Exploring the Old School Concept: Adding Definition to a “New” Market Segmentation Dimension

Damon Aiken, Ajay Sukhdial

Abstract

For years now, sports fans and the popular press have utilized the term old school to describe certain athletes, a distinctive style of play, and a particular set of values. The present study further defines this unique dimension along which fans identify with teams and athletes. The authors explore the elemental roots of the old school ideology and, through the use of a survey taken at an NCAA Division I sporting event, delve into sports fans’ qualitative definitions of the concept. Finally, the old school ideology is discussed as a viable strategic segmentation dimension.

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Introduction

The popular advertising slogan for the ESPN Classic television station coyly asks a very intriguing question: “Are you old school?” Television commercials go on to quickly flash varied edits of grainy film footage showing athletic heroes of the past conquering embittered rivals. At first glance, this seems an innocuous, however unusual, question and one to which many thousands of viewers across America no doubt quickly respond in the affirmative. Certainly, many sports fans want to identify with such greatness, and intuitively it seems that many fans would (or perhaps should) aspire to being old school (OS). Still, a large segment of the population likely associates the notion with being overly conservative and perhaps behind the times, thereby rejecting any teams and athletes (i.e., sport products) that are widely considered OS. Regardless, it seems that the question, and therefore the principle of old schoolness itself, quickly segments fans into two classes. As a means of fans either identifying or distancing, this seemingly new segmentation dimension deserves further attention.

Given the ubiquitousness of sport in American life, even the most casual fan is likely to have a notion of what it means to be OS. Thus, while individual fans may differ about the precise meaning of the term, consumers of sport should be generally capable of answering the question posed above. After all, the term seems to have emerged from American sport and is deeply rooted in American culture (Sukhdial, Aiken, & Kahle, 2002). Many of today’s professional athletes have been labeled OS by the popular press in reference to their work ethic, their level of commitment, their style of play, or some other aspect of their character (e.g., Wahl, 2002). While the OS ideology has evolved over time, being OS does not equate to having graduated from the sport, being literally old, or having retired from the sport. The OS ideology implies a commonly recognized and often shared set of traditional values held by both athletes and fans.

Prior research has shown that while competitive sport may have less impact on our characters than many have claimed, sport still plays a major role in expressing and illustrating our values (Simon, 2003). Moreover, past research has found that to associate with individual and team champions, past or present, is to emphasize the distinctively positive aspects of group membership—a unique way of managing self-image (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998). So it seems that this process of aspiring to be old school, of desiring to be with others that

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are old school, and of harboring old school values further signals the expressive nature of sport.

The purpose of this paper is to further investigate the extraordinary concept of old schoolness. Sukhdial, Aiken, and Kahle's (2002) work investigated the concept and developed a valid and reliable measurement instrument. The present study elaborates and extends this work through a further examination of the origin of the term as well as an exploratory investigation of sports fans' qualitative definitions of the topic; thus, it provides a rich, in-depth analysis of the old school concept. The benefit of qualitative research, especially in this case, is that it sheds light on the true nature and character of the issue (Dabbs, 1982). The present work begins with a discussion of the background of the OS concept, moves into the methods and results of the study, and then concludes with a discussion of the old school concept as a viable segmentation dimension for strategic sport marketing.

The Old School Concept: Where Does It Come From?

The OS concept itself has likely emerged from various sociological and psychological interactions. While it seems clear that the average fan has a notion of what it means to be OS, there are a variety of related perspectives. Each fan is likely to have a slightly different point of view that has probably been influenced by parents, family, close friends, and extended social circles, with additional influence from age- and education-related variables. As a consequence, the OS ideology has been recognized as a multidimensional construct centered on the foundational elements of attitudes towards winning, materialism, and the athlete as role model (Sukhdial, Aiken, & Kahle, 2002). In a continuing effort to understand the construct, the following paragraphs will explore the aforementioned and other related factors.

