborative to nurturing approaches use other techniques of motivation such as inspiration, encouragement, and an emphasis on life skills. One mother, Deb, exemplifies the collaborative-to-nurturing approach by putting no pressure on her son. Even though he did not always respond with collaborative power, sometimes using entitled disobedience towards her, she always parented him in my presence with genuine support and encouragement. She was a teacher and understood the big picture beyond junior tennis:

We are here because we want Nick to be happy and play good tennis, and if he wins at the end that's great. But even if he doesn't, I'm happy. I tell him, "Don't forget the joy when you play tennis. The most important thing is to be happy doing what you're doing. If you go to the court all stressed out about wanting to win, everybody wants to win, but the reality is not everybody can win. So you have to find a way to be happy even when you don't win."...I'm such a strong mother that believes in love and support. If my husband put pressure on Nick in this way...I would not let him, no. No pressure. Because it's stupid. Because you know what, Jen, in the end, if you don't have a healthy mind, it doesn't matter what you are in your life. Who cares? If you are PhD, if you are on top of everything, if you're not healthy, happy, if you did this because your mother or father wanted you to do it, you are lost.

And former player Terri alludes to the “spectrum” of pushing by pointing out,

I think it can be done in the correct way. I think that you can have that... Not necessarily pressure, but the mentality of hard work and the focus, but put it into a more positive direction. A lot of people don't know how to do that, and they think that the only way to enforce it is to do it in a harsh way, because that's the only way their children will get it, and they don't realize that that's not really how it works. You're actually taking them to the other spectrum and you're making them run away from it and burn out.

Summary

The player-parent dynamic in the junior tennis context exhibits a variety of power relations along the relational power grid (Figure 4-4) and power continuums (Figures 4-2 and 4-3). This chapter highlights a portion of those dynamics and shows that as parents and players use certain approaches with each other, they respond with certain approaches depending on the context of the interaction and the dynamic. Parents do not fulfill parental “types” and players cannot always be considered “obedient” or “disobedient”. Rather, they use different approaches with each other at different times in different spaces.¹⁴ This complicates the parent-child binary showing parents and children as between roles of “authority” and “subordinate. Power dynamics shift when parent or player approaches shift along their respective power continuums. The conceptualization of the continuum and grid communicates the ways in which behaviors and attitudes mutate and morph with changing contexts.

Imbalanced power dynamics between parent and player can often result in repetitive and normalized dynamics between them at the extremes of the relational power grid if not performed with critical awareness - ethical self-care, self-stylization and

¹⁴Although I discuss five “stops” along the power continuums and power relational grid, these labels are just meant to articulate the range of approaches parents and players use with each other and are not meant to imply that there are certain types that people fall into

critique of the self and external social environment (Markula 2003). I see the dynamics at the (coddling or abusive) extremes of the relational power grid as involving technologies of domination because they perpetuate power imbalances that result in what Coakley 2006a referred to as “deviant underconformity” (anarchy) and “deviant overconformity” (fascism). These imbalances often result in disempowering circumstances for the player, as will be discussed in detail in Chapters 7 and 8.

However, when parent-player dynamics involve approaches from either one or both the parent and player that include reflexive approaches to ethical self-care, or technologies of self, the dynamic shifts toward the collaborative center of the relational power grid and becomes an empowering experience for both. The interplay between technologies of domination and technologies of self produces paradoxical spaces of choice, support, involvement, and pressure. Through these spaces, parents and players build and/or destroy their relationship.

When parents use nurturing, collaborative, and authoritative approaches (without reaching extremes of coddling or abusive approaches) while players use resistant disobedience, collaborative approaches, and guided obedience (without becoming entitled or submissively obedient), the dynamic is more empowering and sustainable for both parents and players in the long-term. This makes it possible to reverse and transgress power norms within the junior tennis power molecule even if just temporarily, with self-reflection. While most books focus on the “do's and don'ts” of parenting in the sport context, this chapter could contribute to that discussion by showing how some of the “do's” can be “don'ts”, and vice-versa, depending on the context of the situation. But it also fills a void in the popular literature available to parents of child athletes by

showing how some acceptable parenting approaches intended to be empowering can become disempowering, and even abusive, to their children.

The paradoxical spaces of player-parent approaches discussed here exemplify the ways in which technologies of domination and technologies of the self often interact to illicit both empowering and disempowering consequences for the dynamic¹⁵. Thus, the player-parent dynamic is a site to observe the Foucauldian concept of governmentality, as described in Chapter 4, and the ways in which it is often difficult to distinguish between technologies of domination and technologies of the self without taking into account the context of the dynamic, the individuals involved in the dynamic, and the aspect of empowerment or disempowerment which is being judged. While this chapter explores the power relations between players and their parents, Chapter 6 focuses on power relations between players and their coaches.

¹⁵These consequences will be discussed in further detail in Chapters 7 and 8.

CHAPTER 6 PLAYER-COACH DYNAMICS

Coaches are often seen by their liminal athletes as both friend and enemy, hero and villain, biggest fan and evil criticizer (Weiss 2000:195). Coaches play paradoxical roles depending on the context of the situation. Markula and Pringle 2006 recognize this:

A coach and an athlete...exist within a specific power relation, in that the coach typically attempts to guide the athlete's conduct or performance... [But] the athlete is still relatively 'free' to decide his/her response and ultimately whether he/she will continue to be coached [by that coach]. The actions of the athlete can also reciprocally influence the actions of the coach...Thus, although the coach's and athlete's relationship of power may be unbalanced, they can still be thought of as existing within a specific power relation (23).

Building upon this point and the previous chapters on liminality, ritual, and power dynamics, this chapter focuses on the power relations between players and coaches as they use power approaches in their training rituals. First, I discuss the nurturing, collaborative, and authoritative dynamics that can develop between coach and player. Then, I discuss the paradoxical spaces - such as intimacy, "chemistry", performance enhancement, and loyalty - involved within player-coach dynamics by showing examples from interviews and observations. I specifically note the paradoxical spaces of communication, motivation, and abuse that liminal athletes experience with their coaches.

Coach and Player Power Approaches

Most coaches in my research said that teaching life lessons through competition is key to their role as coach no matter what approaches they use on any given day. They recognize a duty with their role to instill a sense of accountability in their players, who are between identities of master and student as well as child and adult. Some

coaches recognize that they are often seen as a third parent to their players and teach them how to be their own coaches on the court and in life. Most coaches enter the coaching profession wanting to teach youths life through tennis. This is reiterated in many of my interviews, but they use various approaches at various times with various people depending upon the goals of the player.

Coaches use power approaches in their dynamics with their players along the authority (coach/parent) power continuum (Figure 4-2) outlined in Chapter 4, much like parents do as outlined in Chapter 5. To reiterate, these approaches include coddling at one extreme and abuse on the other extreme, with collaborative approaches in the middle. I see the extremes as having more disempowering influences on the player-coach dynamic while the collaborative middle of the continuum has more empowering influences. Nurturing approaches can be visualized between the coddling extreme and the collaborative middle, while authoritative approaches can be visualized between the abusive extreme and the collaborative middle. Players' power approaches, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, involve approaches from entitled disobedience, resistant disobedience, collaboration, guided obedience, and submissive obedience.

There are various reasons¹ behind a coach using a certain approach. Empowering coaches adjust their approaches according to the player's goals, personalities, and responses while disempowering coaches tend to sustain the same approach no matter what. Coaching priorities that most participants emphasize as the most important aspects of the coaching role include setting appropriate goals, gaining

¹While it is not the focus of this research to delve into the multiple reasons why coaches use the various approaches along the continuum, it is important to point out that there are many reasons to highlight the contextually contingent character of coaching power approaches.

respect, teaching life lessons, motivating players, and game style. These are discussed in the context of some of the power dynamics along the relational power grid (Figure 4-4), as explained in Chapter 4.

It is often difficult to discern between empowering and disempowering aspects of an individual's behaviors, thoughts, and attitudes. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between technologies of the self, coping mechanisms, and technologies of domination. Coach-player dynamics often incorporate all of these.

Reiterating Chapter 4, Foucauldian technologies of power can only be judged by taking into account the context within which a dynamic between individuals develops.

Technologies of the self are empowering for individuals, and often the dynamic between/among individuals, because they prioritize ethical self-care and self-stylization in order to transgress, or overcome, oppressive power dynamics. Coping mechanisms are similar to technologies of the self because they seem empowering, and perhaps may be, but reproduce the power dynamic instead of transgressing it. Technologies of domination are, generally, disempowering because they reproduce oppressive power. They are often camouflaged through processes of normalization that makes them seem as part of the "natural order of things." Power relations between coaches and players are both reproduced and challenged through these processes of normalization within rituals of training and competition (including daily conversations). Junior players, thus, generate and are generated by these rituals with their coaches.

Nurturing-to-Coddling Dynamics

Coaches who use nurturing approaches tend to emphasize sportsmanship, happiness, and comfort over outcome of performance. They use tennis as a way to teach life skills and rarely emphasize winning as a goal. Coaches may use a more

nurturing approach for several reasons. They may have a laid back personality and choose to have a low-stress environment for themselves by using a no-pressure approach with their players. They may want to go easy on the player the day after a big match or after having used an authoritative approach for several days. They may have been coached with a nurturing approach and that is how they learned to coach or, on the other hand, coached with an authoritative or abusive approach and learned not to use that approach. They may be trying to compensate for parents who are using an authoritative approach bordering on abuse; or, they may be trying to please nurturing parents who want them to coach that way too. Some coaches who use the nurturing approach realize that if they continue to encourage players and their parents who have the goal to become professional, they will be willing to take more lessons and pay more for individual attention, even if they have no chance to make it. Or, they may not want to run the risk of being labeled as a “nay-sayer”, or someone who does not believe in a player's ability to succeed, by parents in the community. Staying positive as well as tough on players is a key component of the collaborative coaching approach in order to empower players, while nurturing approaches tend to have the priority of making practice fun but not pushing their players. Players are left to push themselves and tend to focus on staying positive without constructive criticism.

However, according to most players, coaches who use an extreme form of nurturing, or a coddling approach, are bad for their tennis in the long run because players *want* to work hard. As one top 12-and-under girl player put it, “I don't really care where it is or who it is, I just want somebody who can push me to the next level”. Sometimes, coaches can use permissive/coddling approaches to help them reach their

goals but be lax in their effort to help their players set realistic goals and expectations. Nina, the parent of three players - all of whom have become ranked top in the country - articulated the problem with coaches who take the nurturing approach to a coddling extreme using financial gain as a reason:

[Players get spoiled] because the coaches are too easy because they're just taking money from the rich kid. Tennis is a rich sport. The coaches are taking money from the rich kids, they don't want to coach them, they're just doing it for money, so the coach is miserable, the kids are miserable, and the parents need to see that...Most [parents] pick a coach, and they stay with them for months and years and [say] "Oh he's so nice and we're like family with him." [But] what does it matter? Your kid isn't even getting out of the local tournaments. He can't even make it out of the state tournaments. Something's wrong if they're talented. If you're happy with that then not improving them is fine, but the coach is feeding you what you wanna hear instead of the truth to make your child better.

The nurturing approach can be empowering or disempowering depending on players' goals. Usually a nurturing approach is not as attractive to players as a collaborative or authoritative approach because players who have lofty goals such as playing collegiate and professional tennis know they need a coach to push them and discipline them. But many players, who are self-motivated and push themselves, choose coaches who will nurture them the rest of the way through their junior career. In these cases, this approach can be very therapeutic for players, especially if they have experienced burnout, injury, or abuse from tennis. However, a nurturing approach that is taken to extreme or with players who have always been nurtured can coddle players and instill a sense of entitlement depending on the context. As Dr. Megan Neyer (performance psychologist and Olympian), told me, January 2012,

Some athletes aren't good at anything else; they might not be very smart. They get a lot of positive reinforcement for sport. So much of [their] world is centered on athletics, so [their] identity is built around that. You are in these controlled and controlling systems so that you don't have to grow up and learn those skills. At the collegiate level in sports like football, they support

the developmentally arrest model. Everything gets done for them: getting credits for classes they never took, told when to be, where to be, people knocking on doors if they don't show up, get away with a lot of things, rules don't apply and that's why they get away with a lot.

One coach, Will, admitted that he coddled and, therefore, "ruined" some players when he first started coaching:

I ruined three kids in my 20s. I thought it was all on me. I over-coached them. When they got up to 150 in the world, they couldn't do it by themselves anymore. They depended on me too much.

Player responses. It is apparent from my conversations with people that a nurturing approach is empowering when the parents are authoritative or abusive and when the player had experienced past trauma. But nurturing can be disempowering to players when the parents are also nurturing. Too much power given to players can lead to entitlement and deviance. These are traits that can have anti-social and, consequently, disempowering effects on players in the long-run. Taken to an extreme, a coddling approach rewards players with false praise, even for lack of effort and poor attitude. Players see through this false praise and can feel unchallenged by the coach or spoiled and entitled to praise. This can also disempower them because it may contribute to a lackluster work ethic perpetuate a player's entitled disobedience.

Players rarely snap at, yell at, or openly disrespect their coaches, but they do exhibit entitled disobedience on occasion. I use an example of this from my own coaching experience. During a practice with one of my own players when I was working as a personal coach to a nationally competitive player, there was a tension in the air between the two of us. The thirteen-year-old boy I was hitting with on the far side started out giving me the silent treatment. I kept trying to communicate as we hit the ball back and forth, keeping it light on criticism but trying to keep him motivated. When I

stopped the rally to ask him something about the previous shot he just hit, he called me a “fucking asshole”, yelling it at me from clear across the court. I was astonished and ended practice. I told his father, but there were no consequences. I subsequently stopped coaching him. In my opinion, he felt entitled to behave in that way because his father had coddled him throughout my work with him.

Coach Linda provides an example of an entitled player who yelled at her, overtly ignored her, and even tried to hit her with the ball:

I would ask her questions like, “How are you doing today?” She’d answer, “Fine.” And that’s it. Very standoffish, very irritable, and so I asked her if everything’s ok: “You can talk to me, please communicate with me...” And I’m not one to yell at my players. I don’t think I ever yelled at my players, I just talked firmly and stopped practice or whatever. But she would also yell at me on the court... When we were doing drills where I’m moving her side to side and making her do a really tough drill where she has to do all the running, she would try to hit me with the ball.

Collaborative Dynamics

Coaches who coach from the middle of the coaching power continuum, using the collaborative approach, prioritize the balance of happiness and discipline to enhance both player well-being and success by sharing power with their players. As discussed in the previous chapters, this empowers young players with independence as opposed to either giving them too much power, which can instill a sense of entitlement, or on the other hand, starving them of power which can make them feel dominated. When players are in a collaborative dynamic with their coaches, they generally communicate back and forth about the drills or strategies they are focused on. Coaches who use collaborative approaches ask players how they feel about trying a drill or if they understand a strategy, and players who use collaborative approaches respond. As Denison (2007) points out, “Coaches do not hold complete power over their athletes and [] their athletes’

actions can also influence their way of coaching” (379). This is empowering because they are a part of the decision-making process instead of being told what to do or having the pressure to decide everything without having the proper knowledge to do so.

A collaborative dynamic is also one where players feel like they can relate to a coach, which is a high priority for coaches who use collaborative approaches. One coach, Tim, who played at the Grand Slam level and is well-respected by his players as a coach who often uses collaborative and communicative approaches, describes how he tries to relate to his kids in this way:

I think where I can best help kids is I can relate to them really well because I just stopped playing, so I can put myself in their shoes. Even with the kids now, like, I remember playing the same tournament, and it's just nice to be able to say, “Listen, look, this is what worked and maybe I didn't get further in my career because I didn't do this, or I didn't do that.” To have them see that and maybe, you know, improve it and make something out of it is so rewarding. You know, [it] doesn't have to be a kid who turns pro. And deep down I think I'm a kid myself, so just being around the kids, it's just fun. It just, it doesn't feel like a job.

Former professional player, Linda, who played the Grand Slam level and now coaches with mostly collaborative coaching behavior and attitudes, says she is often worried about instilling her own goals into her players. She emphasizes the importance of her players making their own goals before planning their training regimen:

My top priority is to, first, establish what their goals are. Understand what they want to achieve, and then help them achieve their goals. So when I first started coaching, one of my main students, [] who you met, I was trying to help her understand goals. When I asked her what her goals were, she had difficulty deciding what they were, she didn't know. So I made the mistake of influencing what her goals could be – I said, “When you dream, you have to dream big. Reach for the stars.” So you should be the best in the world and I never asked for anything less, but I wouldn't do that again. I think it's most important to find out what everyone's goal is because everyone is different. The parent's goals are different from the player's goals, too, from what I've found. So I've learned to find out what their goals are and help them achieve them. That's my priority.

Coaches who showed collaborative behaviors and attitudes say they tried to show their passion for the game, to keep practice fun, and to stay flexible with individual players' needs and abilities. One coach I spoke with, who was also #3 in the world as a professional player, shared how his coach used a collaborative approach with him and how he tries to do the same with his own players:

JF: How do you think your coach helped instilled that passion in you in juniors?

Brian: I have tried to think back, and I don't know how. I think that's something you can transmit to others if you feel it. I think that God gave me a heart to play tennis, and without getting too spiritual on you, a lot of people have to find their passions in life and a lot of people don't, and I found mine.

JF: How would you say your coaching philosophy is now and how do you transmit that passion?

Coach: From a philosophical side, the workouts have to be fun...play left-handed. You have to find stuff like that when it's not going right..

Flexibility by the coach was also emphasized by many parents showing how empowering it is for players when coaches shift their power approaches. Mother Nina remarks:

It's totally up to the coach to keep them challenged. If they're not being challenged, a good coach will switch the drills. Or switch the kids around, or switch partners. If they see the child's not motivated, they'll switch the drill and do something that does motivate them – competition, points. Every kid, they might be having a bad day, and you have to do something different for them.

And coaches using these approaches emphasize life lessons of personal well-being and respect while finding a way to win: accountability of actions, work ethic, that success is not guaranteed, delayed gratification, keeping commitments, self-determination, self-sufficiency, courage, preparedness, focus, perseverance, time-management,

sportsmanship, and self-discipline - to name a few². In the segment below from my field notes (I paraphrase here), a coach consoles one of his players after he loses a match while subtly teaching him life lessons. The coach does not give in to his player's complaining and blaming his loss on incidentals, but shows him what he did well and what he could improve upon. He approaches his player in a sensitive but calculated manner, aiming to use this loss as a teaching tool:

The coach says, "I think you were just too tight. In the first set, you needed to go for your shots. You missed a lot of balls that were just a little bit out. You need to make sure they go in in the first set...You'd go after the ball like a lion but then you would make a mistake, so your opponent was actually controlling the points a lot better, because he was managing his mistakes better...The player is visibly upset and starts crying, saying, "He got so lucky! He got every ball! He was just so lucky!" The coach says gently, "Well, that's the way it goes sometimes." (Jan. 29, 2011 – Sarasota, FL)

Another example from my field notes of a coach at a tournament is of Jim, who is known for his collaborative but stern approach especially with younger players. He takes the opportunity to teach his ten-year-old girl player how to deal with an opponent who cheats:

A ten-year-old is playing a girl who has four people watching - coach, mother that's in a high fashion outfit (fur coat and fur hat), and two others. It's already very intense at 8:30 am. She says, "That Russian cheated me!", and her coach, Jim (a good life lesson coach and great with the kids) says, "Well, we need to say the score and keep thinking about what we're doing because it's very distracting when a lot of people are around talking and saying different things. But it doesn't change what you need to do, you know what I mean? Are you excited for the next match?" She says, "Yes!" Jim says, "Yes, get excited! I thought it was good. It wasn't easy because we haven't playing much this week. But you did well though." (Feb. 13, 2011 – Venice, FL)

According to sports psychologists, the collaborative approach to coaching is seen as the most empowering approach for player well-being as well as sport performance by

²This is elaborated upon in Chapter 7.

many coaches and sport psychologists. Dr. Megan Neyer (sport psychologist and Olympian), in a conversation we had, January 2012, she stressed this point:

All of us have gone through phases with our coaches where we vent our complaints. Coaches and athletes both feel a lot of pressure and stress at the elite level. That relationship is important to navigate especially with a young athlete. It's very important as the athlete matures, the athlete becomes more independent and becomes a collaborative partner versus just [a recipient of coach's instructions]...coaches have the responsibility of growing their athlete, not keeping them dependent. That's why many athletes have difficulty transitioning to lives outside because they haven't had responsibility and haven't learned critical life skills. Some coaches prefer their athletes to be dependent so they don't argue... But that's when sport can be developmentally arresting.

Authoritative-to-Abusive Dynamics

There are various reasons for using authoritative approaches, too. Coaches may have a personality that is intense and angry, which can be a positive motivator for players who have a lesser work ethic depending on how the coaches apply it. They may like a high-stress environment for themselves so they provide a high-stress environment for their players. They may use an authoritative approach the day after losing a match their player should have won or after several days of being nurturing with them. They may have been coached by authoritative coaches and that is how they learned to coach. They may have been coached by nurturing or coddling coaches and learned not to coach that way. They may be compensating for parents who are coddling their players. They may be trying to please authoritative parents who want them to coach that way too. Or, they may be trying to look the part of the "tough coach" which can attract players and parents who generally equate "tough" with "success" without question. These coaches may not want to risk losing respect of their players and the tennis community by being too nurturing.

But most coaches, like Ang, feel that they need to adjust their approaches depending on how “coachable” the player is. Coachability is an example of Foucault’s concept of docile bodies, described in Chapter 4, and coaches who use abusive approaches look for players who will submit to their authority role:

You also assess the player first. You have to see what they need. You need to see what their aspirations are before you know how coachable they are, before you really can do anything. I mean, you know, a lot of times your philosophy will not change, but your approach might be completely different from one player to the other.

Sometimes, an authoritative approach is necessary for players who have been coddled by their parents or previous coaches and who show a lack of respect for adults and other players with entitled disobedience. Nina articulates this below and distinguishes between productive and destructive fear³:

You gotta have fear in a coach, absolutely, or you don’t have respect for him if there’s not fear there. But fear should be at a level of, “Oh, they might raise their voice if I don’t do it right.” That kind of fear. “They might make me run.” You can’t have fear like, “Oh my god. Am I gonna get hit?” Or something like that. You’re just gonna turn off the player. But you definitely have to have fear. A little fear in your parents. A little fear in your coach. The coach and the parents have got to have control. And if the kids don’t have a little fear, then you know, they’re walking on you instead of you controlling them.

But abusive coaches take their control and criticism to an excessive level which is apparent to other coaches. One night at a tournament, I was listening to a coach lambaste his player after losing to one of the players in my research. Her father/coach said,

It’s just crazy that he’s all negative, points all the negative things, nothing positive she did, and nothing positive that the opponent did. It’s easy to say that you did this and that wrong, but you gotta just say the opponent was better today.

³This difference is elaborated upon later in the chapter.

Player responses. Some players feel belittled by an extreme authoritative approach, depending on their background and the context of the dynamic, and respond with submissive obedience by doing exactly what the coach says with no complaints, or quitting.⁴ Players exposed to too much pressure and abusive coaching approaches sometimes come off the court crying or ashamed after losing, or they simply quit. These are what I refer to as various liminal pathways in Chapter 3. Former player Todd remembers an abusive coach he had:

[My coach] basically treated us the same, running-wise. So we were... I remember we were running around this field once. Me and my friend were in the back, but he was expecting us to keep up with the eighteen-year-olds. Me and my friend, I just couldn't take it. I remember throwing up, it was bad. And I remember him just screaming at me to get up, and I was just...I fell down on the ground and I just couldn't take it. I remember saying to my parents that I didn't want to play at all anymore. I remember being disgusted every time I saw a tennis racquet or tennis ball.

Others respond with guided obedience as some players say they need the negativity to motivate them. This is an example of Foucault's technologies of domination as highlighted in Chapter 4. Some even say that they hate praise from their coaches more than their criticisms. Coach Linda describes how she negotiates the line between negativity and positivity:

I would definitely want a coach, even if they're more on the negative side. He needs to be able to recognize when to push the students and when to support them. So, I had a coach in the past, for example, that was pretty negative. He would yell at us, but for some reason, I would like that. I would feed off that negativity. He told us, "I could teach monkeys to volley better than you." It was funny sometimes. But at the same time, when I went to tournaments, he was actually pretty positive with me after a loss. So he was good because he was super-negative on the practice court...and you're put under so much pressure at practice, and tournaments seem so easy. And he was actually supportive in the tournaments, so it was almost a shock. For someone who is tough, I would choose a tough coach in

⁴This is elaborated upon later in the chapter.

practice, but who also can be supportive as well, so someone who has that balance. I think those are the main things.

Coaches who use oppressive/abusive approaches, though, tend to teach the lesson of winning at all costs⁵ at the expense of other lessons. It can become disempowering to players when they take this approach to an abusive extreme as I see it associated with injury, burnout, depression, emotional/physical abuse by the coach, and self-imposed abuse by the player. For instance, some players cannot hide their frustration with the coach and channel it through themselves, acting out their frustrations onto themselves with negative self-talk and hitting themselves. But when players use resistant disobedient approaches, or technologies of the self⁶ to resist authoritative approaches or abuse, it can be empowering. Described in Chapter 4, these can be technologies of the self when they are used to overcome oppressive power, and they can be coping mechanisms if they reinforce power relations. For example, a player can quit training with a coach or report him as abusive to overturn the power relation between them.

Players perform these approaches in overt and subtle ways. Denison (2007) discusses “a space between docile compliance and resistance where athletes still have ambition to achieve but are tired of being disciplined by their coaches” (p. 375). Here, a parent talks about her daughter’s refusal to do rituals that her coach asked her to do. I see these behaviors as coping mechanisms:

She has admitted that there are things that she knows that she should do something about. She’s convinced that she’s going to do it her way. [Her coach] said that she’s the hardest effort, she’s the most stubborn person in

⁵This follows Coakley’s 2006a concept of deviant overconformity.

⁶This is discussed in Chapter 4.

the world. He's told her, "it is your very worst trait. With that in mind when we finally get you in the right frame of mind...you'll be at your best strength but, right now it's a huge liability." She doesn't want to do the rituals. She told me one time...she's never done it. People are going to question why she's doing it now.

Sometimes players can verbally articulate their rebellion, but most of the time they show it through their body language. One of the players I trained with showed his disinterest in what his coach had to say during short breaks and in hitting by avoiding eye-contact with him, walking away from him before he stopped talking, playing with the ball, looking down at the court, pacing, rocking his balance from one foot to the other, and generally fidgeting with his clothes or racquet. During a drill, he would show negative body language through slumped shoulders, dragging his racquet, barely moving, or on the other extreme, going for winners wildly or slapping at the ball instead of trying to perform the maneuver that the coach wanted him to focus on. His coach also recognized his rebellion within a month of training him, as he told me after practices that the player did not seem to want to do the work.

Another player with whom I trained for about a year, showed her rebellion when she was tired and did not feel like practicing. One day, for instance, she was particularly tired because she had just won a weekend tournament the day before. Usually, coaches give their players a day of rest after a tournament, but her coach was her father and made her play anyway. During her practice, this day, she stopped running to shots in the middle of the point, her arms and legs were heavy and droopy, and she took extra-long breaks. She rarely spoke on the court during practice, but her opponent was trying to make conversation with her. Normally, she would respond but she just ignored him. Overall, she was just going through the motions to get practice over with. Other players

show eye-rolling, sighing, smirking, or looking at other players for allies against the coach as forms of rebellion.

Resistant disobedience is also exhibited through the refusal to use a coach's technique in matches and brand oneself with the coach or academy identity. A player I trained with for about a year was very amicable, easy-going, and communicative, but he did not always agree with what his coach taught him. He told me that he did not like the way his coach was changing his serve. So, instead of arguing with him, he served the way his coach wanted him to serve in practice. But he served the way he wanted to in his practices with other coaches and his tournament matches. Some players refused to wear the academy t-shirt, and other players only wore the t-shirt at practices but not at tournaments to hide the fact that they were training at two different academies. Thus, there are many player responses to coaching approaches. This creates spaces of “contradiction” (Chapman 1997) and paradox.

Paradoxical Spaces of Player-Coach Dynamics

Through interviews and observations, I show the paradoxes of power involved within dynamics where coaches use approaches that span the coach power continuum in both empowering and disempowering ways. Specifically, I focus on paradoxical spaces of intimacy, chemistry, performance enhancement, and loyalty.

Paradoxical Spaces of Intimacy

The emotional intimacy and interdependency that develops between most coaches and players is often innocent and a source of emotional strength for players. Often a coach offers support and guidance to a player whose parents use oppressive approaches, or when a player has shown respect for the coach and a determination to work hard for a common goal. Some coaches apply their coaching power to their

players' lives outside of tennis in order to influence them away from negative influences (i.e. drugs, alcohol), thereby, being a good role model and mentor for players. But sometimes coaches with the best intentions do not know where to draw the line between mentor and romantic partner (Burke 2001). Male coaching power over teen girl players becomes the norm in junior tennis: sometimes it is completely healthy and other times it crosses a line of emotional intimacy even if it does not become physical (as mentioned earlier).

One parent told me in an informal conversation about how her daughter's coach would send her emails that "sounded like a boyfriend talking to a girlfriend". She said she was feeling like her daughter was being controlled by an "immature, possessive boyfriend" even though it was not physical. The tone of the email was too intimate, she said, and it made her daughter feel guilty for wanting to find another coach because she felt like she was betraying him. As the mother said, it is the coaching relationship between a girl and an older man, the "power that men have over females...this is how girls, women, get trapped in abusive situations".⁷ She wanted her daughter to recognize that this was not a healthy relationship anymore, even though it had been in the beginning. Even though it was not physical, and "it never would have gone there", she felt it was inappropriate because it made her daughter feel like she was in a controlling relationship and doing something wrong by wanting to look elsewhere for a coach. Even though the coach-player bond can be an empowering experience for players as coaches become a confidante and guide through a player's adolescence and through life, this bond can become a technology of domination as coaches become over-

⁷This may be the topic of a future research project focusing on paradoxes of power within spaces of gender in junior tennis. I discuss this further in the conclusion.

controlling with their players, even when unintentionally done. This can develop into a method of grooming for sexual exploitation, however, by coaches with predatory intentions⁸.

Grooming for sexual harassment and abuse is different from grooming athletes to be emotional “punching bags” as there is more of a “predatory” intention involved in sexual grooming, according to Dr. Abrams (sport psychologist) in a personal conversation I had with him, January 2012. Brackenridge 2001 shows how teenaged female athletes who perform at elite levels are at most risk of sexual abuse by a coach or other sport authority figure; this is especially true for those in early-peaking individual sports (like tennis), where elite performance is usually reached in the early teens. According to Brackenridge 2001, the most vulnerable time for sex abuse to occur is actually at the point where athletes are on the verge of reaching elite status when they have developed a heightened level of trust and dependence on the coach as, say, an Olympic hopeful. Brackenridge 2001 refers to this as the “age of immanent success” (117). Players attach their identity to their tennis progress, and thus, often to their relationships to their coaches. Quitting or leaving the coach is extremely difficult to do at the age of immanent success because it is felt as a form of death, at least of the athletic

⁸The fine line between bonding and grooming by coaches has been highlighted in the media recently as a result of the Penn State scandal (Sydnor 2012); also see (Nack and Yaeger 1999, Robinson 1998). Junior tennis coaches that have been accused and charged with sexual molestation of were mentioned to me by my participants and which I found articles on-line. However, there were other names mentioned that I have not been able to find articles about which highlights the cases in which victims of child sexual abuse by coaches decide not to press charges; largely due to the normalization of grooming of teenaged girl players by male coaches in the tennis culture.

self⁹. This exemplifies the player's liminal identity and how it can be malleable for the exploitative coach.

Coach-player “relationships”.¹⁰ There is normalized sexual abuse and recognized sexual abuse in the junior tennis environment. Normalized sexual abuse is apparent in junior tennis when some parents, coaches, and players discuss how it is not uncommon to see relationships and flirting between adult male coaches and their teenage female players. They say it is “strange” but say they did nothing about it because it was between the coach and the player. By the age of immanent success, the athlete and most often the athlete's parents, have developed a trust for and dependency on the coach that overshadows or blinds them to any inappropriate behavior that he may exhibit. Former Grand Slam player, Terri, describes this in how some coaches take advantage of the girls they have been coaching often since they were young teens:

I'm sure that the WTA¹¹ is not really thinking that's a great thing, but it does happen. And the reason it happens is because these girls are starting to play so young. They have no social life, they've never been on dates, they've never had a boyfriend. So here they are spending 24/7 with their male coaches, and it happens and the coaches take advantages of the girls and naiveté. They don't see it as abusive, they probably think it's ok. I never ask, because it's kind of so far in the past that I really do think that when they're in those relationships, they really are in love, because it's the person they've been with for so long. It's a hard question to ask, but I can only imagine that looking back on it, they're probably thinking that it's more than a young person making a mistake not knowing what they were doing...it's like any abusive relationship, where you ask why the person stays. It's because they've been beaten down and in their mind, they really believe that they can't leave, or shouldn't leave.

⁹This is discussed at the end of this chapter.

¹⁰The normalcy of these relationships is exposed in the book by Mewshaw 2001.

¹¹Women's Tennis Association is the main professional tennis tour for women.

Recognized sexual abuse, though, is apparent when the player is considered “too young” for consent, which had varying ages associated with it. Parents and coaches see this as grounds for reporting but, still, speak of times when they were aware of it and did nothing about it. Some even used “cultural differences” as a reason why they did not report it. Nina expresses this:

I think it's more of a European thing. We saw it a lot with my older daughter on the tour. A lot of the young girls would go off with young guys [coaches], and we saw it a lot with her. And they'd end up boyfriend and girlfriend [male coaches with female players]. We've seen it in Bradenton.¹² A lot of foreign coaches come and you see 'em with a young girl and then they end up having sexual relations. We see it a lot with foreign players. Minors....They must not have the age restrictions that we have. I don't know. They're not brought up the same because you do that in America, you wouldn't even be around. But it's very very big in Germany. I see it all the time in the states. But they're not Americans. They're foreign coaches and foreign children.

I pointed out to Nina that it is still illegal here and she agreed, but blamed the parents for sending their girls with male coaches instead of reprimanding the system¹³:

I don't know. But there again. It's the parents' fault. The parents shouldn't be sending these young boys [coaches] with their cute little girls. Why don't they have either a female coach with them, or send a parent with them. Don't send them off with some guy alone.

Several former players with whom I spoke had had relationships with their coaches. One explained how it was the first real relationship she had and it was because of the bond that often develops between player and coach, especially while traveling:

¹²At the time of writing, the local newspapers in Bradenton reported the arrest of a male coach for having a relationship with a minor.

¹³Interestingly, despite this perspective, later in the interview she name-drops a convicted child sex abuser and brags about how her daughter got to stay with him. Either she is unaware of his record or she is in denial.

When I was in a relationship with my coach, you just feel this bond. I was on the court with the man for 4 hours a day, plus another 2 at the gym or running drills. And we would talk about everything. You're at a tournament, it's late at night, and there's no one else there... I think when you're traveling and the world of tennis is so all-encompassing, when you're dating, you're just trying to put your best foot forward. I got the feeling with the guys I'd dated before that they didn't quite know me. They weren't part of the tennis world. And the coach knows you very well. You don't have to explain to them. That's what is so intimate about that relationship. If you're gonna open up with someone, it's gonna be with someone you think really gets you. Plus, if they want to be with me, they really get me. And that's what women want. And you're constantly feeling like no one [outside tennis] gets you because you're so devoted to this life, that the coach is the only one that gets you.

But another former player explains in a different way what it was like to be groomed into a sexual relationship with her coach. The coach took advantage of her liminal identity as she was no longer a child or an amateur, but she was not yet an adult or a professional player. She emphasizes the way that she was, first, belittled and "shoved" around (to take away her power), lured away from her peers (to take away witnesses), and made to believe that she could not function on the tour without him (to fill in the void left by her parents and peers):

At first he was nice because my father was still in the picture. But once my dad was out of the picture, [my coach] became the controller. I couldn't have any friends. Like, I was training with a group of girls who had just broken into the top 100. And he was like, "You can't go to dinner with them! They're in the top 100. You're still at 150. You can't socialize with them!" But if I hung out with people who were below me he'd be like, "You can't hang out with them! They're losers!" And then I would have meetings with potential sponsors, and I wasn't educated at the time. I had left school at 7th grade. I was supposed to be homeschooled but I never did it because of my training schedule. So, I would have meetings with potential investors and if the conversation ever veered off from tennis, my coach would say, "Hey, you need to shut up and just talk about backhands because that's all you know about." And he would say that in front of them, and I didn't understand until later that it was wrong because it was better than I used to be treated. He would make fun of me about my weight and, I don't have an eating disorder, but it's something I'm conscious about now even though I eat [a lot]. That's where it started. After that he started to shove me around. Some people saw, some people wouldn't.

