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Preferred Coaching Styles in Youth Sports: A Qualitative inquiry of Soccer Players from Generation Z

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PREFERRED COACHING STYLES IN YOUTH SPORTS: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY OF
SOCCER PLAYERS FROM GENERATION Z

by

KRISHA PARKER

(Under the direction of Daniel Czech)

ABSTRACT

Generation Z is the up and rising youth of our time. Its members are said to be those born after 2000 until the year 2025. Research has shown that each generation is different due to the events they experience in their lifetime. Although Generation Z is young, it is important to begin understanding their characteristics. Due to the high participation rate and benefits of youth sports, the following research study chose to examine a sample of Generation Z athlete's in sport in order to identify ways of keeping them involved. The focus of the study was placed on understanding youth's ideas of a great coach due to the impact that the coach can have on the young athlete's experience.

Therefore, the purpose of the study was to examine the preferred coaching styles of Generation Z athletes from a semi-structured qualitative perspective. After analyzing the data, four themes emerged: does not yell and remains calm, caring and encouraging, knowledgeable of sport, and involves team in decision making. In congruence with past research, it is evident that over the years youth have showed a desire for a democratic style of coaching which is comprised of positive interactions and feedback. Coaches may be able to use this research to adapt their leadership qualities to the preferences of their athletes. By making such adjustments, it may lead to a more enjoyable and enhancing environment for youth.

INDEX WORDS: Generation Z, Coaching, Great, Preferred leadership

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B.A., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in Partial
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by

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Electronic Version Approved:
May 2010

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this to all those who had faith in me. You are the reason that I was able to push through and complete this project.

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I would first like to thank Dr. Czech, 'DC', for his guidance and support. Your optimism, motivation, and kind words made me believe that I could do anything. I had my doubts in the beginning that I would be able to complete this project but you strengthened my confidence. I can never thank you enough for all that you have done.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Currently, over 38 million youth participate in sports within the United States (Cunningham, 2001). Such a prodigious amount of involvement is significant due to the benefits that are associated with youth sports. They provide an atmosphere that enhances development physically, socially, psychologically and intellectually (NRCIM, 2002). For example, Ewing and Seefeldt (1996) found that sports can provide health benefits such as improving strength and endurance, assisting in weight control and bone structure. Since obesity is becoming a rising issue in our nation, staying physically active will assist in maintaining the health of youth (Steinbeck, 2008). Ewing and Seefeldt (1996) also found that sports allow youth to develop motor skills that are sport specific, along with those that are used in everyday life. However, youth sport offers more than just physical attributes. They provide a place outside of school to build friendships and cultivate a sense of belonging (Seefeldt, Ewing & Walk, 1992). Socially, youth athletes can learn to work with others by using effective communication skills, respectful demeanors and also by understanding the importance of showing positive sportsmanship actions while competing (Hedstrom & Gould, 2004). Studies have also shown that participating in sports can lead to a greater sense of happiness in that it assists them in reducing anxiety and increasing self-esteem (Fraser-Thomas, Côté & Deakin, 2005). Lastly, sports can keep the young mind stimulated through the physical activity that it provides. Positive correlations have been shown with cognitive development and academic performance such as listening skills, grade improvements and overall comprehension (Fraser-Thomas, Côté & Deakin, 2005).

Although sports have the potential to provide youth with benefits, the sports themselves cannot provide these outcomes on their own. In order for youth to grow from their sport

experience they need guidance from coaches, parents, and other important figures. Each involved individual plays a vital role in making youth sport a success (Seefeldt, Ewing, & Walk, 1992). Smith and Smoll (1997) stated: “the most important factor in determining outcomes is the manner in which this important social learning situation is structured and supervised by the adults who play an increasingly active role in highly organized youth sport programs of today ” (p17). Of these individuals, the coach is one who can make one of the strongest impacts due to the amount of direct involvement with youth within the sport context (Smith & Smoll, 1997). Most young athletes spend four to six hours participating in a sport per week during a given season (Lawson, 2002). During this time, many of the coaches are looked to as influential figures.

Martens (1987) provides a list of characteristics that are found in an effective leader: (a) provides direction through the establishment of goals; (b) builds a psychological and social environment that is conducive to achieving the team’s goals; (c) instills values; (d) motivates members of the group to pursue goals; (e) confronts members when problems arise and resolves conflict; and (f) communicates effectively. Although there has been an increase in the number of coaching education programs, many coaches (a good proportion of whom are volunteers) still do not receive such instruction (Lawson, 2002). Therefore, it is probable that many underestimate the influence they have on their young athletes and some may not be creating an atmosphere that best promotes the positive values sport has the potential to provide.

The type of climate that coaches provide can also influence the experience and the ways in which the youth view sport. Many youth join not knowing if they will enjoy the experience. A negative experience with a coach is likely to hold more weight on the coach-athlete relationship than a positive experience (Smoll & Smith, 1996). Hedstrom and Gould (2004) suggest that by

the age of 12 years, youth athletes make a decision on long term sport participation. Furthermore, research notes that some sport withdrawal decisions are due to the dislike of the coach (Fraser-Thomas, Côté & Deakin, 2005). Therefore, coaching behaviors can be a deciding factor in a young athlete's decision to continue with a sport. Understanding the preferences of coaching behavior may assist in the reduction of sport withdrawal, so it is important to gain an understanding of what the youth want from sport and their coaches.

Chelladurai and Saleh (1978) discuss two different types of leadership styles that are prevalent within sports: autocratic and democratic. An autocratic style consists of the coach being the only individual who makes the decisions while a democratic style allows for suggestions from the team. Dworkin and Bremer (2004) suggest that youth development is limited if it only proceeds one-way: from adults to youth. Coaches will seldom be successful if they do not consider the thoughts and feelings of the youth. Furthermore, Stewart and Taylor (2000) found that young athletes desired a coach whom listened to the players and was fun, fair and encouraging.

Past research has shown that the top five reasons children participate in sport include: to have fun, to do something they were good at, to stay in shape, to learn new or improve skills and to play as part of a team (Seefeldt, Ewing & Walk, 1992). This study has provided an understanding for the needs of children in sport, but the generation of youth now participating in sport may no longer have these same motives for participation. Due to changes in the economy, technology enhancements, and other evolvments in the world, it has been suggested that members from each generation differ from the other (Elmore, 2002). Each generation shows evidence of sharing common characteristics amongst its members, which are made distinct through music, experiences, crises, television, celebrities and age (Elmore, 2002). Therefore, the

previous research by Seefeldt, Ewing, and Walk (1992) which happens to be one of the largest referenced studies in the research of youth sports, may be viewed as outdated in that it was performed on individuals from the Generation X population.

Research suggests that more recent generations require a new approach to learning than past generations (Jones, Jo, & Martin, 2009). In a study conducted by Hoffman et al. (2009) on collegiate athletes from the Millennial Generation, a similar notion was made suggesting that coaches may need to adjust their coaching styles to their athletes. They found that the Millennial Generation athlete desires a coach who will sustain multiple roles in their lives, communicate clearly, maximize production, have compassions and be mindful of the entire team's interest. Today's youth, those born after 2000, have been termed Generation Z. Analyst have provided numerous estimates as to when Generation Y ended and the Generation Z period began, but the majority see the merge around the year 2000 (Jones, Jo, & Martin, 2009). Members of Generation Z are said to be more technologically sound than the previous generations (Jones, Jo, & Martin, 2009). Their lives are encompassed by the Internet, which is their common ground for communication. Their verbal skills, expressions, confidence, and other personal skills may falter due to the ability to communicate without these characteristics (BBC, 2007). Elmore (2010) notes that because members of Generation Z have been born into a world of a troubled economy and terrorism they may be less optimistic than the Millennial Generation. It is inferred that members of Generation Z will be cautious, insecure, self-reliant, realistic and globally savvy. Such assumptions require researchers and coaches to look further into the characteristics of Generation Z and how the world has influenced their preferences in a sport context.