OS and the American Way

The roots of the OS concept are spread across the literature of the fields of sociology, psychology, and sport theory, as well as sport writings in the popular press. While the OS concept is not always expressly stated, values and attitudes reflective of the concept appear throughout the literature and throughout society in general. As early as 1899 President Theodore Roosevelt and the philosopher William James emphasized the importance of sports in teaching citizens "correct" civic values (Dyreson, 1999). Since then, numerous scholars have discussed the link between the American way and sports (Gibson, 1993). For instance, Tutko (1979) discusses the importance of an athlete being "courageous, loyal, competitive, dedicated, fierce, determined, aggressive, team persons, tough-minded, psyched-up, motivated etc. . . . a cross between Superman, the Bionic Man and the Boy Scout Oath" (p. 104). This traditional conception of the hard-working and virtuous all-American athlete appears closely linked to the OS athlete.

OS and the Protestant Work Ethic

The OS athlete embodies a certain work ethic idealized by American society. Overman (1997) writes about the influence of the Protestant ethic on sport and observes that religion and sport are symbiotically related. The author recognizes the Protestant work ethic as a cultural force that exerts a great influence on a wide realm of social behaviors and institutions, especially sport. Eitzen and Sage (1978), in discussing the sociology of American sport, describe industriousness as a key building block for athletic success. Whether alluding to an OS philosophy or addressing the concept directly, many researchers have noted a consistent work ethic (Tutko & Burns, 1976; Tutko, 1979; Yauch, 1996). Indeed, throughout American society, our athletic heroes continue to embody a work ethic reflected in such popular expressions as, "give 110%," "never say die," and "give 'til it hurts."

OS and the Athlete as Role Model

The OS ideology focuses on the athlete as a vehicle for conveying socially correct values to young people (Eitzen, 1999). Competition with grace, humility, poise, and self-control have long been viewed as important to athletic success (Eitzen & Sage, 1978). These traditional American values portray our athletic heroes as role models. Thus, fans holding OS attitudes expect that professional athletes should display exemplary behavior on and off the sports field. Contrary to this OS expectation, fans with new school (NS) attitudes likely expect that athletes should focus on winning at any cost and not concern themselves with role model status. Burton, Farrelly, and Quester (2001) allude to this NS notion of the modern athlete as anti-hero. As the authors assert, "... the modern athlete is
now increasingly seen as entertainer and not restricted to concepts of fair play, selflessness, humility or a team-first orientation. Today, some athletes are thought more legitimate for their arrogance, win-at-all-costs efforts, or their showmanship” (p. 316). This issue was exemplified in the Nike advertisement wherein Charles Barkley proclaimed, “just because I can dunk a basketball doesn’t mean I should raise your kids.” Opinions held towards athletes as role models are likely to clearly delineate OS fans from NS fans.

OS and Attitudes Toward Winning
The widely cited claim “Winning isn’t everything; it’s the only thing” speaks volumes about our culture’s focus on success and the objective and quantifiable concept of winning. The words, attributed to the late Vince Lombardi, raise a host of issues that are central to the importance of winning above all else (Simon, 1985). Victory in contemporary sport is often viewed as more important than the way it is achieved (Gibson, 1993; Frayne, 1995). The OS athlete, however, plays “for the love of the game.” Moreover, the OS fan likely recognizes that “it’s not whether you win or lose, it’s how you play the game” that matters. Tutko (1979) argues that a large segment of society has shifted to emphasize winning at all costs. This NS attitude has distorted the commonly held traditional values regarding sports. For instance, the value of being mentally tough enough to handle setbacks has been distorted to the belief that losing is worse than living because you have to live with losing (Tutko, 1979). Further, NS values reflect the notion that anyone who loses is obviously not mentally tough enough to succeed. Gibson (1993) states that in today’s society the quality of athletic performance is secondary to the result. The values of the game, of competition, and of play itself are eclipsed by the cash value of winning.