Then, she describes how it became a romantic relationship as the intimacy that is normally a healthy bond between coach and player became a form of co-dependency. She blames herself still and admits that she was naïve because she had previously been sheltered from dating and a social life:

[My coach] was 20 years older than me, and I was scared and lonely, and he totally took advantage of that, to a physical relationship, and I was pretty fucked up for a while after that. I should have known better...he had pretty much established dominance over me at that point, and it makes me sick to think about it now... The intensity of what you are going through with that person because the environment is intense; it strengthens that bond. But it's not the basis for a healthy relationship. And most of the coaches are a lot older, and these girls, they don't know what's going on. And that's also the reason behind a lot of the females experimenting with lesbian relationships. After they leave the tour, they don't go down that route. It's just, you're there and they don't know what's going on, and there is no support system. It's so easy to get caught up in all these different things. It's just a mess...You haven't had previous experiences, so you're [naïve socially]...I was trying to get out of it for a while, but I couldn't get rid of him. When I was traveling [without him], he would send me emails all the time [saying] "You can't get rid of me...you'll never be anything without me!" He'd call me a slut.

She emphasizes how she tolerated it for so long because she had become used to verbal abuse from other male coaches and her own father, and she did not know what she would do if she left:

I did for a while, but I had heard that from so many people – my father – so that is why I stuck it out in tennis for so long. I wanted to play the Olympics, I didn't know any other life, and I didn't think I would succeed in anything any other way, and I wouldn't know how to go about integrating myself into a normal life...I had a few friends on tour [who would motivate me and leave the coach]...But, then, I couldn't afford to have him around, so he took a job in [in another country] coaching and would try to get me to come over there and train with him. But I said no. I was old enough to realize that it was a blessing [not to be able to afford to have him as my coach anymore]. It was a way to get him out of my life, and I needed to hold on to that. If you know

anyone who wants to train with that guy, they need to stay away from him. He is bad news. His name is []¹⁴.

But these relationships are not considered “illegal” in the tennis world. As a former player, who played for many years on the tour while knowing about coaches who had sexual relationships with their teen players, says:

I didn't even consider [sexual abuse] in sports, but it's something we have to look at. Parents are really blinded about what sports can do for their children and the success they can have, but they don't care what the means are. It all justifies the ends.

Paradoxical Spaces of “Chemistry”

Players, parents, and coaches reiterated in their interviews that the ideal coach incorporates consistent healthy communication, trust, caring, balance, and a sense of teamwork. First, as the collaborative approach relies heavily on constant communication between coach and player (as well as coach and parent), players often speak about their ideal coach being someone they can talk to but also someone who keeps them in line. Below is former player Don's description of his coach, whom he greatly admired because of his collaborative, communicative approach:

[A good coach is like my junior coach], someone who's not going to take a lot of crap, but at the same time someone who's not intimidating. Like, I would complain to [my coach] or tell him something, and in almost like a funny way he'd be like, “I don't care”. You know? It kind of, it got the message across, but it was still kind of funny. But when it needed to be serious, like when he was pissed, it would be a conversation. It wouldn't be

¹⁴This coach's webpage is still currently active, at the time of writing, using this participant's name and career to promote his coaching services. Since there is no licensure or certification system in the United States for coaches outside of the regulated education system, coaches like this are able to continue coaching with only the threat of rumors to hurt business. Even coaches who are convicted of sexual abuse of a minor are able to continue coaching once they are out of jail. The tennis world is full of stories like this one and hundreds if not thousands of girls are harassed and abused, either sexually, emotionally, and/or physically under the rug of the USTA and WTA tours.

him yelling at me. It was him being like, “What do you think you are supposed to do there?”...So like those kinds of things [he would tell me] and how to like work your way through it...We were like almost like friends. That was the relationship. He would slow things down and asked me what I was trying to do. He’d say...“Don’t be lazy and undisciplined about that. Take care of it.”

Here, I describe coach Cassie talking to her ten-year-old player after he lost his first round match. He came off the court crying and the coach sat him on her lap and consoled him, telling him all the positive things he did on the court and reminding him that he has gained a lot of experience. She told him that she does not care about the score and that she saw him do things that she did not think he could do. He would have an opportunity to make it better, and that next year, it would be a different story. She went on to say:

If you quit, you never know. If you lose, so what? If you lose another one, so what? You’re only eleven-years-old and you have a bright future ahead of you. You can’t think about “oh I just lost, I keep losing,” because one day, you’re gonna win. And guess what, when you start winning, you won’t stop. That’s the part you gotta focus on. But you gotta think about the positive, not just the negative, because that’s gonna kill inside and that’s what forces you to get so frustrated. You played good, I was happy with the way you played. You behaved well, you did everything good; the kid was just a little bit better. Use this match to go home and work hard and say, “Next year I don’t want the same thing to happen,” so you got a whole year to improve. You know what you can do in that year? A lot. And you’re gonna get bigger and stronger, and more mature. How about you hold your head up and don’t look down. Be proud of who you are no matter what.

Participants speak about trust as a two-way street with their coach. Finding a coach that believes in them, and one they trust, is cited as one of the top priorities by players when looking for a coach. As Don says:

If you’re gonna get a coach, don’t get a coach that you don’t trust with your kid and what they’re doing. Like them as a person first of all and then a player. I think it should be like a team.

Players also say they wanted a coach that they can relate to or who is easy to talk to, especially after having coaches who use more authoritative approaches. They want a coach who explains their expectations clearly and cares about them as people, not just players. Former player Andrea emphasizes this:

The biggest reason I liked [my coaches] was that they cared about me. It wasn't just about my tennis. Like some days, they would just give me the day off and that showed me they cared, and it made me want to do better for them.

While players and parents coaches with whom they can communicate, trust, and relate, they almost always say they want one that can be tough, as well, and not fake. Ten-year-old player Sara says, "I like when they push me, but I still want them to be just a little fun, sometimes." And former player Andrea expresses,

One of the coaches I just adored, what they did well, was what I just talked about. When I was having bad days, throwing my racquet and my attitude was bad, they would be like, "You need to cut that shit out because it's not gonna work." But when I [lost], they'd say, "it's okay that you lost." They were really big on being positive and being a positive influence. They would only use intensity only when it's necessary. There are times when you have your head up your ass, and you need it. But they knew that I was highly motivated and that I felt bad enough [when I lost]. Sometimes you need that push, like in a match if you don't do the things that you've worked on, you need someone to be like, "Hey, that's not what we worked on. You need to get it together so that you can succeed."

Another top priority in a coach is providing a training environment that promotes healthy competition and friendships among players and parents, instead of an environment that breeds narcissistic rivalry. Parents and players both see this as beneficial to their tennis games and their happiness. According to parent Tina,

They really do try to build it like a sport, like more of a team. They can really be a team like when they travel. The coaches are involved. And they try to make them more like a group here. They don't try to put one against the other. I like that down here...I have to give this a lot of credit. And tennis, in general, if families choose to do it this way, and not all families do...but, it is a community, it is the parents...A bunch of us live on the other side of town

so, we car pool as much as we possibly can. We hold a holiday party every year at Christmas and invite everyone from there... it's a family. I know that I would trust them with my daughter...the families, the parents and the kids know each other. We all travel together.

“Chemistry” is a main factor in choosing a coach. Chemistry exemplifies the shared liminal status of coaches and players in their progression through the embedded rituals of junior tennis (explained in Chapter 3). While it can be disempowering for players and coaches to depend upon each other for identity, it can also have an empowering effect for both. Often, players and coaches do not “get” each other, and players are particularly sensitive to this. Parents are especially vocal about making it a collaborative effort between the coach, parent, and player as they want to be included in the decision-making as well. Nina explains:

You've gotta have chemistry between the parent, the coach and the player. It takes a confident coach, that's not upset, that wants to work with the parent to be a player...The player has to be willing to do what the coach does, and the parents have to agree that it's best, and if the kid's upset about it, the parent's gotta convince the kid this is the way it is now with this coach. There's just so much chemistry. If you're not a team – the parent, player, and coach working together – where are you gonna go? You know, the coach is gonna go one way, the parent's gonna go the other way, the kid's gonna come home and go [complaining noise]. You know, you gotta be on the same page.

Sometimes, parents and coaches keep what their players say to them confidential so that they maintain the trust of the player while still keeping the chemistry among the three intact. Tina describes the fragile dynamic with her daughter's coach:

I think we have a unique situation with [our coach] because she's been with him for so long. And he has been part of her growing up...and it has been a combination of all of those things at different times. She is at a stage now where there are times that we can talk as a threesome, but we have also been at places where she feels like she is getting ganged up on because [the coach] and I, we do talk outside of her. And so often times it is so, I feel we have a solid front with her. You know, we are both trying to accomplish the same thing, neither one of us is saying the wrong thing or going against what the other one is saying. That is my big thing...[I ask him], “What's your

opinion? What is your guidance because I have never played tennis, I have never been part of this world before.” I don't know how to navigate so I need to rely on him. I know there are things that she does not tell him that she tells me. But there are also things that she tells him and not me. Both he and I think, both have to be respectful, and there are some things that I know she has told him and shared with him that, although I may want to know, he has felt that it is not my business and he has got to protect his player confidentiality relationship. And there are things that are, like, as the mom I can encourage her to do, but I would never, like, rat her out.

Communication breakdown. There are paradoxes involved with this approach as there are with others. While at the beginning of my fieldwork I surmised that a collaborative approach with these philosophies *a/ways* resulted in a productive dynamic that benefitted the player, there were times that the collaborative approach seemed to cause a power struggle between coach and player. The ritualized communication behavior from the coach seemed to smother players. This happens through questions about how the player was feeling, constant commentary during drills and rest periods, or stopping the flow of a rally or drill every few seconds to explain a technique or strategy. For instance, one day during practice, one player said that her coach scrutinized her body and it made her feel uncomfortable. She said he told her not to bend at her waist to pick up balls but to bend at her knees. She said, paraphrasing, “Why is he even looking at me while I'm bending down, anyway?” It is great when a coach constantly communicates with a player about her physical and mental state. But it can be interpreted as smothering and intrusive – a technology of domination - depending on the relationship, the player, and the context of the comment.

This particular coach can be caring, considerate, communicative, and collaborative, but he can also be condescending, overly scrutinizing and “fake”, as a few players mentioned in conversations. He seems to communicate too much with his players. When he asks his player, “How are you feeling?” during the second week of

training, the player answers, “I don’t know, just tell me!” But since the coach wanted him to develop into his own coach, and avoid a top-down authoritative approach, like in his old training environment, the coach kept communicating with him by asking him how he felt several times during practice. This clearly frustrated the player even more, who seemed to be used to following instructions without having his own feelings taken into account. He seemed to prefer it that way which exemplifies the Foucauldian concept of the docile body, discussed in Chapter 4.

Therefore, while the collaborative style aims to share power, it can sometimes result in a power struggle between player and coach and even cross over into authoritative mode if the coach loses patience. For example, coaches often try to mold or “brand” players with their own specific style. Some players respond with guided obedience and gladly wear the academy t-shirt and hit their shots the way in which their coaches want them to hit. But some players rebel with resistant disobedience by refusing to apply the coach's techniques to their strokes because they have been playing so long one way that it is too difficult to change, or because it hurts their bodies in some way. It is a constant power struggle between coaches and players over decisions like this because players want to maintain power over their own bodies.

But coaches feel they should have ownership over the brand they are trying to instill in their players due their experience and knowledge. Coaches feel they have more power over the game of tennis (knowledge) while players have come to take ownership over their *own* game (bodies). Thus, player-coach relationships that usually incorporate a collaborative dynamic can incorporate shifts within the “zone of empowerment” along the relational power grid (Figure 4-4) in daily interactions. This shows how the body

becomes a “border zone” (Mattingly 2010) between technologies of domination (coach's knowledge) and technologies of the self (player's self-making), as Markula 2003 discusses.

I give an example of this, here. Six months into a training relationship, one player decided to verbally disagree with his coach. Neither of them relinquished their position for thirty minutes. An excerpt from my field notes of this conversation portrays their struggle for power:

Player says, “I just want to use my forward step.” Coach says, “But if I don’t get you to concentrate on it, I don’t see you doing it enough.” Player says that he steps forward better on his backhand when he’s coming in. Coach responds, “I agree. I think you do it better in matches than in practice because in matches you’re competing and more aggressive and you don’t think about it. But a lot of times in practice I feel like you’re working on things and it slows you down a lot.” But the player continues to politely debate him: “But I think that when I’m moving laterally the open-stance is better because I can transfer my weight better for a faster recovery. On a slow ball, I can move through it because I wanna come to the net.” Then, Coach started to slide along the power role continuum from collaborative to authoritative by placing the blame on Player. He said, “You know what you’re problem is? You hit open- stance way too much, on balls you should never hit open-stance on. It causes you to lose your balance and swing across the ball. That’s why most of your forehands go wide. Remember, you used to miss here [he motions to the inside out alley]. But now it’s getting so much more consistent, right?” Player agrees in a way that sounds like he just wants to leave now. Coach tries to take power back from Player, the power that he originally gave him by having a collaborative coach-player relationship. This is when collaborative dynamic is put on hold so that the coach can try to even the ship again by taking control again. But Player won’t give it back. He dismisses everything Coach has been saying for the last thirty minutes and simply says, “Sorta.” (March 2, 2011 – Bradenton, FL)

This is only a portion of that conversation, but is important to include this here for two reasons. First, it demonstrates the culmination of tension between coach and player after several months of working together and how the collaborative dynamic can become a power struggle and disintegrate. Second, this conversation shows how the

authority that the coach has over the player can be resisted by the player, portraying power like a ball being hit back-and-forth in a rally. This conversation is an embodiment of the power struggle between coach-player and shows how power shifts along the relational power grid (Figure 4-4) described in Chapter 4. Not all collaborative relationships end this way, though, and it was surprising to me as I watched this dynamic unfold from start to finish. In the end, both coach and player went on to start new training relationships that have, so far, been fulfilling and positive according to recent conversations with them.

Paradoxical Spaces of Performance Enhancement

Because abusive coaches tend to ignore the transitional state of player, players avoid coaches who have characteristics that approach the oppressive-abusive extreme of coaching approaches. Participants repeatedly said that players should try to avoid coaches who are inflexible, unable to relate to kids, exploitative, territorial, and burned out. For instance, some parents and players get frustrated when they suggest trying something to the coach and the coach ignores the suggestion. I see this as it pertains to sports psychology, college choices, using a different shot selection, planning the tournament schedule, etc. Coaches are usually used to doing things the way they were taught or the way they have been doing them for years, thereby, reaffirming their status as all-knowing coach and the knowledge of the coaching industry in turn (Denison 2007). This exemplifies a reproduction of power as many are reluctant to change. As Tina says, “These coaches think they know everything. They feel like they don’t need any help.”

Some coaches just do not get along very well with teenagers even though they may have related to them during their pre-teen years. When one coach I watched talked

for too long, lecture, or talk about their playing days, teenagers started to tune out. But there are coaches who exploit players who have potential. Junior tennis is a business and there are many people who get into the business and put making money ahead of helping players. Players often switch coaches and academies because there is such a high concentration of them in Florida. When coaches talk about branding their methods with their players, it makes them more competitive in the industry. They do this in the way they teach strokes and strategy, but also through material means as they make their players wear t-shirts advertising the coach's academy¹⁵. Game style and clothing symbolize identification with and social cohesion within an academy, thereby, relinquishing one's own individual identity and self-stylization which Foucault saw as a tool of domination¹⁶. Branding encourages loyalty, camaraderie, and positive peer pressure to improve among players within an academy, but it can also encourage intense rivalry between academies so that players feel forbidden to practice with players from other academies. Many coaches and parents see this as a problem as it fosters a sense of territoriality with players. One coach, Henry, discusses this territoriality:

Getting pros to motivate to come together [is a major issue in junior tennis]. We've got to grow the game. I think people get defensive – it's great to see the [the various organizations] kind of work together. I think when you get into a local situation, everyone gets defensive and territorial, and they feel like it's taking the kids.

Some of the coaches I interviewed say that other coaches “steal” students, even when their players leave of their own volition. It is very tough in this business because it is a fine line between whether coaches actively recruit players from other coaches and

¹⁵The word “academy” is used by most coaches trying to recruit players even if their program has only two players.

¹⁶This is discussed in Chapter 4.

whether players decide to switch because they are unhappy. There is a certain moral code between coaches that recruiting players is taboo, but coaches do it anyway by giving their business cards to players at tournaments. Players become “clients” to these coaches who do their best to sell their training services to them. Some players are weary to talk to coaches like this, but others feel special that they have been approached. This is how children and teenagers become products in the junior tennis industry. Sometimes, coaches offer junior players free training to come to their academy because their ability and growing fame on the junior tour creates buzz for the academy and attracts business for them. For coaches who work in a corporate environment, like a large international academy, the possessiveness of players is very apparent. As one coach told me about a former player of his, “the academy owns her” because she signed a contract to train there. He said, “as a corporation, they want to control everything...you have to be ready for that when you work for corporation.”

Some coaches feel that they failed on the professional tour and encourage their players to play professionally and lead them away from choosing college, even when their players are not good enough to achieve professional status. Players and their parents believe the coach who says that they have what it takes to be professional. This puts money in the coach’s pocket as it keeps the player at home for training and traveling with the coach, and it gives the coach the power to say he has a player on the tour. But this is mostly detrimental to the player because they become ineligible for a college scholarship six months after graduating from high school. Thus, seniors are faced with the stressful position of choosing a college scholarship, the “safe” decision, or shooting for the goal of a professional career. Unfortunately, many players see

college as a Plan B and turn professional, thereby, giving up the opportunity for a scholarship. As it takes an average of three years on tour to see if a player will “make it”, it is often too late to play tennis for a college scholarship and many players just decide to become coaches. This often restricts their choices for future careers outside of tennis once their bodies wear out. Instead of tennis being a vehicle of social mobility, it becomes an anchor for some players once they leave the tour.¹⁷

Parents and players often get caught in the middle of coaching politics. Many coaches base their careers and reputations off the outcomes of their players. Nina describes, matter-of-factly, the importance of choosing the right coach and how coaches use their players to build up their own resume:

The most important thing is, the first thing you ask a coach is: who have you developed from scratch? Doesn't matter who you hit with. Everybody's hit with everybody. Don't let them start throwing out names of who they hit with. [Ask] “Who have you developed, who are you working with now that's an up-and-coming player? Who have you made?...That's why a lot of good young up-and-coming coaches, they'll take a young player and take them on for free or a low amount of money just to say that's who they developed because that would build your resume. Most, 95% of coaches, maybe 98% coaches in this country will say, “I'm a coach. I worked with so-and-so” and they can't coach to save their life. You gotta find someone that's developed somebody that went to the whole next level.

Another parent, Clark, describes how coaching territoriality and identification with their players' success can get out of hand:

You see the coaches. Like when a ten-year-old who started at age 5, won the state tournament and played a kid who started at age 8, and [the coach] who hit 10,000 balls to him, or something like this, says, ‘I made a state champion!’ You know, his ego is wrapped up [in that kid]. He's 10! It's not Wimbledon! Just relax. But they're insane, mentally, I mean it's just crazy. But parents do the same thing.

¹⁷Former tennis player, Neha Uberoi 2012, wrote her master's thesis about this.

Because of the intense competition between coaches, the lack of loyalty from parents, the physical burden of being on the court all day six to seven days a week in the heat, the weekend travel that is necessary almost every week, and the stress of training players to be good players and good people, coaches tend to burn out. They are paid on a monthly basis and often have no benefits. It is a labor of love for most coaches - love of tennis, and love of teaching. But sometimes it becomes too much for coaches who often postpone or sacrifice their social life to maintain their coaching career, just like they had to sacrifice their social lives for their competitive careers.

Coach Cassie discusses coach burnout:

It's so fulfilling when you see the kids get it; it's a better feeling than hitting a winner; but there also comes along that one kid that makes you hate what you're doing. A majority of the kids fall in the middle and it becomes a tug of war and you lose a sense of who you are, and that's the time to slow down a little....I wanna wake up and not do anything; [where] there's nowhere I have to be, this is the life I deserve. But I'm forced to continue to do this for a while.

Another coach, Will, explains how he burned out keeping up with the USTA philosophy:

If [USTA] can find a way to burn me out, and I have a pre-frontal cortex, just think of what they are doing to the kids who don't have a pre-frontal cortex...I was trying to be like the USTA coaches, [but] I'm a little burned out. And I'm just now starting to get sunburnt out and energetic about what I do again. I just said, "Screw it!" I'm not worried about it anymore. I just want to make players. [Now] I wake up in the morning and I'm jacked to go to work in the morning to make players.

Motivation: fear and anger

Coach burnout can often lead to coaches crossing the lines from authoritative approaches to abuse. Fear and anger are paradoxical sites of power where they can be used to reaffirm disempowering imbalanced relations (as technologies of domination) and/or they can be used to overcome adversity and take charge of one's life (as technologies of the self), thus referring to the discussion on governmentality as

discussed in Chapter 4. But it is very difficult to discern empowering from disempowering fear and anger.

I began this research assuming, from my own experiences as a player, that fear through an authoritative approach worked as a technology of domination in order to temporarily motivate players, but that it made players overly dependent on the deliverer of fear (i.e. the coach) to produce a favorable performance (i.e. a win). I also assumed that, on the other hand, love and inspiration as motivators in a collaborative, dynamic relationship inspired players over the short and long-term because it encouraged self-motivation even without the presence of a coach. But sport psychologists say that the issue of motivational style is more complicated than that. Fear can work for the long-term depending on the intensity and context in which it's given. They also emphasize that if it is to the point of being afraid to perform, fear becomes abusive rather than motivating. Dr. Mitch Abrams (sport psychologist) says in personal communication with me, January 2012,

When you are so afraid if you [mess] up, that your coach is going to kill you, you're not going to be creative. And that stifles you from getting the best you can...if athletes are so afraid that if they don't perform the way their coaches demand, that they are going to be punished, humiliated, harmed etc. and it's going to take away their willingness, their ability to create, then that to me is the reason why fear cannot be used as a motivation...It can be used long-term; the issue is the intensity of it.

Using fear is only productive when it instills a fear of not reaching one's potential rather than a fear of punishment from the coach. If the player has power over the fear by owning the consequence (not reaching potential) rather than the coach's punishment, then an authoritative approach using fear can empower the player to find a way to win instead of disempower the player with fear to create. As sport psychologist

Dr. Mitch Abrams (sports psychologist) continues in his conversation with me (January 2012,

I try to use fear...to bring up that, that aggressiveness, that courage...You use fear as the incentive to get athletes to drive themselves harder. But...there's a catch to that too. A lot of athletes are very perfectionistic. And you do that with someone who is already perfectionistic and you're gonna run the risk of overtraining injuries...Motivation should be seen as a toolbox, and fear can powerfully be one of the tools in your toolbox, the idea that using fear as a motivator is unhealthy across the board all the time, I don't agree with...The idea that using fear as a motivator is abusive is a mistake, it's not true. It can be used as a motivator healthily and appropriately, however it's a slippery slope and fear can easily be used as a weapon of abuse by coach.

This last point, of fear being used as both a healthy motivator and as a weapon depending on the coach, may be difficult for my player participants to articulate and who may not understand the difference between healthy fear and abusive fear.

Sport psychologists and many coaches talk about getting players to get more aggressive by getting angry. Anger does not have to be a self-destructive quality and can be used to overcome adversity. But when does the approach to use anger to fuel a player's fire become training to tolerate abusive behavior from authority figures and abusive environments, in general? How do you instill fear through anger in a healthy way? How can fear and anger be used as technologies of the self rather than technologies of domination? This "grey area" shows how there is a paradoxical space in using authoritative approaches as they can become abusive approaches if coaches use fear and anger impulsively to motivate and discipline athletes without being reflexive about how they are using them. As Dr. Mitch Abrams (sports psychologist), in our conversation (January 2012), says,

If you're going to use exercise as a penalty, then you're saying that exercise is not good...Parents often parent ineffectively because they're angry when they're dishing out discipline. Coaches are the same way; they are angry so

they want to punish their athletes. Calm your ass down, so you can be an effective coach and figure out what it is that you want to change. But most often that's not the case, and that's where you have this high risk of using exercise as a punishment which can easily flip the script over to abuse.

A former coach, that I had as a player, used authoritative approaches that became oppressive and emotionally abusive¹⁸ most of the time. It became abusive when he made our position on the team as well as our future feel threatened for reasons of which we were not aware. He had fits of anger and rage where he singled each of us out to call us names, humiliated us in front of each other, and hit balls at us. He also fueled the competition between us by “dividing and conquering” us. Often, he threatened us that if we ever complained to anyone about him, he would make our lives hell on the team and make it impossible for us to play for another team because he would blacklist us to the other coaches. He made our success and failures about “earning his respect” and would remind us every day of that in letters in all cap locks posted on our lockers when we came for practice.

I was shaken by his emotional abuse, but had the wherewithal to realize that this was not right in some way, even though I had guilt about not being the player or person he wanted me to be for a long time. I kept some of these letters and wrote the things he said to us in my journal. Below is an example from one of these letters of how this coach exemplifies the authoritative approach:

Things are going to change around here! Boot camp is about to begin! I'm going to weed you out! I'm going to find out who can be depended on and who cannot when they face adversity! It is not going to be fun! I'm going to find out who earns the right to be a member of this team! You are going to have to prove yourselves to me! You must earn my respect! I have none for you right now! It is difficult to have respect for a bunch of wimps!...In the

¹⁸The characteristics of emotional abuse by coaches (Gervis and Dunn 2004, Stirling and Kerr 2008) are discussed below.

next two weeks, a lot of things will become clear...It's like they say, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a for[t]night it concentrates his mind wonderfully! We will then know who we can count on! We will know then who will not figure out in our future success. Good luck!

By itself, it may not appear abusive, but on a daily basis over several years, his ritualized anger instilled fear in us that began to wear us down mentally and emotionally to the point that we felt afraid to be creative on the court. Instead of building us up again, as many coaches do, he kept tearing us down. It was his way of controlling us¹⁹.

Talking with other players who had him as a coach, I realize that I am not alone. Other coaches recognize this coach as abusive as well. As one former player under this coach said about Ang's excessive surveillance tactics:

He has eyes everywhere; highest level of surveillance with spies everywhere in the physical therapy and lord knows where else; he knows how to manipulate people, he is a master of manipulation. He doesn't care about the player as a person. All he cares about is status and money.

Even the sport psychologist to whom this player was referred encouraged her to develop coping mechanisms (i.e. communicating more to the coach, finding ways to relax outside of the sport environment, self-acceptance, etc.) to accept this surveillance as part of the coach's method of making her better. This player said that her abusive coach actually hired a sport psychologist to help her cope with her problems that were induced by his abuse. This shows how sports psychology can be a "coping mechanism" rather than a technology of the self. Focus and self-surveillance including the body, the social self, and the psyche – distracts from the larger issues of the environment of junior tennis; what Hoberman 1986 referred to as "psychodoping". As coaches and parents train and micromanage kids bodies (and minds) for maximum efficiency, their roles as

¹⁹This is a characteristic of emotional abuse by coaches (Gervis and Dunn 2004, Stirling and Kerr 2008).

authority figures become normalized, but at the same time, kids embody this external authority and power as their own in a form of self-surveillance, or self-discipline. It is a reaffirmation of an authority's control but also of self-control and, thus, a technology of domination, as discussed in Chapter 4.

As fear and anger are used as motivators and disciplinary tools for coaches who use authoritative approaches with their liminal athletes, they can become tools of “toughening up”. However, as these tools approach an abusive extreme, they “use up”²⁰ players instead, as seen in Chapter 3. The results can be contagious among players in a team or academy environment. In an informal conversation, a former player – who is still afraid of her former coach that she did not want me to record her - told me about why she and other players stayed with a coach who used authoritative approaches that often bled into abuse. She discussed how they wanted to help each other through the experience even though they were “messed up in the head”.

At the same time, they passed along the abuse to each other. She said that the coach made it “bad for everyone on the team” and that it was a very competitive and sick situation where players tried to console each other, while also create circumstances where his abuse would escalate for another. Her coach also physically abused her and the team members by making them run on injuries and during illnesses, and pelted balls at her and the rest of the team without telling them what he was mad about. She said it seemed he got a thrill out of abusing women and that she felt “used up, abused, and tossed out”. But his extreme authoritative/abusive style of discipline, control, and surveillance did not stop her from asking him to coach her on the professional tour. As

²⁰Refer to Chapter 3 for a discussion of being “used up” (Geurts 2002).

she said (paraphrasing), “That’s what abused people do. They keep going back. Junior tennis is a culture of accepted abuse.” This falls under Coakley's 2006a “deviant overconformity” (159) and shows how difficult it is for liminal individuals to define discipline as a technology of domination or a technology of the self. Fear and anger, used through authoritative approaches, toes the line between “toughening up” players, and “using up” players.

Discipline vs abuse

Because “athletes are in a relation of power that assigns them relatively little room for resistance and are often reluctant to criticize practices of high performance sport” (Markula 2003:105), it is difficult for liminal players to distinguish abuse from discipline, let alone define it. This is especially true when players and coaches engage in a “vicious cycle of abuse” (Gervis and Dunn 2004, Stirling and Kerr 2008): as players perform, coaches continue to criticize them, which often makes their performance worse, which evokes more criticism from the coach. As explored in Chapter 3, rituals help normalize power dynamics. Players become dependent upon this dynamic as they come to know themselves through this dynamic. This shows how coach and player can perpetuate imbalanced power relations by using the same (disempowering extreme) approaches with each other instead of shifting them towards a collaborative zone of empowerment. This can be portrayed by the power continuums (Figures 4-2 and 4-3) and the relational power grid (Figure 4-4).

“Abuse” is a difficult thing to define, too, as it changes with individual resiliency, family/sport context and general cultural context (Korbin 1981, 2008). One former player described abuse along a continuum: not setting clear goals, not giving enough time to embody a culture to meet those expectations, verbal abuse and public humiliation,

overtraining to the point of severe injury or death, using the student as a narcissistic extension of the coach, and sex abuse. But the difference between discipline and abuse is highly contested and depends on the context of the coach-athlete relationship. Athletes are not immune to abuse or more likely to be abusive even though this is included in the stereotypes of athletes and sport culture. But there are certain aspects about sport culture that contribute to abuse such as the abuse of trust by coaches in some coach-athlete dynamics and the neglect of athletes' emotional and psychological well-being due to the myth that athletes can overcome any obstacle (Gervis and Dunn 2004, Stirling and Kerr 2008).

Even though athletes are at risk of experiencing emotional and psychological abuse because of their embedded transitional identities, as described in Chapter 3, and are exposed to sports psychologists more than the general population is exposed to psychologists, they still are not being cared for in regards to their emotional injuries. Dr. Mitch Abrams (sports psychologist) emphasized this in a conversation I had with him, January 2012. Sports psychologists are rarely trained to be counselors and, instead, are trained to enhance the performance of athletes despite any emotional injury. Thus, sports psychologists see a need for athletic trainers to be trained to counsel their athletes to care for and prevent emotional injuries while they care for and prevent their physical injuries.

Athletes are no different from non-athletes when it comes to their vulnerability to abuse. Just because athletes are resilient to high levels of pain and sacrifice in their sport, does not mean that they are resilient to abuse (verbal, physical, sexual) by the

people they trust the most - their coaches. Dr. Megan Neyer (performance psychologist and Olympian) put it this way in a discussion I had with her, January 2012:

Emotional abuse is not just a function of the coach, it depends on the athletes. You could have a team full of athletes: some would call it tough, some would call it abuse. To be an elite athlete, you have to be strong and resilient. For those who are less resilient they are most likely to define it as abuse. Lack of resilience is defined as weak: "people can't handle it; they don't persevere". But it is the coaches' responsibility ... There's a great coach that said that it's the coaches job to push their athletes to places they didn't know they could go...The best athlete in the world may not have the highest level of resilience...but coaches get away with a lot of crap because they win...Bobby Knight got away with beating the shit out of his athletes for years.

And as one player put it, "You don't need to scream if the work ethic is already there."

Bobby Knight vs John Wooden. Coaches tend to model themselves after successful coaches across sports like basketball coaches, Bobby Knight and John Wooden: Bobby Knight as the authoritative model using fear as motivation, and John Wooden as the collaborative model using inspiration as motivation. Here is an excerpt from a conversation with a coach that exemplifies this debate:

I remember talking to [a basketball player] who lives in Orlando and played on the Olympic basketball team, and he was coached by Bobby Knight, and he said the motivation was that he pissed the team off so much that the team would rally to spite him. So he got results. Was it optimal? It's not important. Bobby Knight got the results that he was looking [for], and the same with Steve Spurrier. So that's kind of a dictator-style coaching. I think you have to have a certain personality to be able to be coached by those types of coaches. But I think, obviously like a John Wooden, [there are] more values and a deeper and long-lasting effect.

In order to explore the difference between disciplinary training that empowers and disciplinary training that abuses, I asked coaches how they knew how hard to discipline their players when training them. Below are two coaches' responses. The first, my "John Wooden" example, exhibited collaborative coaching behaviors and attitudes and is known in the tennis community for his ability to make players feel independent,

cared for, and successful. The second, my “Bobby Knight” example, is known in the tennis community for his authoritative-to-abusive coaching behaviors and his tendency to make players feel dominated, oppressed, but still successful. They both emphasize that they see the signs in the players’ body and attitude, but they each handle it differently. Coach Tim exemplifies the “John Wooden” model as he explains,

Aches and pains. I tell my kids early on, I always tell them I'm strict but I'm fair, and I'll let my kids make decisions no matter how old they are. But I make them aware that, “Look, it's your decision, but understand if you're lying, you're lying to yourself. You're not gonna hurt me...So if you are telling me that you don't want to come practice tomorrow because you are really tired, and you are not, I'm not getting hurt by it; you are getting hurt by it.” So I kind of plant that seed in them early, to kind of be honest with themselves ... I'll push kids and, when it's a little too much, you can tell in the kids. I mean you can tell how he comes back the next day if he's really sore or, or if he is cramping, you know obviously there are limits. I always look out for that, and I really pay attention to how far each kid can go, and then I make sure I push them just below their limit. Because you always want the kid to have enough energy to recover and then come back tomorrow and give you the same effort. You know if you push the kid past that limit three or four days in a row, then by the fifth day he's gone.

Coach Ang follows the Bobby Knight approach when he says,

I mean in a sense, you know. You know how much a person can give and how much a person can push. And once they get to that point, you know they are not gonna give you anymore. You are gonna back off. But most people can go a lot further than they think they can...burnout happens to everybody. I mean pros, after they've been in the European segment of the year, after Wimbledon they are toast. But, they'll be competing for eight or ten weeks in a row. So, burnout is something that is...that happens naturally after you've been doing the same thing for a long, long time...burnout is just something as far as how you handle the schedule, how you managed to fit the training and the tournament, and have some time away from the game. But I think, again, kids with parents a lot of times they can't get away from the game because when they go home that's all the parents want to talk about is tennis.... It's like everything else, it's shoulder, it's elbow, wrist. But I mean that's overuse. And it happens, but again, it happens in pro tennis just like it happens in junior tennis. I mean when the pros go to play on grass, there's a lot of tendinitis of the knees, tendinitis of the arm just because of the... characteristics of the surface. So again, overuse is part of what comes with the territory of being an athlete.

The difference between these two coaches' responses highlights the difference between discipline and abuse in the way they handle the pain boundary of their players. The first coach who uses a collaborative approach pushes his players just before they reach that line of injury and burnout by communicating with his players about how much further they can be pushed. Coach Tim helps players use tennis as a technology of the self because he employs critical self-reflection and encourages self-care. These concepts, learned over time, can be applied to life outside sport. The second coach who uses an authoritative/abusive approach normalizes injury and burnout as part of the territory of being an elite athlete. In this way, tennis is a technology of domination which Coach Ang uses to reproduce his power over players. The reason for this difference is that the collaborative coach sees the player as a liminal²¹ individual whose body and emotional development are still in transition while the authoritative coach sees the junior player as equal to an elite professional (adult) player. The first coach sees the junior player as someone he can help to be a better person, while the latter coach sees the junior player as someone who might better his reputation or career through his help.

Coaches sometimes have difficulty in balancing the two coaching models. It is not such an easy thing to say that one coaching approach is better than the other. As

Dr. Mitch Abrams (sports psychologist) pointed out to me, January 2012,

I think that you are completely right [that coaches live vicariously through their athletes] except that I also feel for the coaches on the other side. Meaning that, I think that both sides need balance... It's a very vulnerable feeling to have a plan and a vision, and having to trust your athletes to go execute it... So not only the coach is trying to live vicariously through the athletes, they're also trying to live vicariously through the athletes to get the athletes to do things that they themselves couldn't do. But I think it's also important to note the other side; that it is a very vulnerable feeling as a

²¹See Chapter 3 for a discussion of junior athletes as transitional agents.

coach....your success is going to be dependent upon your athletes. Now, to me, that's one of the reasons why I always talk to coaches about the emotional well-being. Because if your athletes are not in a good mindset, they're going to perform worse. And if they perform worse, then it's going to look like you are a bad coach. And then you'll have someone like Bobby Knight come along and treat everyone like shit, and then they are real successful, and then you go "I don't know what to say about that."