As the new generation brings about behavior changes and desires, it is interesting to see how technology and other issues have affected youths' behavior towards sport. Due to the

increased technology reliance among the generation, the related interests may soon replace the desire to play outdoors. Game system advances have now made it possible to play sports indoors without the need of another physical body with whom to compete. The Kaiser Family Foundation (2010) ran a report which showed that youth are spending more time on electronic devices than ever. More specifically, the report stated that youth spend an average of 7 1/2 hours a day on electronic devices such as television, video games, music devices and the computer. However, changes in technology are not the only changes being found with this generation toward sport. Coakley (2001) noticed a change in young athletes' definition of the word 'fun.' He found that many youth were no longer viewing 'fun' as the happiness that sport brings, but instead they define fun as being a better athlete, becoming more competitive and being promoted into more highly skilled training.

Gould (2009) speaks of the arising development of professionalization in youth sport. Professionalization occurs when the youth's main focus while participating in sport is for competitive success and rewards. The athlete may focus on early sport specialization, intense year around training, and place an importance on winning. Research has found that when professionalization is introduced too early in a youth's sport experience, it can result in negative outcomes, including burnout or injury. When youth choose specialization over sampling sports, they may also develop less physical and life skills that are used across the different sports and in life (Côté, Horton, MacDonald & Wilkes, 2009). Changes in sport experiences such as these could impact the way in which youth view sport and the preference they have in coaching styles.

To keep children involved in sports and to make the sport experience one in which the participating youth experience optimal development, it is important that we understand their desired preferences in a coach. Researchers noted that congruence among leader behaviors, the

preference of athletes, and the requirements of the situation would have a positive effect on group performance and member satisfaction (Hoffman et. al., 2009). Understanding how members of the recent generation view optimal coaching can assist in making youth sports an optimally enjoyable and beneficial experience.

The purpose of the study was to qualitatively examine the preferred coaching styles of youth soccer players from Generation Z. In order to gain a rich and in-depth description of the individual's experience, Hill (2001) suggests utilizing a Humanistic Framework to study the participant as a 'whole.' In doing so, the researcher viewed each participant as unique and as a 'co-investigator' to the study. The participants' explanations of their experiences were deemed as truthful and helpful information in analyzing the purposed inquiry. In an effort to provide a comfortable environment for the participant, the researcher showed respect and unconditional positive regard to the participant through empathy, genuineness, and nonjudgmental caring. Through qualitative analysis, the researcher paid close attention to the tone of language, the art of asking questions, listening, and interpretive skills to enhance the findings (Hill, 2001). By using a Humanistic Framework for the study, the researcher was able to focus on the following research question: What are the preferred coaching styles of youth soccer players from Generation Z?

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

The Researcher as an Instrument

The qualitative approach uses the researcher as the primary instrument in obtaining information through interviews, discussions, and/or observations (Czech et al., 2001). By using this methodology, the researcher must consider any preconceived bias before conducting the interviews, in order to not let their personal experiences effect the data collection. Therefore, it was important that the primary researcher consider any biased opinions towards optimal coaching. The following is the primary researcher's experience and views on optimal coaching in youth sports.

At the age of eight I began to play youth sports. I played soccer, softball, and basketball. Throughout those years, I experienced many different types of coaching styles. I enjoyed coaches who were enthusiastic about the sport. I remember one individual used to run up and down the sidelines cheering us on as we dribbled up the field. I also enjoyed coaches who could play the sport. Some would not engage in the practices as much of others. However, I always thought it was fun when we had the opportunity to take on the coach. There were coaches who sat some kids out more than others, and I never thought that was fair. I was even stuck playing goalkeeper which was a position that I only liked to play for so long. I wanted to get out on the field and play but they felt otherwise. Ironically enough I stayed in that position throughout my entire career of soccer.

Last year, I coached two seasons for a recreational, under nine, girls' soccer team. During this time, I made many self-discoveries about myself and coaching. The first season I started out with a desire to win. I was a well known athlete in the community and I felt that I had an image

to withhold. I never expressed my desire to win to them or criticized them for losing. However, I did fall subject to playing my best players an entire game when I felt it was necessary. At practice I concentrated on developing the girls in all areas of soccer and teaching them to work together as a team, while treating each other with respect. The following season I realized that there was more to soccer than winning, and what mattered most was making practice a fun atmosphere. I scheduled it so each girl had an equal amount of playing time throughout the season.

While coaching I also made observations of other coaches. I found that there were many different types of coaching styles. A coach of the boy's team who practiced beside our team was continuously pushing his team to the limit. If they messed around during practice they were running sprints. A coach of an opposing girl's team gave constant encouragement no matter the outcome of the situation. Another coached pushed his daughter so hard that she was crying by the end of the game. Therefore, I have observed authoritarians, encouragers and the numerous other types of coaching styles. From my own experience and observations, I have found that I prefer being a positive model for the athletes and constructively teaching the developmental skills they need to succeed in sport.

Bias Exploration and Bracketing Interview

Due to the primary researcher's participation in youth sports and recent experience as a youth sport coach for a Generation Z population, it was imperative to undergo the interview protocol that would be used in the study. Czech et al. (2001) notes that there is a certain amount of involvement by the researcher in qualitative inquiry that could hinder acquisition of collected data, should the researcher's biases not be considered. Patton (2002) discusses how a researcher must "bracket out" any preconceived beliefs about the subject matter being researched.

Therefore, a bracketing interview was conducted before the beginning of this study. A fellow graduate student of the sport psychology department at Georgia Southern University, who was trained in qualitative interviewing, administered the same interview to the primary researcher that was presented to the participants in the study.

After completion of the bracketing interview, the primary researcher's biases toward 'optimal' coaching became evident through numerous themes. When answering the questions, I found myself picturing both the type of coach I would like to play for and the type that I would like to be for players. Preferred characteristics that I repeatedly mentioned during the interview were: (a) a coach who was challenging but not overly critical; (b) enthusiastic and a motivator; and (c) felt good performance took precedent over winning. Had this interview been conducted at different points in my athletic career, I feel that my answers would have carried the same themes but some may have differed. In high school, I was a competitor and wanted to be pushed to my limits as winning was everything. Now that I have grown and coached young athletes, I feel that youth sport is not the avenue for being concerned over winning.

Pilot Study

Although there is a large amount of research in youth sports, no qualitative research was found that examined the Generation Z population. The interview protocol was modeled after a study by Hoffman, et al. (2009), examined the preferred coaching styles of collegiate athletes from a Millennial Generation. The word "great" was substituted for the word "ideal" in the interview questions in order to simplify the vocabulary for youth understanding. A pilot study was conducted in order to test the change in the interview protocol and test the intended questions on members of the Generation Z population. The pilot study gave the researcher the opportunity to become more familiar with the questions, practice asking the questions and

practice probing a participant. A 10 year old female soccer player from a recreational soccer club in North Carolina was presented with an informed consent and interviewed for the pilot study. The interview took place over the phone, and was then transcribed verbatim. After reviewing the transcription, the following themes about great coaches were established: (a) a coach who let them have fun; (b) did not yell; and (c) emphasizes trying your best. Following the interview, the participant confirmed that she understood all the questions that were asked. I found that it was necessary to probe continuously throughout the interview process, in that the participant was a little shy. I felt that the semi-structured set of interview questions were necessary in order to avoid leading the participant.

Participants

The participants of the study consisted of a total of 10 athletes (5 males and 5 females) from the Generation Z population who were between 9 and 10 years of age. They were selected from a soccer club located in the eastern region of North Carolina. A sample of 10 athletes may appear small, but according to Patton (2002), rules against using a small sample size do not exist within qualitative inquiry. Furthermore, Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) report that when concerning saturation, 80% of possible themes concerning a topic area are found within the first 6 interviews. By examining 10 participants, it is likely that the study found over 80% of possible themes. Each participant had at least one year of experience in youth soccer at both a recreational level and challenge level to be considered for this study. Purposeful sampling was used, and participants were chosen through personal contacts that the researcher had with the soccer club.

Procedure

After attaining IRB approval, the participants and their parents were contacted and scheduled for interviews. All interviews were face-to-face and took place in a classroom for

privacy and confidentiality purposes. In order to assure confidentiality, each transcription of the interviews was coded in order to eliminate the identification of the participants. Also, any files that contained participant information were stored in a locked drawer at the Southern Performance Clinic at Georgia Southern University. Prior to the start of the interview, parents were asked to give parental consent for their child to participate in the interview. The informed consent form consisted of the following statements: (a) participation in the research study is voluntary; (b) participants may refuse to be interviewed or withdraw from the study at any point in time; (c) they are allowed to ask questions at any time; (d) there are no incentives for participating in the study; (e) all interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed; (f) transcriptions of the interviews will be sent to the participant for review prior to conducting analysis; and (g) transcriptions of the interviews will be assessed by the researcher and the research team in order to identify a thematic structure.