OS and Materialism
Materialism has been defined as the importance one puts on worldly possessions (Belk, 1984) and the idea that goods are a means to happiness (Richins, 1987). Higher levels of materialism relate to the notion that one’s possessions assume a central place in life and relate to higher levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Belk, 1985). In the case of the modern professional athlete, numerous claims have been made regarding the explosion in salaries and the prominence of materialistic values. Incredible sums of money have brought about a shift from the old school values of playing for love of the game towards more new school attitudes wherein loyalties are constantly shift towards the highest bidders. While OS fans and athletes are likely to de-emphasize material wealth, proponents of NS values are likely to tout materialism as the modern reality of the world, citing a fundamental right to pursue wealth through any and every means.

OS and Nostalgia Proneness
While the OS concept maintains varied temporal ties to the American Way and the Protestant Work Ethic, it also seems to emerge from the common psychological tendency to look back with fondness—to be nostalgic. Davis (1979) straightforwardly defines nostalgia as a longing for the past or a “yearning for yesterday.” Holbrook and Schindler (1991) describe consumers’ inclinations toward nostalgia. In a series of studies, they find that nostalgic feelings relate directly to a fondly remembered age category: namely, adolescence and early adulthood (Holbrook, 1993; Holbrook & Schindler, 1996). This is likely the same age range when fans begin to closely identify with their favorite teams. Havlena and Holak (1991) categorize prominent themes and emotions in the nostalgic experience. Findings suggest that nostalgic feelings mostly center on people, objects, and events. Furthermore, their analyses of subjects’ self-reported narratives assert that people mainly identify nostalgic feelings towards family, close friends, classmates, teachers, and coaches. Thus, nostalgia proneness is likely linked to OS values. However, nostalgia alone will not fully explain the complex interactions held within the OS concept.

An Investigation of Sports Fans’ Qualitative Definitions of Old Schoolness

Method
A sample of sports fans was accessed through their attendance at a spring season American football intra-squad scrimmage. The event was largely promotional and signaled the official start of the season for this NCAA Division I team. More than 10,000 fans were estimated to be in attendance. Six researchers were positioned at two main stadium entrances. They approached every third person who appeared to be eighteen until a desired sample size of 300 was reached.

As part of a larger omnibus survey, a short, four-part OS survey was administered in a written format. First, the survey posed an open-ended question asking respondents to describe what it means to them when an athlete is referred to as old school. Second, four 9-point Likert-type scaled questions were presented regarding the extents to which respondents view themselves, their mothers, their fathers, and their best friends as old school. Third, respondents were asked to list professional athletes with whom they most closely identify (throughout the four major leagues: NBA, NFL, MLB, and NHL). Finally, demographic questions
were asked regarding gender, age, education, and length of time in the U.S.

Although this was to be an exploratory study, general hypotheses were formulated regarding social influence, identification, and demographics. First, given the perceived complexity of the issue, we reasoned that respondents would often provide multiple topics within their definitions. Second, we posited that social influence would be most prominent among parents, specifically most greatly derived from fathers. Therefore, we reasoned that the highest correlation of OS ratings would be between respondents and their fathers. The logic behind this assumption was that generations of Americans have been raised under the

notion that fathers largely play the roles of sports enthusiast, trainer, and coach. While times are certainly changing and women are playing more socially prominent roles in sports and sport-social development, we believed that many subjects would still have derived their sports values from their fathers. Third, we hypothesized that individual subjects' self-ratings of OS would directly relate to the professional athletes they listed in the identification task. That is, self-reported OS respondents would most closely identify with professional athletes that are clearly OS themselves; just as NS respondents would likely identify with NS athletes. This proposition was derived from sport/exercise identity theory and the supposition that

