Perceptions of Background Anger in Youth Ice Hockey


University of Minnesota

Introduction

“Background anger (BA) is defined as the presence of a verbal, nonverbal, or physical conflict between two or more individuals that does not directly involve an observer (Cummings, 1987; Omli, LaVoi, Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009).” Within youth sport, these conflicts occur primarily between adults in the presence of youth at sporting events. Examples of BA include fans yelling at the referee, arguments between parents and/or coaches, fights involving parents, coaches, and other adults, and adults yelling at their own and other kids (Omli, LaVoi, Weise-Bjornstal, & Rodd, 2008; Omli, 2008). Exposure to BA may promote stress in youth players (Omli, LaVoi, & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009). “Background anger (BA) is defined as the presence of a verbal, nonverbal, or physical conflict between two or more individuals that does not directly involve an observer (Cummings, 1987; Omli, LaVoi, Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009).” Within youth sport, these conflicts occur primarily between adults in the presence of youth at sporting events. Examples of BA include fans yelling at the referee, arguments between parents and/or coaches, fights involving parents, coaches, and other adults, and adults yelling at their own and other kids (Omli, LaVoi, Weise-Bjornstal, & Rodd, 2008; Omli, 2008). Exposure to BA may promote stress in youth players (Omli, LaVoi, & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009).

Method

This descriptive study examined youth perceptions and feelings associated with BA, and player preferences of adult behavior in the youth ice hockey setting as they pertain to the model of BA above.

The mixed methods design sampled the highest rated 15 yr old ice hockey players (94 male and 99 female) in Minnesota via Minnesota Hockey’s two Advance Camps. Players were exposed to one of three pictures (www.usahockey.com) depicting a BA event and asked about their perceptions and feelings regarding BA at youth ice hockey practices and games.

Quantitative Results

Gender

• Ratings suggest that BA is significantly more frequent in women’s hockey than men’s hockey at the U15/Bantam level (p=0.005, d=0.45) regardless of BA type.

• In response to a BA event females report significantly lower perceived confidence & encouragement and greater frustration than males (p=0.042, d=0.32; p=.035, d=0.33; p=0.009, d=0.4) regardless of BA type.

BA Type

• The angry father BA type creates significantly greater frustration and less encouragement than the fighting dads BA type (p=0.028, d=0.47; p=0.035, d=0.44) regardless of gender.

Discussion

• Findings lend support to the use of the Cummings & Cummings model of BA and the use of BA picture scenes in the sport context to assess the BA process.

• Descriptive data supports previous literature on frequency and game intensity for BA and extends to the ice hockey context.

• Qualitative analysis suggests that parent behavior and officiating are key targets for education programs to improve the ice hockey experience.

• While some gender differences were found further research needs to be conducted in this area.

• Findings on BA type support the model such that the identity of combatants is important to the outcome.

• Additional research must be conducted to verify the suitability of performance as an outcome in the ice hockey context.

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Fighting Dads

Perceived Intensity When Background Anger Occurs?

Mildly Intense
Normal Intensity
More Intense
Extremely Intense

Angry Mother
Angry Father
Questionnaire

Female
Male
Gender

F-SD = 1.22
M-SD = 1.19

Perceived Play When Background Anger Occurs?

Poorly
Above Average
Ok
Below Average
Very Well

Angry Mother
Angry Father
Questionnaire

F-SD = 0.95
M-SD = 1.11

Perceived Frequency of Background Anger

Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Often
Every Game

Female
Male
Gender

F-SD = 0.90
M-SD = 0.89
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Results
Gender
• Ratings suggest that BA is more frequent in women’s
• Ratings suggest that in response to a BA event males report higher confidence & encouragement, and less frustration than females

BA Type
• The angry father BA type creates significantly greater frustration and less encouragement than the fighting dads BA type.

Gender x BA type
• Performance

Discussion
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