Interview Protocol

A semi-structured interview was used in order to collect data from the participant. The interview protocol was modeled after Martens (1987) and Hoffman et al. (2009). An introductory statement was read to the participant and the questions were asked as follows:

The study that we are performing is looking at the ways in which young athletes your age describe all the qualities of a great coach. I know that you have just finished playing soccer under the direction of a coach, but I don't want you to think of them right now. I want you to imagine the type of coach that you would really enjoy playing for and try to answer the following questions in the best way that you can.

1. Describe a great coach from your opinion.
2. Describe how a great coach acts towards his/her players.

3. Describe how a great coach would act in a stressful situation. What about a situation that is not stressful?
4. Describe a how a great coach would talk to you.
5. Describe how a great coach can motivate you to be the best that you can be.
6. Describe how a great coach would make important team-related decisions.

Further probing questions were used in order to clarify and attain deeper elaborations of the athletes' experiences (Patton, 2002). An example of a probing question was:

I heard you mention _____; can you tell me more about that?

What did you mean when you said _____?

In order to effectively present this method of open-ended questions and further probing, the researcher followed the guidelines of Dale (2006) to gain clear and accurate descriptions of the participant's experience. "The researcher viewed the participant as an equal, asked only probing questions that were set by the participant, avoid asking 'why' questions, and attempted to stay at the level of the participant's experience" (p. 314).

To build rapport and help the participant feel more comfortable during the interview, the researcher talked with each participant about their hobbies outside of sport. Many of the participants noted that they enjoyed playing video games. During three of the male interviews, the researcher used the probe of designing the coach as a Mii character on the Wii in order to describe a 'great coach.' This probe was only used when it became evident that the participant was having trouble with the first question of the interview. Once placed in this context, all three participants showed a sign of ease and efficiently responded to the question.

Data Analysis

Côté (1993) suggests that there is no one correct way of analyzing qualitative data.

Therefore, it is essential that researchers performing a qualitative analysis provide a detailed description of the procedures, decision criteria, and data manipulation that lead them to the final results of a study. Czech et al. (2001) and Patton (2002) developed a methodological approach for a qualitative analysis that was adopted for this study as outlined below:

1. Approaching the interviews
 - a. *Transcribing the interview*
 - b. *Obtaining a grasp of the interview*
2. Focusing the data
 - a. *Bracketing the data*
3. Phenomenological reduction
 - a. *Eliminating irrelevant, repetitive, or overlapping data*
 - b. *Verifying the elimination of the data*
4. Releasing meanings
 - a. *Forming categories*
 - b. *Identifying the themes*
 - c. *Describing the themes*

Approaching the interviews

Transcribing the interview. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim to generate a document for thematic analysis. The primary researcher was the only individual to transcribe the interviews. Patton (2002) notes it is important to obtain a verbatim transcript in order to eliminate data distortion and assure accuracy of the data. After transcribing the interviews, the digital recordings were erased, and all other files were secured in a locked filing cabinet.

Obtaining a Grasp of the Interview. By performing a repetitive and continuous process of listening and reading the interviews, the researcher had the ability to develop a full understanding of the experience. Czech et al. (2001) refers to this process as acquiring a holistic grasp of the data. Listening and reading the data allows the researcher to check for errors and

obtain a sense of wholeness of the data. Understanding the participants' experience in its entirety assisted the researcher in later stages when parts of the data are eliminated later in the analysis.

Focusing the Data

Bracketing the Data. Patton (2002) notes that it is important for the researcher to bracket out all presuppositions in order to examine the data in its pure form. Although the idea of bracketing out all presuppositions is ideal, in reality this is an unlikely human act; therefore, the purpose is to allow the researcher to become aware of their personal thoughts and biases prior to investigation of the phenomenon (Dale, 1996). By doing so, the researcher can examine the data and ensure that the participant was not lead in any way and that themes are not formed according to bias. Additionally, the researcher can utilize their research team and gain a broader perspective towards patterns in the data (p. 316). The research team allows for a more in depth examination of the data and the way in which the researcher conducted the interviews. After the completion of this process, the data and its elements can be examined with equal value (Patton, 2002).

Reduction

Eliminating Irrelevant, Repetitive, or Overlapping Data. During the interviews, conversations may contain irrelevant information that is not useful in understanding the studied phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Czech et al. (2001) notes that many dialogue aspects such as false starts and brief utterances that are nonessential to the data should be eliminated. By doing so in this study, the essence and importance of the interview were maintained, while making the transcript shorter, clearer, and easier to understand (Czech et at. 2001).

Verifying the Elimination of the Data. After the transcripts were edited and stripped of nonessential data, they were reviewed with the participants for evaluation and verification of

accuracy. The purpose of this process was to guarantee that the truthful experience of the participant towards this phenomenon was captured.

Releasing Meanings

Forming Categories. In order to start the analysis process, the ‘meaning units’ as Côté (1993) terms them must be identified. Meaning units are defined as “a segment of the text that is comprehensible by itself and contains one idea, episode or piece of information” (Tesch, 1990, p. 116). Once the units have been gathered, they are then placed into clusters which are categories that are based on similar ideas that emerge (Patton, 2002). It is important to utilize the research team at this time in order to increase validity and assure that the primary researcher’s biases are not the sole creator of the clusters (Côté, 1993).

Identifying the Themes. Initially the primary researcher and the research team examined one interview at a time in order to gain an understanding of the overall experience of the participants and then how each portion related to the general context of the interview (Czech et al., 2001). Following, the interviews were compared to one another to identify “global themes” (Czech et al. 2001). The “global themes” were coded into categories and given a label that captures the elements from the given set of data (Côté, 1993; Czech et al., 2001). The thematic classification used for analyzing the data was based upon Côté’s (1993) three critical steps to categorizing data: coding experience, inductive inference, and similarity. Due to the large amount of qualitative data, it was essential to code and rearrange the text into organized units. Next, inductive inference was used to examine the organized units and create categories. At no point before this process were any categories or patterns established. This step allowed for the researcher to ensure that bias was reduced and categories were established only from the information that emerged from the analysis. Last, the categories were then compared and

examined for similarity. At the end of the process, the data in each category were similar to one another, yet distinct from the other categories.

Describing the Themes. Patton (2002) suggests that in order to present the results of qualitative data effectively, the theme descriptions should include: focusing and balancing and description and interpretation. Given the large amount of data that was gathered from the interviews, it was essential to exclude some information to focus on the views of preferred leadership styles from a Generation Z perspective. Patton (2002) also notes that when working with qualitative inquiry it is essential to gain a thick, rich description of the experience. Therefore, the study presented the data in a clear and descriptive manner that clarified the participants' experience.

Research Team and Peer Debriefing

The research team consisted of the primary researcher and a group of fellow graduate students in the sport psychology program that had various levels of training in qualitative research. These individuals assisted in the thematizing and editing of the transcribed interviews. The research team received the transcribed interviews, with identifying information coded to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. The team then took part in group readings of each interview and identified meaning units that would then form into clusters. Afterwards, the primary researcher and research team deliberated how those clusters formed overall themes for the study. After classifying themes, the researcher then was peer debriefed by a professor who taught courses and had performed numerous studies in qualitative research. The purpose of the process was for the peer to challenge the assumptions of the researcher, question the methods used for analyzing and interpreting the data and provide support (Creswell et al. 2000). The

research team and peer debriefer served as a source for eliminating the primary researcher's biases which in turn increases the validity and reliability of the study.

Reliability

In qualitative research, reliability is the ability to produce consistent results across people and time (Czech et al., 2001). Furthermore, to consider a study as reliable, the participants must be considered trustworthy (Patton, 2002). In order to increase reliability, the primary research considered the following questions throughout data collection and analysis (Czech et al., 2001; Goodrich 1988): (a) do the descriptions capture the experience?; (b) does the structure match the co-participant's experience?; (c) does the structure emerge from the data?; and (d) do others see the description? Since the descriptions of the youth athletes' views of optimal coaching were shown to be true, this study was considered reliable.

