

Assessing Youth Sport Programs' Facilitation of Positive Youth Development

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What we know...

- Organized leisure can serve as a context to facilitate positive youth development (Larson, 2000)
- Sport is the most popular organized youth activity (Hansen & Larson, 2007)
- Sport participation is associated with positive and negative experiences/outcomes (Zarrett et al., 2008)
- Limited research has accounted for the diversity in youth sport program types (Gould & Carson, 2007).

Program Differences

- Competitive programs with more frequent/intense involvement associated with:
 - More positive outcomes
 - Prosocial norms
 - Interpersonal relationships
 - Time management
 - Academic and adult achievement
 - Diverse peer groups
 - More negative outcomes
 - Physical/emotional exhaustion
 - Risk behaviour
 - Poorer interpersonal functioning

(Busseri et al., 2006; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003; Strachan et al., 2009; Wilkes & Côté, 2010)

What we don't know...

Do other individual and sport program characteristics influence youths' developmental experiences within these sport programs?



- **Individual Characteristics**
 - Age, Sex, Years of Involvement, Birth Month, Ability
- **Program Characteristics**
 - Sport Type (Team, Individual)
 - Number of Coaches
 - Sex of Coaches
 - Age of Coaches
 - Team Sex (Coed, Same-Sex)
 - Age Range of Athletes
 - Size of Team
 - Team Manager
 - Training time
 - Competition Time
 - Context (Club, School)
 - Community Size



Purpose

- To examine associations between **sport program characteristics**, and youths' **developmental experiences** within these sport programs.



Participants

- 920 youth athletes
 - Age: 10-18 (M=14.2, SD=2.4)
 - Sex: 53% Male, 47% Female
 - Sport Type:
 - 80% Team, 20% Individual
 - 32 Sports: Soccer, Volleyball, Basketball, Swimming
 - Level: 39% Regional, 55% Provincial, 6% National
 - Context: 36% School, 64% Club
 - Diverse Communities:
 - Population 105 – 1.3 million
 - Ontario, Alberta, Nova Scotia

Youth Experiences Survey for Sport (YES-S; MacDonald et al., 2012)

- 37-items measuring experiences in 5 domains:
 - Personal and Social Skills (14)
 - “I learned about the challenges of being a leader”
 - Cognitive Skills (5)
 - “I improved my creative skills”
 - Goal Setting (4)
 - “I learned to consider challenges when making future plans”
 - Initiative (4)
 - “I learned to focus my attention”
 - Negative Experiences (10)
 - “Adult leaders made personal comments that made me mad”
- 4-point scale anchored: “not at all” & “yes definitely”

Data Analysis

5 Separate Multiple Regressions

17 Independent Variables

- Individual and program characteristics

5 Dependent Variables

- Personal/Social Skills
- Cognitive Skills
- Goal Setting
- Initiative
- Negative Experiences



Results

Personal and Social Skills

- Adjusted $R^2 = .07$, $p < .05$
 - 7% of variance in personal and social skills attributable to predictor variables

Significant Predictors	β	p
Sport Type (Team)	.41	<.001
Training Time	.19	<.05
Team Sex (Mixed-Sex)	.22	<.05

Results Initiative

- Adjusted $R^2 = .07$, $p < .05$
 - 7% of variance in initiative attributable to predictor variables

Significant Predictors	β	p
Age	.22	<.05
Coach Sex (Same as Athlete)	.18	<.05

Results

Cognitive Skills

- 9% of variance in cognitive skills attributable to 1 predictor variable – age.

Goal Setting & Negative Experiences

- None of variance in goal setting and negative experiences attributable to 17 predictor variables.

Implications for Enhanced Participation

- **High amounts of training time** associated with the development of personal and social attributes.
- Policy and Practice
 - Recognize value of training time versus competition time in developing the person within the athlete.

Implications for Enhanced Participation

- **Mixed-sex teams** associated with the development of personal and social attributes.
- Policy and Practice
 - Consider methods to create more opportunities for co-ed youth sport involvement.

Implications for Enhanced Participation

- **Team sports** associated with the development of personal and social attributes.
- Future Direction
 - How can individual sports better facilitate personal and social attributes such as leadership and teamwork?

Implications for Enhanced Participation

- **Coach-athlete sex match** associated with initiative development.
- Policy and Practice
 - Continue Women in Coaching program
 - Prioritize training and placement of female coaches on female-only and co-ed teams at youth levels.
- Future Direction
 - Why are sex-matched coaches doing a better job of facilitating initiative among youth sport participants?

Implications for Enhanced Participation

- **Sport program characteristics did not predict youths' development** in the areas of cognitive skills, goal setting, or negative experiences.
- Future Direction
 - What other factors within programs are contributing to youths' developmental experiences in sport?
- Policy and Practice
 - Assure adequate resources within programs to facilitate optimal development for all youth.

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