Examining the Goals of Sport Socialization in the Family Triad: The Case of an Immigrant Population

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Abstract 2019-137 Room: Napoleon A3

The United States and much of the Western Europe are experiencing high rates of international migration (Theeboom, Schaillée, & Nols, 2012), meaning that hundreds of thousands of newcomers who settle in these countries each year experience stressful acculturative process. Sport has been credited for its role in helping immigrants cope with various life stressors (Zhou, Zhang, & Stodolska, 2017), yet the existing literature suggests that immigrants’ and their children’s sport involvement differ quantitatively and qualitatively from that of the native-born residents (Diep, Leung, Thompson, Gor, & Baranwski, 2017). The purpose of the current study was to examine the goals of sport socialization among Chinese immigrant families. First, the sport socialization goals were examined with reference to other life domains (e.g., school/education) and the overall acculturative experiences of the participants. Second, using the framework of the family system theory (Rosenblatt, 1994), we investigated the sport socialization goals among the family triad (father-mother-child). In our study, we explored not only the differences between the fathers and the mothers, but also the variations between the two generations concerning the goals of sport socialization.

Method

This study entailed a multiple-case studies design (Stake, 2013), which involved an in-depth exploration of the shared goals of sport socialization within and across selected families. In the project, we utilized multiple forms of data collection, including participant observations, face-to-face interviews, and parents’ journals. The data were collected from the fathers, mothers, and pre-adolescent children from 11 Chinese immigrant families residing in the Houston metropolitan area. Each family’s data were compiled as a case study narrative, on which within-case and comparative coding and analyses were conducted (Yin, 2003).

Results and Discussion

We identified three major themes and a number of sub-themes. First, among the various goals of sport socialization mentioned by the participants, health benefits and character formation were emphasized the most. Chinese immigrant parents also reported the strong connections between the sport socialization goals and the overall life goals. Second, while Chinese immigrant fathers were generally more explicit about the goals of sport socialization than Chinese immigrant mothers, the majority of the couples agreed that the child’s gender made a difference. For boys, parents stressed the importance of their performance, whereas for girls, they were more oriented toward the personal and social benefits of sport socialization. Third, generational gaps concerning the goals of sport socialization were found. Most of the interviewed children expressed that their major goal of sport involvement was to have fun, however, they were incapable of precisely perceiving or understanding the goals their parents held for sport socialization. The findings of the study add to the existing literature on sport socialization (Coakley, 2001) by presenting how the parents’ goals of sport socialization evolved with acculturation levels and by incorporating the father-mother-child triad to explore generational and gender differences. We believe that the findings of the current study have important practical implications for how to provide recreational sport programs in areas with large populations of immigrant families and youth.