Validity

The validity of a study, as stated by Czech et al. (2001), is based on a reader's ability to experience the descriptions as truthful. The reader should be able to follow the process that led to the conclusion of the analysis, no matter their feelings towards the subject matter (Czech et al., 2001). Additionally, Dale (1996) notes that it is in the hands of the researcher to provide a detailed and accurate description of the research that allows the reader to arise to the same conclusions. The researcher also used a process known as triangulation to increase the validity of the study. Patton (2002), states that one form of triangulation is the combination and application of many research methodologies that focus on the same phenomenon. It allows the researcher to gain multiple perspectives on the collected data and conclusions. For this study, triangulation was reached by the utilization of a pilot study, bracketing interview, member checks, and a research team who offered their perspectives on the data.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

All of the participants in this study currently participated in challenge soccer and had experience at this level for at least one year. In the following section, specific quotes from participants are used to demonstrate the notion of a ‘great coach’ from the perspective of Generation Z athletes. After conducting and transcribing the interviews, four major themes emerged from the interviews: a) does not yell and remains clam b) caring and encouraging c) knowledge of sport and d) involves team in decision making. Figure 1 provides a depiction of the interrelatedness of four themes that describe the preferred leadership styles of the Generation Z soccer players in this study.

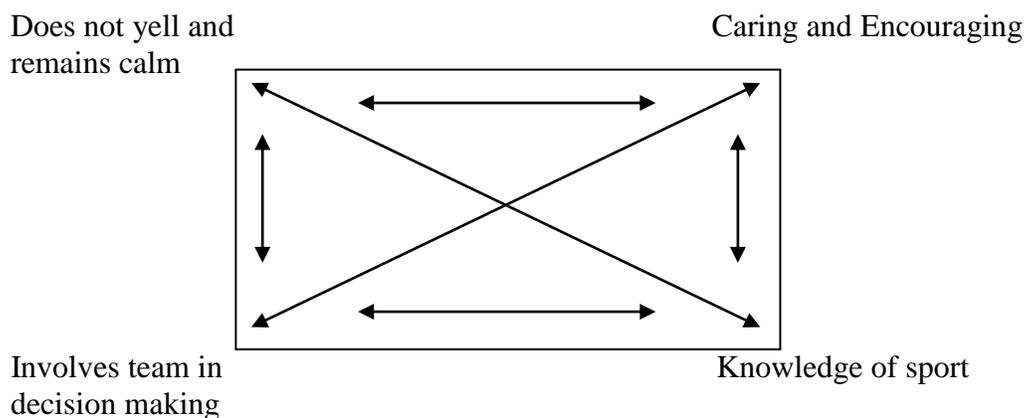


Figure 1. Model of interrelatedness of themes in preferred leadership styles of Generation Z.

Theme #1: Does not yell and remains calm

Each of the participants in the study discussed ways in which they preferred their coach to communicate. A major theme that was mentioned by the participants was that they liked the coach to not yell and remain calm. Not yelling was frequently mentioned and heavily

emphasized by many of the participants throughout the duration of the interview. This action was expressed through numerous statements by the participants. Participant 1 stated, “They would not freak out. Like them just yelling a lot.” When asked why she did not like the coach yelling, she responded. “Just cause, they sound angry. Loud, lot of yelling. Like sometimes you don’t even know what they are saying.” Participant 5 followed with the same idea when asked to describe a great coach, “Ok, so doesn’t yell at you. Like, always yelling in the games. He doesn’t yell at us, like meanly. Not like’s he mad at us. Like, keep yelling your name in the game. Just don’t like it.” Participant 7 emphasized ‘not yelling’ when asked about how he would like a great coach to talk with him specifically. He responded, “I like my coach to be like a medium tone so we can all hear. But if it’s real loud like he’s yelling at us and he’s mad cause we are losing I don’t really like coaches like that.” Later in the interview, Participant 7 mentioned the idea of ‘not yelling’ when commenting on how a coach could best motivate him:

He wouldn’t just yell at us to make us motivated. Yelling isn’t the way to motivate me cause last year in Southwest at the championship game the coaches had to yell at their kids to get them motivated. At first in that game we were already motivated, our coach we we’re always motivated and always ready to play. I just liked how our coach didn’t yell. Cause their team, their team was frustrated and their coaches were yelling a lot.

In conjunction with expressing the desire for a coach not to yell, many of the participants emphasized that they would like the coach to remain calm. Calm was described by the players as ‘not yelling’ but also encompassed a relaxed and positive interacting state between the coach and the player. Participant 6 described this state with the following statement:

Like he tells us to walk with him somewhere like he usually does and like he just tells us all our mistakes that we will work on at practice. And like he don’t yell so all the parents can hear him so he just talks calm. I don’t want him to yell at me and stuff. I just want him to speak calm and nice to me and like tell me my mistakes that I need to work on.

Participant 8 referenced the coach staying calm in his description of a stressful situation. He felt the coach should stay focused and not use yelling as the way to communicate.

I would want the coach to be like talking to us and don't start yelling. He would just talk to us really calm and say... "B, you need to play better defense" but not like yelling. He would just be calm and just do what their supposed to do. Just telling you how to do stuff. Like in the game on corner kicks and stuff.

Participant 10 agreed with the importance of the coach staying calm in a stressful situation. He added that he wanted the coach to forget the stressful state and treat the situation as any other.

He doesn't like yell all the time. He doesn't yell at us if we miss a shot or do something else wrong. He's positive. He's not yelling and stressing out cause he's thinking of it like practice. He forgets that it's like a game. He's calm.

Participant 6 also expressed that he wanted the coach to stay calm and for the coach to not overact with yelling. He stated, "I don't want him to like yell at us. So I would like him to like be kind of patient if we don't, if we mess up one time, like he shouldn't just go all off and stuff. But like he should just let it go."

Theme #2: Caring and Encouraging

The second theme that was derived from the interviews was for a coach to be caring and encouraging. A caring coach was presented as someone who showed that they cared for the athlete by being helpful in their skill building and showing an overall interest in the athlete.

Participant 1 described this type of person as follows:

Like kindly. Like that they care. Like doesn't like always yell at me because I done something wrong or anything And I like coach J and I like playing for him cause he's nice and all that. Like when I get hurt. Usually some coaches don't really know that your hurt and well... actually some coaches don't care that your hurt and coach J usually like subs me in with another player or something if I'm hurt or anything like that.

Later in the interview, Participant 1 discussed the coach's ability to assist her and expressed that her coach cared about her through helpful actions. She commented,

“Helpful. Like if they mix up a move or something they'll just help them fix it. Or if like you missed a day of practice they would go over with you what they did the day that you missed. They would help you fix it by going over the moves and stuff.”

Participant 10 expressed a coach could show that they cared by the following statement,

“Probably see what I do wrong in games he could probably take to practice and tell me and show me what needs to be done so I can become better at what I do and my position.” Participant 8 also expressed how he liked the coaching to show he cared through instruction and concern for them. He described a great coach with the following statement:

By teaching us how and what to improve. How... by if we do something wrong. Overall he would just be a good coach. I like coaches who talk to us a lot. Like after the game, like how you would do, like how you did and stuff or if you played a great game or you needed to improve. Like he would tell us if we had trouble with dribbling like how to dribble better. Like if I play midfield and I needed a break he might tell me then something to do. Like if I had like three or four mistakes he would just talk to me and he'd tell me how I could fix what I was messing up out there.

Participant 7 felt the coach could be helpful by persistently giving the team instruction.

My coach he would tell us like what we need to do at practice and how we do it first and then we would try to work on it if we did it wrong he'll tell us again and help us understand it more and if we did that right then we would work on our differences.

The second portion of the theme was the participants' descriptions of an encouraging coach. The participants provided numerous descriptions of ways in which a coach could motivate them to play their best. The participants of this study described encouragement as positive feedback and consistent motivation by the coach. Participant 1 expressed this in the following statement, “Like he'd say, you can do it, no matter if we lost the ball or it went into the goal and we missed it or it

went in between our legs that they wouldn't get really mad and to try our best." Participant 10 also wanted the coach to encourage them to do their best.