**Table 1**

**Mean Scores of Old School Topics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Description</th>
<th>Coder 1</th>
<th>Coder 2</th>
<th>Coder 3</th>
<th>Coder 4</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Ethic – Disciplined, tough, hard-working, in touch with fundamentals</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditionalism – Traditional American values, conforms to society's traditions</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>40.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time – Classic, in touch with the past</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness – Modest, well-mannered, respectful, humble, nice</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Model – Sets standards, responsible role model to children</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays for Love of Sport – “True” to sport/game</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Player – Unselfish, cares about teammates, puts teammates first</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty – Dedicated, devoted, shows commitment</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism – Not concerned with money or material wealth/goods</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Sportsmanship – Fairness, win/lose gracefully, plays by rules</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Familiar with Term</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent – Plays smart, focused on academics before sports</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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the ideal professional athlete plays a role in the formation of the ideal self-concept (Brooks, 1998). Finally, we generalized and conjectured that men would be more likely to have followed sports (and therefore be more OS), higher age groups would be more likely to have followed sports longer (and therefore be more OS), higher education groups would have more collegiate sports experiences from which to draw (and therefore be more OS), and groups that have lived in the U.S. longer would have had more exposure to the country-specific OS phenomenon (thus, groups that have lived in the U.S. longer would be more OS).

**Results**

Among the 282 usable surveys, 87 (30.9%) respondents were women and 195 (69.1%) were men. Survey respondents ranged in age from less than 20 to over 60 years. Overall, the women in the sample tended to be younger than the men (29.3% of the women and 17.4% of the men were 30 years old or younger). In addition, the men in the sample had achieved higher education levels (48.7% of the men and 36.8% of the women were college graduates).

With regards to the open-ended question defining OS, a code key was developed through a random sample of 75 questionnaires. This key contained thirteen unique topics along with brief descriptions and definitions of each. Four external coders were given the code key and worked independently under identical instructions. First, they were to count the number of distinct topics/issues provided by each respondent. Second, the coders were asked to interpret responses and assign the codes appropriate for each separate topic in the given definition. For example, within the code key the topic of *politeness* was followed by the adjective descriptors of modest, well-mannered, respectful, humble, and nice.

The four coders were extremely similar in terms of their identification of the number of topics in each response. The mean number of topics ranged from 1.45 to 1.61, leading to an inter-coder reliability measurement of .947. Across all coders, the mean number of respondents who only reported one topic was 135.3. This implies that roughly 147 of the 282 respondents took the time to provide more than one topic in their definition—thus, seeing OS as a multidimensional construct.

Table 1 displays the mean number of times that coders recorded each of the thirteen major topics. The inter-coder reliability measurement with regard to topic interpretation was also relatively high (.887). The top three categories in terms of frequency of measurement were Work Ethic, Traditionalism, and Time. Politeness and Role Model status were cited nearly as frequently as Time. Following these issues, a notion of passion and devotion emerged as roughly twenty-five respondents wrote about Plays for Love of the Sport. Being a Team Player, Loyalty, Materialism, and Good Sportsmanship ranged from twenty four to nineteen responses. The bottom three least-cited categories were Other (wherein six subjects mentioned some form of being literally old), Not Familiar with the Term (representing only 64.4% of the sample), and Intelligence (3.2% of the sample).

Correlations were measured between subjects’ self-ratings, ratings of their parents, and ratings of their best friends. In this instance, respondents’ self-ratings had significant positive correlations with all three others (See Table 2). In contrast to our hypothesis, the evaluations of best friends were most highly correlated with OS self-measurements. Respondents’ scores were least correlated with perceptions of their mothers’ degrees of old schoolness. Additionally, an examination of mean scores shows that OS ratings were consistently higher.

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yourself Old School</th>
<th>Mother Old School</th>
<th>Father Old School</th>
<th>Best Friend Old School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.344</td>
<td>.418</td>
<td>.619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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with parents (mean evaluations of 7.10 for mothers and 7.29 for fathers) compared to the evaluations of the best friends (mean of 5.65). Overall, the respondents had OS self-ratings equal to a mean of 6.01, thus seeing themselves as less OS than their parents.

The listing of athletes' names relative to professional league proved only somewhat insightful. A sampling of the most popular names can be seen in Table 3. A wide range of names appeared amongst those 140 subjects who considered themselves "somewhat old school" to "old school." While many were names of retired players, others were still very active in their respective leagues. Thirty-two subjects provided self-ratings of "somewhat new school" to "new school" and listed a very wide range of names of professional athletes. Many suspected NS athletes were only mentioned once (e.g., Dennis Rodman, Rasheed Wallace, Kordell Stewart, and Warren Sapp).