Even though athletes who have abusive coaches may succeed despite their abuse rather than because of it²², it is often difficult for people to refute the abusive coach when he is successful.

Nina articulates how coaches often move back and forth between these approaches to a player depending on where players are in their development. And as players become more disciplined, they want the positive motivation from their coaches rather than the authoritative dictating:

I think sometimes you have to move from one to the other. I think you need the more military in the beginning to give them discipline, because tennis is so disciplined so many hours a day. I think you need that military style when you're younger and as you get a little older, you need more motivation...[My Daughter, for instance] now she's got the military style [with] everything down pat in her game. But now she wants the motivation style coach... When she hits a good shot in one of her lessons, the coach is like "Whoa! World class, world class. That's gonna take you all the way to world championships!" I mean, he lets you know that when you do something out of this world so you keep doing it. And you keep doing it. Instead of saying, "Oh, that's horrible", he pumps up the unbelievable shots because you wanna hear him say "world class" again.

And as Dr. Megan Neyer (performance psychologist and Olympian) points out in an interview, January 2011, "The coach's job is to push their athletes past the point of comfort but to do it mindfully and emphatically."

Punishments. There are accepted forms of punishment that most coaches say they use, such as running and picking up balls. Nina points out how who use coddling

²²Donnelly 1997 and Coakley 2006a make this point.

approaches resist punishing their players at the risk of losing clients, which only makes them entitled and lazier tennis players and people in the long-run:

You gotta make them pick up balls. Too many of these academies, the rich kids don't have to pick up balls to keep the money coming in. Too bad. If you don't want to pick up balls, get off the court. I don't care how much money you have. I've seen kids say, 'that's not my thing'. That's your thing, or [you're not gonna play]. The coaches will pick up the balls because that's not their thing. Well, if you're not disciplined enough to pick up the balls, go join a group at a park or a country club. You're not gonna make it with a private coach.

But sport psychologists say that punishing athletes by making them run causes them to associate running, in general, with negative feelings, which results in an oppressive form of punishment (Denison 2007). It depends on the goals of the player. Other forms of punishment include isolating players from the rest of the team by sending them off the court for several days as the form of punishment they deliver to students when they neglect to do what they are asked to do or when they break the rules of the training environment. Forms of punishment that revolve around self-reflection included having a stern conversation with players to make them see that they are only hurting themselves and even making them write papers about what they did wrong. These forms of "punishment" may, then, become technologies of the self for players if they help the player overcome adversities within their dynamics with coaches and the junior tennis context, in general. As Linda explains,

So for me, it would be about being tough on court, not letting them get away with fooling around, and if they need discipline, then they need to suffer consequences with some sort of punishment, like a run or paper or taking a racquet away from them.

Defining coach abuse

In her earlier work, Korbin 1981 identified three understandings of what "abuse" is: 1) behaviors that are tolerated inside a culture but not tolerated in another culture; 2)

behaviors that are tolerated by some members in one culture but not tolerated by others within the same culture; and 3) structural, societal detriment (i.e. poverty). Abuse is not just a result of the coach's (or parents') interventions (and non-interventions) but also depends on cultural conceptions of discipline and abuse with “the resilience of individual athletes, the age of the abuse, how long the abuse went on, what kind of support systems they have, and what kind of treatment they have for it”, according to Dr. Mitch Abrams (sports psychologist) in our conversation, January 2012.

Some argue that the culture of youth sport is abusive and in violation of human rights because the entire youth sport industry depends on the performance and “labor” of child athletes (David 2004, Donnelly 1997). Among other things, this can involve the neglect of school, working ages, and pushing the boundaries of fatigue and physical injury. And as pressure on the performance of child athletes intensifies with each decade that the business of youth sports becomes more profitable, child athletes are becoming more and more at risk of exposure to behaviors that may be seen as abusive within the sport context as well as society at large (David 2005, Donnelly 1997, Donnelly and Petherick 2004, Grenfell and Rinehart 2003, Kidd and Donnelly 2000)²³.

Shogan 1999 emphasizes that, in an ideal coach-athlete relationship, the coach should be happy to empower the athlete to take control of aspects of his/her own decisions and performance. But, rather than breaking down illegitimate forms of power, the sports world seems to be creating newer methods of athletic dependence when coaches do not use collaborative dynamics with their athletes. Coaches may now limit athletes' lives away from their sport, with regards to employment, use of leisure time,

²³This is discussed further in Chapter 9.

diet and appearance, without question about the independence of the people they are producing in sport (Tomlinson and Yorganici 1997). These levels of control and authority make sport a dangerous site for the practice of child abuse and disempowerment, if coaches do not involve their athletes into the decision-making process of their own training.

Child athletes often accept as normal the gendered and structural divisions of power that exists between coach and athlete which lead to abusive or discomforting behaviors that would probably be considered unacceptable in almost any other setting outside of sport (Burke 2001). While it can be beneficial for the athlete to depend on a coach for athletic development, it is difficult for child athletes to distinguish between appropriate exercises of authority and control from inappropriate ones. This socialization of dependence can train the athlete to become overly dependent, obedient and loyal to a coach that has almost unquestioned control over most aspects of their athlete's life. And in an individual sport like tennis, the coach-athlete relationship can become insular and separated from potential support from other athletes and family.

Thus, based on my research and following Korbin's 1981 perspective of abuse, behaviors which are considered abusive by participants both inside sport *and* outside sport are, nevertheless, accepted for several reasons: 1) they are normalized as a necessary part of "becoming a champion" and, thus, tolerated inside the junior tennis habitus but not outside 2) they are tolerated, ignored or denied to exist by some in the sport culture and not others, or 3) they have become part of the junior tennis structure, and sport in general, and are seen as unsolvable or "the way things are". In other words, abusive behavior is normalized in the youth sport culture discourse as

“discipline” or “sacrifice”²⁴. As one former elite tennis player in my research comments, “we all need to be abused a little to get good, don’t we?”²⁵

Since abuse is rarely defined as such by players and parents – as it would be a sign of weakness to think of themselves as victims – players often say they did not blame their coaches if they had experienced abusive situations with them. Parents also accepted this behavior even while the coaches were belittling their kids. One parent I interviewed spoke of the “mental manipulation” that his child’s coach had put his son through. This entailed unclear nutritional advice (telling kids to watch what they eat while not telling them what to eat, fostering excessive dependence on him (by saying things like “Listen to me, not your parents!”), pitting teammates against each other, money-grubbing (saying “I don’t teach private lessons unless you pay for the program!”), guilt tripping to get results (saying “I guess you just don’t want to win bad enough”), over-scheduling practice sessions and tournaments, “bullshitting” (telling parents they can make their kid a star as long as they stick with them), subtle authoritarian bullying, paying more attention to homeschooled kids who they think are more serious about tennis, making the player self-obsessed with training which results in injury/burnout/body image disorders, and making the player depend excessively on him. This parent, although he recognized these behaviors as “mentally manipulative” and abusive (his words) he was still with that coach when I interviewed him.

Yelling. Emotional abuse by coaches occurs when coaches abuse their positions of power over their athletes emotionally, through verbal, psychological, and physical

²⁴This is elaborated upon in the following chapter.

²⁵She says this after telling me about her experience with what she describes as “an emotionally and physically abusive coach”.

behaviors (Gervis and Dunn 2004, Stirling and Kerr 2008, Stirling et al. 2010).

Emotional abuse is the least recognized and least studied form of child abuse in the context of sport and is the result of several factors: 1) *physical behaviors* exhibited by the coach such as hitting and throwing objects at the athlete or near the athlete; 2) *verbal behaviors* such as yelling and shouting at the athlete or group of athletes, belittling, name-calling, degrading comments about things like weight, appearance, and comparison to others, and humiliation; and, 3) *denial of attention and support* – the cruelest form of emotional abuse - by ignoring the athletes or excluding them from practice for no apparent or rational reason, thereby reducing their sense of identity in the team, sport, and life in general (Stirling and Kerr 2008).

The most common forms of emotional verbal abuse by coaches include shouting, belittling, threats, and humiliation and that these behaviors occur more often and intensify as athletes reach elite levels (Gervis and Dunn 2004). Most players just accept being yelled at as par for the course of becoming a better player, as Katie describes: “It just seemed like if you want to be good, it’s natural that someone is yelling at you somewhere, because that’s what everyone else is doing.” Yelling can be a technology of domination, even when seemingly empowering, when it confirms the authority of the coach as it is ritualized and normalized in the tennis environment. But it can be empowering as a technology of the self when used to overcome oppressive power.

There are different kinds of yelling that fall along a continuum of empowering disciplining yelling to disempowering abusive screaming (i.e. positive motivational yelling, instructional yelling for performance adjustment, critical screaming at

performance, and personally critical screaming at the athlete).²⁶ How a player interprets a coach's yelling depends upon personal background, family values, and cultural traditions of disciplinary training and parenting. But many players in my research say that they would rather be yelled at and told what they are doing wrong than given false praise or ignored, which supports Stirling and Kerr's 2008 research. Most participants say that yelling is okay as long as it is done in a positive, constructive way - focused on the activity rather than the person. Most also say that yelling is never condoned when it is criticizing the individual instead of critiquing the performance. However, many add that yelling at the athlete in a critical way is condoned if the athlete is not listening, is being lazy, or is disrespectful. Thus, players distinguish between yelling that is necessary and yelling that is too harsh and unjustified: "bad" yelling includes "screaming" and constant yelling instead of for specific things, and "necessary" yelling is for laziness, poor attitude, and lack of respect. As player Hope explains,

Pushing someone hard is good yelling. Bad yelling would be like, "You're not playing good, you're so lazy, you can't play tennis". That would be like bad yelling.

Here, a former player describes how he felt yelling was necessary for him when his attitude was poor. He says it helped him stay disciplined and to recognize that he needed to be in control of his own emotions and concerns:

Don: When I was young, I would get yelled at all the time, just for things like throwing my racket. Never for how I played or effort. Like that [tournament] when I tanked my match, [my coach] made me immediately run for an hour.

JF: So, for attitude you would get yelled at.

²⁶Holt et al. 2008 devise a similar continuum of yelling in the soccer context.

Don: Yeah, it was like good stuff. I deserved it and I knew it. I always wanted it, I think. I was in a very weird place that week. It just kind of culminated in that match. I just made the decision that I was going to do this. I knew [my coach] was going to be furious, but it was almost like I wanted the punishment and the pain of it....

JF: You have a higher sense of discipline than most people.

Don: Yeah. But that comes from [my coach]. He taught me that. Because it's such a comment there are no excuses with him. His classic response would be "Do I care?" And in reality, no one else does.

And coaches see yelling to be necessary when the player is undisciplined. Coach Linda says,

I think it has to do with the parent deciding what they want for their player. So for everyone it's going to be different depending on their values. For me, personally, I believe there should be no hitting. Let's say I have a son who's undisciplined, then I want a coach that's going to yell at him and make him do what he needs to do until he needs it.

Yelling for effort/attitude works for some players and coaches, but other coaches say they would not recommend this for several reasons: 1) the player inevitably becomes sensitized to it which forces the coach to use it more often and more intensely to get an effect, 2) because of this, it is very easy for the yelling to cross the line from disciplining of effort/attitude to abusive as a result of performance, and 3) it subconsciously teaches the player to yell at themselves during a match because the coach is effectively modeling this behavior as appropriate. However, name-calling, belittling, humiliation and mental manipulation are generally considered to be crossing the line into emotional abuse (Gervis and Dunn 2004; Stirling and Kerr 2008). Former player Andrea describes her coach's emotional abuse which made her experience with her abusive father even worse:

I had two abusive coaches. One from about age fifteen to seventeen, and the other I worked with from about until I was twenty-two. And they were both all sorts of screwed up. The first one would think of any excuse to

scold me and tell me I was stupid. And the second one, he actually found out about the [abusive] situation [with my father] and I was an emotional wreck. But he would just say, "What could you have done to your parent to make them want to treat you like this?", like it was my fault. It still infuriates me when I think about it. So that didn't work because I'd go home and get it from all sides, and I'd go to the court with my coach and I'd get it from all sides. I went into an internal guilt thing, and it showed in my results so my dad thought we needed a new coach. My coach would hit balls at me, it was bad...But I'm not angry at him because he's got his own issues. I don't feel like he's trying to be a bad person, he's just got his own issues. He's not happy. I don't blame him. But the coach after him I do blame because he knew better.

Physical training. Dr. Megan Neyer (performance psychologist and Olympian) pointed out in a discussion with me, January 2012, that misinformed training rituals could be seen as normalized physical abuse and neglect, especially when they result in injury and, even, death:

In sport, it's particularly hard to distinguish what physical abuse is, unless they punch someone. Not all coaches are knowledgeable in nutrition, weight training, exercise physiology...so they could have uninformed training regimens which is a form of abuse. The whole concept of overtraining and what is appropriate is a very individualized thing. Physical abuse making athletes go for long periods of time without water. If as a consequence of this [they die], I strongly believe that these coaches should be convicted of murder. If you lack that much knowledge about what a body needs to perform at a high level, you have no business coaching. That's physical and emotional [abuse].

For instance, coaches (and parents) often deprive junior players of water as forms of "getting tough" or punishment. This highlights the ways in which rituals can become destructive, as explored in Chapter 3. There is also physical abuse in the junior tennis world once the player is off the court - mostly by parents to their own children. But there have been some occasions of coaches hitting, kicking, shoving, slapping, hitting balls at, and putting a chokehold on a player. A highly reputable coach, Rick, admitted to this in his interview without regret even though he believes in "coaching by example". He uses intimidation, rather contradictorily, to teach his players not to play fearfully:

You coach by example, by showing them three hours a day, six days a week...I can't stand when players play "not to lose"...I threw one of my players up against a fence one day in front of 2000 people [for playing not-to-lose, or fearful]. I took a guy, who later committed suicide, unfortunately, who was playing in the national championship not-to-lose [instead of to-win], I took him a head-lock and started choking the guy. Another guy, I held him up against the fence right in front of his father and got real close to his face and started swearing at him. But they won their matches because they stopped playing scared. That's my job as a coach: to teach them not to play scared...I could never have coached the girls that way...But I don't think of myself as being an especially tough coach.

Some would call this abuse; others would call this good discipline. Nina says how necessary it is for coaches to get tough on kids to improve but that there is a limit:

Oh you hear it all the time. You see it all the time from the European coaches. But you hear about a couple top American coaches slamming the kids against the wall if they don't perform the way they tell you to. You hear it all the time, but you know, I haven't seen it with my eyes. But I've heard it enough that I'm sure a couple of people [I hear about] it actually happens [with]. A lot of, lots and lots of coaches hit a ball at the player if they're not listening or making mistakes. A lot of coaches do that. Uh, the high tense coaches. But most of them just make them run or something like that. You know with the child abuse laws. Some coaches are doing it because their kids are lazy and they're just, most of those, are just taking the parents' money. And the kids don't even stand a chance because the kids are lazy and their just trying to get them to do better for the parents to keep the money coming in. But, uh, most coaches aren't gonna do that. You're not gonna motivate a kid by treating them like that, and take them to the next level.

While emotional abuse is harder to define, and admit, for many junior tennis participants, most participants agreed that hitting a player and hitting balls at the player was abusive.

Paradoxical Spaces of Loyalty

Given the various coaching approaches and rituals in which coaches exhibit their power, one of the biggest decisions that parents and players have to make is choosing a coach. This includes deciding whether to switch coaches, to have one coach, or to have more than one coach. They take into account the coaching approaches and the

paradoxes of each as outlined above, but there are also politics involved in these decisions. Parents and players experience tremendous stress over these decisions and coaches do, too, as this is their livelihood. More importantly, they invest time and energy into a player that they are at risk of losing to another coach who will take credit for that player's successes and blame the previous coach for their failures.

Every few months, many players switch coaches because they and their parents expect a coach to improve the player in such a short time. Coaches say that they do not develop a player for the tournament at the end of the week; that they are focused on developing a player long-term. But if the player (or parent) wants change sooner than that and they do not get it, they just switch coaches. In these ways, players have more power than coaches. However, some players choose consistency in a coach over the "next best thing". But, still, these players sometimes realize they stay too long with a coach because they are friends, even though they are not improving. To avoid having to leave a coach, some players have more than one coach, but this can get confusing for the players who may be getting coached by coaches with vastly different methods. Player Shilo, with whom I trained over a period of several months, was sought after by two different coaches. His mother said that he was exhausted and felt bullied by this tug-of-war between coaches. Mother Tina expresses the loyalty she and her player have for the coach and how common it is for coaches to fight over players in the junior tennis culture: "I believe long term and that there is a development plan. If you are going to constantly change that, you are just creating a big nightmare at the end."

But most players do end up switching coaches after working with them for months, even years, because of what coaches refer to as, the end of the "honeymoon

phase". Tina continues to describe the loyalty she and her daughter have for the coach but adds that her daughter became less enamored of her coach gradually over the past year:

The world used to revolve around [her coach]. She was like so enamored with the whole world of [him], you know. I've seen that pass and I've seen where he has been lumped in with like the rest of us crappy adults that really know nothing.

She adds, as several other parents note, that having more female coaches to turn to, especially in instances of traveling with teenaged girls, would reduce the risk of male-female emotional power plays and abuse.²⁷

Summary

"Foucault asserted that dominant individuals, groups, corporations, and states do not arrive at their position because they have power, but they have become influential due to the contingent workings and, at times, tactical usages of the knowledge that informs and supports their power" (Markula and Pringle 2006:34). As Denison 2007 also points out, while coaches have expertise and are instilled with the power role to guide their athletes, this guidance can easily turn into a disciplining technique. But instead of doing away with practice rituals altogether, Foucault advocates that we be mindful of the effects of our practices and how we might prevent them from becoming practices of domination (Denison 2007).

Linking this back to the discussion of power in Chapter 4, the player-coach dynamic in the junior tennis context exhibits a variety of power relations along the relational power grid (Figure 4-4) and power continuums (Figures 4-2 and 4-3). This chapter only highlights a portion of those dynamics, but it also shows that as coaches

²⁷I elaborate upon this in Chapter 7.

and players use certain approaches with each other, they respond with certain approaches depending on the context of the interaction and the dynamic. Coaches do not fulfill coaching “types” and players cannot always be considered “obedient” or “disobedient”. Rather, they use different approaches with each other at different types in different spaces.²⁸ Thus, this chapter complicates the adult-child binary by showing how power dynamics shift as coach or player approaches shift along their respective power continuums.

Like chapter 5 shows with player-parent dynamics, this chapter shows the ways in which imbalanced power dynamics between coach and player can often result in repetitive and normalized dynamics between them at the extremes of the relational power grid if not performed with critical awareness - ethical self-care, self-stylization and critique of the self and external social environment (Markula 2003). I see the dynamics at the (entitling or abusive) extremes of the relational power grid as involving technologies of domination because they perpetuate power imbalances the more normalized they become rituals of training and communication. These imbalances often result in disempowering circumstances for either the coach (on the entitled extreme) or the player (on the abused extreme). However, when coach-player dynamics involve approaches from either one or both the coach and player that include reflexive approaches to ethical self-care, or technologies of self, the dynamic shifts toward the

²⁸Although I discuss five “stops” along the power continuums and power relational grid, these labels are just meant to articulate the range of approaches parents and players use with each other and are not meant to imply that there are certain types that people fall into. The conceptualization of the continuum and grid hopefully communicates the ways in which behaviors and attitudes mutate and morph with changing contexts.

collaborative center of the relational power grid and becomes an empowering experience for both.

This interplay between technologies of domination and technologies of self, or governmentality, forms a more balanced approach to power that can be conceptualized as the “zone of optimal empowerment” along the relational power grid (Figure 4-4). When coaches use nurturing, collaborative, and authoritative approaches (without reaching extremes of coddling or abusive approaches) while players use resistant disobedience, collaborative approaches, and guided obedience (without becoming entitled or submissively obedient), the dynamic is more empowering and sustainable for players and the power molecule (Figure 4-1) in the long-term. This makes it possible to reverse and transgress power norms within the junior tennis power molecule, even if just temporarily, with self-reflection. As Markula 2003 points out, transgression of the dominant binary between “all-knowing” coach and “docile” player is possible through ethical self-care and self-reflection (or subjectification).

The paradoxical spaces of player-coach relations discussed here exemplify the ways in which technologies of domination and technologies of the self often interact to elicit both empowering and disempowering consequences for the dynamic.²⁹ Thus, the player-coach dynamic is a site to observe the Foucauldian concept of governmentality, as described in Chapter 4, and the ways in which it is often difficult to distinguish between technologies of domination and technologies of the self without taking into account the context of the dynamic, the individuals involved in the dynamic, and the aspect of empowerment or disempowerment which is being judged. Shogan 1999

²⁹These consequences will be discussed in further detail in Chapters 7 and 8.

points out that coaching texts rarely discuss “how and with what effects sport discipline controls athletic bodies and the relation of training to the organization of space, time and modality of movement” (181). By applying a Foucauldian perspective to coaching power as other sport scholars have done (i.e. Denison 2007, Markula and Pringle 2006, Shogan 1999), this chapter could help fill that gap.

While the last three chapters have focused on how power “plays out” between “authority” figures (parents and coaches) and “subordinate” figures (players), Chapters 7 and 8 discuss some of the consequences of these dynamics on player well-being and social identity.

CHAPTER 7 EMBODIMENT OF IDENTITY AND WELL-BEING: PAIN, POTENTIAL, AND MORALITY

The previous chapters explore the processes through which junior players embody their identities and power as well as the ways in which power is “played out” in their dynamics with parents and coaches. This chapter focuses on the dynamics from collaborative middle to the abusive ends of the relational power grid (4-4) and their consequences for junior players' well-being and sense of self. Specifically, this chapter articulates some of the paradoxical consequences of these processes and dynamics including paradoxical spaces of performance enhancement: pain, potential, and morality.

Paradoxical Spaces of Pain

As professionalizing junior tennis players constantly strive to develop their tennis identity, which is often at odds with their non-tennis identity, they experience junior tennis in empowering and disempowering ways. At the heart of this struggle is a paradoxical relationship with pain tolerance; not just physical, but emotional and existential pain. This was explored in Chapter 3. Applying the Foucauldian concepts of power discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, pain is both a technology of the self and a technology of domination. As liminal agents, players come to know themselves through their endurance of pain created by authority figures (i.e. coach, parent) and peers (i.e. opponents) as well as self-inflicted pain. Players can interpret pain, simultaneously, as torture and transcendence. It is this paradoxical experience of pain that allows power to be embodied through embedded rituals, as described in Chapter 3, for the sake of building and meeting one's “potential”. Involved in the quest for improvement are several factors including adherence to discipline (in training and competition), risk-

taking, injury, fatigue, criticism, and deprivation. These are perceived as markers of success for the liminal athlete. The paradox inherent in the junior tennis journey is that while the concept of well-being is defined by balance between physical/emotional health and success, this balance is often sacrificed in the pursuit of success. As one former player exclaims, “Is balance even possible?!”

The Pain Boundary Concept

Through this “sport ethic” (Hughes and Coakley 1991), youth athletes learn how to stretch the boundaries of pain in order to attain physical achievement, personal and spiritual fulfillment, and maximal performance. Their empowerment largely depends upon their dynamics with parents and coaches. As Chapters 4, 5, and 6 discuss, players tend to experience holistic empowerment (as both players and people) when their relations with coaches and parents are within the optimal zone of empowerment along the relational power grid (Figure 4-4). However, when relations with parents and coaches reach the entitled or abusive extremes, players experience more debilitating consequences.

In other words, athletes developed in environments that prioritize personal well-being and individual needs, push the boundaries of pain and achievement with appropriate recovery time. This type of training is seen as a technology of the self, as defined by Foucauldian scholars, because it involves reflexive, ethical self-care performed with the intention of empowering and overcoming oppressive power. The resulting sensations of mind-body-spirit connection, and ultimate control of the self and environment, can be empowering for youth athletes. On the other hand, athletes developed in environments that prioritize immediate performance over long-term personal well-being, tend to push too far or too fast past the pain boundary with an over-

commitment to sport ethic (Hughes and Coakley 1991). This is an example of Foucault's concept of technologies of domination as coaches and parents prioritize their control over their players and focus on results. It includes contexts where players are guided by coaches who are uninformed about the psychological, emotional, and physiological nuances of developing (pre)adolescent athletes. The result can be disempowering – a form of “deviant over-conformity” (Coakley 2006a) - producing excessive dependence on the coach or sport for identity as well as injury, burnout, and illness.

Here, I briefly describe the junior tennis schedule and the dependence on authority in order to discuss the various forms of pain. Then, I discuss pain as a consequence of training that, while intended to strengthen, have the potential to become debilitating practices. First, physical pain can expand players' physical resilience and endurance of intense training and competition while causing injury and exhaustion. Second, emotional pain can expand players' emotional resilience and tolerance of adversity and hardship while approaching potential burnout. Finally, existential pain can increase players' capacity for self-knowledge and purpose while, potentially, solely depending on tennis for self-worth in the world, in general.

(Over)Scheduling

The typical training schedule of a junior tennis player whose goal is to play collegiate or professional tennis is summed up by coach Linda's description:

For a player that wants to go Division I or pro, depending on their age, they want to play a lot of tennis in their early years. From the age of ten to fifteen, they want to get a lot of hours of tennis in. That's the time when they can really get a lot of balls, have a lot of hitting under their belt, do a lot of consistency and build a good, strong foundation and work through pain, work through days when they don't want to work hard, push themselves.

To reiterate, points made in Chapter 3, some participants believe that playing eight to ten hours a day is what it takes to make the professional ranks. Others believe that this is too much and that playing two to three hours a day is enough. Generally, this schedule is usually spread throughout the day for those that are homeschooled with a morning practice followed by three to four hours of school, and then an afternoon practice with conditioning afterwards. At night, players typically do any homework that they might have and then get seven to eight hours a sleep before they wake up to do it the next day.

Many players, parents, and coaches try to navigate the boundaries between empowering pain and disempowering pain when making these training schedules as well as planning their tournament schedules for the upcoming year. Some players are afraid to take days off for fear of losing their edge. One player said, “Whenever I take two days off in a row, I don’t feel good, I feel sluggish. I don’t want to take time off, but I know I have to.” Players can often be over-trained by coaches and parents, or they can over-train themselves, afraid to fall behind their opponents. As mother Deb explains:

I’m very careful after his [last injury]. It’s hard to manage any athlete who gets injured. This is the most frightening news for every young person, every young athlete, who achieves a lot, who is under stress to achieve, who is so young to have longer way but wants to work, but realizes “I’m not able because my body is telling me I have to stop.” This is the most devastating news for every single athlete no matter what sport they’re playing, and that’s something that can really put you down because [they are] taking this seriously. If you really like something, it’s no joke.

Coaches and parents try to prevent their players from burning out by restricting training and competition on certain days, or even weekends. This is difficult because when players show a will to train seven days a week, it is easy to let them. As several parents ask, “Why stop them from working hard if they want to?” But youth athletes

often do not know where their pain boundaries are. While testing them is all a part of growing up, it can lead to permanent damage to the body and the psyche. As one parent, Sue, whose daughter suffered several injuries and subsequent burnout from junior tennis puts it:

Some kids mature earlier than others, and you've got to be so careful during the formative years cause you can not only burn out mentally, but you can do an injury that's gonna limit greatly what you're gonna be able to do in sports.

Coach Tim, who achieved a professional career for about fifteen years, described why he was able to last for so long due to his father's insistence on self-care and mandatory breaks:

Unless I was playing a tournament, like Friday night would come, and we would come back home from practice and he would take my rackets, put them in his car, and that was it. And then like, yeah, and I was like, "I want to play tennis, I want to play tennis, I want to play tennis." And he was like, "nope". And he goes, "Go play soccer, go play basketball, go to the pool, go to the beach, whatever you want, you are not playing tennis." So, you know he was really smart. It was a unique way of doing it but he was very smart, and I am really thankful for that.

His father showed him how to use tennis as a technology of the self with a focus on self-care and rest. Now, Tim spreads that message to his students. He goes on to describe how he prevents burnout in his own players; essentially by leaving them wanting more at the end of every practice:

I would look out for kids that aren't having fun. You know I think that's when kids first start burning out, either mentally or physically. When the kid is not having fun or he's not enjoying himself, when he's always tired, when you always have to push him, whether it's the parent or the coach always having to push the kid. Then you know something is wrong...I'll be like, "All right, we're done," and it's fifteen minutes early, and they're still like "Wait a second! We still have fifteen more minutes!" And I'm like, "Oh okay yes I guess we do, I'm sorry." You know? But I think as long as the kid is pushing you, not constantly but he's the one who's pushing you, or making the effort then I think you're fine. I think once that stops, then I think that is when you have to start asking yourself if they are getting burned out or not.

In short, players learn how to stretch their pain boundary to their annual, weekly, and daily schedules with the guidance of an ethical coach and parent who is focused on their well-being. But when their pain boundaries are stretched too far by coaches and parents who do not have their well-being as a priority, they can be disempowered. The pain boundary as it relates to the scheduling, or over-scheduling, of training and competitions, is a site to analyze Foucauldian concepts of power; specifically, how technologies of the self can become technologies of domination.

(Over)Dependence on Authority

Rather than just a vehicle to learn social values and internal rewards of work ethic, team work, and all of the benefits that sport offers, sport at this level becomes a vehicle for external rewards of money and power for players' parents and coaches. Parents and coaches want to see a return of their investment in the form of sponsorships, endorsements, Olympic medals, or college scholarships. Players become extrinsically motivated too. But junior players, especially those who are shielded from the specific expenses of their sport, are more focused on the process of training and accomplishing their performance with perfection. They are often oblivious to the specific monetary expenses of their training although they are aware that their parents are making great sacrifices for their success. For instance, my participants say they feel more pressure at tournaments when they fly and stay in hotels because they know those things cost money. They want to win those tournaments to prove to themselves, their parents, and their coaches that it was not a waste of money and time.

Winning is strictly translated as cultural capital to move up the ranks of the sport social ladder. As players get to the elite levels, winning is compensated monetarily as scholarships and sponsorships become ways of proving their self-worth to themselves

and others. With the pressure to show parents and coaches that their investments of time, energy, and money are worthwhile, athletes often trust their coaches with their dreams and see them as parental, authority, and heroic figures. This gives coaches enormous power. Many coaches who view their athletes as collaborative participants in the training process do not abuse this power. Coaches who use approaches from the zone of optimal empowerment, discussed in Chapter 4, show players how to use tennis as a tool of empowerment – a technology of the self. They teach players to be their own coaches.

But coaches who use abusive approaches do tend to abuse their power as they feel the pressure, themselves, to produce “winners”. This can make them feel entitled to excessively control, punish, over-train or bully their athletes whom they may regard as representations of their reputation rather than individuals they have the privilege of inspiring. To reiterate the discussion from previous chapters, coaches and parents are more likely to abuse their power over athletes if they see their athletes as vehicles for their own success and status. Rituals of training become technologies of domination, for these coaches and their players, to reproduce the power dynamic between them. They take advantage of their players’ liminal status, knowing that they depend on them for success and identity as tennis players. Players depend on coaches even when they use fear and bullying to motivate them to perform in the immediate future. These athletes are usually disempowered in the long-run because fear can eventually lead to an over-dependence upon the coach for approval. According to Dr. Mitch Abrams (sports psychologist) in conversation, January 2012, performance based on fear motivation, rather than respect for the coach and a will to win, can lower self-confidence despite

victories if it stifles creativity. It evokes a sense that winning cannot be accomplished without something to fear if they lose. Low-self-esteem and a learned helplessness can result over time from a sense that they will never appease the coach's wishes. As discussed in Chapter 6, performance motivated by fear can become more of a way to avoid the coach's punishment. Performance motivated by love and respect is a way to achieve transcendence and personal growth through effort and attitude.

Abusive coaching is all too common among junior tennis coaches. Parents often go along with these coaching tactics as they normalize and justify them as part of the process of developing champions. According to Dr. Mitch Abrams (sports psychologist) in personal communication, January 2012, who specializes in working with athletes who have been victims of abuse by their coaches:

I think the biggest problem with abuse in general - and coaches are notorious for doing this - is that they'll try to isolate you from your other supports. Say, become so dependent on them that you are afraid to try and end the abuse. And it makes you ripe for all kinds of other behaviors. I mean very often you'll see athletes that are in those types of situations, whether it's sexual abuse or otherwise start engaging in risk-taking behavior. Sometimes it will be eating disorders, sometimes it will be drugs, sometimes it's promiscuity, sometimes it's unnecessary risks, and sometimes that's about well maybe if I show you how fucked up I am, someone will pay attention and rescue me from this craziness. And it's also worth noting that they don't always realize that that is what they are doing.

As a result, players may form an excessive degree of dependence upon their coaches who may lead them on paths toward physical and emotional pain if they are not educated about the overall development of children and adolescents or do not apply training regimens that are age-appropriate. Malina 2009 agrees: "Over-dependence on and/or control by coaches...is potential for emotional abuse – verbal or non-verbal, physical abuse and sexual abuse and molestation" (S7). Even when coaches have the

best intentions, they may follow the cultural patterns of training and competition in junior tennis that are more debilitating than empowering.¹

Physical Pain and Injury

Tournament after tournament, I watched girls as young as ten-years-old compete with limbs wrapped with ace bandages, knees encircled by shock-absorbing bands, and shoulders wrapped with ice as they out of the physical therapy room. Players told me of bone bruising, tendinitis, stress fractures, bulged discs, strains, and overall inflammation in most parts of the body including the neck, shoulder, elbow, wrist, lower back, hip, knee, ankle and foot. Coach Linda explains the problem of injury below:

I became a personal trainer because of this – there are so many injuries with the shoulders, the knees and the wrists. It's so common with a lot of players having this wrist pain, because your body is still growing, especially as a young child, and hitting balls, each time you get more competition, each year you get stronger and stronger, your opponents get better so stronger balls are being hit at you. And then your wrists, there are so many tendonitis injuries or tennis elbow or things like that, definitely a lot of first injury shoulders from serving and not having the right technique yet, and not having a strong enough upper back or shoulders, the kids are just not trained well enough.

Stress fractures, tendonitis and bulged discs are very common injuries in the youth sport world². Katie, a high level collegiate player notices this when she realized that her college team was rare in that they did not have stress fractures because their practice schedule was minimal even though they were #1 in the nation:

We were always really thankful to be there, because we were like, “Wow, we barely practice here. No wonder we're not injured.” Usually everyone

¹Some parents recognize this dependency on the coach as debilitating and hindering their children's performance and well-being. They exercise their agency by looking for a new coach.

²For more information on common youth sport injuries, see Beil 1998, Hyman 2009, Gorman 2005, and Pennington 2005.

that showed up, someone had a stress fracture. I don't think in my four years there anyone had a stress fracture.

Professionalized youth athletes still often perform through debilitating pain to achieve their goals and garner recognition from the sport community. Parents and coaches further encourage kids to accept pain as, according to one coach, “Kids are after a title so no one cares that the kid is in pain all the time. They are just given anti-inflammation meds and other pain killers to help them achieve their goals.”

Emotional Pain and Burnout

Youth athletes come to know themselves through the paradoxical yet powerful combination of pain and discipline through their rituals of training and competition, discussed in Chapter 3. Tennis can be a technology of the self when it teaches players how to overcome adversity, for instance. But the “dark side” of emotional pain is burnout - a term used by my participants to define mental and emotional exhaustion that entails a sense of dread or apathy towards sport, depression, and withdrawal. In this way, the rituals of training could be seen as technologies of domination as it reproduces a sense of oppression for players. The result of this oppressiveness can affect stress levels in players, which is a precursor for health problems. As Malina 2009 notes, the stress associated with elite youth sport can be a precursor to later mental disorder (S7). If burnout is considered the emotional counterpart to physical pain or injury, then the body accumulates emotional burnout much like it does physical injury. This can, in turn, manifest itself into physical pain as well. Most players say burnout is mostly a “mental thing”. As former player Terri says,

I think I just knew when I needed a break, and I would say I need a couple of days off because it was a mental thing with me. The burnout wasn't physical, I didn't feel like I was physically unable to go out and play and run, it was more of, “Oh my God, I've been playing a lot,” and mentally, I couldn't

focus. It was more of a focus thing. I needed a vacation, to stay away for a couple of days. And at that point, in the juniors, I mean, two or three days felt like a week.