Before games he doesn't worry about how good the team is that we are facing and he doesn't really try to stress us out of how many goals we need to score and like if we're about or if we lost we get kicked out of the season so he wouldn't like say that he would tell us to try our best.

Participant 3 desired a coach who continually encouraged the players and included the importance of not putting them down. She commented:

Like, doesn't just like keep asking you, like...like just asks you, asks you like what your problem is and what position do you want to be in. They just give you the choices, not really staying on you about how you are playing bad. Just encourage me. Say nice things and don't put you down, respectful.

When Participant 8 was asked what a great coach could do to motivate him he responded, "Encouraging. Like an encouraging voice to me, like encouraging. He would keep on saying...he would say B remember, keep practicing whatever. Like every time I mess up or like every two times I'd want him to keep on encouraging and tell me to do my best." At the end of the interview, Participant 8 again noted the desire for the coach to be encouraging:

Encourage is like thinking you can do something. Think you can do something and you keep on trying. So if you make mistakes you keep on trying and never give up till you keep on doing that. And the coach, well my coach that I'm thinking of would be encouraging us, full of courage.

Participant 9 expressed a combination of caring and encouraging in his description of how a coach could best motivate him in a game.

He would just, just say like keep doing your best, don't let, if we are winning by so much don't just let them score, keep going and would just keep telling us through the game to just don't wait for the guy to get to you, come out a little bit then run back and get your position. If I did something right he would probably just go, he'd probably just say keep doing that and you will succeed or something and then if I was doing something wrong he would just say when you do that just do the opposite of what you're doing and just try your hardest.

Theme #3: Knowledge of sport

The third theme that emerged from the data was that a great coach would be knowledgeable of the sport. Knowledge of the sport encompassed the ideas of knowing the game of soccer (e.g., rules, plays, organization) and also having experience in playing the sport.

Participant 10 made this evident by saying, “Has experience, like knows the game. He knows all the rules and he knows how he can help his team get better. Knows what they need to work on.

He participates with us like in scrimmages and stuff.” Participant 2 also that emphasis should be

placed on the coach having experience in soccer by stating, “Someone who has played soccer

before and they are good at it.” Participant 9 briefly mentioned in his description of a great

coach, “Well, he would be athletic. Like he can run really fast and he knows soccer. He knows

the positions and knows drills to teach us.” Participant 8 elaborated on the idea of the coach

knowing and having played soccer. He went further to express that he did not like a coach who

was unknowledgeable and unorganized. The following is his statement:

He’s coached before so he knows what to do, knows how to play, experience in sports....so... like he would know what to do and stuff. Like I had a coach one time that wasn’t really.... Like there was this really good team but they had a lot of players sign up and I was little and they had another team that wasn’t really that good and I got on the team on that and that coach wasn’t really into it. He wasn’t really that good. He just didn’t know what was going on. I want a coach to like always tell us when practices are and help us get better.

Theme #4: Involves team in decision making

During the last portion of the interview, all participants were asked how a great coach would make team decisions. The overall theme that was presented by the participants was the desire to have a coach who would consider their opinions or preferences while making decisions. Many of the participants discussed being involved in decision making as the opportunity to voice their preferences in playing a particular position or allowing them time in game or practice

situations to offer their opinion. Participant 1 noted, “I kind of like the coach to talk to the team because some places where the coach puts them they’re not really comfortable so they don’t really understand the whole process of the position.” Participant 9 agreed with the coach allowing their input on what position they would like to play, “Well he should probably, well at first he should ask us where we would like to play and he should let us try that position out and if we weren’t that good at it then just pick another position.” Participant 6 also illustrates this idea and adds that he wants the coach to consider which players they work alongside the best. He states:

Well I like him to talk to us about stuff because if we don’t know what we’re doing. Like if he says that, like one of our best players, which all of them are awesome, but like one of our good players like if he separates them and we really need him or her then we probably won’t be as good without him or her. So I like him to talk about it with us before he makes that change.

Participant 10 emphasizes that he would like the coach to listen to what they have to say and also allow them time to speak in the game.

He could probably listen to his players and not go off, like what he knows and most of the time what he knows an he’d let some or most of the players choose, like what needs to be done if they know what ... so like at half time if we are losing he would let us have like a couple or two minutes to say what we think and then he’d tell us, so he’s not like just telling us what needs to be done all the time.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the preferred leadership styles of Generation Z athletes. A qualitative analysis of ten soccer players from a Generation Z population revealed four common themes. Generation Z athletes prefer a coach who: (a) does not yell and remains calm; (b) is caring and encouraging; (c) has knowledge of the sport; and (d) involves the team in decision making.

Due to the benefits offered by youth sports, it is important to understand the preferences of coaching styles among the new generation in order to keep youth active. Generation Z is a generation comprised of young members with the oldest peaking at 9 to 10 years old. Although we know little about their characteristics, we can examine past generations and the issues that have already shown to be prevalent for this generation. The results of this study give us an insight of the coaching preferences for a sample of Generation Z and ways in which we can adapt to enhance the youth sport environment.

Stewart and Taylor (2000) found coaching issues as one of the top three reasons that female athletes chose to quit a sport. Furthermore, they reported that their favorite coaches were “fun, nice, listened to and understood players, fair, encouraging to individuals, knowledgeable, and pushed the team to do their best.” Their least favorite coaches were describe as, “mean-rude, unfair, not encouraging, having yelled at players, having poor coaching skills, not nice, negative, and too strict.” Garcia (1994) came to similar conclusions in assessing the gender differences among youth while learning fundamental skills. He noted that neither gender liked coaches who yelled at players, exhibited poor coaching skills, were not nice, were overly negative, or too strict. Frey, Czech, Kent and Johnson (2006) explored experiences of female athletes with their

coaches. They found that females felt that an ideal coach should be a ‘good leader, teacher, friend, and motivator.’ Each of these studies coincides with the themes found within this study. Does not yell, encourages, and displays knowledge of the sport were themes in this study that were consistently mentioned when describing a great coach and will be further discussed throughout the remainder of this section.

While three of the major findings of the study (not yell, encouraging, and knowledge of sport) were found within the previously mentioned studies, it should be duly noted that each of the participants in the current study mentioned that they wanted the coach to be ‘nice.’ The majority of the participants described this term in further detail as ‘not yelling:’ which was, in turn, selected as the vocabulary to use for the theme. The participants of this study emphasized that they did not want a coach to yell. They preferred the coach pull them to the side and explain their mistakes. They wanted the coach to consistently remain calm throughout all situations whether they were stressful or non-stressful. Due to the high frequency of the theme, it is important to consider why the participants viewed yelling as such an issue. Through the descriptions provided by the participants, it appears that many had an issue with the loud noise of yelling. One of the participants commented that there was so much yelling that they did not know what the coach was saying. Fry and Hale (1996) noted that age has an influence on processing speed and working memory. Therefore, children require a longer period of time to process commands when compared to adults. If youth are confronted with yelling adults, that action may take up a large portion of their processing and working memory which, in turn, slows down their response time. Participants also conveyed the idea that many times the yelling sounded angry. Kenow and Williams (1992) examined the relationship of anxiety, self-confidence, and evaluation with coaching behaviors. They found that athletes perceived many coaching behaviors

more negatively than did the coach. While many coaches may not intend to appear angry through the act of yelling, it may be internalized as such by youth and have a negative impact on their experience. Smoll and Smith (1996) comment that a negative experience with a coach is likely to have a greater impact on the coach-athlete relationship; therefore, hindering the positive youth sport environment. Youth who become upset by a gesture made by the coach are less likely to be engaged and be willing to learn the sport (Dworkin & Larson, 2006). As discussed by Elmore (2010), it is inferred that members of Generation Z are cautious and insecure. Therefore, negative criticism and yelling may cause them to be hesitant of trying new skills and less confident in themselves.