Additionally, many nonresponses were recorded among this relatively small group of subjects. It is interesting to note that Michael Jordan was popular among both segments of OS and NS respondents. Perhaps this was due to his astounding popularity, but also perhaps because while his training and work ethic might be considered OS, his athleticism and showmanship may be seen as more NS.

In hindsight, three separate issues may have led to the limited results found within this identification section. First, it is likely that the identification task was too open-ended and perhaps somewhat difficult to comprehend. Respondents might not have understood the task or the terminology behind "identifying" with an athlete. Second, the list of possibilities for potential professional athletes may have been too immense and therefore difficult to sort. Third, respondents may have been suffering a certain level of fatigue and/or boredom with the survey. The section posed a second set of open-ended, conceivably more thought-provoking questions and was placed three-fourths of the way through the lengthy omnibus survey.

Interestingly, a recency effect can clearly be seen in the identification section as a good number of people listed Terrell Brandon (NBA point guard) as a player with whom they identified. Coincidently, at the time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>League</th>
<th>Self-rating as old school</th>
<th>Self-rating as new school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Athlete you identify with (N)</td>
<td>Athlete you identify with (N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFL</td>
<td>Joe Montana (15)</td>
<td>Deion Sanders (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Steve Young (14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Elway (11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emmit Smith (11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kurt Warner, Jerry Rice (10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Walter Payton, Brett Favre (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dan Fouts, Troy Aikman (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBA</td>
<td>Michael Jordan (25)</td>
<td>Michael Jordan (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Terrell Brandon (16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Stockton (13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Larry Bird (8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clyde Drexler (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLB</td>
<td>Cal Ripken, Jr. (26)</td>
<td>Ken Griffey, Jr.(13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mark McGwire (18)</td>
<td>Alex Rodriguez (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sammy Sosa (8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greg Maddux (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tony Gwynn (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHL</td>
<td>Wayne Gretzky (26)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mario Lemieux (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bobby Orr (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N < 5 not shown*
of the data collection, this player was featured in various news media for playing in the current NBA play-offs with surgically implanted pins in his foot. Playing through pain would seem to be a key attribute of the OS athlete and likely a personality trait with which OS fans identify.

"It is interesting to note that Michael Jordan was popular amongst both segments of old school and new school respondents."

Finally, some noteworthy demographic differences emerged from the data. First, a positive correlation surfaced between age and OS/NS self-ratings (Pearson correlation = .236, p < .001) with significant differences between the six age groups (Chi-squared = 48.4, df = 5, p < .001). Second, education levels were discovered to positively correlate with OS/NS self-ratings (Pearson correlation = .154, p < .01) with significant differences between the four education groups (Chi-squared = 27.0, df = 3, p < .001). Finally, gender proved to be a discerning factor between the group's self-ratings as either OS or NS. A significantly greater number of females fell into the self-rated NS group as compared to the male-dominated OS group (Chi-squared = 8.3, df = 1, p < .004). Since a high percentage of respondents had lived in the U.S. all their lives, no discernable relationships could be derived from the time in the U.S. variable.

Discussion

Interestingly, old schoolness appears to be a dynamic and multidimensional concept centered around a core set of values. The OS concept is temporally dynamic in terms of how society shapes and changes the notion, just as society's sport-related values evolve over time. Moreover, time changes what is considered OS and NS, but time alone does not differentiate the OS from the NS. For instance, there must have been a time when Joe Namath and Ken Stabler, Wilt Chamberlin and Julius Irving, Bobby Orr and Wayne Gretzky, even Ty Cobb and Babe Ruth were all considered progressive, innovative, and avant-garde in their respective eras and sports. Using today's vernacular, given their larger-than-life personas, their flamboyant lifestyles, and their innovative styles of play, they would have been labeled NS; at present, however, these athletes might be more commonly viewed as OS because society has evolved to view their actions as such. On the other hand, numerous contemporary athletes might commonly be considered OS. They actively take the field/court/diamond/rink nightly to face new competition (e.g., Kurt Warner and Jerry Rice, John Stockton and Terrell Brandon, Sammy Sosa and Greg Maddux, Mario Lemieux and Brett Hull). Intriguingly, many of today’s younger professional athletes could be considered OS because of their traditional values, work ethics, etc. (e.g., David Carr and Joey Harrington, Mike Dunleavy and Tim Duncan, Troy Glaus and Chipper Jones, Adam Deadmarsh and Keith Tkachuk). So, it appears that the OS is not a direct function of time, but rather an adherence to OS values.