Burnout can also be thought of as “destructive flow”, as explained in Chapter 3. There is a lack of “fun and challenge” in the junior tennis environment. Mother Nina says,

Burnout exists because parents make their kids do something they don't want to do...[I]f you force them to do it and they don't wanna do it – they're not challenged or they're not hitting with good enough kids – then you're gonna be burned out. But as long as you're making it fun and the coach is making it fun and challenging, there's no such thing as burnout if you're having a good time and you enjoy it and you love it...If you have no confidence, you can't get out there and play, and you're upset and crying. That's burnout. That's how you burnout a child. But there's no such thing as burnout if you love the [activity].

Thirteen-year-old, Sara, describes it this way:

I think people get tired of it and stuff because their parents are maybe like overdoing it. Like they don't let them maybe go to the movies once in a while or go see friends. I think that's important.

But one way or the other, the physical body or the emotional soul is prone to injury if the player is pushed too hard. One father, Charles, articulates how injuries are often signs of burnout:

They won't say they hate the sport [or] they don't want to play anymore, that the parents have pushed them too hard; they'll say “Hey my shoulder hurts.” So I think a lot of injuries, I mean, it can be actually that injuries are a way of relief for kids to get out of situations that they don't want to be in.

Conscientious coaches who are careful not to use tennis training rituals as technologies of domination, realize that even if a player is faking injury, it could be a sign of burnout.

In these cases, coaches like Linda advise them to take the day off:

If you're about to make them do a tough exercise and they know it and all of a sudden, they seem to have pain, you know it's fake...you can tell the attitude of the player is a little lethargic or they're not so motivated to come to practice, injuries more likely occur, or they say they have more injuries.... My players mostly have been pretty honest with me about having pain. I believe that they have pain. But on the days that they're motivated, they

work past the pain. On days where they're not motivated, they say it's too much for them to handle. So I believe that they have pain because it's normal, they're on court every day, and I have pains too, but now, being older, I know what pains I can work through and what I can't. When you're younger, you feel a pain and maybe get scared, and if you're motivated, you'll just move past it and it doesn't matter, but if you're tired and it's another hard day of practice and you know it, then it's sort of a cop out, something to use as an excuse. So you have to recognize the attitude of the player – their pattern... pressure also brings pain.

Unfortunately, some parents and coaches dismiss complaints of pain or fatigue as par for the course for developing athletes. One parent explains:

I would hypothesize that every kid who goes through any kind of serious competitive tennis, probably burns out at some stage. The question is to let it just burnout and just die, or manage it until they come back again... You know sometimes I think you have to just tough through a little bit and just you know you have to manage it and slow things down.

Thus, even though it may be empowering in the short-term with immediate victories and performances, exposure to emotional and physical burnout over time can debilitate athletes in the long-run. Still, many parents and coaches often ignore the signs of burnout and even refuse to accept that burnout is a real phenomenon. Below, one of the most revered junior coaches in the world, Mac, exemplifies this perspective:

I take a whole different perspective on this. I don't think the players actually burn out. I think the parents burn out. I really do. I think the parents burn out because, a lot of times the parents are living through their kids, and the kids start to get older. Reality sets in, and the kid now has a boyfriend or a girlfriend, or a driver's license, and loses interest. And people think, well, they burn out. I think that if you are driven and you have passion, and you love to play, burn out doesn't happen. You're gonna lose, you're gonna fail, but I think it's more the parents.

Parents either do not believe in burnout, as well, or simply do not know or recognize the signs because they are so focused on their child's tennis development and goal achievement. For instance, over a series of months training with a player, I recognized that he became more and more fatigued as he came out to practice. His

coach and I both felt that he did not want to practice because he was playing so much already with another academy. His schedule was packed with four hours of school, five hours of tennis and another two of fitness daily, and there were usually about five people watching him at tournament matches: his coach, fitness trainer, parents, and me. The pressure, combined with the fatigue, seemed to weigh heavier on his shoulders each day as his shoulders seemed to droop and his movement became more sluggish as he approached the court. But the parents ended up blaming the coach instead of the many hours a day they have him training. Even though his mother understood what burnout was, and described the symptoms, she did not recognize it in her own son. At least she did not admit to it and told him to “push through it”. She told me once that he was not the type to “throw a tantrum”; that, rather, he was the type that could just “move on”.

Existential Pain and Depression

Exposure to abuse over time - whether it is physical, emotional, psychological, or sexual – especially if it occurs from a young age, can result in post-traumatic stress disorder. Abuses of power by parents and involves clear technologies of domination. It can lead to personality changes, including depression. Players who say they were abused by their coaches and/or parents, say that they were also hindered by the abuse and could have done much better without it³. One former player who was abused by both her father and two coaches, physically and emotionally, said that she was just so drained from dealing with the abuse. Andrea said that even though she learned how to

³This experience is very similar to Geurts 2002 concept of Gambian women being “used up” with each traumatic experience they endured in their lives, which I explored in Chapter 3.

persevere through tough times with her abuse, she had nothing left for the court or her life outside tennis:

Going through all of that is exhausting mentally, and playing as you know is exhausting mentally. Think about having to compete and focus and putting all your mental facilities toward that when your mental facilities are being drained because of everything else that you're dealing with. So, I felt like my competitive abilities were up and down. I was a good competitor. But there were so many days that I just could not put it together because I was so tired. I'd do well for two or three matches and then after that, it'd be mentally exhausting.

Because, as discussed in Chapter 4, the differences between technologies of the self and technologies of domination are difficult to distinguish, the differences between discipline and abuse are so subtle. But even though abusive behaviors are clearly technologies of domination that reproduce coach/parent power over players, they are often normalized as part of the training environment and accepted as the right of the authority figure. Sometimes, they are recognizable by other parents. One mother, who heard about my research, pulled me aside to tell me that there is a “hidden depression” among junior players and that it is a huge factor that plays into burnout, lowered self-esteem, and lessened ability to function outside the tennis world. She said that she can see kids that are gloomy, droopy and exhausted, and it looks like they are carrying a burden on their shoulders. They do not know how to articulate or even acknowledge their burnout. The irony is that many junior players do not yet know how to communicate their feelings. At the same time, they are trained to control their feelings in matches. As players are trained to control their feelings from an early age, they are trained to maintain the positive thoughts and downplay the negative. Negativity often causes feelings of guilt because players are told that it is their fault that they are negative.

This is how sports psychology can neglect deeper problems. Hoberman 1986 recognize this blinding of social forces in order to stay focused on performance enhancement as “psychodoping”; prioritizing the athlete over the person. Treating burnout without treating the deeper emotions and relationship dynamics with parents and coaches that may be developing underneath the surface can often make problems worse; not just for the player’s game, but for the player’s well-being⁴. When junior players keep playing under those conditions of hidden depression, they get used to pacing themselves, of going through the motions, and becoming detached from tennis. As a result, they become detached from emotions, as is highlighted as a problem many former players experience in their adulthood relationships. This exemplifies Seligman's 2010 discussion of dissociation in Chapter 3.

A few players spoke of feeling “helpless”, or stuck in their situations as tennis players. They had put so much time and effort into developing their tennis careers that they felt it was too late to quit. Psychologists use the term “learned helplessness” to convey this feeling. One former player said she felt “suicidal” during periods of burnout as a teenager, and there have been several junior players who have committed suicide, according to a coach I interviewed:

I think tennis has an impact because they were very talented, very high level players. And there was something about that individual sport and the pressure of tennis that I think maybe pushed them over the edge. Not to say that it was exclusively the game, but there's something about the game associated with their personalities that I think contributed to their demise.

⁴Sports psychotherapist Tracy Hanlon addressed this in her lecture at the 2010 Annual United States Professional Tennis Association coaches’ conference.

When sacrifice becomes self-harm

Parents and coaches often say that discipline is the number one thing that players learn through tennis. When I asked players what they have to do to be a successful player, they overwhelmingly talk about self-discipline. Ten-year-old player Skye says,

You have to do a lot of fitness, eat right, you have to play more tournaments, and more matches to make you more match tough, and then your level just goes more up. Don't eat a lot of junk food...And you have to be able to bend your knees. And you have to be able to hit the ball. You can't push the ball and not bend your knees.

Parents see the value of this self-discipline as it relates to the world outside of tennis:

The least you're gonna get out of it is a full ride to any college. You'll become a lawyer, a doctor, anything from the discipline they learned all the years. Having to do fitness, and school, and tennis. You know hit balls over and over, it just makes college that much easier to come out with all the discipline you learned.

Involvement in competitive tennis can empower youths with technologies of the self by keeping them out of trouble, as many parents and players express to me. Many parents explain how they got their children involved to stay away from drugs, alcohol, and sex. This tends to work, for the most part, as statistics show that teenaged girls who play sports are less likely to get pregnant than those who do not play sports (Coakley 2006a). Players often say that they do not want to do drugs or drink because they are training their bodies to be as strong as possible. For instance, many players in my study refer to drugs and alcohol as "stupid". Even so, the highly commercialized atmosphere of youth sport at the upper levels of competition requires great financial and time investments by athletes, parents, coaches and sport federations. It can be difficult to distinguish between training environments and schedules that are emotionally enabling and those that are disabling.

Discipline from coaches and parents can be internalized and transformed through players' liminal experience and flow states in matches and training. This is how an authority's power can be transformed into self-discipline by junior players as an empowering experience of self-control and independence. Former player Don describes this sense of empowerment through self-discipline in the way he controlled his rewards for a job well done:

I would go out there and just force myself to go do it. I would pick a number in my head and I was gonna do it like even if I picked a high number, I was going to finish. And was gonna go, I would walk with a basket of balls, and was like okay I'm going to make twenty-five serves there, there, there, and there, then make thirty second serves in each box in a row or something like that, and I'm not leaving until I do that. And that was my discipline, I chose to do that, and I'm gonna do that... There'd be no problem to have a cookie, but, I would just do it because it was something I wanted to do and I would just not allow it... You have to be your own police. But that's what I like about the discipline stuff. I feel like that's where it comes in. It may be total B.S., but if in your mind, like, if you think it's doing a positive thing, then it is.

But, what can be seen as technologies of the self can actually be technologies of domination reproducing the dominant sport rhetoric of "no pain, no gain". Reproducing an overly demanding or exploitative training environment, pain and abuse can be self-imposed as an excessive form of self-discipline in the form of eating disorders, compulsive negative self-criticism, and excessive training to the point of injury. The embodiment of discipline can, thus, turn into methods of self-harm when discipline becomes an extreme sense of self-surveillance and control⁵. Much like a teenager who self-harms through cutting, drug-abuse, alcohol abuse, promiscuity, etc., teenage athletes often cross the line along the empowerment continuum from self-discipline to self-harm through excessive punishment, obsessive training (i.e. self-deprivation of

⁵Examples of self-harm is seen in other sports as well (i.e. Ryan 1995)

water and rest) and extreme dieting. Players often hit themselves. One teenaged player in my research sometimes hit the outside of her calf so hard during matches if she made a mistake that it would bruise the next day. Her mother reveals,

If you look at her left area on her leg...it's purple, blue and swollen. [I ask, because she hits her leg there?] Yes. She got a code violation at the very end of the match because she lost a tie break with somebody in her opinion she should never be on the court with.

Another common method for teenaged girls to maintain control of their environment is to control their bodies through food intake and by starving themselves⁶. This is also motivated through media images⁷. It becomes a cycle of control over one's body that can turn into an obsession; thus, self-discipline (technology of self) can become self-harm (technology of domination) through an excessive degree of self-surveillance (Bordo 1993, Jones and Aitchison 2007). Disordered eating can lead to menstrual problems which can influence bone loss and, ultimately, osteoporosis and stress fractures: "There is a fine line between sport practices that are healthy and sport practices that are unhealthy" (Jones and Aitchison 2007:70). When athletes are at their unhealthiest (i.e. low bone density) they can feel powerful and empowered. They can be fit but unhealthy at the same time. One mother, Susan, says that her daughter had problems with compulsive dieting and exercising:

She definitely over exercised. There was one point where I was, and I've since read about this, [worried about] borderline anorexia. You might have anorexic tendencies but you never become an anorexic. But definitely as far as calorie counting and increasing exercise because of body image.

⁶Jones and Aitchison 2007 and Malina 2009 say that eating disorders can be sparked by coaches comments.

⁷This is elaborated upon in the next chapter.

But other mothers say that, instead, their daughters try to have more muscles than other girls. But girls still struggle over the body shape they are “supposed” to have. As Tina notes about her daughter:

She has obviously always been bigger than the average girl her age, taller as well as bulkier. And we have had conversations where she tries to fall into that path that a lot of girls fall into whether they are athletes or not athletes... And you know the whole issue of the number on the scale; I personally try to show her it differently. I mean as an athlete you really need to be thankful that you do have the ability to have muscle and that you have developed that muscle with your work. You should be proud of it, you shouldn't want to be skinny just because it's like, and you are not fat. It is healthy, it would be unhealthy if you were the other way in my opinion. And you need that, you need what you have worked to achieve to help you power through the ball. But I don't think it is an extreme where you should take something to enhance your performance....She doesn't really say about restricting calories but she is body conscious and she does want a solid body.

Nina, mother of two female daughters, simply states:

Now the thing is to have muscles. Like [my daughter] was showing the big muscles in her arms. That's big now, even for the young girls to have some muscles showing. So it's not the thing to be skinny any more. It's the thing to be an athlete, a jock.

But many players can take this training of their body to an extreme. Another player I followed for about eighteen months suffered two major overuse injuries from his over-training and intense competition schedule. His first injury, a stress fracture, was sustained at age twelve and kept him out of the game for two months. His next injury, a ligament tear, was sustained a year and a half later and kept him out for another month. Many do not consider overuse injury as a form of self-harm, though, because self-harm is normalized as part of the sport ethic of self-discipline and self-punishment in order to automate performance. This is where Foucault's 1988 concept of technologies of the self become distorted through rituals that reproduce (self)abusive tendencies; no longer a source of empowerment, but a source of self-degradation and self-debilitation.

Behaviors of self-empowerment through healthy eating, balanced training regimen, pushing players past laziness, and mental self-talk to calm down can become behaviors of self-harm through physical, verbal, and mental self-torture.

It can be hard for players to admit to themselves that they are unhappy, let alone their parents. Eleven-year-old Skye says,:

Some older players get mad, they say they don't wanna do it anymore. So they think that they can't really do it, so they just quit. At the young ages, they don't really say it as much.

Here, Deb sees this unhappiness in her own son:

This summer before [last], listening to him and not having the strength saying no, that summer he wanted to continue [training] from the moment schools stopped. He went to the club the whole summer long. I was crazy. I was bringing him lunch because there is no good food and he was playing so hard. We were pretty disappointed with the program. At the end of August, every time he came home, he would turn irritable...That's the most terrifying thing you can find. That your child, doesn't want to go, he's not happy, but he still thinks "I have to go [practice]...until they are dead!

Some parents notice these and other self-destructive behaviors, but are hesitant to interfere as many do not experience the line between self-discipline and self-harm as athletes.

Long-term effects of disempowering pain

Some of the former athlete parents would miscalculate how far their player-kid could be pushed as I saw many kids with these parents on the verge of burnout. As a result, some former players emphasized that they still push themselves past the pain boundary, or point of burnout, due to habits they acquired in junior tennis, and only know they are well into burnout once they get sick. As former player Katie says,

I'd like to believe that until now I did know when burnout was coming, but I'm well into burnout for the last few months... But I think my body, for me, even though my ulcerative colitis is in remission, that has typically told me when it's time to take a break, and I'll just sort of feel kind of queasy in the

stomach and it doesn't feel like a stomach ache or a cold, and it just clicks in my head. Actually, I'm probably really tired and stressed out and I've been ignoring those signs, and now this is your body shutting down now.

Several former players express a dependency on stress to feel fulfilled, even though they dislike it. This exemplifies an embodiment of identity, explored in Chapter 3, through stress, pressure, self-discipline, and burnout. Former player Bonnie admits,

I don't like to be in high stress [situations], but I'm constantly in them.... I run myself down, I get sick, and all these things happen, and then I do it all over again. But I've been non-stop since I was born [with tennis], so I think it's natural to be like that. When I have breaks in school...I go crazy, I'm so bored. I have to do something to stay occupied." [She says this proudly, but as I feel the same way, it can also be exhausting. The loneliness and purposelessness of not having stress is overpowering.

She notes that she realizes that she is tougher, though, than other women who did not play competitive sport. Still, she wonders if she is tough or if she is just used to tolerating abusive environments. While junior players learn how to overcome challenges, they become used to challenging environments. This can become an empowering trait that they carry through life in the work place and interpersonal relationships⁸. However, through this "toughening up" process, players can also become hardened to emotional challenges as well as blind to environments that are abusive to them. Former elite player Katie discusses this paradox of being tough while also aware of her tolerance of abuse:

The positives [from junior tennis] are that I can pull through more than, certainly more than any other woman that I've met, almost to the level of [abuse]... I think still I get emotional than the equivalent man, but from a work perspective, I'm pretty tough. I can take it, take the feedback, and actually do something with it, instead of just breaking down and crying in tears. That's not to say that I haven't done that, but certainly the times that I have cried have been like, wow... I can't believe you haven't cried before

⁸In sport, this is often seen when athletes discover more about themselves during injury or burnout (Orlick 1998).

now - situations, where there's a lot of just abusive behavior going on.... I let shit go on longer than it should have, but just on a day to day basis, people know me as a person that they can count on to get things done, and I will make sure that they get done and not make these excuses of why it couldn't get done, and that's reminiscent of [the mentality of] "I'm not going to give you excuses of why I didn't win that match." I need to go back and be better. So the mental toughness is still very much there. The amount of work that I and my friends are willing to take on is also tremendous. We're the hardest working people without complaining, which seems to go hand in hand. Or we bottle it up until it explodes, which is still not good. But that's certainly some of the positives that as an employer you'd want to look for – but maybe not as a spouse.

The end result of pushing one-self past the pain boundary can result in Over-Training Syndrome⁹ and enduring years of chronic stress during childhood and adulthood can include chronic health problems into adulthood like auto-immune disorders¹⁰. This is an area of new research in the psycho-neuroimmunological field, but autoimmune disorders seemed prevalent among female former junior tennis players.

Katie supports this idea:

I've had four people come to me and say they had ulcerative colitis, too...I'm not surprised but I'm also kind of surprised that it keeps coming up on such high level tennis players. But I think there's no question that you're constantly stressed. Your body is, not the mental "Oh I'm stressed out", but this constant fight-or-flight, "I feel like I'm going to get eaten by a lion" and what's going on hormonally, I think...It just never goes away.

Paradoxical Spaces of Potential

Chapter 3 introduced the concept of potential as an aspect of liminal identity for junior players. This "potential" has various forms and effects for junior players' conception of themselves. While current players and parents are so deeply involved in

⁹Robson 2003 discusses the development of Over Training Syndrome as the result of a burnout and injury leading to cytokine sickness leading to chronic inflammation leading to OTS (also known as "underperformance syndrome").

¹⁰Some have referred to this as "toxic stress". There is more research on autoimmune disorder as a result of chronic stress (Benner 1998).

the junior tennis process, former players and parents speak the all-consuming experience of junior tennis. The money, time, and emotional energy that is spent trying to achieve the elusive “next level” is often not enough to many former players and parents. Below, parent Susan articulates in detail the frustration she feels which exemplifies the lengths that most parents go to in finding the “extra edge” to help their players reach their potential:

We thought she needed some different physical training than she was getting, so we did gymnastics on the side for a while. The whole stretching, what not. We did boxing on the side. That was her thing at that point in time. We kind of followed what a number of the Russians, including Maria [Sharapova]...They were doing all this cross training. So [my daughter] went to a lot of those same things. And we just felt that we were paying too much money and not getting precisely, the results. And not getting the specific training that we thought she needed... I'm just recalling this now, [thinking], “What have we done to this child, in bringing her up through tennis?” There was always something else that she could do to reach that #1 spot. So it wasn't enough to do the training. So then we went to the cross training. Then we went to working with a fitness coach...and it kept getting to a higher level. Then we went to...a coach on sports psychology ... we go and work with a physical therapist. Now you're doing two hours of stretching a day... It was always trying, you know, “What's the next thing?” ...it was never good enough. It was never quite enough, never quite, to win that last match that was gonna make the breakthrough. That was going to, all of a sudden, “Oh yes, I can do this, let me move on [to the pros]”... it was always just about chasing that elusive goal [thinking] “that next tournament is going to be the one.”

Much like Mattingly's 2010 conception of the “paradox of hope” in the health enhancement setting of the hospital, I see a *paradox of potential* in the performance enhancement setting of junior tennis. That is, junior players and their coaches and parents can be both empowered and disempowered by having hope that a player's potential will be reached. The end mark keeps moving because “potential” is a subjective and ungraspable goal. As former athlete Rita puts it:

We had been trained for so long to do the best thing for our tennis. We didn't have a perspective at eighteen. We didn't think, “What's the best

thing for my life?” That’s where the parent should come in. A good coach sits their player down and says, “Let’s be realistic. What do you want to do? Just because you’re not making it in tennis doesn’t mean you’re failing. That is something that tennis also did to me. Because I didn’t reach the level that I wanted, I felt like a failure when I finished.

Yet, regardless whether it means monetary success, social mobility, or simply the feeling of mastering the game, this concept of “potential” is what drives junior tennis participants to devote a bulk of their resources: time, energy, and money.

When I asked participants why they got involved in tennis in the first place, the most common answers included the love of competition and increased feelings of accomplishment and confidence that came with winning. Coach Linda says,

I loved competition. I don't know what it was, but my friend, I went and met her to play tennis with her one day, and I just loved it. I loved the sport. That's just how I remember it. I didn't want to do anything else. I didn't want to hang out with my friends, I didn't want to do anything else, I just wanted to play tennis all day. And I don't know what about it drew me to it. I just had so much fun. And I was good at it.

The hope to reach one’s potential can distract players from getting involved in destructive activities that many young people face (i.e. drugs, premature sexual relations). Tennis keeps players busy during the hours after school, so that they cannot explore these destructive activities. But it also gets players motivated about staying healthy so that they can perform at their best level and fulfill their potential. In this way, the concept of having potential can be quite empowering for a young person. However, because so many players feel that they do not reach their potential by the time they want to reach it, they can feel utter disappointment and shame. In this way, the concept of potential can have a disempowering effect on youths’ well-being¹¹; particularly when

¹¹Coakley 1992, Donnelly 1997, Malina 2009, and David 2004 are just some of the references highlighting the disempowering aspects of competitive youth sports.

parents and coaches have discouraged them from finding other sources of identity in case potential is not reached. More often than not, this “narrowing” of options for building identity can be self-imposed by the player and result in a negative effect on self-esteem and social skills.

Coaches often point out that tennis is a game where disappointment is a common phenomenon because, the way that the scoring is structured, the winner of a match can still lose as many points as she wins. Losses, losing, and missed shots often come with the territory of being a tennis player. But if a player finds that this disappointment is too difficult to recover from, they may want to pick a different sport to play. As coach Linda advises:

As long as the player is okay with it there, and they're fighting and they want to play, get them into tournaments as soon as possible because I think competition is motivating. And if they can't handle the pressure and they're not doing well, then you have to adjust and teach them that tournaments are fun. They don't have to look at it as a chore or it's so much pressure. Maybe there's someone putting too much pressure on them. But tournaments are really what tennis is all about, and if kids can't handle playing tournaments, then maybe they're just not meant to be a competitive player, maybe they're a player that just want to play for fun or a player that just wants to use tennis as a form of socializing or exercise.

Indeed, the most common reasons cited among all participants I interviewed for quitting tennis included not having enough success or money as well as too much parental pressure. Father Clark elaborates on this point and compares the pressure in tennis to that of a team sport:

The kid didn't like it anymore, okay. And the reason they didn't like it anymore, and it's always the same reason, it's the parents putting too much pressure on them. That's the most common thing, you know what I mean? The parent goes through that mourning process [after their kid quits] and once they're done mourning they start putting out the excuses: “Well, you know, he didn't like it anymore. He wanted to try soccer.” Something like that. [and you're thinking] “Yeah, you probably drove him out of it.” And, see, when you go from an individual to a team sport, there's less pressure

on the kid by the one parent. They just simply, because of their nature, they just blame everyone else on the team [and say] “It’s not my kid anymore [that I have to blame for losing].” It’s hard not to blame your kid [in tennis] because your kid is the only one on the court, you see?

The unwillingness to compete is another reason why players quit playing tennis, as former player Don notes:

I think it’s the unwillingness to compete. I can see so easily how it can be so determined. You work hard, and it’s not fun. Playing junior tournaments isn’t fun at all a lot of times. There’s nothing fun about it. It’s terribly stressful environment, there’s so much going on around you, you’re constantly competing. You have to compete and you don’t wanna lose. Losing sucks. You’re by yourself every time, and I just remember so few times—and mostly because I was copping out—I’d get a tournament so excited to go and come home and be like “That sucked, that was no fun”.

Many players quit because they want to explore a non-tennis identity. One mother, whose daughter quit at seventeen, talked to me about her daughter. She could have gone on to play college tennis, this mother said, but she quit because of social reasons. She had no friends in the tennis scene anymore. It seems that because she built her identity solely around tennis, she burned out on that identity. In some cases, quitting is the right thing to do for many players in order to find happiness and balance in their lives. But in other circumstances, it can be considered a “cop-out” from a commitment that should otherwise be kept, according to participants.

Early Specialization or the Road to Burnout?

When to start training, playing tournaments, and generally focusing on intensive training in order to reach potential, is one of the most frequently asked questions among parents.¹² Many parents see their children as having professional potential and get

¹²Many parents asked my advice about this and I would tell them that every child is different, but that the child should be the one urging parents to go practice, not the other way around.

extremely excited about their futures. This excitement motivates parents to put their kids into training programs at very early ages. They do it because they want to be “good” parents by giving their kids every opportunity in the world (Coakley 2006). Indeed, many parents say things like, “As her parent, I have to give her every chance to succeed.” Below, one mother exemplifies the epitome of early specialization by conceiving her two children in order for them to become tennis players. In discussing age to start training, Nina advises me on how to train my two-year-old niece:

Just like your little niece you want to develop. Start now with a ball on a rubber band, a gamma replacement ball, and a little ten dollar racquet at Walmart. And you move the ball where they swing the racquet because they can't swing low to high at that age. But pretty soon they've seen the ball hit the racquet so many times, they have that hand-eye coordination. They're hitting the ball every single time no matter where they hold it. And you have to develop that as a youngster at one-year-old if you wanna make a champion. There's so much more to tennis than people think. If you wanna develop like these kids do, you have to play at least two hours a day. Between cones and ladders and fitness drills and medicine ball and rubber bands and you're not lifting any weights. They say up 'til seven you can develop all the hand-eye coordination. At seven, they have what they have. And then by twelve-years-old, they say girls will have everything. Boys have a little longer.

Most parents follow this line of thinking by starting their players in lessons by age five, and tournaments by age eight, so they can get a jump start on the competition, getting them used to a competitive environment and daily training sessions. Parents and coaches often express that if players wait too long, they start to develop interests outside of tennis and it is too late to pull them back into focus. It is commonly believed that the most successful junior tennis players must identify with tennis over any other activity in order to attach a “life or death” mentality about tennis that can motivate them to win. This is when tennis could be considered a technology of domination as it controls players and limits their explorations of other “selves”.

But many coaches who have been coaching for a long time and are sensitive to the holistic well-being of their players express that starting too early usually results in adolescent over-use injury and burnout¹³ as the body, and the mind are not yet developed for long-term training. Even though child players can execute the drills and conditioning that their coaches demand of them, often as early as age six, this does not mean that they are able to sustain this pace and endure it over the next ten years physically, emotionally, and mentally. Most coaches and former players say that because kids are able to do things at such high levels, it masks their vulnerability to injury and burnout and, thus, makes them seem like adults. Their abilities to achieve great feats, although empowering them with immediate feelings of strength and subsequent adulation (i.e. technologies of self), actually are the tools of their eventual self-destruction through injury, burnout and social isolation (i.e. technologies of domination)¹⁴. Below, coach Will voices his frustration at not seeing the signs until his player articulated it to him, and the frustrations he feels with the pressures from USTA as well as from the parents:

I have been going through burnout with her for the past eight months, and she said to me that she started playing tournaments way too young. Three tournaments a month at nine. "I don't want to do it anymore." A sixteen-year-old kid looks you right in the face and articulates that... Let's figure out what's wrong and make an adjustment. USTA and their changing the points, I was on the road every weekend, and I just stepped back and said "screw it." Now I love it again. If they can find a way to burn me out, just think of what they are doing to the kids who don't have a pre-frontal cortex. They are purely dealing with the emotional part of their brains. Their parents

¹³Burnout in youth sports (i.e. Coakley 1992, Malina 2009) and in junior tennis (Gould et al. 1997) is the result of social issues in the sport context, not just psychological issues within the athlete. Over-use injury is discussed as a consequence of early specialization (Malina 2009, Pickard 2007).

¹⁴Malina 2009 mentions this, too.

are on my ass about getting their rankings up and worrying about their points dropping off, [saying] “You’ve dropped a point”, “You’re not a four-star anymore, you’re a three star”. And then teenagers are just being normal teenagers. They may have a boyfriend at school that’s not treating them right. They may be doing poorly at class or someone is making fun of them. They think they’re fat. And then you add tennis and all this other crap on top of it. You’re gonna make them crack...I want a [group] of coaches who actually care.

Academies: The Next Step or Hype?

Parents often ask me if I recommend going to an international sports academy. People generally have very strong opinions either for or against it. It is not a decision that parents make lightly to send their children to an academy as it is very expensive for most families: \$35,000 - \$100,000 a year depending on the program. Parents must pay a semester in advance with no return of funds if the player does not like it. It is a highly corporate environment with agents and scouts, and it is based on a structure of surveillance. The approach that the academy system takes is an authoritative to abusive/exploitative one that privileges the group over the individual. In Foucauldian terms, academies often use technologies of domination in order to maintain control and surveillance of the group. This can be beneficial for coddled players but detrimental for already self-disciplined players used to a collaborative approach.

Coach Frank, who has been coaching juniors and collegiate players for forty years, does not like the academy system. He says it takes players away from their nurturing environments and puts players in an environment based on conditional love:

We’ve canned the process of getting there. I absolutely hate it. I worked at a tennis academy, but I hate the tennis academy movement. When I grew up, there were no tennis academies. In every city in America with players, there was a great role model and all the kids grew up emulating this role model. What started these academies, was you took these role models and brought them down to Florida for the academy. The role model around the country started to get very generic, and all the role models were down here. The problem with the academy system is that you cut out the nurturing

aspect of kids' lives: the home. You sell out for this big transfer....there's not a lot of unconditional love for the kids. It's conditional.

The “canning process” he refers to has to do with the fact that the academy system is based on a philosophy of monitoring liminal students as they transition into elite players, or that is the goal, anyway. The courts are setup in a way that they can be watched from a coach's surveillance tower (Figure 6-1) and a long view of courts (Figure 6-2). The group structure relies on a system of peer pressure and surveillance with challenge matches, punishment of the group for an individual's mistake, and its sports science techniques that divide the junior player's abilities into individual parts. These techniques of control to guide and instruct liminal athletes are highlighted in Chapter 4 as examples of Foucauldian technologies of domination.

The video system is one way for coaches to break down the intricate movements of strokes for each player and document their strengths and weaknesses. These films are showed to the player, often after they are taken. Because players are so used to being filmed for the purposes of analyzing their stroke, they become tolerant or perhaps even unaware of the video cameras set up on each training court which can be viewed online by anyone who logs onto the academy website. Unknowingly, players are simultaneously being monitored by their coaches inside their offices as well as exploited as advertisement for the academy to potential students who are interested in enrolling.

The group structure is set up so that players see each other as constant opponents. A player in a lower group can “challenge up” to a group by choosing a player from that group to play, usually one of the lower three. This puts players at a constant level of stress because they identify so strongly with their group number in the hierarchy of groups. A player's spot is always in jeopardy within the group and among groups

which increases the amount of peer pressure between players. Because of this peer pressure, there is a strong incentive to train hard and to stay ahead of the players they see as their rivals, or the closest to them in playing ability. This peer pressure is often stronger incentive than a coach's or parent's demands, so the self-surveillance increases along with the peer surveillance. Former player Katie describes what it felt like:

The academy was weird. Being there all day long and all you do was talk about tennis and think about tennis, and there's definitely some sort of weird hierarchy of popular kids and not popular kids. You were popular because you were really good at tennis, and you were normally nice to other people. But if you weren't very popular and all you tried to do was kiss up to the good players and I didn't really understand the social rules of the academy in that sense. So I felt kind of lost. I just wanted to be friends with whomever – why can't we talk to them? This was so weird.

Another aspect to the surveillance of the group structure is the sponsors, agents, and college coaches who come to academies to scout. They scout the top groups and players are aware of this “silent audience” and the potential of being selected. This also keeps them motivated to self-monitor and stay disciplined.

The mental toughness department measures junior athletes into parts, a common approach in the attempt to quantify human performance, as Hoberman 1986 describes. It is a way for academies to keep track of the potential and improvement of their current players. Much like the way in which Foucault's 1975 panopticon of surveillance made prisoners become their own monitors, this system of measurement becomes a way for players to judge their own improvement and skills, even if they have little to do with tennis. It is a way, in other words, to keep players disciplined with their off-court training - in the weight room, their diet, their sleep, etc. - without needing to assign a private coach to constantly supervise them. The program quantifies players'

abilities and, in the long run, the players start to self-judge based on these subjective scoring techniques. It is subjective because it makes it appear to the player that the highest score on a skill equates to the highest chance of becoming a professional athlete.

One of my participants who trained for a brief time at the academy got very upset when he got low scores on many of his tests. Scoring these players on their forehand, their backhand, their serve, etc. in part is based on the assumption that the whole is equal to the sum of its parts. Many find this controversial arguing that if a player scores highly on every stroke or strategy, this does not necessarily predict the outcome of their tennis career. The intangibles, though, cannot be quantified including drive, incentive, endurance of motivation, goals, etc. Even if players can put it all together, it will not predict their winning capacity. Not only are strokes and physical skills quantified but personality and cognitive abilities are as well. They take a baseline, initially, and test players periodically along their stay at the academy. As a result, players apply their score to their personhood because the academy attaches a numerical ranking to players' answers, ranking them according to what a "professional athlete" should be like. It is used as a way to justify the academy system in the youth sport, professional sport, and the sport science worlds.

Thus, there is much controversy over statistically measuring kids, especially when it is being used to monitor and judge for future scholarships and coaching selections. The academy system is an industry whose primary goal is to quantify "potential" in young players in order to, in some participants' views, exploit it for their own financial gain. As one coach describes, the academy system is "killing people" by

making them play seven hours a day. He only realized after he left how people were getting injured “left and right” and were going into the therapist’s office everyday injured, burned out, unmotivated, and homesick. I often heard about how players do not want to admit injury or fatigue for fear they would be labeled as weak¹⁵. They can get used to not saying anything and make their injuries and burnout worse. This exemplifies the reproduction of technologies of domination and how players normalize burnout and injury as part of the process to becoming a “champion”, especially if they are trained in an environment that holds applies that philosophy.

As a result, while some players may thrive on the discipline and structure of the academy system, many wilt. Many participants, who used to train at a large academy, refer to the large international academy training environment as a “militaristic” and “corporate” environment that provides little individual attention and quality training. According to coaches who have worked in this environment, it is based on a pyramid scheme where the lower players pay full price in order to allow the talented players with the most potential to train for free. Those hundreds at the bottom make it possible for the few at the top to succeed and are left to the “graveyard”, as one coach said, of tennis players when they are done.

One mother, whose son trains at an academy, says that the hundreds of kids that go there and pay full tuition never even see the head coach. She says that the academy has “more bad pros than good” teaching there, doing “second-rate drills like standing at the middle of the court and just feeding balls”, letting the players play matches without giving any instruction, and basically just “yelling at them like military drill sergeants”. But,

¹⁵ Nixon II 1996 discusses this.

she reiterates that they have state-of-the-art facilities, and that is why the top names go to train there which attracts more and more players there. She says, “Who doesn’t want to practice on a court next to Melanie Oudin or Jelena Jankovic or Sharapova or Kournikova?” There is a philosophy of separating players from their parents, she continues. This can be healthy when the parents are overbearing, but parents should be present in order to be sure their child is in a healthy environment. For instance, she said she did not want her son to travel without her and pick up habits and philosophies of eighteen-year-olds or twenty-something coaches whose moral codes may not be the same as hers. She heard of the stories about relationships between coaches and female junior players. Parent Clark supports this point by exclaiming:

A lot of people aren’t willing to leave the family, or send their 13-year-old child to [an academy] to be abused, okay. I would never send my child away for tennis. Are you insane? And I would never let a male coach travel with our female daughters. Are you insane?

The interview excerpt below exemplifies what I hear from many players who have trained in the academy system:

We really wanted him to keep going to [the academy] to learn survival, but his demeanor is working against us. It’s backfiring. He’s becoming more negative. We went to hit this weekend, and I could tell he just gets so negative and down as soon as he walks through those doors. He changes his whole demeanor. It probably wasn’t even worth it to leave [our home state] to come down here, because he is so negative.

