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

Kyle Haderlie

Utah Conference on Undergraduate Research

28 February 2014
Introduction

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).

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

Special Thanks:
Dr. Travis Dorsch
Dr. Camilla Knight
Mr. Keith Osai

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