The OS concept is popularly seen as multidimensional and quite complex. A full 58% of respondents took the time to identify more than one issue related to old schoolness. The concept is not only multi-faceted, but likely also contains many high-level interactions. For instance, the notion of OS athletes “playing for love of the game” (and OS fans/consumers appreciating this) seems to equate to a host of issues including selflessness, nonmaterialistic values, loyalty and dedication, respect for the game/sport, respect for the fans, an appreciation for the history of the game, etc.

Furthermore, it appears that the OS core set of values revolves around three critical components. First, it seems that being OS implies believing in and setting certain standards of behavior. These standards are often viewed as traditional, decent, respectable, and time-honored according to an American historical context. The building blocks of this component revolve around having a solid work ethic, being polite, respectful, a proper role model for children and society, and upholding American traditionalism. While the OS athlete has attained role model status and wishes to maintain that status, the OS fan seeks out the athlete as role model and admires the athlete and his or her actions on and off the field. As two respondents eloquently stated:

"Old school means that your athlete is to be a scholar, dependable, honest, and a leader for the future" (Respondent 233).

[Old school means] "[t]raditional values of family and school, work ethic, no drugs, athletes [that] are role models" (Respondent 200).

The second component of the OS concept deals with the notion of being nonmaterialistic. The OS athlete plays for love of the sport. Similarly the OS fan values the passion, dedication, and loyalty that the athletes exhibit. In this sense, players and fans alike are "true" to the game; they are devoted to sport for sport's sake and not concerned with inflated egos, greed, or materialistic wealth. The OS ideology condemns materialism and materialistic values. Monetary rewards are secondary to the rewards found in competition and sportsmanship. Old schoolness is clearly delineated as a segmentation dimension by perceptions of wealth.
and materialistic values. Some representative subject-comments:

[OS athletes are] "[a]thletes that play for the love of the game not to get rich or famous" (Respondent 27).

"It [OS] means the athlete is mostly in it for the team, not for their individual ego. They place more emphasis on team success and helping others than they do on individual awards, recognition, and financial gain" (Respondent 60).

"Dedicated to the sport and staying crime free. Makes the sport the most important part of their life over media, endorsements, Hollywood careers, a stepping-stone etc." (Respondent 258)

The third component of being OS deals with attitudes towards winning and sportsmanship. An OS athlete will win and lose with grace, dignity, and respect for the game and others. The OS athlete plays by the rules and the OS fan appreciates this fact. Core OS values do not put winning above fair play or good sportsmanship. This complex notion is reflected in the following responses:

"Old school means those who play the game as it was intended. They’re athletes who follow good sportsmanship and play hard, but not cheap or dirty. They respect those who come before them and respect the veteran players" (Respondent 180).

"Old school means to me an athlete that is loyal to his/her team. They are hard working, honest, and play for the love of the game" (Respondent 280).

"They know the ‘true’ meaning of sportsmanship and play the game because they love it" (Respondent 183).