Most coaches, like Will, reiterate this sentiment: “[In the academy system], kids just rent a court and grind for two hours with a paid coach. They’re like meat to those coaches.”

Paradoxical Spaces of Morality

A constant theme that flows through my interviews is the concept of morality and how tennis teaches players to be either good or bad people through the rituals of discipline described above and the power dynamics described in the previous chapters.

Coaches often say that parents get their children in tennis or sports in general, to develop positive life-skills. These skills include self-esteem, self-determination, goal-making, self-sufficiency, courage to fight, preparation skills, focus, discipline, time-management, respect for self and others, delayed gratification, keeping commitments, making decisions, and how to be a “good person” in general. Former player Terri says,

We had structure and focus, we were goal-oriented, we stayed out of trouble. Sports made us kind of just focused on that and not other things that could get us into trouble. I think if you are in school, you do have your goals and focus and structure, but I think it's on a different level because you're putting yourself out there and competing. Whereas in school you take tests, everybody does that. With a sport, you practice, you get really good at something, and then you put yourself on the line in front of people. There's pressure, there's a lot at stake. There's a lot because you know that you put in all this work, and now you have to show what you've done. And now you've got to not only show other people, but you have to prove it to yourself. So I think that builds a lot of character and confidence. I think if you gain that as a kid, you think that you can work hard and have results, and it's just building you into a better person.

But some people express that tennis teaches kids to have poor morality. Coach Frank told me this: “I told my wife that I love tennis. But there’s no way in the world that I want our children in this environment. It’s ‘How to Be an Asshole 101’.”

However, even though former players have mixed feelings about junior tennis participation, they often say they benefit from it overall. For example, Rita says,

I’m aware of the loss of my childhood and that’s my biggest concern for my children; I want them to stay children. But my question is, I know tennis gave me a lot of structure and I definitely want my kids to have what sports gave me in that sense. I think sports helped me above and beyond normal people in career lives. I felt like I had a huge step up from the average person. That I would like to translate to my kids, but without them having to lose their childhood.

Most assume that the skills that they learn in the meritocracy of sport (Coakley 2006) will automatically transfer to life and the adult working world as socially marketable skills (Bauman 2007). For instance, mother Sherri says,

[My son] has learned accountability, to take responsibility for himself, that working hard pays off, when things don't go his way he learns to deal with it and it's part of life. When he gets bigger, even if he doesn't play tennis, that life is going to be similar to what he's learning on the court... he's learning how to be a good human and to deal with life.

Coach Tim summed it up like this:

Just, even from a young age, it teaches you to be responsible, set goals, or work hard, and you know, just basic general life lessons that you learn a lot later on. I think in life as a regular kid, in tennis, you just learn them early on because of the game itself, and what it teaches you: [that] things aren't always gonna go your way. Doesn't matter how hard you work or how good you think you are at something, that you are not always gonna succeed. It teaches you to be responsible, and to set goals, and to have priorities. That there are consequences. If you want to, if you have a match at eight o'clock in the morning, and you want to stay up on your Nintendo until 3:00 in the morning, then you're probably going to lose. And, I learned all of that stuff kind of early so, I'm really thankful for tennis, and the junior experience was great.

Another well-respected coach, Mac, talks about the sportsmanship, physical fitness, and how it applies to their future adult working worlds:

I think, especially in today's society, tennis and life are so common. There are so many problems out there in the world today. First, it gets the kids off the street, so that's the first thing, it could be a game changer altogether. But the fact that you got to figure it out on your own, it's one on one. You handle winning. You handle losing. Sportsmanship and physical fitness. There are so many things that tennis teaches you even more than team sports. So I think that those are the benefits. It teaches you how to compete in business as you get older... But all these other subplots you get from tennis are huge. The hard work, dedication, and being on time, and running for every ball. These things are huge factors that people that now are just on their iPod, just texting all the time on the computer, or watching TV, I'm not saying they won't become very successful, I'm just saying you get a head start by learning all this stuff on the job doing something that you love and is fun.

The business metaphor is used by some others too. For instance, former player Rita says she is a better competitor in business because of her tennis:

You learn to be strong and put your guard up because everyone's a competitor. The flipside of that is that's good for business and learning to deal with office politics...when everyone else melts down, I feel serenity and

I can solve problems really easily. I'm good in a crisis. I don't know if it's my personality or if tennis had something to do with that. But the weird thing is, I wasn't very good at it in tennis. But maybe the practice of being in that scenario, I found it useful in other things.

Mother Nina adds that, even if her daughters do not make it professionally, they are learning the discipline it takes to be successful in another field:

[My daughter's friends] tried to go pro like [her] but they all ended up at top colleges. Most of them becoming doctors and lawyers now. Because they had such a high level intensity training all the time. They were just so disciplined... I can't see any of them doing what they're doing if they had not had the discipline on the tennis court.

Tennis, especially, has the capacity to instill these skills as the player has all the attention and control on the match court. Former player Don, who explains how much fear of failure he had during his junior tennis days, says that he learned not to develop the same fears in adulthood, particularly in school. He describes how tennis taught him how to be courageous, prepared, and focus in order to fight for his goals:

Law school can be a cutthroat environment... I don't want to do what I did in so many matches and mentally copout because it's easier not to go full on and put myself out there...it can be intimidating just to go to the law firm to interview, that's like going to my first super national. And I definitely just remember those feelings like I'd go and see kids that just looked so intense, and yet you could tell they thought that they were good and that would intimidate me. I could get intimidated just watching kids practice...and I don't want to do that ever again...Just disciplining my life because without the tennis I don't know where I would've found that to do...

And father Clark points out how tennis prepares players for life, but that it is simply a metaphor for life, not actual life like many parents treat it as:

A key theme in tennis, right? Persevering. Realizing you can be up and lose, and be losing and come back and win, or what have you. It's a central theme in tennis, as in a lot of competitive sports. But tennis is individual for the most part. You have to battle. It mirrors the battle that may be in the future, and ironically, a battle for life in the future...You can win or lose in your head before the first ball is hit, but you gotta play what's in front of you and see what happens. Don't think too much, you know? And there's something to be said for that in life too. You can overthink things, situations

where you worry yourself to death. You gotta compete, man... In the big picture, she knows I could care less. This is tennis. Who gives a shit. Okay? When bullets fly, I hope she can unjam a Glock 19 under pressure, level 3 jam.

Thus, junior tennis involves the application and development of technologies of the self, as well as technologies of domination. As Chapter 4 points out, they can be simultaneously experienced, thereby showing how junior tennis involves paradoxes of power and empowerment. In general, there is something about sports that when an athlete performs something with the bodily, physical achievement, an athlete can see it, and other people see the progress. For junior players, that is important for building self-esteem. They learn a sense of accomplishment at an early age with tennis and it becomes “addicting” (according to many players), which is why parents want them to play sports from a young age: to get used to that feeling of accomplishment. When players get older, this sense of accomplishment can translate to adulthood goals like getting a degree, getting a job, building a career, growing a family, etc. Kids feel the immediate effects of their hard work through their body as well as through their interactions with others who recognize their accomplishments. They can perform their potential, their achievement, and self-worth as members of society by learning through the body during liminal experiences of training and competition, as is explored further in Chapter 3¹⁶.

But at the competitive level, college-level and pro-level goals require a tremendous amount of sacrifice. Parents and players do not know this when they start the process of playing tournaments and it creeps up on them. Before they know it, they

¹⁶Alkemeyer 2002, Wacquant 1995, and Downey 2010 discuss learning through body in sport, in general.

have become trapped in the system of investing more time, money, and energy into enhancing the child's performance and chasing ranking points without making the conscious decision to do so. But quitting is rarely an option they consider because they have already invested so much time, money, and emotion, that they keep moving forward hoping that it will pay off in the long-run in the form of a college scholarship or pro career at the most, or the learning of life lessons and physical health at the least. Players, thus, learn paradoxical life lessons that may or may not transfer into their non-tennis lives. As former player Bonnie puts it:

No one tells you that if you want to be successful in life, in general, you have to work really hard. I found it out myself. But why don't tell you [if you want to do anything else] you're going to have to work really hard for that too. I think that would help so much...Coaches should translate the lessons they teach to life and how tennis fits into the bigger picture. They just say, "If you don't do this, you won't succeed in tennis and you'll just have to go work at McDonald's [which is not necessarily true]." They make it seem like tennis is the only thing to work hard for.

Work Ethic: Practice Makes Perfect or Perfectionism?

While players learn to practice in order to improve a skill, they learn values of work ethic. While this can positively influence their lives outside and after tennis, it can often lead to a perfectionist¹⁷ personality, or the inability to be satisfied with one's work or being, in general. Mother Susan tells me this about her daughter:

She just had an incredible work ethic, and that transferred to school and tennis and everything else. To her detriment, to the level that her workout ethic... Because she lets her sense of responsibility kind of overtakes her life and balance... I think she's learned now to keep more of that balance, but, to some degree, I think she had a really hard time letting go and not. She's a perfectionist. She knows she's a perfectionist. She thinks a lot of that comes from her experience in tennis, and she's talked to psychologists a couple of times about it. She says it always comes back to tennis and [her] dad.

¹⁷Appleton et al. 2009 show how perfectionism in junior athletes can lead to burnout.

When I ask her if she thought it was due to tennis or whether she was just “innately” driven to perfection, she says:

It's been so long. She was always involved in tennis so it's kinda hard to say. You have a three-year-old who dragging her dad out to hit balls, how many balls can she hit over the fence. Maybe that would have happened anyway.

In tennis, players are especially prone to become perfectionist because of the individual nature of the sport; the all-consuming focus of one self and how to constantly improve it. Perhaps, tennis attracts youths who have predispositions to be perfect. But, even if there is innate predisposition to perfectionism, tennis fosters its growth, as

Coach Tim explains:

I saw perfectionism expressed in many different ways among junior players: staying after to regular training sessions to ...It sounds a little crazy but to be a tennis player I think it's have to be different, you have to have something different about you because you have to enjoy suffering a little bit. Like you have to enjoy working your butt off and going to play a tournament, and losing the first-round. And you're like, “I just worked for two weeks, cramped three days out of the two weeks, killed my body, I come here, and I lose first-round...” I think maybe it does attract that kind of mentality, or people with that kind of mentality. But then once you've been in the game long enough, I think you start to develop that mentality...You've got enjoy that time while you're training and practicing and working.

Practicing serves, staying in the gym until 9:00 pm, meticulously placing ponytails and barrettes, eating and not eating certain foods, doing homework, etc. are all examples of perfectionism. One player even expressed her perfectionism through her inability, or her disdain, for doing estimations in her math homework. She felt compelled to find the exact answer, unsatisfied with an impartial estimation, even though that was what her homework required. Former Grand Slam player Andrea notices that she still attaches her own self-worth to her achievement in adulthood, which frustrates her: “That's the biggest thing I struggle with now. My self-worth is attached to my accomplishments and

that is bullshit.” Former player Todd adds how dependent upon tennis he became for motivation: “I’m worried because I’m a very competitive person. That’s my personality. I’m worried that [without tennis] I’ll lose my incentive to do things.”

Despite the abuses, sacrifices, and unhappiness that many former players endure, they still say it is all worth it in the end for the work ethic and perseverance they develop. These examples show how learning lessons of work ethic can be both a technology of the self that empowers while, simultaneously, being a technology of domination that traps players in a cycle of perfectionism where they feel they can never quite achieve their potential.

Sportsmanship: Being a “Good Sport” or a “Weak Competitor”?

Tennis has its historical roots as a “gentlemen’s game”, and many parents get their children into tennis because of this rhetoric. Players who are taught to be good sports by respecting their opponents and the game of tennis are, essentially, being taught to be good people first and foremost. Mother Deb describes how she teaches her son to be a good sport:

So far I always tell him, “Every sport is asking you to be very nice. It’s not going there and playing—even if you played the most beautiful powerful tennis—you are not behaving well, people will not like you. People do not like bullies on the court, people do not like bullies on the grass when they play soccer, people do not like people who are rude or showing how powerful they are because they know how to play”... I’ve seen many things like lying and cheating. It’s okay to be a little bit mischie[veous], but there are fine lines [to be a good sport].

It does not take parents long, however, to realize that junior tennis is less of a “gentlemen’s game” now, and more of a cutthroat competition that has ramifications beyond the match such as sponsorships, scholarships, and parental and peer approval. While many coaches and parents talk about the value of learning sportsmanship, most

let their players get away with poor sportsmanship when it means winning the match. Poor sportsmanship can come in various forms such as cheating, not talking to the opponent before, during, or after the match, and negative self-talk that can distract the opponent. When I asked parents how they teach their children to stay competitive while also maintaining good sportsmanship, parents agreed that it was a difficult boundary to negotiate. Usually, they condone their player's tantrums, and even cheating, by letting them continue to play¹⁸. Mother Nina tells me about how she teaches her daughters to be competitive over being friendly:

They're taught to go on the court and be on the wire, they have to be nice and shake hands at the end. And when they come off the court they can talk to whomever. And they're not allowed to speak to their opponent once they step on that court. And they just have to go out and fight like a dog.

Mother Sherri tells me how even if she teaches her child to be a good sport, she cannot expect it to be reciprocated:

It's competitive. This world is competitive. It's a competitive world. It's an ugly world...Like this morning, [my son] was playing a match. It was 5–5 the 1st serve when [my son] called it out. But it was two seconds late [which is against the rules], and [the opponent] said he didn't call it early enough. But [my son] said that he did the same thing to him in the 1st set but gave it to him. The opponent said, 'Well, I'm not giving it to you'. This kid was another player [at my son's academy]. The father was just there watching, not doing anything... You just grow up to be a mean, mean person when you do that stuff when you're young.

Cheating: learning to cope with deception or learning to deceive?

Many participants describe the Florida junior tennis culture as a “culture of cheating”. Here, mother Tina describes what it was like moving to Florida for her daughter's tennis career:

¹⁸However, some parents did pull their kids off the court with this behavior – something that many parents congratulate but will usually not do themselves for fear of sacrificing their child's ranking and confidence.

I was told when I first came here - and [my daughter] was training for a few months and didn't play any tournaments and then she was just getting ready to play a tournament - and one of the dad's whose girls played, one of them was playing, he said, "Welcome to junior tennis; cheat or be cheated, which will you be?" And I was so naïve. I was like, "What?" He was like, "Yeah, just choose which side of the coin you are going to be on." I was like, "You've got to be insane." Now I'm like, I totally get where he was coming from... and the sad part is I see it with parents, I see it with coaches, I see it with players, and I'm just, it sickens me. It really does.

Cheating is often cited as one of the most problematic aspects of junior tennis that the USTA does not do enough about. Parents and players both see it as a necessary price to participate, though, and as something that is almost encouraged in the junior tennis environment among many players. Former player Don even says,

The environment of cheating is almost encouraged because you can win. And if you can win, and do it again. You gotta do it, but I never did it.

Some coaches and parents teach their students to cheat in order to get the upper hand in matches, both in score and in psychological intimidation of the opponent. At one tournament in my first month of field research, I watched as a player badgered her opponent to show her the mark of a ball that the opponent called out. Even though the ball was clearly out, she used this tactic of intimidation to convince the opponent that she was wrong so that she would overturn her call. The opponent, indeed, gave in because she could not find a mark, even though the rules do not obligate her to find one. The rules state that a player is responsible for her own calls on her side of the court and does not need to have a mark to prove it. But the opponent in this case felt pressured to be a "good sport" as opposed to "sticking to her guns" and defending her call. This is a common occurrence as players know there is social capital attached to the behavior they exhibit on the court. Players sometimes choose to give the benefit of the doubt to their opponents in order to possibly form alliances with them later on in the

tournament or in their career for companionship, moral support during other matches, doubles partners, hitting partners, travel partners or a chance at legitimate friendship. Other players choose to forego the chance of forming alliance in order to take advantage of a player's sportsmanship so that they can win in the moment. Despite the intimidation in this particular situation, the intimidating player lost. As a result, this player was viewed as "desperate" by her opponent and other spectators as she had to resort to intimidation to win. Former player Don describes what it is like to be cheated and intimidated like this:

It's like, "No, just beat me because you're better. Don't beat me with bull shit." And I was just frustrated. And I would get mad because they were trying it, and I would get thrown off my game, and that's what they were trying to do, and I let it happen. And I knew that's what they were trying to do, and I knew it was working, and I would get more mad, you know?

One player bragged to me in an interview about how he intimidates his opponents. I watched him do this during a tournament match as he played mind games with his opponent. For instance, when his opponent called the ball out, he continued to play the point and hit a winner, even though the opponent stopped playing. The opponent said that he called it out, but my participant said "I didn't hear you call it out!" to intimidate him. The opponent said, "Yes I did!" and my participant said, "Well, I didn't hear you!" The opponent then said, "You can't just decide that it's your point!" My participant said, "Well, you never called it!" At this point, the father got involved and yelled at his son to just play. This participant had a reputation of manipulating the score and cheating among his player peers. It is very likely he did these things because he is desperate to impress his father. Because parents put so much emphasis on winning, pleasing the parents is a big incentive for players to cheat. In this particular parent-child dyad, the child garnered most of his attention from his father from tournament matches

like this. It is possible that this participant saw cheating as, not only a strategy to win, but as a strategy to win any type of attention from his father (even if it was negative). In this case, cheating can be used as a technology of the self by players. However, it might also be seen as a coping strategy for losing (i.e. at least he could feel in control of the mental manipulation of his opponent even if he was not in control of the score.)

Intimidation and manipulation take other various forms during matches, too: changing the score, calling a ball out that is in, calling “lets” to re-play the point, using bathroom breaks to change the momentum of the match, etc. When I asked mother Tina if she saw coaches teaching their players to cheat, she said yes, and struggled with the ethics about how to deal with that:

Yeah. And you know even the advice, it is like you are out there and you are in the middle of a match and you are losing it and you know, well, you should go to the bathroom; use the bathroom break... that would be great advice, I guess, but I don't know... so is that fair? I guess it is if they have to go to the bathroom. But is it really? I don't know. I don't know quite how to stand with that.

One former player, Todd, admits to cheating because he was forced to by his dad and coach as winning meant everything:

There are so many crazy parents. My dad had signs that he'd give me when I was twelve. Like if he ran his hand here through his hair, turned his hat backwards... My coach had those signs, too. It's cheating. I didn't really have a say. I definitely knew it was cheating. I didn't really like it. But I never said anything about it...I was coached, if I got cheated, to cheat back...That was my coach. But my dad didn't say anything about it. Nor did anyone. I was told, if I got cheated, “you're cheating them back. If he cheats you, flip the score even worse.” I got yelled at all the time for not cheating back. I got yelled at so many times for missing line calls or close calls that I left in that were out, I got yelled at for that all the time. If I got cheated, and I didn't cheat back, I definitely got yelled at...But I wouldn't say that it was just my coach telling me to cheat. It was pretty common to see cheating back. I think it's really tough to control. I think the cheating comes from the pressure. It's like, you have so much pressure to win, and you have to. Close calls are out. Winning is really everything. No one wants to lose, obviously, and you continue in the tournaments. You get better, you

get higher ranked. If you lose first round in every single tournament, versus if you win and you continue, it could be the difference between going to college or not going to play tennis.

Several participants remarked at how well junior players learn to deceive and manipulate the umpire. For instance, mother Nina points out,

Oh, it's big time now. Now they're teaching them, when you call the ball out, say "No, the other shot was out first" and to steal the point. So when the umpire comes you say "No, I called my shot out". Because the umpire just says, "It's your call". You say, "Your shot was out first." Or if they give you an ace, say, "I'll tell them to call let" and it's your call. Um, this is big time junior tennis...They teach them, if you're down 40-15, you say [your up] 40-15 and [the umpire just makes them go back to 15 all. So you're down 15-40 and you come back to 15-all and have another chance to win the game. And the parents are standing on the side telling them what to say every game. It's out of control now. Totally out of control.

And, former player Don reiterates,

It's so clear when a kid is just bull shitting, you know? They're the ones that are cheating and they're the ones that get the referee on you. And the second you get a little bit of momentum back, they're like go getting the trainer. There's so much garbage and sometimes the referees just pander to it and let it happen right front of them, and don't care and act like it doesn't matter. I was playing a kid who is incredible cheater down in Miami and he thought I had made a bad a call, so my next second serve hit dead center in the service box, he just called it out and went to the point. And I was flabbergasted that that could happen. And I got a referee so I could explain what happened. But he was like, "There's nothing I can do for you." And I was like "No, this is bull shit! There's forty people watching what happened, and you can't do anything?" the tournament director came out because he knew this kid and he did not like this kid. And the tournament director looked at this kid and said, "If I hear one more thing, I'm just gonna kick you out of the tournament." That was as well as I've ever seen something like that handled.

Cheating parents. Parents not only have been known to teach their kids to cheat and manipulate their opponents or umpires, they do it themselves by talking to their players through the fence and giving them hand signals (both are forms of coaching that are against the rules). I watched as one father scratched his head in certain ways as his ten-year-old daughter looked up at him from the court between

points. But since the umpire cannot tell the father to stop scratching his head, the other player was left crying on the sidelines feeling helpless and outmatched by the father-daughter team. Another father was notorious for doing the “cellphone trick”: walking behind the back of the court and acting like he was talking on his phone but, really, he was coaching his kid. He was banned from tournaments for six months for getting into a fight with another parent who accused and confronted him about it. Here, an umpire voices her frustration with this very common occurrence and questions what the parents are actually teaching their kids:

I just had a situation with coaching during a match. It was so obvious. I coded the player, told the parent that the next time he does that, I'll have to code the player with a point player. The parent told me to get out of here. So the player did it again and she had to code her a point penalty. So, what is the value we're teaching when we're telling kids it's okay to cheat? The parents stand right there and signal to the players all the time.

Some parents go so far as to manipulate their child's birth certificate so that they will be bigger and stronger, and therefore win more easily, against players in their division (who are actually a couple of years younger)¹⁹. Mother Tina explains:

A conversation I had where USTA officials said, “Look we know that some of these kids aren't the right age, we know that their nationality isn't [what they say it is], but when they come here from a foreign country and they have a birth certificate and it has been altered or changed, whatever, who are we, we are not the police of birth certificates”, and it is like, really?

Performance enhancement drugs. Some parents who are driven to make their children successful, no matter what the ethical boundaries they must cross, go so far as to find a doctor who will administer human growth hormone (HGH) injections to their

¹⁹This is a common occurrence across youth sports (Malina 2009:S7).

child in order for them to grow taller and stronger than their peers²⁰. There is no way to test whether someone has been injected with HGH and it is a legal hormone for children who have deficient growth hormone naturally, so it is a common suspicion of children who are taller than their parents. Many parents say they hear rumors that certain players go to Europe to get the injections and return after a few months to have grown a foot taller. But it is very difficult to verify if this is true because it is such a secretive thing as is evident by the following conversations with a former professional player, Henry, who became a junior coach:

I think [human growth hormone is used in junior tennis]. You see, I mean, when I played junior tennis you saw a lot in Europe. I have friends that are European tennis players that are on tour now, and that were on tour when I played, and they openly [said to me], "Oh yeah, when I was sixteen I [used performance enhancement drugs] because I needed a little help...[They don't regret it], not at all. I don't particularly agree with it but, yeah. You are going to start seeing it, or see it right now... And there is no testing in Junior tennis anyway, so you are not going to catch it even if there is.

Father Clark also sees the use of HGH in junior tennis:

The whole place is just a big juice fest!... You don't really know because there's no monitor for it. But the tour on both sides, it's nothing but juicing. There's juicing at almost 100% now. And they do it with the two most common ones – testosterone and HGH which are naturally occurring. They just make them [have it] at higher levels.

According to several parents, coaches, and doctors, HGH is used by junior tennis players to help them grow taller than they are genetically coded to. Mother Nina says,

I know many, many kids who are on it, who have taken it. No names. Pros, a lot of juniors. It's all HGH – human growth hormones – and [girls] take it before their period starts so they don't start their period so they grow an extra six inches over what they were supposed to be.

²⁰Coakley 2006a, Hoberman 1986, and Malina 2009 discuss the use of performance-enhancing drugs in youth sport.

Several people think that the professional tours - ATP and WTA - as well as the USTA know of such negative tests, but do not want to publicize them for fear of putting a stain on the tennis industry. As father Clark points out,

[The pro tour] is behind it. Henin pulled out just before the French open. That's her tournament. Nadal pulled out of his Grand Slam just out of the blue. Agassi went from superhuman at age 35 just after the Australian Open to normal in three months. Yeah, right.

Consider how long it took to find out about Lance Armstrong²¹. Some parents and coaches talk about it with disdain and that it creates an unfair playing field for those who do not want to take the substances. Others, even despite their disdain and recognition that it can cause health problems such as cancer, reproductive problems, and genetic code alteration in the future²², say they would do it for the competitive edge if they had the money. Mother Nina admits to this:

You can go to Russia, supposedly you only take a shot or two in Russia, in the States it's \$45,000 a year...Everybody knows a doctor, a friend doctor who's saying, "Oh, you got a growth problem, you need to take it."...She said, "Mom, it's not fair. I'm sitting here 5'6" and they're all 6 feet tall because they have the money to take it and I don't"...It's not fair. My kids don't take it. It's not fair to them if the other kids are. I don't have the money to take it. I mean, I think if I had the money I might jump on it... Because everybody else is doing this.

Several parents say that the larger academies in Florida offer to contact players with doctors who will prescribe HGH if they want a boost in their physique and game. This happened to Tina's daughter:

²¹At the time of writing, Armstrong confessed his use of performance enhancement drugs after years of denying it.

²²Performance enhancement drug-use could be seen as a public health issue as its use is trickling down to the high school sports arena and is not limited to the baseball and football fields anymore.

I have been told that, especially at the academies, like bigger academies, like [famous international academy] in particular, that if you haven't really developed by the age of fourteen, then that is a very general question that you get asked; if you are wanting to do to, you know, up your chances [to be a great player]. You're good but you will never achieve greatness unless you have the size coupled with your skills.

Coping with cheating. While many players learn how to be good sports and to cope with injustice through the situations they experience with cheating opponents, other players acquire the life lesson of “learned deceptiveness”. In this way, tennis not only breeds good sportsmen and women and teaches life lessons of fairness and justice, it also breeds the dark side of competition and teaches kids how to be deceptive and deviant. It depends on the guidance these players have. And, as many coaches, parents, and player reiterate, it is one of the biggest concerns for the players. Not only do they have to train for their matches but they learn to be hyper-vigilant against opponents (and opponents’ parents) who are out to cheat and intimidate them. As coach Brandon puts it,

Tennis is such a unique sport with the self-policing calling your own lines [compared to soccer]. It lends yourself to issues you don't have in other sports with referees: where someone makes a bad call, it's on the ref. These kids, emotionally, this sport takes a whole different toll on you.

This self-policing brings back the Foucauldian concept of self-monitoring, described in Chapter 4, and how it can be both an empowering technology of the self and technology of domination. Not only the cheated player feels added pressure, but the cheater does as well. One parent told me she feels sorry for kids who are taught to cheat because if they do not win with cheating, they feel extra worthless. Despite the toll it takes on their players, parents and coaches often view these cheating situations as opportunities to learn valid life lessons of how to cope with unjust people and circumstances. For

example, father Clark ridicules other parents who try to shield their children from cheaters:

Usually they learn, and smart parents realize eventually when you're first kid in the 10s and you're sitting there grading line calls and all sorts of nonsense, because you go through enough that you [say to yourself] "I don't care if this kid cheats my kid to death, I should pay her extra." Why? Because this is the skill set she needs: how is she gonna handle it? You know what I mean? I'm all about learning a skill set: How will she mentally hold up? If she's getting ripped up, does she go to the police, which is [the umpire]...does she call the police chief in? She's entitled to go to the desk and get the tournament director. Does she know the steps to take care of herself? I'm much more interested in that. Whether she beats her or not. I'm more interested in the process. And that's what we teach her. We could care less about any of that.

Interestingly, Clark goes on to equate parents who want to put an "umpire on every court" to prohibit cheating as proponents of a culture of dependency:

They're missing the point. That's a great example of how [parents] don't get it at all. They're missing it. So what? [mocking a whining player] "Life isn't always fair?" Is that what they're telling me? Whatever! What a ridiculous statement! [he says with disdain]. Somebody like that is insane. Think how stupid that sounds. What you want, parents who have a brain in their head, will want [the opponent] to cheat [their kid] to death! Because when you come out to bum-fuck Egypt out here, and you're playing some guy you never heard of, who's also friends with the tournament director, whose cousins are calling the lines in Ecuador, you better be able to handle it, man! You know?

Coach Frank, who has years of experience, reiterates this point that more than anything else, junior tennis teaches players how to stand up for themselves against cheating and that putting more umpires on the courts would just make it seem like a "police state". He feels that the children learn to do the right thing, not by having an authority figure police them, but by learning through the experience of coping with cheating, manipulation and intimidation tactics that players use with each other; just like the "real world":

Bully Training 101. We breed bullies out here on the tennis court...Two of our kids were bullied badly here, but you have to learn how to handle it. There are three ways to handle it: be a wimp, a jerk, or a man/woman. At first, you're a wimp, you back down. That's what happens to wimpy kids, they back down. And a lot of coaches teach kids to be bullies by getting their opponents faced with "Come on!" and a fist pump. They do it tactically and strategically to become top dog, to back them down. Accuse them of bad line calls, call the ref, their backing them down. Most of them are a wimp first, and then they lose. Being a jerk is better than being a wimp, but then you risk your reputation. But you have no chance being a wimp. I'd rather a kid be a jerk. It's a natural progression to becoming a man. Strong but in control takes years of being trained with conflict. It's not a natural thing. Aggressive kids win out here, but a lot of kids aren't aggressive by nature. They detest that situation...We've created a police state. Societies aren't good because of rules. It's because of a deeper moral code. People don't act right or wrong just because of rules; it's because of their moral code. Honest people are honest, dishonest are dishonest....[We used to not have referees.] Now the more referees we got, the worse things have been amplified. Obnoxious, manipulation of the rules, and pragmatic approaches. It's a police state. The kids learn how to work the referees...it doesn't keep bad people from doing bad things. What it does is it pushes around the good people....When you have too many referees, it's about how to manipulate the rules. If you had a police man on every corner, do you think that would keep bad people from breaking rules? No it just stimulates the level of deviance. The good people just stay in their house because they're scared to death of messing up and scared to death of the criminals.

Thus, despite the presence of umpires and the guidance from their coaches and parents, players cheat and use intimidation tactics against their opponents. Cheating can be seen as a coping mechanism or a technology of domination by the cheater, but it can also be seen as a technology of the self for the player who must learn to overcome the cheating and win without it.

Management of emotions: productive aggression or destructive anger?

The paradox of anger is apparent, as discussed in Chapter 5. How coaches and parents teach youths to express their emotions is also very complicated. While they encourage sportsmanship, they also encourage ferocity and aggressiveness. One of the most common things a coach can be heard telling a player, for instance, is "Be

aggressive!” Some coaches use images of violence to get this message through. Sometimes, coaches use terms like “killer instinct” and “when you smell blood, don’t let him get up!” As sport psychologist Dr. Mitch Abrams (sports psychologist) told me, January 2012, “There is nothing wrong with being angry as an athlete, and anger used the right way can be a very powerful fuel”. He added that it gets out of control and bleeds into other aspects of an athlete’s life when coaches and parents do not talk about how to use anger in a productive way by channeling it into a stroke, throw, kick, or sprint. So, while competitive junior tennis can be an outlet for anger, it may also be an instigator and catalyst for anger. This is another example of the paradox of power within junior tennis. On one extreme, encouraging kids to express no anger can make them think it is okay to not “fight”, or persevere, when down in the score or bullied/intimated by the opponent. On the other extreme, anger that is bottled up without being properly channeled can be expressed outside of the sport context and can result in deviant behavior (Coakley 2006a). Some players internalize their self-hatred during these dissociative liminal states. As one player told me, I’d rather hit or pinch than yell at myself. It has to come out somewhere”, meaning that she had to release her pent up frustration and aggression. So instead of publicly humiliating herself by yelling, she hit and pinched herself in private. In this way, expressive anger may be more empowering than keeping it all in. Thus, anger is another example of the simultaneity of technologies of the self and of domination.

Confidence: individualism or narcissism?

Because performance enhancement in youth sport is both empowering and disempowering, the differences between encouragement and entitlement are also

difficult to discern. Confidence building is one of the key aspects of developing an elite athlete. Coach Linda explains:

If there's negativity with the parents, there's negativity in the team, then it will show in the player, because the player will feel it around people that she's that close with around this heightened environment. There needs to be people believing in her and supporting her and telling her she's the best and just confidence. The players just need to constantly be fed confidence. It's so important.

But some elite athletes - as they become increasingly skilled at displaying physical and psychological discipline, sacrifice, strength, speed, and power - become superhuman in the eyes of society. This is especially true if athletes are coddled and not held accountable for their actions outside sport. According to Dr. Megan Neyer (performance psychologist and Olympian) in personal communication, January 2012,

Coaches have the responsibility of growing their athletes into collaborative partners instead of keeping them as dependents...[but] some coaches prefer their athletes to be dependent so [that] they don't argue. When athletes are raised in these controlled and controlling systems...and haven't had responsibility or learned critical life skills, they have trouble transitioning into life outside sport, and that's when sport can be developmentally arresting."

Despite parents' original intentions of enrolling their children into sport to learn life skills, the sport culture at the elite levels can be disempowering in some aspects by reducing youths' ability to function in a non-sport environment if they do not learn how to *apply* those skills. In other words, excessive reliance on the sport environment for structure and identity can make transferability of skills to non-sport situations more difficult, especially if athletes believe they are "above" societal rules.

For example, tennis teaches players to be self-reliant individuals. Taken to an extreme, the empowerment of individualism and the strong sense of self-worth that can go with it, can turn into narcissism and a sense of entitlement; even an inability to

connect to people and ask for help²³: Former player Todd acknowledges this in his interview:

I was definitely more bratty. I was definitely felt like I was... When you're playing an individual sport, there's a lot of "It's all about you." Just – you are going to decide the outcome of the match. Your teammates aren't going to do it, you can't turn and look at anyone, place any blame anywhere besides yourself. That's how I've kind of lived my life. But it works both ways. If I lose, it was my fault, but if I win, it was me. I did it. I definitely, now, take matters into my own hands. Like in tennis, I got to play an individual sport, I've been dependent on myself a lot more than other people. But that hurts me, too. I have serious issues asking other people for help. I don't ask anyone for help. I never tell anyone what's going on inside of my head. I never share feelings or anything like that. I think that tennis has helped or caused that. But I definitely think that tennis has made it harder for me to express myself. I don't talk to anyone about my feelings.

As one coach says, "Tennis, by its very nature, is narcissistic," because there is so much emphasis placed on the player as having sole control over his/her own actions and success, like with the outcome of a match. Mother Barbara comments on how, even, referees are intimidated by some players' narcissistic attitude:

When kids get sassy and nasty with the refs, they should get penalties. It's killing me that they let these snotty, bratty kids rule the court. And the refs stand there like they are afraid to do anything. I think they are afraid of the players and their parents.

Coach Will tells his students what the plan of practice is one day, emphasizing that no one is too good for anyone to play with and that they are all here to get better:

We're gonna play matches today. It doesn't matter who you play, whether you think they are better or worse than you. Your job is to play your best no matter what. The older kids play with the younger kids and get a great workout. The older kids don't give me attitude because they know I know what I'm doing...It's just hitting a ball back and forth. If tennis defines your life, you got problems. Tennis is a microcosm of life...If you're gonna become unglued from a tennis match, what's real life gonna do to you?

²³This is elaborated upon in the next chapter.

Coach Frank says that American players are coddled with unbalanced positive reinforcement which lacks constructive criticism. He feels this leads them to quit out of lack of fulfillment:

Our coaches baby the kids. Kids don't develop an inquisitive mind in our culture. Everything they do is reactive: they listen to their iPod, listen to their coaches; everything they do they become robotical. Development is not done from the inside out. It's done from the outside in. It's a societal problem. We teach how to be an asshole first, then lover of the game. The winning part becomes superficial and meaningless, so it doesn't fulfill the kids so they quit. We fabricate our achievements. We are so good at marketing dog crap...participation trophies? We don't know the difference between a diamond and a rhinestone in our society.

Coach Frank goes on to say that talented players are discovered and then coddled by the USTA system which eventually disempowers them:

You can make them feel unique by being hard on them and showing you care....But we separate the talented kids from the rest of the pack; protect them with wildcards. But then we weaken them that way. We turn them into hothouse flowers; they don't learn to succumb to the elements.

He points out the difference between self-esteem and confidence:

Self-esteem and confidence are different. Self-esteem is learned through unconditional love in the home by age 6. They will probably be confident their whole lives. Confidence you earn through your accomplishments. It can't come cheaply through things like participation trophies...Real confidence is earned. It's what you do. People can have one without the other...[As coaches] we treat people differently.