It is evident that Generation Z athletes in this study and those previously mentioned desired a coach who provides positive interactions and feedback. Martin, Jackson, Richardson, and Weiller (1999) found that early and late adolescents rated positive feedback as their main preference in a coach. Overall, they found that athletes preferred a coach who created a positive atmosphere and was able to provide effective instructions. Horn (2002) found that coaches who continually provided positive and instructional feedback after performance success and performance errors had a significantly positive impact on the athlete's intrinsic motivation and overall sport experience. Providing positive interactions and feedback among players leads into the study's second major theme of the desire for a coach to be caring and encouraging. The participants of the study noted that they wanted a coach who motivated them and expressed caring attributes. They described these coaching qualities as someone who was willing to assist them with skills, effectively explain their mistakes and motivate the team to play their best. It appears as though coaches who have these qualities are more likely to develop a positive relationship with the players. Under their direction, players can learn in a comfortable

environment and not be concerned with making mistakes. They can be confident that their coach will assist and encourage them to succeed. Barnett, Smoll and Smith (1995) integrated a coaching effectiveness training program into a study in order to analyze the impact the program would have on an athlete's experience. The program informed the coaches of the need to provide athletes with a positive and supporting environment. They found that individuals who played for the coaches that participated in the program showed more positive attitudes, higher levels of self-esteem, a greater enjoyment of the sport, and lower levels of sport withdrawal.

While many youth in this study wanted their coach to possess positive personality characteristics, they also showed a desire for their coach to have knowledge of their particular sport. The participants in this study felt that it was important that their coach knew the game and had experience with playing the sport. Martin, Jackson, Richardson, and Weiller (1999) compared the preferences in coach qualities between youth players and their parents. Both males and females rated the coach's ability and participation in sport as the second most important quality they wanted in a coach. Frey, Czech, Kent and Johnson (2006) found that athletes perceived a good coach as someone who was respected by their players. The participants explained that in order to earn that respect the coach must have a sufficient amount of knowledge in the sport and be able to perform the skills. Dorwin and Larson (2006) found similar results when they examined adolescents' negative experiences while participating in organized youth activities. One of the major categories was the negative influence by adult leaders. Similar to the current study, a prominent theme among the participants was unknowledgeable or poor leaders. They described these individuals as 'someone who was inexperienced in either the activity or in serving as a leader for the activity.' One of the issues that has been discussed regarding poor leaders is the large number of volunteers that serve as coaches in youth sports. Although

volunteers contribute heavily to youth sports, Carnegie (1992) comments that many of them have little or no training. While it may appear that providing an uneducated coach is better than no coach at all, this assumption, may in turn, become a detriment to their experience.

The last prevalent theme among participants was the preference of a coach who involved the team in their decision making process. The participants of this study emphasized wanting input on their played positions and the opportunity to voice concerns during the game. Martin, Jackson, Richardson, and Weiller (1999) also found that young athletes, along with their parents, wanted a coach who allowed them the opportunity to assist in the decision making process. Trends such as these provoke questions relating to the type of behavior (e.g., autocratic, democratic) that young athletes now desire in a coach. Chelladurai and Saleh (1978) found that males had a greater preference than females for their coach to display an autocratic style of behavior. Sherman, Fuller, and Speed (2000) found only a marginal difference and noted that overall participants wanted the coach to have a democratic style of behavior. Beam, Serwatka, and Wilson (2004) examined student-athletes and found a significantly higher preference for a democratic coaching style. As the years have progressed, it appears a democratic style has become a generational trend, while the majority of athletes, at least in a youth setting, desire a democratic coaching behavior. In this study, there was no evidence that males and females differed in this respect. If assumptions had to be made based on the conversations with the participants, it was the males that expressed a greater preference of a democratic style of coaching. In the interviews, the males were passionate about not wanting the coach to yell and having the ability to give suggestions in particular practice or game situations. Cramer and Prentice-Dunn (2007) suggest that being aware of athletes' concerns and taking them into consideration will establish a strong coach-athlete relationship. By utilizing this democratic style

of coaching, a greater connection can be created which may enhance team cohesion and motivation.

There were several limitations to this study. First, the study was limited to nine year old soccer players. Since they are the oldest of their generation, the study was limited to only questioning this particular age group. Furthermore, soccer players may have had different experiences with coaches than those who play in individual sports or sports that are more/less contact based in nature. The study was limited to athletes from one sport club in the eastern region of North Carolina and may only reflect the opinions of the styles of coaching in that particular area. Lastly, youth have a limited amount of vocabulary. Therefore, it may have been difficult for them to fully explain their preferred types of leadership styles.

Future research could expand on this study and implement a mixed-methodological approach. Many researchers who examine leadership styles utilize the Leadership Scale for Sports which is a 40 item questionnaire that examines athletes' preferences in leadership styles. The LSS was developed by Chelladuari and Saleh (1978) who focused on understanding the required, preferred, and actual behaviors of coaches. It would be beneficial to compare the preferences of Generation Z athletes to the actual behaviors of their coaches. Comparisons between coach and athlete could, in turn, allow for a more balanced and interactive environment. Another potential avenue may be to examine the role that technology plays in the lives of Generation Z and how it is influencing their participation in sport. Participants of this study discussed an interest in technology before interviews and some were able to better answer questions when referenced to video games. If it is evident that technology will play such a major role in youths' lives, we may want to examine ways in which it can be beneficial to their physical health.

The conclusions that can be made from this study are that coaches need to be aware of their athletes' preferences and concerns. Many times coaches focus on their own endeavors and may ignore the opinions of their players because they believe they know best, based on their own playing/coaching experiences. It is important that coaches recognize that each athlete is different and that they need to adapt their coaching styles to the desires of their players. This study showed that youth want an environment in which they feel comfortable and one that allows opportunity to grow in sport. It appears that Generation Z prefers a democratic coaching style which consists of positive interactions and feedback. Such findings are becoming a common trend among research in that past generations have also found that youth want a coach who poses positive actions and behaviors. It is important to take note of these consistent findings because some coaches still place their wants over the needs and wants of young players. Coaches need to become aware that yelling, negative criticism and overemphasizing winning are not actions in which youth look for in a leader. By understanding the coaching preferences of Generation Z and those of past generations, we can become aware of young athlete's desires while playing sport and utilize this information to create a positive youth sport environment.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH QUESTIONS, DELIMITATIONS, LIMITATIONS, ASSUMPTIONS & DEFINITIONS

Research Questions

1. What are the preferred coaching styles by youth soccer players of Generation Z from a qualitative perspective?

Delimitations

1. There is a small sample size. However, in qualitative research this is common in order to gain a more in depth analysis of the research questions.
2. Participants were only selected from one recreation club in North Carolina and may not be a representative sample to generalize to all youth sports.
3. The study was limited to athletes participating in youth soccer.
4. The study was limited to a Generation Z population.

Limitations

1. Participants in the study were collected by use purposeful sampling, mostly through personal contacts.
2. Youth may have been unable to open up completely.
3. Youth may have limited vocabulary and were unable to adequately express experience.
4. Youth have not had many experiences of different coaching styles.

5. The primary researcher of this study was a former coach of a female, Generation Z soccer team which could of brought a biased opinion to the data collection; however, measures were taken to eliminate such biases as much as possible.

Assumptions

1. Participants understood questions and answered to the best of their ability.
2. Participants were able to effectively verbalize their thoughts.
3. The researcher effectively asked probing questions that did not lead the participant.

Definitions

1. Generation Z: individuals born from 2000 to the present (Jones, Jo, & Martin, 2009)
2. Youth Sports: applied to any of the various athletic programs that provide a systematic sequence of practices and contests for children and youth (Seefeldt, Ewing & Walk, 1992).
3. Triangulation: Strategies for reducing systematic bias and distortion during data analysis (Patton, 2002).
4. Humanistic Framework: An emphasis on describing the perspective of an individual and how they experience the world in which they live (Hill, 2001).
5. Early specialization: investing in one sport on a year round basis from a young age with the goal of developing expertise (Ericsson et al, 1993).
6. Sampling: engaging in a variety of sport during childhood (Côté, 2009)

APPENDIX B

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Butcher, J., Lindner, K., & Johns, D. (2002). Withdrawal from competitive youth sport: A retrospective ten-year study. *Journal of Sport Behavior*. 25(2). 145-163

Butcher, Lindner, and Johns performed a study on students in tenth grade of high school and had them fill out a questionnaire which questioned their sport activity and withdrawal from sport since first grade. This allowed them to understand some of the reasons for withdrawal from youth sports and specifically ask sport-specific vs. permanent drop out questions. Ninety-four percent of the students had withdrawn from at least one sport over the ten year span while seventy percent of those who dropped out of a sport continued to compete in at least one other sport. For youth it showed that enjoyment and feelings of competence are most important for keeping the child in sport. Females reported that lack of competence and pressure to perform well was more important reasons for withdrawal than for males.

