

## 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	$\beta$	$p$
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	$\beta$	$p$
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.

### Acknowledgements



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Theresa Beesley  
Dany MacDonald  
Katherine Tamminen



Canadian Heritage  
Sport Canada

Patrimoine canadien



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada