Navigating the Balance Between Competition and Fun: Understanding the Importance of Values-Based Expectations

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60-minute symposium, roundtable, or workshop 11:00 AM
Abstract 2019-378 Room: Oakley

Youth sport organizations in North America are bombarded with requests and limited means of fulfilling those requests. This limited capacity creates internal competition regarding which issues are addressed and how they are addressed. There is a juxtaposition between the value placed on winning and the value placed on enjoyment, despite the fact that both these values and norms of behaviour could potentially operate in harmony (Karssing, 2001). Youth sport is utilized not just as a means to acquire athletic skill, but as a context to develop positive social behaviours (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005). For example, Lee and Colleagues (2000) highlight 18 values in youth sport, ranging from winning to fair play and enjoyment, where youth athletes rated winning as the least important value.

Recognizing the values present in the youth sport context, it is important to understand the values-based expectations that stakeholders bring to this context. Thompson and Bunderson (2003) proposed an expansion of the traditional definition of the psychological contract to incorporate the notion of ’ideology-infused’ expectations. The ideological contract has been characterized as “credible commitments to pursue a valued cause or principle” (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003, p. 574). Research to date on the psychological contract in the sport setting has often been delimited to exploring relational and transactional contracts (see Harman & Doherty, 2017). However, it has been proposed that ideological contracts may assist in explaining why one may view their contract as being breached in the absence of mistreatment, or why one may continue with an organization despite a breach of their transactional or relational contract (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003). Further, Jones and Griep (2018) found that continuous breaches in ideological psychological contracts result in burnout and dissociation with the target.

As such, the purpose of this workshop is to explore the content of the ideological psychological contract within the youth sport volunteer coaching environment. Moreover, the purpose is to bring researchers, practitioners, and instructors within the youth sport context together to discuss (1) the current state of research regarding ideological contracts among coaches and administrators in youth sport (researcher perspective), (2) how sport practitioners (e.g., coaches and administrators) manage values-based expectations of themselves and others, and (3) how instructors incorporate understanding of values-based expectations into their sport management classrooms.

To stimulate discussion, the workshop will begin with a brief overview of the current research regarding ideological psychological contracts. A roundtable discussion will follow regarding the role of future research in understanding the ideological psychological contracts in youth sport (lead by researchers), how to incorporate values-based expectations into policy and practice within youth sport (lead by a sport practitioner), and where ideological psychological contract theory may fit best into our teaching practice (lead by a faculty member). The workshop is framed to benefit NASSM membership by increasing dialogue regarding values-based expectations in youth sport, and to reflect on the research, practice, and teaching impact of our scholarly contributions.