Summary

This chapter discusses the paradoxical spaces in performance enhancement, particularly the ways in which players develop their sense of self through experiences of pain, conceptions of potential, and learning of morality. Players are constantly negotiating the pain boundary and moral lessons in order to reach their potential: how far to push the pain boundary and in what moral manner in order to enhance performance, but not so much that it hurts them or takes them out of the game or

reduce their status and identity as “player”. In other words, players will sacrifice their bodies and conceptions of sportsmanship, for instance, to win and gain status in the junior tennis community. But if they get injured or caught cheating, they will be forced out of the game and suffer the consequences to status.

So much of the time, they push too far past these boundaries, or are pushed by coaches and parents, and do not recognize it until they experience a loss of power. Because of the power roles that coaches and parents play, and the power that players have instilled in themselves to enhance their own performance, few are paying attention to the long-term well-being and identity-formation of junior players. Often, if a parent voices concern, the player will ignore the warnings and that parent feels compelled by the sport ethic to continue. The power that the sport ethic has over junior tennis participants influences the parent (and coaches) too. The costs of performance enhancement outweigh the benefits when the results are physical and emotional burnout, abuse of power, deviance, and/or entitlement; even if winning accompanies these costs. But coaches and parents often do not recognize it until later when players experience chronic, life-long injury, illness, abuse, harassment, and depression.

While players' sense of well-being can become enhanced through lessons of discipline, sacrifice, work ethic, sportsmanship, and emotional regulation, it can also be harmed through overdependence on authority, injury, burnout, self-harm, learned deceptiveness, pent up aggression, and narcissism. As discussed in Chapters 4,5, and 6, for technologies of power to be empowering for the individual, they must be done with the focus of well-being to be considered technologies of self; otherwise, they do more to reaffirm the dominant power. Training and competition rituals that are intended to

empower (as technologies of the self) can become disempowering (as technologies of domination) in certain aspects when the player and authority figures around the player, practice these rituals without reflexive focus on the player's liminal status and well-being.

The examples I use to show how certain practices can be both technologies of the self and technologies of domination, depending on the context, suggest the difficulties involved in discerning “good” practices from “bad” practices for junior tennis players and youth athletes in general. “Potential” is a concept that can make players feel confident about their place in the social order of junior tennis and the larger social world, but the tools used to get there may reduce their potential to “succeed” instead. Pain is something that players endure in order to strengthen themselves to meet adversity on the court, and in life. But experiencing pain too far past their pain boundaries can make them less able to meet adversity with injury and burnout. At the same time, though, players can feel empowered through their injuries and burnout when it helps them know their boundaries and gives them status in the sport world (Pickard 2007, Nixon 1992, Young 2004). Moral development through tennis includes lessons of work ethic, sportsmanship, fair play, emotional management, and confidence building. But taken to extremes, these moral lessons may result in perfectionism, reduced competitiveness, pent up anger, and narcissism.

Thus, there is a point at which technologies of the self can become technologies of domination, and sometimes they coexist and intertwine in the same practice, as introduced in Chapter 4. To ensure that the player is empowered through these practices of junior tennis, the dynamics that players have with their coaches and parents

prioritize a focus on well-being. This is done through constant reflexive perspectives on training practices, and how they are affecting players' long-term and holistic well-being. Through ethical self-care, self-stylization, and critical self-awareness, as Markula 2003 also points out, on the part of all three participants of the power molecule (parents, players, and coaches), junior tennis practices are prone to be more empowering overall for players. As a result, the liminal youth athlete may emerge from the physical and emotional demands of training and competition and a conditioned commitment to the sport ethic as both a strengthened and weakened performer and person, depending on the context. This is especially important to recognize for emotionally dependent youth athletes who want to conform to the standards of the training environment and their coaches' and parents' expectations but who may not understand the differences between empowering pain which extends the pain boundary, and debilitating pain which may be unrecoverable. But as they become more experienced, athletes learn the difference between empowering and debilitating pain.

While this chapter focuses on the well-being and self-making within individual players (psychological and physical issues), Chapter 8 will discuss players' well-being and self-making in the social environment of junior tennis (among peers, family, and the larger social structure).



Photo courtesy of Jennifer J. Fiers

Figure 6-1. Surveillance tower



Photo courtesy of Jennifer J. Fiers

Figure 6-2. Long view of courts

CHAPTER 8 EMBODIMENT OF IDENTITY AND WELL-BEING: TENNIS AND NON-TENNIS SOCIAL WORLDS

Players become themselves based on their liminal experiences of pain, potential, and morality, as described in the previous chapter. But, as this chapter discusses, they also develop a sense of who they are in society based on their commitment to a tennis identity – through friendships, education, and family – as well as their perceptions of gender, race, and ethnicity.

Paradoxical Spaces of Tennis Identity

Players sacrifice much of their social development – friendships, education, and family time – to commit to their tennis identities. But some players come to question this commitment as they get older if they see themselves as almost non-existent outside of tennis. As Malina 2009 points out, this can cause them to question what else there is in the world and if they really want to play tennis. Former player Katie emphasizes this in her interview:

I was seventeen and I [took three weeks off], I thought, “Oh my God, I've never taken this much time off from tennis.” And I started thinking... “What am I doing? Is this something I really want to do?” That's when it started to get really scary, because it was like, “Wow, what have I been doing all this time?” But I don't think I started to figure it all out – I'm still in the process of figuring it out. But I think only within the last few years that I started thinking, “Was tennis something that I really wanted, or was this something that somebody else wanted?”... I never was given throughout my lifetime the permission to explore interests, so when asked, “What do you want to do with your life?” and “What sort of things do you do outside of work?”, it really tends to make me struggle, because nothing grasps my attention the way that it did with tennis.

This attachment to tennis as a sole identity source can make kids seem like outsiders in a non-sport setting (Weiss 2002). As Katie continues:

[Kids at school] just said, “Oh, you're the tennis girl”. I remember thinking “That's who I am” – it was “tennis girl.” And I think I enjoyed all that

attention, but I tried to not be tennis girl...It's a very weird thing. I'm proud of how far I've come, but also not wanting to be known like that, there was this inner conflict that was starting to develop around high school...I think there were times inside the family, too, where if I didn't play tennis, who would I be, but I didn't really have a chance to explore that, because I had always played tennis.

But, at the same time, it can be a sense of empowerment for them to have a special skill and to give them a safe space if they do not have it at home¹. Coach Linda says this about herself when she was a player:

I felt like tennis was always sort of my outlet, like I just wanted to be myself and be free and away from fighting, because there was always fighting at home, so I really enjoyed getting away from the tennis court where no one could yell, so that also sort of motivated me. Sometimes you hear about kids, and this wasn't my circumstance, I didn't grow up poor, but you hear about kids who were really poor and had to fight their way up, so you have to find a way to achieve greatness, and they had to fight their way out of it.

Playing high-level tennis, or any activity, can be a sort of religious experience for players, too. This may be what helps players endure the negative aspects of their sport. But an over-dependence on sport for identity can also be seen as an “overcommitment to sport ethic” (Hughes and Coakley 1991) or “deviant overconformity” (Coakley 2006a), as has been discussed in previous chapters. This is especially true for the teenaged liminal athlete who is discovering who she is both in her sport as well as in life. Some parents, like Barbara, recognize this attachment of identity to solely tennis as destructive to players' overall sense of well-being:

Tennis kids are all alone out there. If they aren't getting positive reinforcement, their little minds are trying to figure out, “Am I good? Am I bad? If I don't win, I'm not a good person.” But your life is not defined by your tennis. [My daughter started doing that and I made her stop for two weeks. She needed to take a break. I told her “You're a beautiful person inside and out, you're such a hard worker.” Her confidence took a nose dive. [The culture of tennis] is “If you don't win at tennis, you stink as a

¹Weiss 2002 points this out about gymnasts.

person! Who are you?” It comes from the parents, players, and pressure. Some kids thought they’d get a full ride to college or they think “I gotta go pro.” For God’s sake! Who’s gonna be a pro?! Parents need to be realistic about that. Let them have a dream but let’s shoot to have them play high school or college or try to be top 100. But I think its parents and coaches [putting the pressure on to be the best] and I think it’s our society now. It’s so much harder.

Players change their whole lives to pursue tennis and this puts an immense amount of pressure on them. When they focus solely on tennis results for self-worth, they succeed (largely because they have no choice but to succeed) or they fail because they break under the pressure knowing this is all they have going for them. They come to identify themselves according to winning or losing based on their definitions of success and failure. Former player Don describes this feeling:

It would define me a little bit like if I had had a couple wins in a tournament I probably would walk around the tournament, with a little bit more, “I’m the man, I’m here!”, than if I was losing.

Most former players, like Andrea, give the following advice to parents of current players:

Let the child be. Granted, I probably wouldn’t have gotten as far as I did if I hadn’t been pushed, so there is a place for it. It’s tough...It teaches you the value of dedication and hard work. Don’t let them quit. But don’t let kids base their own self-worth upon results because it doesn’t matter.

Because, as many participants point out, the first question that players ask each other is, “Did you win?”

Many professionalized junior players perform coping skills in their sport better than many adults to overcome great pain, pressure, and fear. Some can translate these tools to cope with life outside their sport and the various empowering and disempowering aspects of succeeding and/or failing to meet the expectations of their parents, coaches, and themselves. Some can translate these tools into technologies of the self and move themselves beyond dynamics in sport, and life, in which they are

dominated. But some cannot do either. For those who cannot, coaches, parents, and sport administrators are often not prepared to help them cope with these pressures both during adolescence and upon retirement from sport. Several former players describe the depression, frustration, and a sense of identity-loss from this liminal transition upon retirement and leaving the tennis identity behind. Former player Ann says,

I think that I'm depressed because I think about "What have I done with my entire life?" I was this really special amazing person in the first part of my life, and now I'm less than average. I don't have this thing that makes me special.

And former player Bonnie reiterates this point of not being special after retirement and feeling lost; perhaps another form of liminality as players find themselves between tennis identities and post-tennis identities:

Everyone is there for you while you're playing but no one is there to help you transition after...And you're just so isolated in that world, which is great, but it takes so much time. You don't know many other things or what to do when it's over. I think that's probably the biggest down-side: you don't know what you're doing when it's over. It doesn't prepare you for what to do when it's over....I was crazy for a little while. I didn't know what to do. I wasn't depressed. I was anxious, really irritable. I didn't know what to do leaving the only thing I'd ever known and trying to figure out what I was going to do next in life. It wasn't enough for me to just make a living, but I actually wanted to be something but I didn't know what or how to get there, and it was really tough...I tried to be normal. But I felt I wasn't educated to do anything except teach tennis.

Former player Rita says she returns to tennis when she needs to find her true self:

When I quit playing at 25...I was really at a loss for how I fit in the world...Whenever I feel like I'm at a loss in my life [during a transition period], I always go back to tennis because it's the one place I feel grounded. It's like, "Well, at least I know who I was." I'll get back on the court for a month or two, and then be done with it because the happy feeling isn't there anymore. It took me a while to figure out who I was. People would [introduce me as a tennis player] like a job title that we were given since we were kids. When that goes away, you're like [lost].

Friendships

Junior players have a rare opportunity to meet players from all over the world of different ages and genders and of various cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. They form bonds as they all share a common goal: to be one of the best tennis players in the world. Coach Tim articulates the sentiment expressed by many former players and parents about the value of the friendships players make through tennis:

I have friends all over the world. 90% of my friends are all because of tennis like a lot of the things that I have experienced or have, or anything, have all been through tennis; from my job, now, to friendships that I've had forever.

Although youth athletes may give up friendships with their peers, some develop life-long friendships with their athletic peers, some of which may or may not be affected by their competitive rivalry. But because they share this common goal, and because tennis is an individual sport, they must compete against each other to achieve it. So, even though junior players are constantly around other junior players, they are isolated by their rivalries marked by a constant competition for the coach's attention, peer approval, and ranking points. This isolation and lack of intimacy between players is emphasized more by girl players than by boys. One WTA player, who recently just quit because of her unhappiness and depression while on tour, says this about tour life: "It's a very lonely world." She notes that players on the WTA tour "tend to be less social, more individual, guarded and competitive" than their male counterparts, which means making friends can be very difficult (Girard 2013). But some boys have this experience as well, according to former player Don:

I just didn't feel like part of [the junior tennis scene], and kids were nice; that wasn't the problem. I just didn't feel like part of that crew of kids and I guess I just kind of was like, you know, "That's fine, I'm just here for tennis"... I

didn't make any friends at tennis tournaments... I think [it was because] of the competitive atmosphere, a little bit - at least the kids from Florida, they were already friends, I wasn't really part of that group. I was happy to keep it separate and, also, when I got to tournaments they just made it such a big deal. I was way too serious about it.

While most girls say that they know many other girls through tennis, they hint or even directly acknowledge that they know none, or maybe just one, on a close level.

Friendships are hard to maintain at the international junior and beginning professional ranks because of different tour schedules and different pressures, as coach Linda describes:

I knew some players that went pro along with me... Mostly the girls that I got to know when I started playing, some girls got into the 300s and couldn't get any higher. Then I sort of lost touch with them. I didn't really focus on making friendships except for one particular girl on the tour.

For the most part, they lack a shared emotional intimacy with other girl players because to share one's innermost secrets and insecurities is to "show their hand" to their potential future opponent and rival. Former player Katie describes by saying, "A lot of people were just mean to people who just weren't as good, and I thought that is just...

"ugh!" Former player Andrea admitted,

It's not a healthy environment, it's not emotionally healthy, and I wasn't happy. I didn't know how unhappy I was until I made the decision to move on within a couple of months. It's a very emotionally draining [environment]. There's very little emotional support between the women on tour, unless you have familiarity ties or an entourage. It's just very difficult....

Former player Rita also says,

The girls I competed with, we weren't there to be friends...It's so isolating out there. If you're a social person, the structure [of elite tennis] is not something you'll take to...You're out there by yourself.

And former player Tracey explains the difference between tennis and a team sport:

A lot of it was the people. A lot of the tennis girls are mean and intense, and nobody really wants to be friends or anything. It's really a very individual and head-to-head sport. It was really tough mentally so it kind of wore on me after a while. So I [played another sport]. There's a whole team, everyone's really nice. You're really close knit with all your teammates. So it's a lot more fun [than tennis].

Preadolescent player, Skye, acknowledges this complexity in friendship as well:

After you play someone, there are people that don't want to be your friend, and then there are the people that will talk to you and end up being your friend.

Many parents, who use more authoritative approaches, encourage this kind of rivalry.

Several parents note that it is so hard to find players to play practice matches with because parents do not want their player's weaknesses exposed or they do not want to help another player improve. Mother Tina is frustrated by this:

Parents are cut-throat. [They think] "I don't want my kid hitting with your kid outside of the tournament because your kid might get better." Oh my gosh, really?

Mother Nina seems to prefer this mentality:

They're taught when they step through that gate, they turn on their competitive face and when they come out the gate, they're supposed to stop all the pressure, win or lose, you can be friends. But the second you walk through that gate, it doesn't matter if you're playing your best friend, you're not their friend when you step on the tennis court.

But former player Rita describes how she wanted to feel "human" after having to be so closed off and competitive in junior tennis:

My dad wanted me to turn pro. He did not want me to go to college. I went to college, though, specifically for that; I wanted to be human. I wanted to be able to relate to people. I was very aware of [the fact] that I didn't have that social connection with people [in juniors].

In addition to the lack of close bonds they have with other players, elite junior players are often isolated from non-tennis peers entirely. Several former players say they feel like they lost their childhoods to tennis. As Rita puts it,

I had no social life as a child, as an adolescent. My social life was with people significantly younger than me or significantly older than me. I remember Jennifer Capriati at a national tournament, and I remember thinking [about her], "You are an idiot savant. You cannot communicate with anyone...I do not want to be you"...I couldn't do much on the weekends because I would have to go to tournaments down in Miami which meant having to leave the house at 5:00 in the morning to get to an 8:00 match. Every tournament seemed to fall on a major social life event. I never went to birthday parties. I never went to friends' houses after school because I had my tennis. I feel like it took my childhood away.

And Katie says,

Keeping friends is hard, because everyone wants to go out on Saturday night and I'm flying out to Tennessee today to play in that tournament.

For those that do attend "normal" school (i.e. public or private school where they must show up for class), as players often identify it, they often leave school a class period or two early to make tennis practice on time. They are allowed to do this by the state as they can substitute their physical education requirements with an outside sport as well as skip a study hall and even lunch. But by leaving school early to attend a four or five hour training session, players miss out on after-school activities such as extracurricular school clubs, other sports, parties, sleepovers, and even just "hanging out" before going home at the end of the day². These activities do much in the way of bonding kids in their respective age groups and making them feel included in their peer group (Weiss 2002). Not attending both organized and informal activities like these contributes to a feeling of isolation. While some players speak of a disdain for these activities and label them as "wastes of time", many players (and their parents) say that missing these times is the biggest sacrifice they have to make towards becoming a professionalized player. However, in the same breath, they say that it is worth it. This is

²Weiss 2000 shows this with his work on gymnasts.

an example of how a technology of domination could also be a technology of the self if players reflect upon the reasons they are making such sacrifices. They even often prefer to call it “a price to pay” rather than a “sacrifice” as the term “sacrifice” insinuates an unwillingness to do something. Former player Rita put it like this:

The flipside [to having few non-tennis friends], is that when I was in school, I always felt I had my tennis friends and this other life, and I wasn't that invested in my high school friends. Peer pressure wasn't a factor for me. The good part was that I felt like I excelled at something so I never felt like I had to impress people or [succumb] to peer pressure.

Parents, like Nina, who take a more authoritative approach, reiterate this idea that the loss of a childhood and non-tennis social life is a price to pay for success, as expected:

You miss a lot about being a tiny little kid. Doing all the little things like slumber parties, birthday parties, cake and ice cream and all these things you don't get, but you know, you ask my older daughter [who's] 24 years old, “Do you miss all that?” She says, “Oh no. I've seen the whole world. I've been to every country in the world. And you know by the time I was 16, there wasn't a country in the world I hadn't been to.” So you just gotta weigh it. You don't wanna take a child that has no chance ever at becoming a pro and take away their childhood for tennis.

Coaches, like Ang, who take a more authoritative, even oppressive, approach to guiding players see it as more black and white a decision. A narrowing of identity, he says, is necessary to become a great player:

You have to basically devote your life to becoming a professional tennis player, not that you can neglect other aspects of it, but you know your social life, your academics, they come second or third after the tennis. If that's that you want.

But mothers, like Tina, who may have had a “normal” teenage life, wonder if their daughters are missing anything by focusing all of their energies on tennis during high school. She and her daughter go back-and-forth between whether to have more of a non-tennis identity or whether to just focus everything on tennis. This is

another example of the liminal experience of identity formation between tennis and non-tennis worlds:

She has to think about things that, in my mind, normal teenagers don't think about. Or don't think about very much. She has to think about a tournament schedule, what she eats.....how early she really needs to be here..and what does she need to be doing in the gym today. And I know teenagers are busy, but she's here at 7:30 in the morning and gets done at 6:45 at night. She's got that time in the middle to eat some food, and study, drink some protein and I mean it's...she has a couple of lockers in there but, you know it's not like hanging out in the hallways with your friends passing notes...she doesn't get any of that...She went through a period where she thought she was missing out on some stuff. But when we talked to her, she sort of started looking at things with a different spin. She's like, "I hardly ever get to do sleepovers"...and it's hard to have for her, I mean girlfriends is very difficult. The ones who don't play tennis, don't get it. They are kind of out of the loop. The girls that do play tennis, there is such that competition between them...They can't let that guard truly down. We were very unbelievably fortunate that there was a girl she considered a best friend. We became friends with the family.... They were good like that and when a tournament was over, we always made an effort to go out to dinner or go to their house or our house. That was a great experience for her...[She started realizing] you get to do different things together then what those [other non-tennis] kids are doing. Once she started thinking that way and the freedom that she has... Then she's like, "This is totally worth it."

These activities also do much to help players form strong self-esteems and identities that are based on multiple sources, not just tennis. Tennis players, especially, because of the intense amount of pressure placed on them, and that they place on themselves as the only player on the court, tend to narrow their identity formation. Former player Rita emphasizes how this affected her ability to form social bonds in adulthood:

When I was in therapy, my therapist said, "The reason you have no connection with moms now is because it is like high school. And when you were in high school, you were very task-oriented. You were focused on your tennis. You had a mission to compete. You weren't there to be social or to blend in, to find your group. So, now, you are task-oriented and focused on your children. You're not focused on blending in, or blending in, or finding your niche with your group." And it hit me; it's because of my tennis.

According to most players, it is easier to become friends with junior players who are not threats to a player's social standing. This means befriending players in other age groups, from the opposite gender, and from a much lower or much higher ranking tier than they are.³ But even when befriending boys as hitting partners, girls are often warned to stay away from getting romantically involved with them. This is often ingrained at an early age as part of the sacrifice for reaching their potential. As a result, girl players are often not allowed to date until they are sixteen or seventeen.⁴ But even with the lack of social outlets for players, they often see it as a necessary sacrifice, or a price to pay for their tennis futures.

While interviewing former female players, the topic inevitably came to emotional relationships as we spoke about our significant others and how we view dating after leaving competitive tennis. This is a huge topic among players because dating is near to impossible, even as adults on the professional tour, while competing because of the travel and the time-commitment to training. Dating usually means short-term flings for most players until they retire and stay in one place. What is interesting, though, is how many of the former players I spoke with said that they had trouble emotionally connecting⁵ with people because of the years they were trained to stay somewhat

³This changes, however, once players start touring the international junior and professional circuits as they must learn to depend on players at their same age and playing ability for hitting partners, doubles partners, and general companionship as these tournaments can often be far from home. This is when players learn the paradox of sport of being both competitive and cooperative with each other.

⁴This type of sheltering is a big reason, coaches and parents say, why girls become romantically involved with their coaches who are often their most intimate male relationship at an age where girls start to desire male attention.

⁵Messner 2003 discovered this about elite male football players

emotionally impermeable. One player pinpoints it to the concept of “moving on”: when one point ends, another one begins. Katie finds this structural component of the tennis scoring ritual to be a metaphor for her emotional attachment, or lack thereof, to people:

With tennis, it's about going to one point to the next and not letting things bother you, so whatever emotion you have, you try to regain your focus and move to the next game, next point. If you lose the first game, you get killed, you just kind of forget it and move on, and growing up, one of my biggest strengths was that I had always been written up by kids that said that was my strength – mental toughness, and being able to pull a major comeback through not really ever falling apart. So I think about that, and it's this thing that you're not able to express feelings...That is the way to deal with things that continue to come up and impact me as I've been getting older and is a big topic of debate with my therapist...It's the exact opposite of what you want to be as a human being, but exactly what you want for a tennis player to be successful, and there's a major conflict there.

She goes on to say how this has affected her ability to find a long term romantic relationship:

I think the major reason that I started seeing a therapist is because I'm not getting close with anyone....I tend to go for “emotionally immature closed people.” [My friend] said I don't see it because I'm comfortable around them because they don't force [me to open up, and they're just sticking around and [I'm] never really going to get close to anyone if I keep going after people like that.

And another former player said that she was the same way – “unemotional”. For instance, when she and her husband get in an argument, she just walks away. She says she does not know how to confront. She says she just walks away like she is walking to the back fence to start another point.

In summary, it is hard to make close friendships in the competitive junior tennis community. Players are trained to perform isolated in their own minds. In order to perform at the highest level, one has to “bury” oneself inside one's brain. At the competitive level, it is a-social sport, despite the fact that at recreational levels it is considered a social sport. At the elite levels, people either want to be your friend to

experience success vicariously or they want to maintain a competitive distance. Like mother Nina says:

Everybody wants to be your friend when you're good. A lot of the younger people, the kids who aren't real talented, they're all friends with each other. And you see all the new parents [being] friends with each other. Um, when you have top stars, you're not out there to be everybody's friend. You're out there to go take care of business. Get off the court and go home. You're not out there for a social party.

“Public isolation” may be a good way to phrase this. Juniors interact with each other at tournaments and training environments, but many of these environments do not allow for the camaraderie. Some academies have environments where players can form camaraderie in teams and recreational activities (i.e. Ping-Pong table, video games). But those who train in isolated environments with just a coach on the other side of the net and the parents on the sidelines, the social connection fades. Whether players can persevere and sacrifice a satisfied feeling of social camaraderie, or whether they burnout, depends on the individual personality, resilience, exposure to social/school life outside of tennis as well as the power dynamic between players and their parents/coaches, as discussed in previous chapters.

Education⁶

In addition to the education that players develop about their body and spatial awareness⁷, players are exposed to new places and people that they may not otherwise have traveled to or met if they stayed in regular schooling. Mother Nina recognizes this:

They know they're gonna see the whole world as a junior. My other daughter saw the whole world, traveled the whole world, to every country in

⁶Malina 2009 and Coakley 2006a point out the priority of sports over education in a school setting.

⁷Refer to Chapter 3 for further discussion.

the world, played every junior Grand Slam twice, and she says I wouldn't trade it for anything else. Now all my friends have graduated college and want to travel the world, she says, "I've been the whole world, I've traveled the whole world [already]."

And Bonnie says,

The cultures I saw and the lessons I learned, I don't think you can put a price on that. It's made me the person I am today. I have such an open mind because of it....I wouldn't trade that for anything.

There is a growing trend for junior players to enroll in on-line schooling in order to give them more flexibility with their schedules and more time on the tennis court. But, many players experience a type of discrimination from teachers when they miss class for competitions because they do not see that tennis is an alternative, educational endeavor. Mother Tina voices her frustration with this:

I know some of the issues that some of the kids have here is seat time. They can be the best student in the class but because they may have to leave early on Friday to travel to a tournament, and if it is a tournament that happens to hold over until Monday and Monday doesn't happen to be a school holiday, they made it all the way deep enough into the draw to warrant being there on a Monday. A kid could very easily fail a class based on not being there regardless of work that had been turned in. And I have a hard time with that. You are punishing this player that is obviously handling both well!

Many players say they are happier doing on-line schooling to avoid this, as well as for the reduction in stress to make deadlines and to make-up homework and tests they would miss in public or private school. Parents often add that doing on-line or homeschooling keeps their children from getting involved in activities that they considered to be "public school problems" (i.e. drugs and sex). Several point out that on-line education provides an even better academic education than public school does.

Father Rick says,

It's actually good for me because now I can see more what he really knows because you couldn't get so deep into what he does because he has too

much [homework in regular school]. Now you can actually see their quality of this [work], which is I think good for both [parent and child]... Parents do this homeschooling for different reasons. We really just want to optimize time and I think he can learn even better in this limited time in this setting.

And player Hope likes it because she can go at her own pace: “I like homeschooling, I like it better. I get to play a lot more tennis.... I can do it at my own pace.” One of the biggest reasons parents pull their kids out of public or private school is to avoid the “mountains of busy work”, otherwise known as homework. It is not uncommon for players to stay up until midnight finishing their four hours of homework because they were at practice until 7:00 pm. As mother Deb says,

I want him to focus on the things that will make him really happy, and they whole process of learning and discovering the world, not like wasting time on a hundred pages of this and that. It's like creative thinking. And that's what schools are missing today.

Some parents see online schooling as a survival strategy – which could be seen as either a technology of self or coping mechanism - for their players to even stay in school at all while they play tennis because both schedules of junior tennis and public/private school can be unmanageable:

It is incredibly challenging, when you look at the tournament schedule, the practice schedule, and everything that, you know, for all four years that you are supposed to have accomplished... getting through like the high school years, getting ready to go there, there are kids that, I think, that is why so many kids end up quitting school.

But parents who extol the benefits of online education recognize that there must be one parent available to guide the player through their schooling, and that many families do not have this option. Most families, in general, have two parents working. But in the tennis world, most families who participate in junior tennis full-time have one parent

working and one guiding the child through tennis. Online school is usually guided by that parent. Tina notes,

Depending on the level of involvement of the parent, I think it could be an incredible education. But, it takes a lot of time and a lot of effort...from the parent and child. Both personalities have to go together. My kid is easy...She takes it very serious. She also knows that if she isn't...it all ends.

If not guided by the parent, students must be extremely self-disciplined. Mother Susan says,

If you're going to be a successful home school student, you have to be extremely self-motivated. If you're a successful tennis player, you have to be very disciplined and self-motivated, so I think that that, in itself, transitions to college. She didn't have any trouble, anyway. But she was very extremely responsible as far as home-schooling.

If not, students often fall behind or resort to cheating. Some parents even pay tutors to do the homework for them. This can be disempowering for players in the long run when they do not learn how to write papers and meet deadlines; skills they must have in college if they earn that scholarship that they are trying to attain.

There are drawbacks to doing on-line schooling though⁸. One is that, even though it may provide more flexibility in time, players lose out on elective courses like art, music, psychology, astronomy, etc. These classes, although not required, help start the student thinking about a future career beyond tennis. Public/private school can also be extremely detrimental to a player's development of social skills outside the tennis environment. As mentioned earlier, although tennis can build communication skills with other tennis peers who share the same cultural values, non-tennis peers who do not share junior tennis language and culture are more difficult to communicate and bond with. Public and private school can, not only provide academic education, but can teach

⁸Malina 2009 discusses this too.

players these social skills, to respect authority other than coaches and parents, to respect the fact that they are in a privileged position to participate in a competitive sport at an elite level, and provide the tools to build a self-identity outside of tennis. But, this may be part of the overall plan to focus players onto tennis and prevent them from thinking about an alternative life path.

Coach Tim, who played professionally and prioritizes player well-being in his coaching with collaborative approaches, says this about online schooling for junior players:

I went to public school through middle school and high school...and I felt that was huge for me. It kind of, it didn't make tennis feel like a job. Which I am totally against now. I think a lot of kids are doing homeschool now, or the majority is. And there's so many things that you learn at school, whether it's respect for authority, meeting deadlines, because [a teacher says] "You have to because I told you to." I mean there is a bunch of things that you learn in school that you just don't learn with home school [like socializing with people who aren't tennis players.] ... And you see kids that aren't as lucky as you are. Whether it is in your family situation or your personal situation or are lucky enough to have a talent that you have to do something, and you really appreciate what you have a lot more. I feel school is so good for the kids... I mean I feel like if it's all about tennis, at some point, like, when kids turn fifteen, they are going to wonder what else is there and they're going to lose their focus anyway.

Most participants, like Rita, advise that if a player is going to do on-line schooling, they should be in some other kind of non-tennis social activity so that their lives are not just about school and tennis:

If a kid is really good at what they are doing, and are having success, I don't think there are enough hours in the day to do everything [both school and tennis]. They'd have to choose. But the year that I only went to school for six weeks, I ended up getting the highest grades in the class. I would often tell teachers that I was going to a tournament when I wasn't because what teachers could cover in a week, I could cover in a six hour session....So best case scenario, if a child is pursuing something and they want it, school is wasted time but they need to be in some type of school. But you can't leave out the social aspect. They have to be involved in something. If I had to do it again, I wish I had had a more social aspect [to my life].

Thus, the paradox of on-line education is that it can be both empowering as a technology of the self and disempowering as a coping mechanism to survive in the tennis world. It reduces the stress level of junior players and allows them to have a more flexible approach to their tennis and schooling. But it also reinforces the narrowing of players' tennis identity which makes it difficult for them to reconcile their liminal status in both the tennis and non-tennis worlds. While it may seem empowering in the immediate tennis world, they may be missing the preparation and socializing skills that they will need for college and adulthood. While the tennis world provides some of these skills, especially those pertaining to exposure to a multi-cultural peer population, they may not be readily transferable to situations outside of tennis unless coaches and parents guide them to use those skills in these ways. Ultimately, the coaches and parents who use power approaches within the zone of optimal empowerment, as discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, guide players to use tennis as a tool for life rather than teaching them that tennis *is* life (which abusive coaches may teach).

Family Dynamics

Participating in junior tennis can have both bonding and fracturing effects on a family. The bonding effects come from the amount of time that at least one parent spends with their tennis playing child. Sometimes, both parents play tennis and it becomes a way for the entire family to strive for a goal. One family I interviewed consisted of the father/coach, his wife who had a weekday job, and four tennis-playing children. They all seemed happy playing in the grass before their match and cheering on each other during their matches. Another father, Ted, talks about how tennis keeps his family together through shared experiences:

It's been great, I think it's because everyone plays tennis. I think it's been, at different levels...everybody's got that shared experience [of]...getting on the court and playing matches against...kids that are jerks....winning tough matches, losing tough matches, they've had that shared experience which in a lot of ways has bound the kids together.

However, many parents and players experience fracturing in the family because of the distance and pressures on the family dynamic that comes with participating in junior tennis. Family separation is a huge part of junior tennis as many families sacrifice their weekends almost every weekend for it. While it can bring families together under a common activity and goal - where they might otherwise be in separate rooms watching TV or playing video games - it also can tear them apart.

I talked to many mothers who have sent their children to live with their coaches or to live at a tennis academy. One mother said it was “not that bad” when she sent her thirteen-year-old son to [an academy] for the remainder of his teen years, and that they talked every day. But she said that if she had to do it over again, she would never separate the family. She said she just had to make the coach teach the same values and life lessons that they would have taught him. He and his sister, who followed him to the academy, were pretty much raised by their coach. (This is how the coach becomes a third parental figure in a tennis family.) Another mother I talked to made the same decision to send her twelve-year-old son to live with his coach. She still struggles with this decision five years later and asks herself if it was the right move. Even though he really wanted to do it, the mother had to relinquish her parental values to the coach. Moreover, former players told me about girls they knew who moved cross country to be with their coach only to get romantically involved with them while they were still minors.

It was also mentioned several times how common it is for mothers to have affairs with their child's coach and for marriages to end in divorce because of this distance and

pressure. A common scenario I came across in Florida was for the mother of a player to move with the player in order to train at one of the many tennis academies that freckle Florida's map. The father stays in their home state or country to work and earn the money to pay for this training. Some couples go weeks and months without seeing each other. When the player does not perform to the level that the parents expect - especially after investing this energy, time, and money in the player's training – it adds to the family tension. As a result, divorce is common in the tennis world because of the time that one parent spends traveling with the player and because of the financial and emotional strain it can put on the family. Junior players are not aware of the ramifications of this move from the start but come to realize it once they are deep into the commitment.

There are also many disagreements between parents over the way they should raise their tennis playing child. Usually, one parent wants to push more while the other wants to push less. One family had noticeable tension between the parents about their daughter's tennis training. While the father, who was also the coach, wanted her to practice often until 9:00 pm, the mother often tried to pull her from practice earlier. She appealed to me to talk to the husband and convince him that their daughter had practiced enough, she scheduled appointments, or she used homework as reasons to stop practice. She took her daughter home when the father left the club for a short period of time and wanted to give her daughter a day off after a tournament when the father did not allow it. The player in this case was being tugged between being a player in her father's eyes and being a developing girl in her mother's eyes.

When there are other siblings involved, they often get neglected as the parents' constant focus is on the player. One mother was at her wit's end as she explained to me

how it gets old sitting in the hotel room with her son after he loses, being depressed with him because he takes it so hard. And it takes a toll on the entire family. The father was an athlete who, she said, felt like he had not fulfilled his potential, so there was pressure on their son to do really well in order to fulfill the father's potential. She said they have been in marriage therapy because of the different views they have regarding their son's tennis as the father puts more pressure on their son than the mother is comfortable with. There are also three other siblings to worry about, but the son's tennis tends to pull attention away from them.

Because of the financial and time investment families make, the well-being of the family dynamic is often highly dependent upon the outcome of the player's tournament matches. Some parents' eyes welled up with tears as I interviewed them about their experience with junior tennis. One father admitted to me that he had been verbally abusive in the past and had since changed his attitude in order to maintain a positive relationship with his daughter. Another mother started tearing up over discussing the stress that she feels for her son who never seems satisfied anymore due to his increased focus on tennis. Yet another mother appealed to me in anguish and desperation for a therapist or someone to help her daughter who is verbally and physically self-abusive when she loses. When the family dynamic is so dependent on the player's tournament match results, that it is strengthened after a win and weakened after a loss, the player comes to feel that she is responsible for the happiness of her parents and siblings through her performance and that the love she is given is conditional upon this performance. Former player Katie discusses how the stress from this realization even made her chronically ill. I use Katie's interview to exemplify the

family dynamic that many junior tennis players experience as a result of their participation in competitive tennis:

I came to this realization and said to my dad – “Would you still love me if I couldn't play tennis?” And I think... It kind of makes me sort of choke up, too, because it's such a hard thing to say and I've never brought it up since. But I know that period of time, my mom really blamed my dad for making me sick, even though it was like, “Hey, it's part of our family genetics, you can't really do anything about it.” [ulcerative colitis is an autoimmune disease which is hereditary and triggered by chronic stress] but she was like [to my dad], “You did this to her!” ... Of course, I always hear this second-hand from my sisters years later, but yeah, I think there was a lot of internal family turmoil after that, and I think that changed the way my dad worked with me after that point.