The retrospective study gives us a look at the amount of withdrawal that most individuals will experience from at least one sport in their lifetime. It's interesting because although individuals are withdrawing it shows that majority of individuals give sports a try. Gould (1987) concluded that conflicts of interest and interest in other activities have been to be the most consistent motives for sport withdrawal, also included are dislike of coach, boredom, and no fun. Again, one of the reasons for withdrawal comes back to the coach and the environment that they provide. Obviously sports are not going to be for everyone but if they provide the benefits that experts say than it would be imperative to try and keep them in at a young age. It may be of interest to question our participants on the

effect that an individual who does not fit their coaching standards would play a role in their withdrawal. If not asked directly then we should at least keep our ears open for such statements.

Chelladurai, P., & Saleh, S. (1978). Preferred leadership in sports. *Canadian Journal of Applied Sport Sciences*, 3, 85-92

Chelladurai and Saleh developed the Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS) questionnaire which analyzed the preferred leadership style of athletes. The authors looked at five different categories and specifically analyzed both males and females desire towards an autocratic or democratic style. The LSS also served as a basis for understanding qualities that are important in an effective leader.

The reports of this study assisted in understanding how athletes of past generations have viewed leadership. The study allowed the researcher to note trends that are becoming prevalent throughout research and compare them to Generation Z. By understanding the LSS scale, it may be vital to use a mixed methodological approach and look at Generation Z both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Coté, J., Horton, S., MacDonald, D., & Wilkes, S. (2009). The benefits of sampling sports during childhood. *Physical and Health Education*. 6-11

The article discussed the benefits of sport sampling over early specialization. Sampling is when an athlete chooses to participate in multiple sports throughout the year instead of heavily specializing in a sport. The authors expressed that athletes who sample sports are less likely to dropout or become injured. Sampling has been linked to positive sport and psychosocial outcomes.

The importance of the article, in regards to this study, was to examine issues that Generation Z athletes may face. It is important that we understand the way in which sport influences their lives and how their participation in sport can impact their future.

Cunningham, S. (2001). National Council of Youth Sports Market Research. Retrieved from:
<http://www.ncys.org>

Cunningham provided an article which reviewed the report by the National Council of Youth Sports for active participants playing youth sports. The report provided an overview of the total number of participants and the amounts that participate within each sport. It noted that over 38 million are participating and soccer is the top participated sport.

The article provides the study with yet another reason to be concerned with the way in which youth sports are conducted. Since there are so many youth involved in sport, it is important that they are provided with an atmosphere that is conducive to their development. This article also gave a rationale for examining soccer players in that it is the top participated sport by youth in the United States.

Elmore, T. (2002). Utterly updated: Current stats and stories to help you connect with the millennial generation. *Growing Leaders*. Retrieved from: [http:// www.growingleaders.com/index.php/articles/article-archive.html](http://www.growingleaders.com/index.php/articles/article-archive.html)

Elmore reviews the ways in which the Millennial Generation has been influenced by society. He reports that each generation is made distinct through music, crisis, celebrities, events, and many other influences that occur during their lifetime. Elmore also notes that each generation, due to their different experiences, may require a different style of learning.

Although the article is focused on the Millennial Generation, it offers useful information concerning the ways in which generations are shaped by their environment. It provides rationale as to examining Generation Z further in that they may have different types of preferences and learning styles.

Ewing, M., & Seefeldt, V. (1996). Patterns and attrition in American agency-sponsored youth sports. In F.L. Smoll & Smith (Eds.), *Children and youth in sport: A biopsychological perspective*. 31-44. Dubuque, IA: Brown & Benchmark.

Ewing and Seefeldt provided an overview of the way in which the atmosphere of youth sport can influence a young athlete. They discussed the ways in which sport can be both positive and negative for youth. From a positive standpoint they discussed how physically it could assist in weight control and the improving strength and endurance. They also noted that it can improve their motor skills that are both used in the sport and in everyday life. Ewing and Seefeldt also discussed that athletes may choose to withdraw from sport which may be due to burnout, injury or negative experiences with peers.

This article was the main resource used to describe the benefits that can be offered by youth sports. Along with other researchers, it has been noted that youth sport provides numerous benefits. Such benefits can impact a child physically, socially, psychologically, and intellectually. Understanding the benefits and negative impacts can assist in educating coaches of the best way to enhance a child's experience.

Fraser-Thomas, J., Cote, J., Deakin, J. (2005). Youth sport programs: an avenue to foster positive youth development. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*. 10(1).

The authors of the study analyzed the ways in which sports can provide a positive atmosphere for youth. The authors discussed the ways in which influences could have both a positive and negative impact. Adults and program design were two of the main contributors. It was noted that one of the way in which developing a positive atmosphere was by utilizing the 5 C's (competence, confidence, character, connections, and compassion/caring).

The information from this study was used to gain a better understanding of the ways in which sports can be a benefit to young athletes. A model, designed to serve as a guideline for coaches and policy makers in building a positive environment, served as an aid when determining the way in which youth sports should be structured. Such information helps in understanding ways to keep youth involved in sport.

Frey, M., Czech, D., Kent, R. & Johnson, M. (2006). An exploration of female athletes' experiences and perceptions of male and female coaches. *The Sport Journal*. 9(4).

The study by Frey, Czech, Kent, and Johnson takes a look at perceptions of female athletes towards gender preference of coach. After conducting a semi-structured interview on 12 female athletes the study found four prominent themes concerning the topic: 1) Discipline and Structure 2) Personal Relationships 3) Passivity and Aggressiveness 4) Coach Preference. Overall, the majority of the female athletes reported that they preferred to have a male coach in that they felt they had a greater level of knowledge, a better understanding of the road to success which in turn lead them to have a greater respect for the male coach. They also felt they were organized, instructional and presented an authoritative coaching style while female coaches were more lenient. However, the females did feel that female coaches were more likely to relate and build a

friendship. They showed more encouragement and motivation with positive feedback more so than the males.

The study was a significant source for my study in that it allowed us to gain an understanding of the characteristics that female athletes preferred in coaching. The study showed that there is more to an athlete simply preferring one gender over the other. It will be interesting to see if youth in our study will first mention a gender preference as a quality of optimal coaching as opposed to certain characteristics.

Hedstrom, R. & Gould, D. (2004). Research in youth sports: Critical issues status. *Michigan State: Institute for the study of youth sports.*

Hedstrom and Gould provide a summary of beneficial research that has been conducted in different areas of youth sports. They mention areas such as the benefits of competition, parental influence, peer influence, and reason for burnout. Some of the most important findings were by Seefeldt, Ewing, and Walk (1992) who identified the following possible benefits associated with competition in youth sports. They are: to learning physical skills (both motor and sport-specific), appreciation of fitness, sense of belonging, and acquiring sport skills for leisure. They reported the reasons that children expressed that they participated in sport which was to have fun, to do something they were good at, to stay in shape, to learn new or improve my skills and to play as part of a team. They also noted reasons that individuals drop out of youth sports which are: no longer interested in the sport, it was no longer fun, the coach played favorites/was a poor teacher and wanting to participate in other activities.

This article allowed us to gain an overall view of youth sports. We get a picture of the ways in which they could be beneficial, ways in which youth see them as beneficial and

ways in which they could lead to burnout. It helps us to understand some of the characteristics of sport that youth enjoy and arrive to an understanding of optimal coaching from a youth's standpoint. If we can understand why they want to be out there and also understand why they lose interest then we can make changes to enhance our programs. Since the majority of the research report by Seefeldt, Ewing and Walk was conducted in 1992, it will be interesting to compare our results with their findings and see if optimal coaching coincides with the reasons that they choose to participate.

