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The Impact of Parents’ Past Experiences on Parenting Styles and Practices in Organized Youth Sport

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The Impact of Parents’ Past Experiences on Parenting Styles and Practices in Organized Youth Sport

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Introduction

Approximately 35 million children in the United States participate in Organized Youth Sport each year (Weiss & Hayashi, 1996)

One of the primary reasons children become involved in organized youth sport is because their parents introduce them and facilitate their involvement in sport-related activities (Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2004)
Introduction (cont.)

Many parents sacrifice and invest a significant amount of money, time, and emotional energy in supporting their children’s sport-related activities (Green & Chalip, 1997).
Introduction (cont.)

Parents’ past experiences seem to have an impact on parent involvement in organized youth sport (Snyder & Purdy, 1982)
Participants

A subset of **46 U.S. parents** (17 fathers, 29 mothers) were recruited from a large-scale study being conducted in Australia, Canada, the UK, and the US.

Parents ranged in age from 33 to 53 years \((M = 43.96, SD = 4.84)\).

83% as White or Caucasian, 11% Black or African American, 6% multi-racial or “other”.

Parents reported a range of experience in sport, ranging from 2 to 20 years \((M = 2.55, SD = 1.22)\):

- 91% participated in **youth** sport
- 70% participated in **secondary school** sport
- 26% participated in **club, travel, or elite** sport
- 35% participated in **college or university** sport
- 4% participated in **Olympic or international** sport
- 4% participated in **professional** sport
Method

Procedure:

Participants were recruited through league directors in non-school based youth sport programs. Data were collected through the open-ended surveys via online interface at the convenience of the participant.

Data Analysis:

OPEN CODING - The process of identifying themes in the data
300 + themes were found

AXIAL CODING - The process of identifying categories and subcategories of the themes identified in open coding
13 Categories
18 Sub-Categories
Results

Parent’s goals for their OWN youth sport participation:

Non-Competitive to more competitive
• “[To] have something to do”
• “[I wanted to] win championships, play at the college level, and play recreationally for life.”
• “I wanted to go to the Olympics”.

Perceived benefits of OWN sport participation:

Immediate
• “I gained a sense of belonging”

Long-Term
• “I loved being an athlete as a young girl and gained confidence...and have carried that confidence into being an adult.”
Results (cont.)

Parent’s goals for their CHILDREN’S participation in organized youth sport:

Social
• “[I want them to] experience joys of being part of a team”

Emotional
• “I want my daughter to feel strong and confident in her body and proud of her athletic abilities.”

Behavioral
• “[I want my children] to be humble in victory and gracious in defeat.”

Cognitive
• “I would like them to gain the critical skill of setting smart goals and taking daily steps that help them reach those goals.”

Outcome
• “I would like to see my children participate in high school athletics and possibly at the college level.”
Results (cont.)

Parent’s current roles in child’s participation:

Volunteer
• “Our goal is to keep kids involved and develop their skills”

Fiduciary
• [I provide] financial support [and] transportation, [am a] cheerleader, [I] decorate buses for trips, monitor grades for eligibility, and communicate with coaches.”

Parenting Styles:
• “Demanding, but fair.”

Parenting Practices:
• “[I] Never miss a game, [I] step in and coach where needed, [and I] mentor the other children.”
Discussion

Contributions

• Insight into parenting styles and practices in organized youth sport

Findings

• Parenting styles are adjusted according to other parenting styles

Parents with limited/no past experience

• The goals of the four participants who did not participate in organized youth sport aligned largely with the goals of the other 42 participants who did.

Limitations

• Situated in a single social context (i.e., organized youth sport)

Future Research

• Aimed at understanding parenting styles in more diverse populations with parents from a range of ethnic, SES, and geo-political backgrounds.
Thank You!

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