She wants to leave it in the past, but it is still at the surface as she continues to describe the confusion she has about her tennis identity as she asks herself whether it was her dream or her father's dream:

I started realizing that [my father] was putting his dreams on me, and now I realize even more that that was like... really tough because here I was working trying to become this incredible tennis player and got really sick... And we just had this conversation six months ago, and I was like, “This was all about you? I thought this was all about me.” But that's sort of in the past, so I'll just leave it there.

She continues to articulate the stress it caused on her family when she would lose, but realizes that she probably would not have quit because she could not foresee it:

There was a sense of when I didn't win a tournament because I had always been #1 in the eastern region. So if there was no winning in the end, coming home with the trophy, it was no good. But I did notice that there was a lot more tension in the house... Just little things... People would not be as happy and laughter filled home if I didn't win. So at some point, I thought, “It is my duty to win these tournaments.” Yet, I still didn't make the connection like, “Is this what I want? Am I doing this for my family?” And there weren't enough people there to sort of suggest that, but at the same time, I don't think I would've been able to hear it if someone had suggested it.

Even now, twenty years later, she feels guilt towards the mental torment her older sisters went through because of their father's intense focus on her tennis:

My older two sisters also played tennis, not as intensely as I did, they had quit during college, but they had also gone to therapy, and I had always felt like they had it a lot harder and tougher as my dad was trying to figure out how to be a good coach/father, and I felt like he sort of experimented with them. I think I have a little guilt towards that.

And she even admits that she is still in denial of the subsequent abusive behavior her father exhibited towards her as a result of this intense focus and dependency upon her results. She attributes it to her parents' cultural heritage and says her success means that it was probably worth it. But, I still feel she struggles with believing this:

I think it's worth it, because I think I'm still very much in denial of the fact that it was at all an abusive relationship. My therapist would agree with me, which is why I still find myself making excuses as to why we would sit on our heels for an hour and a half or two hours getting lectured over and over again about why that match was bad. But to me, it's just part of [our] culture. It really is, we used to, if you were really bad, you sit on your heels. So when I ask if that would be considered abusive, I'd say, "No, he didn't hit me. He didn't tell me I was stupid." He didn't do that, but here I am doing this. But in the overall picture, I got to go all these amazing places and do amazing things, and got to go to [a top college] and got a free ride. I now have a great job. So I think after all is said and done, yeah, I think it was worth it, but I don't think I had any choice.

Unfortunately, physical abuse by parents as punishment for losing is not uncommon, as discussed in Chapter 5. This type of physical abuse is different from that which is used as a means of training. Punishing players for losing by making them walk home after a loss, slapping or hitting them in the parking lot, and throwing things at them as they leave the court is something that most players say they witnessed or heard about once in their junior tennis career. One mother told me how her (now) ex-husband threw their daughter against a car and hit her. He was also a coach to other players. But instead of pulling their players away from him, they supported him and paid off the mother to not press charges. This exemplifies the kind of protection abusive parents/coaches have in the junior tennis field.

Some siblings of junior players pursue tennis, as well, just for the sake of keeping the family together in the same place on weekends. But, sometimes junior players inadvertently teach their younger siblings not to follow in their footsteps. Siblings see how tennis affects the family dynamic and sometimes realize they do not want to have the same amount of pressure on them. As one mother remarks about her younger son: "He saw what happened [with his sister] and he didn't want any part of it." Other former players see their younger siblings slink away from tennis when they see the pressure, and sometimes abuse, that their parents put on them: Former player Andrea notes this about her brother:

I have a younger brother. He initially wanted to play tennis. But when he started taking lessons and started to see everything that I went through, he was like, "This is not for me." He'd go out of his way to tank and not try so he wouldn't have to play.

Former player Rita notice how different she and her brother are because of tennis:

My brother played but he didn't compete. He just played for fun. It was his own choice. He didn't want to [compete]. Our lives now are so different....He had no defined boundaries the way I did. When I look at where my boundaries were placed, it was always because of tennis. They either said, "Do whatever you want," or "No, you can't because of tennis." It always revolved around tennis, [so that] we get mad at tennis but not at them. [My brother] saw my life and said, "I'm not doing that!" As first born, I didn't think I had a choice. But he did.

But if the sibling decides not to pursue competitive tennis, it can fracture the family. Either one parent travels with the tennis player while the other parent stays home with the sibling, or the whole family travels to the tournament but the siblings' interests and pursuits are neglected. One former player blamed her brother's psychological disorder on the fact that the entire family's schedule revolved around tennis all the time and that her father used up all his attention on her: "Everything in our lives – the scheduling, the

financing – revolved around my tennis. I was treated like an only child and he was treated like he didn't exist.”

But as much as junior tennis can be a catalyst for family tensions, it can also be an escape from them for junior players. Former player and coach Linda describes how tennis was a safe place for her to escape “real” life and stresses, to feel empowered in the environment of tennis when she felt disempowered outside of it:

My parents were always fighting and got separated for a while, I felt like tennis was always sort of my outlet, like I just wanted to be myself and be free and away from fighting, because there was always fighting at home, so I really enjoyed getting away from the tennis court where no one could yell, so that also sort of motivated me...So it's like tennis was [a] way out of the torture, maybe.

Overall, junior tennis can be an empowering and disempowering experience for families. It may start out as a bonding experience, but at the higher levels of competition, it can fracture the family and require them to live separate lives. This is an aspect of junior tennis that, perhaps, surprises most families as they progress through the years of competition. They recognize the sacrifices but often feel as if they are trapped in the commitment because of the time and money they have invested. It becomes a tool to keep families involved in a common goal while, at the same time, it can pull them apart when they develop differing opinions about how to pursue those goals and when they make sacrifices for the player while leaving the other sibling behind in the decision-making process.

Gender Differentiation

Junior tennis both challenges and reproduces gender ideologies and stereotypes. Since Title IX⁹, girls' participation in sport has increased by several hundred percent (Coakley 2006a). In their participation, they have shown that they can train and compete at the level of boys and men. However, in my research, I emphasize several ways in which female subordination to males can be reproduced on a daily basis. For instance, the majority of coaches are male. As Coakley 2006a points out, this is an unintended backlash to Title IX even though discussions about Title IX is often referred to as a policy of discrimination towards men and blamed for the lack of tennis scholarships available to boys¹⁰. Many male coaches are responsible mentors, but more often than not, they reproduce gender stereotypes, unintentionally, including the idea that girls and women need to be coached by (and thus are subordinate to) men.

It is difficult to discern when gender equality and diversity appreciation are used as tools of equality or discrimination. For instance, aggressiveness and competitiveness are portrayed as “masculine” valued qualities while “emotion” and “being too analytical” are portrayed as “feminine” devalued qualities (Hargreaves 2001). Girls often take pride in playing like boys as they see this as a way to be considered “just as good” by playing like “one of the boys”. As Jones and Aitchison 2007 describe in triathlon, this could be considered a technology of domination and a technology of the self. As Chapter 3 discusses how players embody and perform their liminal identity, girls perform their

⁹Title IX is the Amendment established in 1972 that makes it illegal for any educational institution to withhold equal access to educational resources, including sports, for girls.

¹⁰Coakley 2006:238-243 discusses the debates concerning Title IX and how girls are often discriminated in sports because of their gender.

gendered identity in the game styles. Girls who like coming to net, which translates to being an aggressive player, perform their desire to not be perceived as “just another girl player”. Other girls tend to stick with a more defensive baseline game or wear obviously “feminine” attire (i.e. ruffles in their skirts, bright colors, bows in their hair, more jewelry and makeup) to preempt any criticism about their athletic identity or sexuality (thus, reinforcing the hetero-normative of sport) (i.e. Birrel and Cole 1994, Bolin and Granskog 2003, Markula 2003, Jones and Aitchison 2007, Theberge 1991).

As girls and women normalize this gender dichotomy and accept it as part of the culture of performance enhancement in junior tennis, some male coaches abuse their power position over them to have relationships with their players (as discussed in Chapter 5). Former player Rita emphasizes the abuse of power by an older male coach when he got involved with his younger female athlete:

It was definitely a power thing. There is definitely a power thing when it's between a male coach and his female athlete. When you go to the men's tournaments, there are always girls at those things. You go to the women's tournaments, there are no hot guys. There are crazy old men that follow you. So the only valid option when you're traveling, is coaches. And there's more of an emotional thing with women. So when you're traveling with a coach, and he's making you better at this thing you're struggling to get better at, and you get these amazing results, there's just this bonding that happens. And the coach is the one that should have more awareness. He shouldn't abuse it....A lot of the male coaches abuse it. You're all wrapped up in your wins and sex; it's a freaking mind game. It's terrible. Guys don't have that. On the flip side, these male coaches, they're around these hot young girls all the time, and men don't necessarily say no all the time. And, are there any female coaches in men's tennis? No. It's a double-standard. I never felt the sexual harassment that I knew was said to other girls. I heard coaches talk to each other and joke, but they never crossed the line with me because my dad was a pro. But I knew lots of stories of girls in their teens that were dating their pros and it's very inappropriate. It was both in juniors and pros. It was in the ITF's...There were girls traveling. The South American circuit has tournaments in every country. There are girls thirteen and fourteen on those circuits traveling by themselves. [and those girls are having their relationships with coaches too].

But this player does not label this abuse of power of male coaches over teenage girls as sexual harassment because she says these girls often start the relationships. She says that promiscuity is rampant among teen players, in general, on the international junior circuit:¹¹

But the thing is, I didn't see it as sexual harassment because these girls didn't look like victims. It wasn't the coach. The joke was that if you went on the [ITF tour], which was nine weeks and all the same players would play these tournaments, at the end of the nine weeks, the guys and the girls had slept with each other. Like, everyone had slept with each other by the time they made it through the nine weeks. That was the big joke about the tournaments. But that's what I liked better about the ITF tournaments than the USTA tournaments, was that the guys and the girls' tournaments were always at the same place...I saw more of the relationships between coaches and players [at the semi-professional level], where you were more isolated...Some of the inappropriate behavior I saw, the sexual harassment, I didn't even consider it as such back then. I don't even think I heard the term until I started working [after tennis]. We weren't aware of it back then...The relationships that we thought just seemed 'odd', were between the pros and the girls at some of the academies....

As former player Andrea notes:

I wouldn't say it was extreme. It happens. It happens a lot more than you think. It's bad, it's not an isolated case. I think it happens a lot in juniors. There's a power control of male coaches that is from, I think, societally constructed gender roles...We are trained to be subservient to males.

Sexual harassment in the form of humiliation is also a common occurrence in the junior tennis training environment, as Rita remembers:

I remember them yelling down the court, 'Why are you so slow today? Is it that time of the month?' And when you're a teenage girl, and you have crushes on half the guys out there, the last thing you want is to hear them point out it's your period.

While this could be the subject of another dissertation, the reproduction of the male coach-female player norm results in the regeneration of several myths about girls in

¹¹See Coakley 2006a for an explanation of how female athletes use promiscuity to avoid labels of lesbianism due to the gender ideology constructions of female athletes.

junior tennis. These myths highlight the ways in which the liminal identity of girls - as both teenagers and as professionalizing players – is manipulated to reproduce the male-dominant norm of junior tennis. These myths are more examples of how junior tennis can be a technology of domination for girls if they participate in junior tennis without carefully considering the rhetoric that pervades their training environments. Instead of tennis becoming a tool to transgress dynamics that normalize male power, girls and women in the junior tennis environment often reproduce these dynamics by equating them with “success” and acceptance into the tennis world.

Peaking: biological truth or cultural construct?

A common stereotype is that girls “peak”, or achieve their highest tennis-playing potential earlier than boys¹². This is used to justify starting girls in specialized, intensive training at earlier ages than boys. Mother Nina says,

Girls are two years ahead of boys. And so, you gotta just take advantage of them. They go through puberty several years younger, and their whole development is different. You can't take a 6-year-old boy and put them on the court with a 6-year-old girl.

Typically, the belief is that girls must start achieving at a high level by age fourteen in juniors in order to have a chance to play professionally. If they have not achieved a high international junior rank by the time they are sixteen, most coaches believe they have no chance at a professional career. Going to college, it is believed, is disastrous for girls because they get “distracted” at college, meaning, they become enticed by the social scene and lose their focus for tennis. Boys, on the other hand, are considered to be able to go to college if they have not achieved a high ranking by sixteen, and develop

¹²Coaches generally use the literature that show girls' mental and physical maturity starts before boys'.

their games there. This perpetuates a myth that the college experience for boys is beneficial for their tennis development because they can have camaraderie with the team and they do not get “distracted” by the social scene. It also implies that girls cannot have camaraderie on a team and that they get “distracted” by social life. This is believed by most coaches and parents: As father Clark surmises, “Women are stuck. They gotta make the commitment [to turn pro] early. Men can go to college at least two years.”

Competitiveness or “cattiness”

Another common stereotype is that female players cannot leave their competitiveness on the court because they are “too emotional”. This is a contradictory statement since competition *is* emotional. This is used against girls to describe them as “catty” instead of competitive. Even female participants use this term to describe female competitors, hence, exemplifying the unconscious reproduction of the myth of female incompetence in the competitive sport sphere. For instance, former player Terri discusses the difference between boys and girls in junior tennis:

The girls are very competitive and catty, and the boys tend to get along a little better, they're almost casual....I always used to envy that. The boys were so relaxed together and I thought that it just looked like fun...With the girls, there's always some kind of drama going on, and the guys are just like, “Ok, if you did something let's just move on”, and the girls, they always bring it to the next level. If there's a problem on the court, they'll bring it onto the court with them, there's always something with the girls...I think that it means we're more emotional. So we're much more emotional creatures, and it's just something that we have that is something we can't get rid of. As much as we want to be like the guys and relaxed and cool, we just can't.

Mother Tina also sees girls as more “vicious” than boys:

Girls are much more vicious [than boys]. They can't just go out there and play tennis...there's much more involved in it. Also, it's off the court...How your experience with them on the court for the first time can determine if

you could ever have a relationship with them..I don't see that with boys...I don't see that at all because so many of the boys play each other and when they are all on the road together...they are still buddy buddies. They go hit with each other and warm each other up and don't think, "Ok, I can't warm up with you because I play you"... When you are at the [girls'] tournaments, you will see the clichés. The boys just don't see their clichés...

Also, many parents feel that girls can not be pushed as hard as boys because of their "emotionality", thereby coddling and infantilizing them. Father Ted acknowledges that he may have coddled his daughter more than his sons:

I didn't push [my daughter] enough, maybe because she was a girl...she is kind of my little girl. I didn't want to, you know, upset her. I was more willing to push [my son], and I sort of look back and wish that I pushed [my daughter] a little harder.

And coaches, even female coaches like Linda, use this stereotype to justify different coaching practices with girls:

Girls are so emotional, they need to be consoled, maybe explain things more so they understand it, where boys, if I tell them to do a drill, they pretty much understand it and do it. When I get mad at a boy for something, he doesn't get emotional about it. I've coached a couple of different boys, but not long term, I coached a 22 year old boy and now I'm coaching a 14 year old boy. It's funny – when I got mad at the boys for something, like the other day, I had to stop practice. I had to say "This is it. We're done" because he was fooling around...I'm here respecting you, you're not respecting me, this is it. You're not going to improve, and I can't help you if you can't respect me. And he said, "No, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to, please just explain the drill to me," and everything was fine after that. With a girl, if I had gotten upset with her, she would've taken it more personal.

This can encourage coaches to be more patient and caring in their coaching practices, which could lead to more empowering consequences for players and their well-being. But, a coach points out that while it is harder to coach women than men because of their emotions, they are also more competitive because of their will and tendency to hold grudges (paraphrased):

I let the girls get away with more; let them get more bitchy; but then we started training like guys, like athletes, and it got better; the girls got really

mad. They would call their parents and say that I was training them too hard. It was too mentally draining. I wouldn't allow them to make any more excuses. But never name-call...Girls are more competitive than guys. Women sometimes have to be taught competition. But once you do, they want the competition. Their will is so strong...But guys can be in a fistfight and they walk off as friends. Girls hold on to it for a long time.

While this may certainly be true for many girls, it is not true among all girl players, and it becomes a way for male and female coaches and players to talk derogatorily about female competitors. Coach Ang, for instance, says that girls do not like competition, paradoxically, *because* of their emotions:

I think with girls you have to be a lot more technical, you have to be a lot more sensitive, you have to be a lot more careful with their approach. With boys, you need, you know, you use their athleticism a lot more. You basically do have to work some on the technical side of it, but you have to, you know, with girls a lot of them competing is an issue. With boys they love to compete. So you know... In each case there are things that are good, and there are things that are bad. I mean girls are more responsible, they are more mature at a younger age. They are more disciplined, but at the same time, they don't have the competitive instinct that the boys have, they don't have the... You know the athleticism that the boys have, and the strength. So, you know it's one or two of the other, you know but it all balances out at the end... Boys compete and they know that it's over when it's over. Girls, drag it like a dead dog.

This quote brings up another stereotype: that although girls are not innately as competitive as boys, they work harder. This stereotype normalizes the concept that girls have to work for their success, and boys do not. It also exemplifies the stereotype that girls are not as naturally athletic as boys. Another male coach, Brian, while he acknowledges that girls might be more emotional and that this is not a politically correct thing to say, does not treat his girls any differently from his boy players. He points out that girls are just as competitive as boys; albeit, he attributes his player's toughness to the male influences in her life:

[A girl I coach is] competitive because she's got five brothers. She's competitive, she knows how to compete, she sees them, she fights with

them and rattles with them. I've worked with her almost three years now. She has never once come to the court with anything less than 100% and a smile on her face. Always. So she doesn't even have a cell phone, she doesn't have a Facebook, she's not your typical teenager. So in that sense, there's really no difference. It sounds like guys, that's pretty much...That's it. It's a pretty chauvinist statement, the girls talk, but...They're more emotional. I'm married, so I know that there's a difference, but you can't say that and be politically correct. But she competes, so in that sense, there's really no difference.

Cute and thin, but strong

Female athletes are often faced with the dilemma of challenging gender stereotypes by playing along with them. For instance, women can participate in professional sports with men, as long as they fit into the mold of acceptable femininity that the media and society, in general, perpetuates. This is called “cosmetic fitness” : being firm but not too muscular, strong but thin, competitive but not too aggressive, etc.¹³ Girls learn how to be “cosmetically fit” very early on in their sport participation in order to be accepted by their sport peers and not be labeled “lesbian”, which is still seen as abnormal in the sport world even though more individuals accept homosexuality, in general. Former player Rita describes one player from juniors:

I remember at that age, it wasn't just about being a good player, it was about being a girl as well. The rough thing about sports is that for boys, it automatically gives them a more masculine edge. A girl being in sports, especially in our day, it meant that you weren't sexy and girly and you had to prove yourself in that arena. Nowadays, being a female athlete is sexier. I remember seeing one player with red lipstick and big hoop earrings and wondering how she could play with all that. But she was so sexy. And I wanted to keep my hair long because I wanted to be sexy. And there's also this stereotype in women's tennis that everyone is gay. If you're not gay and a female athlete, it's like you're trying to come out constantly to prove that you're not gay. I see these girls with the glittery pink headbands as if to say, “Hey, I'm not gay. They're overcompensating.” Back in the day, it was like, “If you weren't sleeping with the guys, you must be sleeping with the girls.”

¹³Coakley 2006a and feminist sport scholars (i.e. Markula 1995, Theberge 1991) explain this further.

This is reiterated by several coaches and parents, like Nina:

[Sponsors] see if [players] have the talent they're looking for. And of course, they want somebody kind of cute, good attitude, the way you carry yourself, and a lot of it is looks. I mean, the little cute blond Russians get a lot more money than other kids... [up and coming boy players] are good looking boys. So, I'm sure it helps, but not like a cute girl. A cute girl can draw so many more millions and sponsorships.

But there is a fine line between being cute for the sponsors and being obsessive about diet and body image. There is also a fine line between being strong and being too "thick". Female players learn as they get older to keep things positive and listen to their coaches and the people close to them before trusting a sponsor about things like body weight/size. As coach Linda says,:

Being a professional athlete, you're not supposed to be thick, you need to have muscle and you have a little extra on your body as a female. You don't have the energy to compete the whole year if you're thick. So yeah, I hear about that, and that's where the parent needs to come in and be a filter, maybe help the player and say, "Ok, the sponsor she needs to lose weight", but instead of telling the player that, tell the coach that, talk to the coach about it, and if they don't agree with it, then tell the sponsor, "Screw you!"

The stereotype of female players being fat is often expressed (often derogatorily) by coaches¹⁴. As one coach said, "If it jiggles, it's fat". These kinds of microaggressions (Sue et al. 2008) can propel a player into years of obsessive exercising and severe restriction of calorie intake. Other reminders of player "fatness" are body fat tests involving a male coach pinching various parts of girls' bodies – hips, thighs, bellies, arms, and rib cages - with giant plastic pinchers, publicly exposing players' body fat.

¹⁴This also happens in other sports (i.e. Ryan 1995).

Female coaches

There are few role models of women coaches in college or juniors. The stereotype of female coaches being lesbian is a deterrent to some girl players as male and female coaches use the term “lesbian” derogatorily to describe female coaches. Girls, sometimes, call each other “lesbian” derogatorily to insult each other even though homosexuality has become more accepted in tennis over the past three decades¹⁵. Female coaches are also seen as less capable of pushing players at the upper ranks. One girl, whom I interviewed over the course of a year, said that she did not want to play for a woman coach in college. When I asked her why, she just said that she was used to her male coach from juniors and could not give a clear answer. But it exemplified the kind of stereotype that many female juniors and former players have about female coaches; a misunderstood conception, even about themselves, of female coaches not being “good enough” and needing a male coach to dominate them:

I wouldn't want to work with a female coach because I would just butt heads and I just wouldn't listen. I would listen to a guy much better. And guys wouldn't want to work with a female coach. And most females out there would want to work with a guy coach. I think that's why most coaches are guys. And, also, a lot of females aren't good enough to hit with guys at a high level. So, I think you find a lot more females coaching at the country club level.

Another former player, Terri, reiterated this and added that male coaches provide a protection factor that female coaches cannot, thereby reproducing another gender stereotype that women need protection, specifically from men:

I think there's more [female coaches] now because I have a few friends that are doing that, which is great to see, I love to see that. I think it could be one of many reasons, but I think that girls like a male coach because he's

¹⁵Martina Navratilova, Billie Jean King, and Amelie Mauresmo are examples of openly gay professional tennis players.

dominant. It's a dominant figure, and being on the tour and having that dominant figure is almost like protection. Because you do need to protect yourself out there. You have competitors and opponents, you want to feel like you're in that secure space. And I think that comes back to man vs woman: I think that the men know what they're doing and the women are going to be softer, or maybe not as good of a coach.

Additionally, female coaches are more respected if they are at least as strong and physically able to keep up with their players. This is especially true when female coaches train teenaged male players. Most players (and parents) assume that female coaches are less capable than male coaches if they are not as fast and strong as they are. As coach Linda says,

I think being able to hit may help because they see me as able to hang with them. Even if I don't always beat them it's ok – as long as I can hang with them and they see I'm fit, so it's almost like setting an example for a player instead of just telling him what to do, you're doing it yourself.

The respect is harder to earn and maintain for female coaches despite their record as female coaches, as coach Cassie describes:

It's harder to keep the respect; once you start putting your foot down, they don't want to work with you but with guys they listen to the discipline; and they only want you to work with their child and no one else; you always have to prove yourself no matter what your credentials; because you don't beat the men, you must not be as good; like [a famous male coach], he's a good motivator but he doesn't know shit about tennis.

I asked several parents and coaches their perspectives of why there were more male than female coaches in junior tennis. When I posed the question to fathers of why there were not more female coaches in junior tennis, they generally assumed the same thing that many female coaches did: that women want to start families. But they blamed it more on a biological instinct instead of on a response to the cultural aspect of discrimination and masculine domination in the junior tennis environment. As one father put it,

There's no doubt. There might be something to that. Women tend to migrate anthropologically toward the next thing in life – like children – more than men do...Men don't naturally [have a biological instinct to have children] in their early 20s turn to that. In their 30s, they're 10 years behind women, who in their mid-20s are already thinking about it [marriage, family] in some point in the back of their mind. Some of them, by history, don't generally go from college to pro. They maybe burn out more, go to the next biological clock.

Another father put it more simply: "Women go off and, you know, kind of get into relationships." However, many women have shown that it is possible to continue with tennis even after having children. Kim Clijsters winning the U.S. Open after having her child is a good example.

On the other hand, what may deter women from entering the coaching world – which would be a focus for future research - is that many women were coached in a way that was traditionally masculine, the authoritative approach: no pain-no gain, winning above all else, segregation of boy and girl divisions, etc. Many male (and female) coaches take it to the extreme with a hyper-masculine approach, as Messner 2003 discusses, which makes it tiresome for many players once they reach adulthood. It forms the foundation for gender stereotypes and discrimination, sexual harassment, and the reproduction of male-dominant ideologies, in general.

Racial/Ethnic Differentiation

One of the benefits of playing junior tennis is that it exposes players to cultures from all over the world. This is especially true at the more highly competitive levels where travel to international tournaments is frequent. But, even though tennis has become more "diverse" since before the civil rights era (tennis has a long history as an elitist, upper class, whites only sport), it is still a mostly white and mostly middle to upper class sport. Mattingly points out that striving for the American Dream ignores structural

inequalities among class, gender, race, and ethnic boundaries (2010:15). Likewise, I see striving for success in the junior tennis world in a similar light. While I did not intend on doing research about racial and ethnic stereotyping in the junior tennis community, I did note some of the ways in which racial and ethnic stereotyping is being used by coaches/parents and, thus, potentially learned by players from an early age. Here, I discuss some of the things I noticed in the field that show how race and ethnic stereotyping and discrimination are still a part of junior tennis, despite its multi-cultural population¹⁶.

When I asked parents if they thought there was any racial or ethnic discrimination in the junior tennis world, the responses varied depending on the parent's race. The majority of white parents say that there is no racism or discrimination of any kind in junior tennis, even though they acknowledge that the non-tennis world does have racism and discrimination. The white parents who do say that there is racial discrimination in the junior tennis environment refer to discrimination against white players, due to the USTA's Diversity Program. While some parents of color discuss their experiences of "microaggressions" (Sue et al. 2008) of racism, many players (across genders, races, ethnicities/ nationalities) say they feel discriminated against in large part due to their socioeconomic status, regardless of their income level. For instance, the USTA tries to help lower-income players of color with the Multidiversity Player Program, which makes white lower-income players who need the financial support to stay competitive feel discriminated against. But the middle- to upper-income players also feel discriminated against as they want the sponsorship status for social marketability

¹⁶While I only highlight some of the few instances of racial and ethnic discrimination, this could be the focus of a future research project.

(Bauman 2007). Some refer to this as “reverse racism”, unaware of or ignoring the racism against non-white players that pervades tennis history:

I did see discrimination, I saw it for a black girl...the USTA was definitely supporting her financially, but I was playing against her and I had all black referees, and I'm not at all racist, I didn't even notice it. My friends were telling me after the match, and it was strange. I know she was getting financial support, and maybe it was crazy and it just happened to work out that way that we had all black refs on the court. I know she was getting a lot of support from the USTA and maybe it's just because they're trying to promote more non-white players.

But, most of the black parents I spoke with¹⁷ all said that they had felt, witnessed, or experienced some form of racism. Some white parents felt that if there was any racism felt by black players, it was because of their parents' influence. For instance, one parent mentioned to me that she did not know why the “black players won't socialize with the white players”. She said she saw a black player hanging around a group of white players but would not contribute to the group and explained that she thought black players have parents with “chips on their shoulders” and instill these ideas in their kids. She said she used to work in a “black school” so “I should know. I've seen this happen a lot”. This is an example of “microaggressions of racism” (Sue et al. 2008) in junior tennis. This mother did not seem to understand the perspective of a black person, or any minority, in a large group of white people in a community whose history was grounded in exclusionary principles of racial segregation (i.e. black players were often denied access to tennis clubs before the Civil Rights era). But she meant what she said in a positive way, as a way to promote integration. She seemed to think that it is racist of black players to be reluctant to join in with a group of white players. This conversation

¹⁷Most black parents I spoke with were African American, but several were from African nations.

occurred informally just after a tournament official told me that she felt that black parents had a chip on their shoulder towards officials, as if officials are against their black sons/daughters.

An African-American father of a highly successful junior player did not comment on the details of the racism that he said he felt in the junior tennis environment because I think he wanted to focus on what his daughter has achieved, not the obstacles she has faced. Another father/coach, who was born and raised in a West African nation¹⁸, had the same perspective when I asked him about discrimination and said about his daughter, "As long as she keeps winning, there is no discrimination." However, Nina, an African- American mother emphasizes the racism she has felt throughout their junior tennis experience, specifically in the ways that the referees respond to her and her daughters:

[Referees] over-ruling calls for [us] but not the other player. I mean, calls that were good but he made sure every little thing was picked on by this one. I mean, be fair. If you're gonna overrule this side, overrule the other side, you know?...For the most part, the refs are really good. But the older ones still don't like blacks. Particularly, not in tennis.

But, for the most part, Nina feels that the players, themselves, are open and welcoming to her daughters and that the racism is worse in public schools than in the tennis environment. Likewise, some coaches say they see discrimination, but were hesitant to label it as such:

Racial, ethnic, I think it goes a little bit both ways though. I think you see it both ways definitely. The thing is you see situations that you don't really know the thought process behind certain decisions, but it makes you wonder and sometimes they are really obvious, and you could be wrong. I don't think it's something we will ever be able to put a finger on and say

¹⁸For reasons of anonymity, I will not reveal the nation.

yeah it is because of this, or no it's not because of that. But I mean there have been many situations where it's gone both ways.

So there seems to be a consensus among white parents that there is no racism but black parents perceive racism where there is not any. And the consensus among black parents is that there is race discrimination, inside and outside of tennis, but that their coping strategy is to ignore it and succeed. There is very little that these parents feel they can do to dispute the discrimination they feel.

Unwittingly, coaches can influence players' beliefs and understandings about people from other countries just through courtside conversations. Some tend to classify certain cultures as having certain amounts of work ethic and seem to categorize players' potential depending on what country the players are from. They are not consistent about the characteristics they apply to players according to culture, but more often than they realize, they justify cultural classification to explain things they cannot otherwise explain. Players, thus, emulate coaches and form stereotypes about other players, as well. For instance, players often said "Russians are cheaters", "Eastern Europeans are hungrier", "Americans are lazy and spoiled", "Asians are robots", etc. One coach points out a commonly acknowledged cultural difference (or stereotype) between Asian players and American players in that Chinese players are not necessarily abused or "cogs in the machine" as the stereotype would suggest:

[In China] they line up and bow to you. On the outside, the respect is out of the ball park. You pay homage to the elderly, people in authority. You do no step out of line because there are so many people that look down on that. It doesn't mean you're not free thinking or a cog in the machine. It just means you respect authority. Rules never keep bad people from breaking rules, it just stimulates deviance. We're great at rules but not teaching morals. In Asia, there is a built in hierarchy for respect of age and authority. But in our culture, we think we're holding kids back if we don't give them parameters. But kids want that. It starts with unconditional love.

Stereotypes are not always used derogatorily, though, and often seem to be a way to joke around with and bond with another player, as a point of humor and connection¹⁹. When it may become disempowering is when players ostracize and stigmatize players due their stereotype, and when they learn that it is right to reproduce these ideologies. In these cases, players may learn to discriminate people based on their cultural/ethnic/national origins.

Thus, stereotypes still formed despite the cultural appreciation and the friendships that form across cultures. Cultures are often discussed as homogenous even though individual friendships disprove that to players. The rhetoric, however, remains. An environment of cultural diversity for players does not necessarily, by itself, reduce stereotype or discrimination reproduction. It can sometimes breed it. When I asked junior players if they had experienced any racial discrimination, most initially said they had not. But when I continued to talk with them, some felt that there was a certain amount of stereotyping and categorizing of junior players based on race or ethnicity. One African-American player, Hope, told me about an exchange she had with a parent of one of her opponents at a tournament:

I was playing a tournament I was playing a girl and I was at like 5–0, and her dad started coaching her and getting pissed off, and he came on the court, and he like went up and called me “Sour lemon from the islands” and...and I went up and switch the scoreboard to go up 5–0, and he said it was 4–1, and he goes out there like slapped my hands...And he called me a cheater, but that was like when I first started playing [tournaments] so I kind of like cried.

A white player tells me that he feels the stereotypes are legitimate:

¹⁹Black players are sometimes regarded as “naturally” strong and fast which perpetuates the notion that they are “naturally” better athletes and that they do not work as hard or play as strategically as white players (Hoberman 2000, Hartmann 2000).

It was definitely an Asian stereotype. I used to hate them. They were just so much, like, further developed mentally. They were all just so disciplined. It's a part of their family. The discipline on the court and they were also mentally strong, and I would just get so frustrated because these kids were very good, but I would lose to them all the time because I was a mental mess and it was over there just doing their thing. Otherwise, I don't think there's any racial or inter class [stereotypes].... I am definitely by no means a racist, but I firmly believe that stereotypes exist for a reason, and tennis helped foster that for damn sure. And in my belief, they're all legit... Russians cheat. Every single Russian cheated. Every single Asian was extremely disciplined. You know, like maybe it was good maybe it was bad. But they were all legit. Spanish kids, kids from South America... They had all the same garbage. They were all taught to [cheat], definitely taught to do it.

American Junior Tennis and International Competition

When I asked them how American junior tennis compares to other national federations, most participants said that American junior players were “behind” other countries. Their evidence of this lies in the fact that there are less than 10 Americans in the top 100 of the ATP tour and that no American has dominated since Pete Sampras (surprisingly, they neglect to see that there are more American women in the top 100 of their own tour). However, they often ignore the fact that tennis has become more accessible to countries around the world in the past few decades due to globalization. While these players may come to America to train, they nevertheless, keep their country of origin as their place of citizenship in order to stay eligible for federation support as well as to say that their country is “here”, a feat that is tough to accomplish in American tennis where there are thousands of contenders. In most participants' adamant description of American junior tennis' deficiencies, they give several reasons in comparison to other countries and cultures such as having too many options, being soft and lacking parental discipline, and having no specific coaching standards. I see this “paradox of privilege” that pervades American junior tennis as incorporating several facets where empowerment and disempowerment of junior players is often difficult to

discern, as described in previous chapters. These facets of privilege are in conversations about 1) choice, 2) drive and discipline, 3) player development, and 4) commercialism.

Choice: “good for life, bad for tennis”

One of the most common answers as to why participants thought American junior tennis was behind other federations (such as Spain, Belgium, and Argentina) had to do with the fact that America is the only country where players can continue their competitive tennis in college. While providing more options may be seen as a positive thing to most people, many parents of junior tennis players see this as a detriment to a player’s focus. Below, mother Nina, equates the option to go to college on scholarship as a distraction, or an “excuse”, instead of an opportunity because it interferes with players’ training schedule (both of her daughters started on-line schooling in the second grade in order to train for their professional careers):

Everybody wants their kid to make it but there are different routes. You can’t be great at school and great at tennis. You gotta pick. Do you wanna be good at both, do you wanna be great at tennis, or do you wanna be great at school? You can’t have it all. There are not enough hours in the day. American tennis people think they can be a pro and go to college and this and that, but you just you can’t do it.

American players are more likely to grapple with the decision of whether to play professionally or play for college because they know that college is a real option. Players in Europe, for instance, usually play professional tournaments and then pay for college after they have realized they probably will not make it as a professional player. Coach Tim who played professionally from age fourteen for about fifteen years put it this way:

I think US kids, if you are a good junior you have so many options like I said you can go to school or you can try playing the tour, or you could maybe get

a job at a really nice country club and make a lot of money, and make a good living, and tour and other countries. At least, [in a South American country] I can talk about what that experience today but there it's, okay you're going to play tennis, all right well you either make it or you are going to drive a cab. So it's like oh, okay. There is no Plan B basically there.

This does not mean that non-American players cannot play collegiate tennis. In fact, more and more non-U.S. players are accepting collegiate scholarships than ever before as they realize it is a safer, economically better bet. But they are still investing loads of money, time, energy, and sacrificing the family togetherness for that chance. One mother said that her son will keep his citizenship while training in the U.S. in order to be eligible for the Davis Cup for his country. Although Sherri invests close to \$100,000 a year in her son's tennis development and lives halfway around the world from their home, she says,

When he's older he'll get a chance to play in the Junior Davis cup, and then the [professional] Davis Cup. That will be a good experience because he wants to go to college in the US, and in the US there's 500 kids that are better than him. You're not getting get that kind of opportunity unless you're [really highly ranked and are playing Davis cup].

