

Eloise M. Jaeger Scholarship Award Winning Proposal

“Kids Speak: Youth Sport Coach and Parent Behavior Preferences of American and East African Children”

Jens Omli

Abstract

Due to increased childhood obesity and widespread elimination of PE programs in public schools in the US, agency-organized youth sport programs have become increasingly important to the health of 46 million American children who participate each year (Brustad, Babkes, & Smith, 2001). Organized sport plays a different but important role in developing nations in which programs have been created for the purpose of rehabilitating children who are victims of various forms of maltreatment, including physical abuse and social deprivation. During the last two decades in Uganda, girls have been victimized in particularly gruesome ways (e.g., being forced to serve as “wives” for rebel soldiers), making the need for effective interventions immanent. By providing the potential for consistent contact with adult mentors, organized youth sport programs provide a protective factor against maladjustment for children during formative periods of development, thus, participation is especially important within vulnerable populations. Currently, fewer girls than boys participate in youth sport in both North America (Seefeldt, Ewing, & Walk, 1993) and Africa. Continued participation in youth sport is predicted by (a) supportive parental involvement (Brustad et al., 2001) and (b) congruence between the actual behavior of coaches and behavior preferred by athletes (Chelladurai, 1990). The purpose of my research is to identify behaviors that girls and boys prefer to see in parents and coaches in youth sport settings. With cooperation from the Cornerstone Development soccer program, male and female children age 7-15-years-old, who play competitive soccer in Kampala, Uganda, will be recruited to participate in a two-phase investigation. First, grounded theory methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which involve semi-structured interviews of multiple subjects related to a central phenomena, will be used. During each semi-structured interview participant will be asked to describe (a) their favorite and least favorite coaches as well as (b) how adults typically behave during games and how they would prefer adults behave during games. After data analysis is complete, specific coach and parent behaviors extracted from these grounded theory interviews will be used to create culturally appropriate surveys in which participants will be asked to report how often they prefer coaches or parental figures engage in specific behaviors such as “yell at the referee” on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with response options being “Never,” “Almost Never,” “Sometimes,” “Most of the Time,” and “Always.” During the second phase, these surveys will be given to a larger sample of youth soccer players within the same population. Finally, survey data will be submitted to a factor analysis to obtain quantitatively derived categories of the most and least preferred youth sport parent and coach behaviors of East African Children.