Demographically, this preliminary study indicates that OS fans are more likely to be male, older, and more highly educated. Perhaps being old school is somehow related to learning, playing, and watching a variety of sports over time. Through learning and playing the game, knowledge of the OS ideology and the OS values grows. As more women play and attend sports, and as the female fan base for professional sports continues to grow, it seems that these differences will narrow. Either way, these OS gender differences require further investigation and replication. The notion that older fans are generally more OS likely relates to the fact that these fans probably have a larger knowledge base from which to draw. Additionally, this finding points to the premise that old schooliness is (however directly or indirectly) related to nostalgia proneness (see Holbrook, 1993) and perhaps other time-related variables. Finally, education levels likely correspond to participation in, and attendance of, college athletics. Through more experience with college athletics, fans are introduced to the OS and perhaps gain an appreciation of OS values. Of course, this finding also needs further investigation.

**Implications: The OS Concept as a Segmentation Dimension in Sport Marketing**

Previous research has shown that society maintains a certain level of nostalgia proneness (Holbrook and Schlander, 1991) as well as a certain desire to identify with athletes (Wann & Branscombe, 1990; Wann, Tucker, & Schrader, 1996; Fisher & Wakefield, 1998). Given these tendencies, then perhaps society also maintains a collective understanding of the old school concept itself and (for many fans) an inherent desire to identify with OS (or NS) athletes. Given this strong values-based division between fan groups, the OS-NS dimension appears as a strategic basis for effective fan segmentation.

"A better understanding of old school values will provide sport marketers with a more strategic understanding of fan behavior, overall."

Simultaneously, many consumers have an ideal self-concept (Sirgy, 1982) that centers on positively valenced connections to athletics—in this case, the yearning to be considered old school. Sports marketers may more strategically choose to tie their firms/products to OS athletes in order to capture some of the positive affect associated with these individuals. Recent examples include Gatorade utilizing various OS images of Michael Jordan quenching his thirst over the years and Century 21 using Cal Ripken, Jr., to portray strength, stability, and commitment to OS values relative to the firm's ability to provide such values.

Accordingly, a research-worthy proposition emerges in that OS marketing messages would be more meaningful, more memorable, and quite simply more effective amongst OS consumers.

Prior research has also noted that endorser image and brand image should be congruent (Misra & Beatty, 1990; Kamins & Gupta, 1994). In the case of the OS concept, the commonly held perceptions of the OS athletes should match with the images of the advertising firms, their messages, and their products. Message effectiveness would be enhanced through a match up of spokesperson and product (Kahle & Homer, 1985). For instance, Joe Montana (most likely, a noted OS athlete) might make a suitable endorser for Wilson Sporting Goods (likely, an OS company portraying an OS image and encoding an OS marketing message). Similarly, Shaquille O'Neal (likely an NS athlete) would be an appropriate spokesperson for companies such as..."
And 1 or EA Sports that are probably widely perceived as NS. Future studies should investigate the match-up hypothesis with regard to this new OS/NS dimension. Finally, a great deal of past research has tied consumer values to consumer behavior (e.g., Kahle, 1996). OS values appear very likely to guide the behaviors of sports fans. Thus, a better understanding of OS values will provide sport marketers with a more strategic understanding of fan behavior overall. On the surface, it seems that OS fans would tend to look back with fondness and with great regularity. Further, OS fans are likely to hold strong and consistent attitudes towards materialism, winning, and athletic social responsibility. In particular, OS fans are more likely to consume greater numbers of souvenirs, autographs, and memorabilia. OS fans are more likely to purchase the new throw-back jerseys, caps, pennants, etc. In an experiential context, OS fans are more likely to look favorably on promotional events such as legends games, retro nights, and hall-of-fame games. Interestingly, in the current nostalgia boom, marketers have been noted to frequently engage in alteration or even falsification of nostalgic marketing messages in order to make collective-memory connections with consumers (Aiken, 1999). Regardless of the truthfulness of nostalgic ties, a good deal more research is required in order to clearly identify OS values and relate these closely held beliefs to fan consumption behaviors.

In conclusion, the OS–NS dimension represents a viable segmentation tool for strategic marketing. This initial study shows that sports fans vary according to attitudes, beliefs, and values regarding old schoolness. Given the exploratory nature of this study, future research should attempt to more clearly delineate OS values and behaviors as well as OS athletes and fans.

References