But, because players would have to move to another country to attend college and leave their families behind, and these players would need to be able to know enough English to study at the collegiate level, the decision to go to college in the U.S. is not always an option, or at least an easy one. Therefore, most players outside the U.S. opt to turn professional as early as possible and shoot for their dream to make it as a pro player until they either reach that dream or realize that they will not make it. Then, they quit completely and go to university. With the latest in on-line education technology, some players actually get bachelor and, even, master's degrees while pursuing their professional careers (a trend that more and more American players are following). Because many parents and coaches believe that having a "Plan B" takes drive and

motivation away from a player, they take the choice of playing college tennis off the table when the player is still young so that the player starts to identify him or herself as striving to become a pro, rather than saying, "If I don't make it, then...". It is a difference in parenting philosophies. Some say it is better to give kids many choices and options, while others say that only distracts kids from their ultimate goal.

Many participants also felt that American players have many more competitive sports to choose from. Tennis is low on the totem pole of organized sports in America behind sports like football, baseball, basketball, hockey, golf, and even Nascar. But in Europe and South America, tennis often shares popularity with top sports like soccer.

Coach Ang sums it up:

American Junior tennis is behind. And there's more people playing tennis all around the world. And again you compare to other sports...everything's gone global. As a result, there are more people playing. And tennis is not that, you know, that popular in the United States so the pool isn't as big. I'll give you an example. In Belgium, there are 400,000 kids in tennis. At that age in the United States, the pool is closer to 100,000. So here is a small country, with three times the amount of kids in the pool. Just because kids here have other options.

Some see the plethora of sports to choose from as a productive cross-training technique where, for instance, playing soccer helped build endurance or playing baseball helped with eye-hand coordination on the tennis court. Besides the improvement to their tennis game, a secondary sport can help relieve the pressure from tennis and serve to be another source of identity formation for young players, especially when they know that they are being judged by their sport performances. Indeed, many players start out playing a variety of sports until they settle on tennis and find that their experience with these other team sports helped prepare and motivate them for the individual context of tennis. In fact, many players chose tennis because they dislike the

team politics of other sports and preferred having total control over the progress of the game as well as being able to actually do something the entire time. Others, like Nina, however, see other sports as a hindrance to their players' tennis development:

If you wanna be a pro nowadays, you [used to] be able to play another sport. You didn't have to do what you're doing now. Now there's no way you'll make it now playing two sports. There's too much competition in tennis.

So, some people may argue that there are too many choices in the U.S. for kids and that is why there are not many American players "making it" on tour. But when I asked the question, "Does having other activities help or hinder kids' success?", they often said that having other activities helps a kids' chances for success in life but say that Americans cannot succeed in tennis because they have too many choices or are spoiled. It is a double standard. Many people say that Americans have the most access to resources but take it for granted, so people move here from other countries with the drive necessary to take advantage of U.S. facilities. Perhaps, it is more truthful to say that having options is best for a child's overall well-being but can also provide a hindrance to a child's professional sport aspirations if he/she allows it to. It all depends on the guidance of the parents and coaches and the balance and drive of the player.

Drive: natural or innate?

Returning to the topic of drive, most participants - including parents, coaches, players, and umpires - stereotype American players as "soft", "entitled", "lazy", and used to immediate gratification in comparison to players from Europe and Asia, particularly post-Soviet European countries and communist countries. While one coach told me that "Chinese parents spoil the one child they have", most coaches and parents stereotyped Chinese players, as well as Eastern European players, as disciplined and respectful of

authority. Coach Ang expresses a common response to my question of whether American players are different than that of other cultures:

The kids are soft. The kids have, they think that they have... They are deserving of things that they haven't earned. They are spoiled, there are spoiled rotten. In every sense of the word, in sports and outside of sports.

Another coach and parent exclaimed:

These Russians...they don't quit until they see \$10 million in the bank. Then they blink. Then they blink. It's the culture. She's on a mission. That's the difference.

As many participants stereotype American players in this way, they continue to characterize players from Eastern Europe as the most driven and those from Asia as "hardworking", "disciplined", and "respectful of authority". Players from South America are often characterized as "grinders", meaning they never give up. These stereotypes are based on cultural inferences about drive which often sparks a debate between natural talent versus training. While most participants refer to the lack of development and infrastructure in certain countries as the source of their drive, they would also support a view of natural drive and talent. Below, former player Don's views highlight this paradoxical, and rather contradictory, thinking that I hear from many of my participants:

Kids from Serbia you hear the stories, like kids who were practicing an empty swimming pool with bombs going off around them, it was their way out. They were pulled from family, from friends, from anything but tennis when they were 9 years old and put in an environment where it was all they knew. They were coming from nothing. The kids that were so good, you never hear about kids coming from well-off families. There always coming from with nothing for families and they have, it's ingrained in their minds, and they're coming from crap. Living in this environment, they're such natural competitors. Their life has been a fight, so when they're on the court there been a fight, they can fight far more than we can. In this country the only kids you can play tennis are kids with money. And even on top of that, the kids that get good rankings are the kids that can go to every tournament... and kids from this country... there is an entitlement issue,

there is an issue of them expecting things to be handed to them. It really comes down to [the fact that] you can be talented, but if you don't have [the drive to] kill someone [on the tennis court], you're not going to be a professional tennis player. How are you gonna make it otherwise, you know? To me that's the difference. You look at where all these other kids are coming from, it's just so natural to them. We don't have that.

Mother Nina expresses the same contradictory view about drive:

It's just plain genetic. But now all these people think, "Oh my kid's athletic. He's gonna be a tennis player." There's more to it. You gotta have the right technique, you gotta have the fitness, the food, sleep right, it's a full time job. Just eating right, sleeping right...I think you get that drive from your parents.

Coach Ang distinguishes innate drive from learned drive:

Some people are born with it, some people have to learn it. The ones that learned don't compete as well as the ones that are born with it.

Another reason participants give for player "entitlement" in the U.S. compared to other nations had to do with parenting styles. Most participants blame American parents for being either too lazy or coddling to their players. But they also see overbearing and, sometimes, "abusive" parenting in the U.S. tournament environment. Several of the players that admitted that they were physically and emotionally abused by their fathers, also admitted they thought it was a "cultural thing" as they were sometimes from South America and India. But physical abuse is perpetrated by American parents as well, so it is hard to draw a definitive line between U.S. and non-U.S. born parents. While non-U.S. parents were often revered for their disciplinary parenting approaches, they were simultaneously criticized for their abusive measures. I found this to be one of the most interesting paradoxes of my research. Below, a conversation with mother Nina highlights this paradox:

Nina: There's a lot of respect [in China]. In some of the Asian countries, they still slap your hand with a ruler stick if you miss the ball...Oh, the discipline is

severe [in other countries] to where you couldn't do that discipline in America.

JF: It would be considered abuse here.

Nina: It would be considered abuse here to where it's not in foreign countries. And those kids are so disciplined. It helps the ones that have it [talent]. They're very disciplined, the ones that are gonna make it. I haven't seen many that didn't. I know a few that came to America and lived here and their tennis went downhill. So I think they needed the discipline because it was what was driving them. And then they got too Americanized, I saw them fall apart.

JF: Should coaches take on that kind of strict behavior here, or would that be just impossible to do?

Nina: No, your strictest coaches are the ones making players. The coaches in America are too worried. I'd say 98% of coaches are too worried about getting their money and they find a family with money and they're all just bull-crap talk. And they talk up a storm and tell you what you wanna hear, just to keep the money flowing in. And they don't make the kids be disciplined. They can't. They're spoiled rotten brats.

JF: How should a coach discipline a player to create a good player? There are boundaries in America. What would be over the top as far as discipline?

Nina: Um, you can't hit a player here. So really I don't know what you could do here, but it's some kind of drive.

So, while Nina thinks parents should emulate disciplinary measures that may be considered abusive by American standards, she says parents should not be abusive towards their kids because it will burn them out. Another parent, Clark, discusses this line between disciplinary and abusive parenting, as well, by also portraying American kids as soft. But he wonders what the cost is of disciplining kids to the level that, as he says, Russian and Chinese parents do. He discusses the point at which he finds the level of discipline, seemingly necessary for tennis success, to be not worth the detriment it can impose upon the parent-child dynamic:

I don't know what's good or bad. We could argue that the Russians, the way they push their kids, is abusive. But they could argue from the other

side that if they didn't do that, they wouldn't be where they are...it has to be about more than just tennis. If by pushing them, they [my kids] don't want to return my phone calls in life, I guess we'd have to agree that I failed. Their [Russian] culture may not agree to that. To me that's a no brainer.

Money and agents: opportunity or exploitation?

As "talented young athletes in many sports are regularly sought and often exploited" by sport agents and agencies (Malina 2009:S8), many coaches who have been in the junior tennis industry for decades say that money in the form of corporate tennis academies and agents has hurt a sense of community that used to permeate junior tennis in 1970s America. But, at the same time, coaches say that money is necessary to participate in junior tennis to pay for quality coaching, travel, and equipment. The paradox is that players who come from wealthy families have less drive to work hard than those that come from less wealthy families. But it is the wealthy families they must depend upon to keep working with the driven and talented players. For instance, coaches often take players from wealthy families in order to cover expenses for the players they really want to develop and give discounts too. Here, one mother reminisces about her experience with one of the top coaches in the world:

She trained at [international tennis academy] for 2 years. She trained and became very good friends with [world #1 player]. She was part of [world renowned coach's] group. But it was, we always felt that, it became too expensive, and too expensive if you weren't getting what you wanted, you know...I'd say it was \$35,000 a year....that doesn't include school. That may have been before we paid [him] something under the table to keep her on his court.

But coaches often find that, instead of being able to give the time and attention to the players they feel have the most potential, they must give their time and attention to the players who have paid top dollar for it. The parents who pay the most for training often pressure the coach to pay the most attention to their kids and see no problem in

telling the coach how to run the academy or practice. Coaches have to please the parents in order to keep the academy running which erases the reasons they got into coaching or running an academy in the first place (i.e. to be self-employed and, thus, call the shots).

Another paradox of money is seen in the presence of agents and sponsors. I saw agents roaming around the international and professional tournaments. They are often business people who see junior players as a potential profit-turning product. Some players who had agents from an early age had positive experiences. One coach said he had no regrets of his decision to sign with an agent at twelve - even though it illegal to sign until fourteen - because he felt he was guided properly by his father and a close friend of the family who was also a highly regarded sport psychologist. Another former professional player reiterated the need for guidance when signing with an agent:

I think agents are a good thing because they can help get sponsors, but there definitely has to be someone close to the player that will filter the information that the player gets so the player only hears the positive or good stuff, and if there is negative, it's things that the player can deal with because they're going to take things seriously.

But while they can offer players the opportunity to follow their dream into the professional tour, as turning pro is near to impossible without an agent or wealthy parents, they can also destroy careers by over-scheduling them and encouraging them to turn pro too early. Often players and parents are naive in their decisions to sign a contract that is worth far less than a college scholarship would be. The paradox of signing with an agent is that while it can finance a player's path to professionalism, it can also destroy one's chances with the pressure and expectations that come with signing. It can also start the player on a path to indebtedness from an early age, depending on the contract. While agents may offer contracts that cover all of a player's

expenses for the first few years of training and travel, they often expect a return on their investment in the form of a percentage of earnings. Some agents see these contracts as loans that will be paid back with interest regardless of whether the player succeeds or not. This ties the player to their agent for years to come. One mother took this into account when she discouraged her daughter from accepting an offer of a few thousand dollars to get started on the pro tour. She encouraged her to accept a college scholarship worth \$160,000, instead.

Injuries and burnout can also result from overtraining as agents, who are often unschooled in the management of young tennis players, assume they are able to follow similar training and competition schedules as adult professional players. Some parents do not mind this risk, though, as one mother says about her daughter:

[She] is gonna start traveling in may for ITF. Hopefully, she'll have a sponsor. USTA will take her to some. And she's all set to see the world. You know, she could get injured in four or five years, and her career could be over and she'll still have seen the whole world. Look what she's done already in junior tennis. She's sacrificing as a child.

Interestingly, she realizes her daughter is sacrificing her childhood as well as a college career but, because she will have "seen the world", it is worth it to her. She feels that the financial gain through sponsorship and potential endorsements as well as the alternative education she will receive through traveling and being exposed to different cultures will be worth sacrificing a more mainstream college education. I asked if she would change her mind if her daughter happened to get injured. She responded, "No, no. We're turning her pro for financial reasons...They end up paying for your college two times with the money you're gonna make off endorsements."

While there are limits as to how many tournaments players can play until they turn 18, due to the “Capriati Rule”²⁰, agents and coaches often substitute tournaments with more intensive training schedules for fear they will fall behind other players who are probably training just as hard. It is the constant feeling of staying competitive that is at the heart of professionalism, and to teenagers who are making decisions to forego college in exchange for a shot at the pros, this feeling is more intense than ever. To be sure, their futures - both tennis and non-tennis - are at stake.

While many parents are open to the idea of at least considering an agent’s financial help, most coaches see agents as parasites who exploit junior players and who have contributed much to the commercialization of junior tennis, in general. Coach Henry blamed parental greed for this: “They’re greedy, end of story. There’s money out there, it’s a business, it’s a science, and these kids are being prostituted for it.” But coaches can also be part of the exploitation. One coach acknowledges this to me in private after a frustrating day on the court:

Coaches let kids get away with disrespectful behavior towards themselves and their parents. But it’s hard for us as coaches to say anything about it because we would lose a client. How would we support ourselves?...It’s a scam, this is all a scam, this is just a scam.

Tennis is not a scam, like some coaches and parents say, unless coaches are overcharging, under coaching, and leading people on to think that their player will “make it to the pros” if they just spend more money on lessons. At the heart of most coaches’ intentions is helping youths to make realistic goals and learning to be self-sufficient,

²⁰The “Capriati Rule”, as known in the junior tennis arena, was instated after Jennifer Capriati rose to stardom by fourteen by reaching the Top 10 world ranks professionally, only to burn out by sixteen. This rule provides a tiered schedule of tournament play for young players who play professional.

self-confident, respectful, disciplined, healthy, happy people. But the business of coaching and junior tennis coupled with the economic pressures of life and the increasing market value of quality coaching may make it seem like a scam sometimes. And this leads to the third paradox of money: the more money that is involved to improve participation and financial gain in a sport industry, the more corruption and normalized abuse that is bound to occur.

Summary

This chapter discusses the paradoxical spaces in the conforming to the tennis identity, particularly the ways in which players develop their sense of self through their relationships with peers, their (non)participation in school, their family dynamics, and perceptions of gender, race, and ethnicity. While tennis ability can elevate players' experiences and status within the social world of tennis as well as outside of it, their tennis identities intertwine with their non-tennis identities in complementary and contradictory ways.

As Chapter 3 discussed the ways in which junior tennis players are liminal agents being made and making themselves through their tennis journeys - and as Chapter 7 focused on their experiences of pain, potential, and morality through this process - this chapter focuses on the ways in which social worlds collide and co-exist. As players become committed to their tennis identities in order to reach their potentials through experiences of pain and moral learning, they often find that this means leaving behind their non-tennis selves or minimizing the experiences they have outside of the tennis social world. As a result of these paradoxical experiences with friends, school, family bonds, and tennis peers, junior tennis players conceive of themselves in the world as different but, at the same time, unique. Rarely, did one participant regret making the

sacrifices they have made to become who they are, as social beings, in the tennis world. At the same time, though, they often acknowledge wondering what a “normal” life would be like.

Referring to Chapter 4, players come to know themselves through their experiences of power. Thus, as Foucault 1988 advised against labeling certain practices as “good” or “bad”, junior tennis can be an empowering experience when players are allowed spaces of non-tennis identity formation in order to avoid “deviant overconformity” as Coakley 2006a describes. When players commit, solely, to the tennis identity for their sense of self, they “live and die” with their performance and results which invites the opportunity for exploitation by coaches and agents, as well as overdependence by the family for their happiness. Similarly, when players reduce their exposure to academics by completing the minimum requirements, they limit their potential to become someone else if their tennis dreams do not come true. And when gender, racial, and ethnic stereotypes are reaffirmed through rhetoric and jokes, the gender and class divisions in junior tennis, as well as in sport in general, become normalized and invisible to players.

Thus, junior players experience both empowerment and disempowerment through the technologies of the self and technologies of domination in junior tennis. They make themselves and come to understand their environment through paradoxical spaces in their social relations with people inside and outside the tennis environment. As they internalize their external realities, they fold these experiences back into themselves and perform their “selves” for others. Through this process of “doubling”, as explained in Chapter 3, they continually transform themselves based on the context in

which they find themselves. As players use the tools they learn through tennis to question the dominant norms of their social realities, they may use those very tools in order to dismantle them. Acknowledging the paradoxical spaces within these social worlds is the first step to acknowledging the potential for possible alternate ways of doing and being.

CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION

“The most important fact about modern sport, viewed as an anthropological phenomenon, is the hostility to introspection its goals and techniques require, and this is its truly disturbing dimension” (Hoberman 1986:207). Denison 2007 adds,

Sport sociologists are reticent to apply social theory to the purposes of performance enhancement...[with an] extreme emphasis on individualism...This means that all responsibility for change falls upon the individual...[but]...changing an individual...is not always the best course of action to remedy a problem. What may appear to be an athlete's personal problem might actually be related instead to some larger social construction of how we believe sport should function (380).

In other words, the problems that arise and continue to arise in sport are often not individual problems; they are social problems. And, as Foucault 1980 recognizes, focusing on individuals ignores the ways in which power creates knowledge which, in turn, constructs identities and normalizes power roles. In an effort to explore the problems within competitive junior tennis that have continued to exist over the past three decades since I was a player (i.e. coach abuse, parent abuse, burnout, injury, identity narrowing, lack of education), this research is provides a structure by which to discuss the dynamic characteristic of power among players, parents, and coaches. As sport scholar Denison 2007 advocates for an application of social theory to the practice of sports training and competition, this research applies classic theoretical conceptions of ritual, practice, and power to the setting of competitive youth sport; specifically, the performance enhancement of junior tennis players.

Chapter 3 explores how as junior tennis players come to know themselves through empowering and disempowering processes, they develop self-worth and conceptions of their place in the tennis (and general) society. Through their daily

training practices, interactions, and conversations, players experience pain, conceive of potential, learn moral lessons, build (and avoid) friendships and family dynamics, and develop perspectives about gender and racial identity. As they transform through embedded rituals, their constant state of “becoming” professionalized tennis players distinguishes them from their peers who are not involved in elite endeavors, who may have more time to just “be”. With the constant emphasis on improvement, enhancement, and potential, there is little room for contentment. The sense of accomplishment that comes with achieving a goal is quickly replaced by the compulsion to improve upon it. They trade what they refer to as a “normal” childhood or adolescence for the shot at perfection and becoming a symbol of the human struggle; a symbol of survival by reaching the ideal human form where body, heart, and mind meet to achieve perfection. But, players progress along various liminal pathways of improvement, starting over, and withdrawal. As one coach and former top-ten world player asked, “When does tennis become a debilitating process even when you are doing all the right things as a coach and as a player, but it still does not make a player feel alive?”

I have sought the answer to this question by exploring the simultaneous coexistence of what Foucault 1988 describe as technologies of the self and technologies of domination. “Technologies of the self embody resistance, transgression, and empowerment on the part of the individual, unlike technologies of power which signify disempowerment on the part of the individual as a result of oppressive regimes of power effected through dominant discourses (Jones and Aitchison 2007:53). Junior tennis players are not just “docile bodies” (Foucault 1975) or liminal subjects (Turner

1969) being molded into the ideal athlete according to the dominant norms of the junior tennis world by their parents and coaches. Players use training and competition rituals, in which they are instructed by coaches and parents, in order to empower *themselves* as players and people. Thus, they are liminal *agents* making themselves, as well as being made by authority figures, through these rituals. They become themselves through both technologies of domination and technologies of the self.

But, as Chapter 4 explains, it is often difficult to make a clear distinction between practices and attitudes that are forms of technologies of domination, those that are technologies of the self, and those that are coping mechanisms, a dilemma that Foucauldian sport scholars acknowledge (i.e. Chapman 1997, Jones and Aitchison, Markula 2003). Technologies of domination involve players feeling that they must exhibit behaviors and attitudes in order to please authority figures and satisfy the expectations of the junior tennis social world, even if they feel disempowered doing so. When players' practices and attitudes help them overcome situations that disempower them (i.e. coach/parent abuse, burnout) by prioritizing their own health and well-being, they are using technologies of the self. When players' practices and attitudes do not result in the transgression of the power that acts to subordinate them in the first place, but helps them survive in the environment nonetheless, these practices and attitudes can be considered coping mechanisms (Jones and Aitchison 2007, Markula 2003). Defining which practices are empowering and which are disempowering depends upon who is making that judgment and in what context these behaviors and attitudes are being judged. For instance, I as the researcher and a former player may label certain practices as disempowering technologies of domination or coping mechanisms if I see

potential long-term detriment to player well-being as a consequence. On the other hand, my junior player participants may judge certain practices as empowering and “worth it” despite disempowering circumstances (i.e. abuse, injury) if they see immediate results that winning and improving can bring (i.e. higher social status, praise).

To solve this dilemma of whether junior tennis is a beneficial or detrimental experience to youths’ development, junior tennis may best be described as a space of paradoxical power where junior players are *simultaneously* empowered and disempowered by their junior tennis experiences. Empowerment usually results when personal well-being is prioritized over performance, while disempowerment usually results when performance is prioritized over well-being. The choices that are made about training, competition schedules, and general lifestyle often involve factors that have both empowering and disempowering consequences. For instance, junior players who build their identity around tennis may have a greater amount of victories on the court which can be empowering. But they must sacrifice their social, family, and academic lives as a result, which can be disempowering in the long-term. As a result, junior tennis players can feel both entitled to succeed at tennis and, at the same time, come to resent tennis due to the sacrifices they have made for that success.

This supports Markula’s 2003 point that Foucault does not label certain practices as inherently good or bad. It depends on the context in which practices are performed. Practices of self-care can transgress if they are not just used to comply with the dominant ideal of the high performance athlete, but are used to “actively increase the understanding of one’s self as an ethical being” (99). Competitive youth sport is not inherently good or bad, but practices involved in this endeavor can be judged as such

depending on how they are performed. Thus, youth athletes can become empowered and transgress the dominant power norms of youth sport if they prioritize their own well-being over the production of results through daily practices of self-care. These practices are meant to increase their self-understanding as well as their awareness of themselves as ethical agents in the world around them. By doing so, they are likely to become more productive and successful, anyway, than if they were to sacrifice their well-being for potential success (i.e. Adie et al. 2010).

Instead of discussing parenting/coaching styles in Chapters 5 and 6, I try to explain how coaches/parents approach their relationships with their players/children given the power roles with which they are inscribed. Similarly, I describe the various ways in which players approach their relationships with their coaches/parents given the subordinate role they have. If we view these approaches and dynamics along continuums that are constantly changing across contexts, then we can begin to understand the various circumstances in which adult and child interact in a power relationship. In this way, my research is an attempt to give an ethnographic account of power as a force that is performed in the dynamics between individuals constantly shifting in everyday practices. Power relations can be discussed along continuums within a grid of relational power in order to understand what “chemistry” is, for example, and how it transforms individuals through rituals of power.

Markula 2003 points out,

[I]f Foucault theorizes that power is not necessarily an evil, the[n] researchers should not automatically assume that powerful individuals in sport manage their power unethically [and it is] as important to study the management of power as it is to analyze individual athletes' reactions to it (100).

It is important to understand the perspective of all parties involved in power relations and how power is gotten and applied without assuming intent one way or the other, even though intent may ultimately be found to be part of the process. Often, behavior is normalized and performed without reflection. This research explores the approaches taken by the participants of power dynamics among players, coaches, and parents without assuming that power is dictated with malevolent or benevolent intent, one way or the other, even though it may have such effects on the player unintentionally. This research also shows that although power can be held in title by coaches and parents as authority figures over players, players also show their power in daily interactions with coaches and parents. Most importantly, the context in which the power dynamics take place dictates the overall effects of power and its interpretation of being empowering or disempowering as perceived by either player, coach, or parent. This is explored in Chapters 7 and 8.

As the differences between empowerment and disempowerment of youths in competitive tennis depend upon how strongly players attach their identity as people to their identity as players, and the context within which one is judging this (dis)empowerment, it calls into question how individuals judge empowering and disempowering experiences. The experience of being “betwixt and between” these identities – can result in empowering youths with discipline and encouragement (at the middle of the power continuums) and disempowering them with entitlement and abuse (at the extremes) depending on the degree of this attachment and on the context in which the player is viewed. Attaching personal identity solely to a tennis identity based on results can be disempowering for overall well-being as it often entails sacrificing

happiness, social development, and personal well-being for more winning (but does not necessarily succeed in doing this). On the other hand, attaching it too loosely to a tennis identity based on results can be more disempowering for overall well-being if it entails sacrifice of socially marketable skills (i.e. work ethic, discipline, learning to win) for happiness. Thus, players can be disempowered by their tennis experience with a sense of entitlement, on the one hand, or oppression, on the other; and sometimes, both.

A balance between tennis and non-tennis identities seems to lead to youth empowerment. When players are allowed a more broadened adolescence - to have access to non-tennis peers and activities, a balanced family dynamic, and school that exposes them to life outside the tennis world – and when coaches and parents stress life lessons and sportsmanship either over or equal to results, junior players are more likely to have balance. When players are neither solely tennis players or solely “normal kids” but in-between and both of these identities – thus, liminal individuals – they are less likely to attach their self-worth to either one so strongly that failure at one will lead to a sense of disempowerment and conditional love/support from their parents and coaches. Thus, there is more empowerment during liminality (between identities) and when individuals interact at the middle of the power continuums and power grid (i.e. collaboration). There is more disempowerment when players sacrifice one identity for the other and when their relations with coaches/parents reach the extremes of the relational power grid (i.e. entitled, abused).

Some may wonder if a more broadened adolescence is the recipe for creating champions. But, a better question may be, does a more broadened adolescence allow youths the freedom to pursue championships while maintaining their health and future

opportunities if sport does not work out? As sports are becoming more and more dependent upon practices that debilitate youth athletes (i.e. performance enhancing drugs, social isolation, concussion, chronic injury and illness, greater power instilled in coaches), players' potential to become champions becomes valued at a greater degree than their psychological, emotional, and physical development. A Foucauldian analysis of junior tennis asks, then, how competitiveness and performance enhancement becomes normalized as a means to an end. This includes questions like, how is the desire to win promoted ahead of the pleasure of participation? And, how does the rationale of competition produce knowledge? In short, the ethical athlete must question the very conditions that frame him/her as an 'athlete'" (Smith Maguire 2002:305-306). When we question those conditions in which we are developed and become ourselves, we gain control over the consequences of those conditions: "If we are each the site of social order, if we adopt an ethics of existence, if we refuse the standardization of our self-formation, then our autonomy can be used to different, and perhaps radical, effect" (Smith Maguire 2002:311). So, the questions youth sport participants should be asking are these: What factors of junior tennis are involved that can sustain the self-care, self-stylization, and self-/social awareness that makes sport an ultimately empowering or disempowering experience for individuals? Who has the power to make that judgment?

These questions should be aimed at individual sport practices in specific contexts including all aspects of physical training, competition, sport psychology, etc. These practices can be empowering technologies of self for athletes to overcome adversity, but they can also be forms of "psychodoping" (Hoberman 1986) that blind athletes to the greater context of their performance enhancement. For instance, sport psychology,

a.k.a. performance enhancement of an athlete's mental toughness, can be used as both a way to learn perseverance and as a way to normalize their tolerance of abuse and abusive environments. It can both empower players by providing the tools to cope with oppression and abuse, to resist power as a technology of the self, but it can also be a tool of their oppression and abuse thereby reproducing their disempowerment as a technology of domination. But if used in a way that helps players place sport into their lives in a sustainable way that complements their lives instead of dominating their lives, it can help them think through grander existential questions: Where do I fit into the grand scheme of things? How does playing tennis contribute to how I fit in?

Where *does* junior tennis fit in the grand scheme? This could be answered with future research. Some see sport as a socialization tool into the political economy:

As the burden of responsibility for social order falls ever more on the shoulders of individuals, so too does the responsibility for one's own improvement, competitiveness, and optimization. Governmentality, then, refers to a "mentality" or way of thinking about the administration of society, in which the population is managed through the beliefs, needs, desires, and choices of individuals... (Smith Maguire 2002:307).

Individuals choose to engage in practices and hold beliefs that foster their self-improvement and entrepreneurialism (i.e. sport performance enhancement), values that are inherent of capitalist systems. Junior tennis could be considered an extension, or microcosm, of the neo-liberal economy. Since competitive sport is arguably the world's predominant physical culture, especially as it pertains to child socialization and child rearing, it has become the model by which even recreational sport is organized. It has displaced traditional sport in many countries around the world as a symbol of cultural identity. The monoculture of competitive youth sport has spread world-wide values of competition, individualism, and winning above all else, even though learning life lessons

of team work and perseverance among others is incorporated in that. But most importantly, it is the spread of values of “performance enhancement” in order to stay competitive, self-reliant, and ultimately victorious that reflects the current state of childhood in post-industrial societies - a time for productivity rather than of exploration, as Coakley 2006a points out. Thus, political ideology of capitalism is reproduced in the global sport of junior tennis. Players are taught above all else that winning is everything. Friends are rivals, injuries are badges of honor, parents are managers, coaches are drill sergeants, and winning is rewarded no matter how it is earned. Junior tennis, thus, both reflects and socializes children with the values of capitalist culture world-wide.

Another question that could be asked in future research is, who benefits from elite junior tennis, and elite youth sport, in general? Players benefit from the life lessons they learn and the exposure to various cultures, but they could learn these things at the recreational level. At the elite level, they can benefit from the potential scholarships and post collegiate career in playing professionally or coaching. But only a small fraction of players get these opportunities. It could be argued that the adults of the junior tennis world benefit the most from junior tennis, at least the way that it is run now. Coaches, tournament directors, and tour administrators make money because of the labor junior players put forth. Because only a few of the thousands of players who play get reimbursed for their years of sweat and monetary investment, most junior players could be considered as unpaid laborers who support a multi-million dollar adult economy (Donnelly 1997). Without junior players, there would be no junior tennis, and thus, no jobs and identities for thousands of adults. As one former player said, “The people who benefit the most from a child superstar are the parents: financially and in many ways.”

That said, this is not necessarily a call for monetary compensation for junior players because that could increase the risk of exploitation of players by agents. But the subject has come up in my interviews and is being considered by some collegiate sport commentators and coaches (Coakley 2006a)¹. This is a call to make some changes within the junior tennis environment that reduce disempowering aspects of junior tennis while promoting the positive. As Markula 2003 states, "...it is possible to examine how everyday bodily practices can empower women to change the institutional use of power in sport" (88), I see it possible to examine how everyday bodily practices can empower child and youth athletes to change the institution of power in youth sport. Ultimately, this could affect change in power dynamics between authority and subordinate power roles in broader settings (i.e. the workplace, educational environments).

As Foucault suggests, it is possible to transgress dominant ideals by adopting a new definition of morality based on ethical self-care, self-stylization, and critical self-reflection (Markula 2003):

[Since] power is in every relationship, but not all relationships are symmetrical, how does the feminist sport researcher who occupies a position of relative power in comparison to her research participants, manage her power to create change? We might need to become more aware of the possibilities for our technologies of the self: how can a feminist researcher actively change the condition of women [and children] through sport rather than eagerly waiting for "others" to create transformations for us to analyze (100).

But it is also important to consider how, not just researchers, but athletes can fold the dominating external discourse into themselves in order to see the sport world (and, thus social world) differently as well as be seen differently by others. By articulating the dynamics between players and their coaches and parents, this research hopes to

¹ This is currently a topic of debate within collegiate sport.

encourage junior tennis participants to dismantle the disempowering aspects of junior tennis and find a way to balance between tennis and school, childhood and professionalism, focus and friendships. But, as one former player asked me, “Is balance even possible?”

If players (and parents and coaches) participate in junior tennis in ways that include critical reflexivity and focus on ethical means of self-care, they may transgress the “norms of junior tennis” that work to disempower players and make balance possible. For instance, players could train for fewer hours a day in order to take classes (online or in school) in order to build a non-tennis career plan. This reduction of training would also reduce their risk of injury and burnout and, thus, chronic illness and pain. Families could constantly re-evaluate their investments in their child's tennis career, including the use of the term “career”, and pay closer attention to how their investments and involvement in tennis are impacting their family as a unit and the individual members within it. Finally, as junior tennis has a history of racial, gender, and class discrimination, players could also be better exposed to the historical context of their participation. When players criticize Title IX for its unfair treatment of boy players, for instance, they do not realize that boys generally receive half of the college scholarship funds that girls do, largely, because of football programs; not women’s equal access to educational (and sport) resources (Coakley 2006a). It would prevent players’ discriminatory inclinations as adults if they were to learn early on about the ways in which they have come to exist and participate in their current sport social worlds.

Overall, my research provides a structure to discuss power and performance enhancement of youths. It also explores the limits to that performance enhancement

and the ways in which the youth sport industry, in general, tries to expand those limits. Social status of being a top athlete is a major reason why most players invest so much time, money, and energy into sport; a social status that is shared and depended upon by most parents and coaches. This striving for social status and marketability – the striving for affirmation of identity as a productive and successful, even heroic, member of society - is why many parents spend much more money on their child's training than they could ever save from a college scholarship. And this money is what supports junior tennis coaches, federations, academies, and equipment companies – an entire industry.

Perhaps the biggest paradox of junior tennis, and of competitive youth sport in general, is that players are considered children because they cannot make money with their labor while they are simultaneously treated like adults because of the expectations that are placed on their performance (or their labor). We train our youths, in non-sport settings as well, to be high-performing in order to maintain the ideology of social progress (i.e. as long as we are producing winners, society is progressing). But might it be that we are not just building a stronger generation through youth sport but, also, creating a generation of burned out, exploited laborers of an adult economy? It may be that by cutting youths from sport teams as early as middle school because they do not perform as well as others, we are also perpetuating the childhood obesity epidemic in this country by valuing athletic performance over holistic identity development and well-being. So, the questions that need more research and more philosophical and anthropological inquiry remain: Where are the limits to performance enhancement? Who benefits from elite youth sport in the long run? Who ultimately decides?

This research hopefully will make it easier for elite youth athletes and their parents and coaches to avoid the pitfalls of sport while enjoying the many benefits it has to offer. It follows Malina's 2009 call for "vigilance and systematic monitoring of coaching/training environments in select/elite youth sport programs" to promote the well-being of young athletes (S7). It can also apply to non-sport performance enhancement cultures for youths such as the arts, academics, etc. Further applications of this research can contribute to the study of physical, medical, emotional, psychological, and social effects of performance enhancement and stress, in general, and how it pertains to the conversations about child abuse and children's human rights, specifically.

As sports has recently become a topic of concern in the discussion of children's human rights (David 2004, Donnelly 1997, Grenfell and Rinehart 2003, Kidd and Donnelly 2000), this research could contribute to a certification process for coaches in competitive youth sport in the United States in order to prevent further exploitation, injury, and abuse of youth athletes. There are over 40 million youth athletes in the U.S., but no mandatory certification processes to become a coach. While other countries require a strict regimen of classes and training to earn a license to teach, just like any school teacher's certification process in the U.S., American coaches get certified through the individual sport's federation merely for marketing purposes. It is not a legal requirement. This results in a wide range of approaches to teaching philosophy and technique.

Although this creates a vast array of choices for athletes, as well as a sense of confusion about the most productive and healthy training processes, it makes it easy for

adults in the youth sport industry to exploit and abuse youth athletes and get away with it. For instance, the coaches I mentioned in Chapter 6 as having been accused and charged for sexually molesting or abusing their underage players are still coaching. There is no way to take a coach's license away when they do not have one in the first place. Some of those coaches went to jail for child molestation only to get out and move to another state or country where they are coaching junior players right now, in public, advertising their coaching services on the internet. Similarly, coaches who are emotionally abusive continue to coach which makes their methods become a normalized aspect of the junior tennis social fabric. The USTA does not monitor coach-player relationships and there are no coaching licenses. There is no structure in place to discern between disciplinary training measures and emotional abuse just as there is no punishment for sexual relationships between coaches and players who are under eighteen (the legal age of consent in the U.S.). Thus, much of the physical, emotional, and sexual abuse that occurs between coach and player gets normalized as “private business” between coach and player.

My research employs the skills I learned in junior tennis (i.e. analysis, work ethic) in order to “push boundaries [to] illuminate who has the power, why they have the power and how they keep the power” (Johnson and Kivel 2007:103). It can contribute to the education of players, parents, and coaches as well as a certification process for coaches in the United States. By “scrutiniz[ing] those practices and policies that need to change in order to make leisure and sport equitable and safe” (Johnson and Kivel 2007:103), I hope my research can help promote the maintenance of overall youth well-

being as well as the eradication of abuse and discrimination in the youth sport context and youth performance enhancement contexts, in general.

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