

Factors Influencing Sport Managers' Provision of Autonomy-Support

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The role of sport managers within the context of youth sport and recreation today is extremely significant, especially considering the approximately 52 million youth estimated to participate in these activities (National Council of Youth Sports, 2001). These sport managers, as coaches and leaders, often serve as critical agents in two ways. First, these individuals are responsible for shaping the environment that children and youth experience. And, secondly, these individuals are instrumental to the benefits youth derive from participation. Therefore, both directly or indirectly, sport managers' styles of interaction and exhibited leadership behaviors influence youths' experiences in these sporting contexts.

Based on the importance of leadership to the context of sport and the field of sport management, several sport-specific models of leadership behavior have been extensively developed and empirically tested. These models include Chelladurai's Multidimensional Model of Leadership (MML; Chelladurai, 1980), Smoll and Smith's model (1989), and Horn's (2002) model of coaching effectiveness. In addition to these more general models, Mageau & Vallerand (2003) have proposed a model specific to sport managers' exhibition of an autonomy-supportive interpersonal style. This interpersonal style has been defined as when "an individual in a position of authority (e.g., an instructor [or a coach]) takes the other's (e.g., a student's [or an athlete's]) perspective, acknowledges the other's feelings, and provides the other with pertinent information and opportunities for choice, while minimizing the use of pressure and demands" (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003, p. 886). Oftentimes, this interpersonal style is directly contrasted with a controlling interpersonal style, defined as when an individual in an authoritative position uses extrinsic rewards and directive language, with little or no regard for the feelings or perspectives of others, in an attempt to get others to follow an already established agenda (Amorose, 2007; Reeve, 1998). Because autonomy-support from the leader has been found to result in increased persistence at the task (Gagne, Ryan, & Bargmann, 2003) and more self-determined forms of motivation (Gagne, et al., 2003; Pelletier, Fortier, Vallerand, & Briere, 2001), adoption of this interpersonal dimension of leadership should be promoted.

However, despite the extensive amount of research conducted on the benefits of an autonomy-supportive interpersonal style, minimal research has explored the factors that promote sport managers' adoption of this critically influential style (Amorose, 2007; Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007; Gagne et al., 2003; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Conceptually, Mageau & Vallerand (2003) have proposed three groups of antecedents that may be critical for adoption of this style, including a coach's personal orientation, the coaching context, and the coach's perceptions of athletes' behavior and motivation. While this conceptual model of factors proposed by Mageau & Vallerand (2003) is an essential first step, research in parenting, education, leadership, and sport domains indicate several other factors that might be important facilitators of an autonomy-supportive interpersonal style.

Based on the above, the purpose of this presentation is to propose a more comprehensive model of factors that influence a sport leader's adoption of an autonomy-supportive interpersonal style. The factors included in the model are (a) ego-involvement, self-determination, game strategy efficacy, motivation efficacy, technique efficacy, and character-building efficacy as leader's personal characteristics, (b) leader's perceptions of athletes' motivation and athletes' competence, and (c) external pressure and experienced stress as contextual determinants. This presentation will highlight each factor and the nature of their influence on sport leader/manager's autonomy-supportive style toward youth. Finally, this presentation also will advance directions for empirical investigation of the model, and discuss the implications of this line of inquiry for the professional preparation of sport leaders/managers.