Hilgers, L. (2006). *Youth sports drawing more than ever*. Retrieved November 18, 2008 from CNN.com. Website: <http://www.cnn.com/2006/US/07/03/rise.kids.sports/index.html>

The purpose of the article is to provide an understanding of the way in which youth sports plays a role in the lives of American families today. It estimates 41 million of American children are involved in youth sports and that number is continually growing. In 2002 it was reported that 17.5 million were playing soccer. For the most part experts say that this increase is a great thing for the kids. Sports teach them how to work with a team, develop skills, and have a desire to be active which is great since 16% of American children are considered obese. However, Dr. Dan Gould notes that some downsides have begun to arise in youth sports. Professionalization is becoming an issue. Many kids now are only playing for the scholarship and are putting a lot of time and effort into only one sport. Such practices can not only lead burnout but also sport injuries.

This article gives us a good estimate of the amount of children and families that are involved with youth sports. It also gives us a rationale for choosing soccer as our main focus in that it is one of the most played sports by youth. From these numbers we can see that it is important how organizations are operated and that they are using their full

potential to provide for the kids. Furthermore, Dr. Gould points out the issue of professionalism that is becoming more prevalent of an issue for youth which is those of generation z. This shows a change in how families look at sports and in turn lead to a change of what youth expect from their coaches and peers.

Hill, K. (2001). *Frameworks for sports psychologist: Enhancing sport performance*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Hill discusses the ways in which a Humanistic Model can be utilized within sport psychology. The primary investigator is to treat each individual with genuineness, empathy, and non-judgmental care. The participant is viewed as a 'co-investigator' in that their experience is examined as unique and truthful.

A Humanistic Framework was utilized for this study. The article by Hill, assisted in the way in which the primary investigator approached the interviews. It served as a guideline in collecting data and a reference to better understand qualitative inquiry.

Hoffman, E., Czech, D., Metzler, J., Burdette, T., Zwald, D., Blazo, J., & Zakrajsek, R. (2009). Preferred coaching qualities in NCAA division I college athletes: A qualitative analysis of basketball players from a millennial generation. *Applied Research in Coaching and Athletics Annual*. 24. 140-178

The study uses a semi-structured qualitative analysis to coaching preferences of the millennial generation. This generation, also known as the Echo Boomers, are mostly comprised of individuals who would be in college at this time. They found that the millennial generation desires a coach who will sustain multiple roles in their lives, communicate clearly, maximize production, have compassions and be mindful of the entire team's interest. Specifically, they found that majority of females from a millennial

generation wanted a wanted a caring, helpful and understanding coach as well as one who is calm in stressful situations. They also wanted a coach who maximized production from their players. Male participants desired a coach who treated each player in a unique yet fair manner. They also wanted a coach who stressed the importance of discipline.

Majority wanted their coach to be a role model, a good communicator and offer academic support services.

This study serves as the underlying structure of our study. Hoffman et. al. showed that there are differences in generations which leads to our research on generation z. The study also shows that there are gender differences within collegiate athletics which also leads us to assume that we will find differences in youth sports. They make the suggestion that coaches may need to adjust their coaching style to their athletes which I feel is exactly what we are trying to prove in our research. Coaches need to understand that not all athletes are the same especially when it comes to youth. We will base our interview protocol on that used by Hoffman et. al. since it has been proven valid and reliable.

Jones,V., Jo, J., & Martin, P. (2009). Future schools and how technology can be used to support millennial and generation-z students. *School of Information and Communication Technology, Griffith University.*

The article explains that individuals who were born in the same generation tend to experience similar life events, have similar attitudes, adaptabilities and traits. They explain that as we enter into new generations that those individuals require a different approach to learning. They explain that research has shown that kids today are not the

same as kids many years ago. However, schools are not adjusting to the new developments of today and still operating on a traditional model.

The article provides us with a timeline of the beginning and end to each generation.

Jones, Jo, and Martin term Generation Z as those who were born or will be born between 2000 to 2020. The evidence that each generation has been different than the other gives us reason to believe that generation z, which is youth involved in sports at this time, will require a different approach to learning than those in the past. Therefore, studies of the top five reasons of why kids participate in that were preferred almost twenty years ago will very likely have different results on the youth today.

Martin, S., Dale, G., & Jackson, A. (2001). Youth coaching preferences of adolescent athletes and their parents. *Journal of Sport Behavior*. 24(2). 197-212

Martin, Dale and Jackson performed a quantitative analysis on athletes ages 10 to 18 by use of the Participation Motivation Questionnaire to discover youth coaching preferences. They found that overall most athletes have similar types of coaching motivation which included the ability to effectively teach and perform the skills of the sport, implement effective instructions at practice and provide an atmosphere that they can compete and achieve set goals. Age of the coach was not a concern for either gender. However, genders did show different opinions in regards to preference of coaching style and gender of coach. Males reported that they preferred a male coach whereas majority of the females did not have a preference. However, those females that did express an opinion chose female coaches over males. They also found that girls preferred a coach who focuses on keeping the athletes active with fun and excitement whereas boys preferred a coach who emphasizes fitness and competitive challenge.

The results of this study are important implications for gender differences of opinion of optimal coaching. It showed that males and females do have different preferences and it will allow us to understand more deeply of the needs of the young athletes. I found it interesting that gender of the coach was also a factor in concerns of coaching preference. In most studies female athletes that have expressed a preference of the gender of the coach have chosen a male coach. Females in this study chose a female coach which questions if this will be a common theme in generation z.

Martens, R. (1987). *Coaches guide to sport psychology*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers.

Martens provides guidance to coaches who are looking to utilize sport psychology principles. He reviews numerous qualities in which an effective coach should pose and gives suggestions on the ways in which coaches can enhance their sport atmosphere.

Martens notes that an effective coach should: (a) provides direction through the establishment of goals; (b) builds a psychological and social environment that is conducive to achieving the team's goals; (c) instills values; (d) motivates members of the group to pursue goals; (e) confronts members when problems arise and resolves conflict; and (f) communicates effectively.

The suggestions for an effective coaching style were used in the development of the questionnaire for this study. By asking youth to describe their preferences on each of the categories it allows us to see how youth prefer their coaches to conduct the sport environment.

Seefeldt, V., Ewing, M., & Walk, S. (1992). Overview of youth sports programs in the United States. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development.

Seefeldt, Ewing, and Walk discuss the advantages that youth sports offer within the United States. Along the lines of many other researchers, the authors note that children can benefit from a social standpoint and build friendships. They also discuss the top five reasons that children play sports. It is discussed how those involved in sport impact the experience

This study is well known in the youth sport literature. It was used in this article to discuss the ways in which youth view sport and how we can use this information to look at Generation Z.

Smith, R. & Smoll, F. (1997). Coaching the coaches: Youth sports as a scientific and applied behavioral setting. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 6(1). 16-21

In the article, Smith and Smoll review past literature of the importance of coaching behavior in youth sport. It was noted that many individuals are able to teach the technical aspects of the sport but are not taught how to establish a stimulating and positive psychology environment. In most of the circumstances, youth produce positive outcomes when the coach places development and fun above winning. They use positive reinforcement and constructive criticism by ways of encouragement. Smith and Smoll comment that the most important factor determining outcomes is the manner in which this important social learning situation is structured and supervised by the adults who play an increasingly active role in the highly organized youth sports programs of today. For future directions they note that a study comparing boys' and girls' reactions to specific relationship with coaches could reveal important sex differences. Our study will

compare genders and their views on optimal coaching which should also reveal important desires of each sex. The greatest contribution that we can take from this study is how they express the importance of the coach on the outcomes of the youth. It expresses that it is important that their learning environment is ran efficiently and at the interest of the youth. By us gaining an understanding of the ways in which youth wish their coaches would act can help us to increase the enjoyment of youth sports while still providing a growth enhancing atmosphere.

Stewart, C. & Taylor, J. (2000). Why female athletes quit: Implications for coach education.

Physical Educator. 57, 170

Stewart and Taylor examined the reasons that young female athletes chose to withdraw from sport. They found that athletes withdrew due to pressure from adults and a lack of interest. Participants reported that they desired a coach who was fun, nice, encouraging, and pushed the team to do their best. They also found that participants had a negative experience with coaches who were unfair, yelled, and were too strict.

The information of this study allowed us to understand the importance the coach plays on a young athlete's experience. Many athletes reported that they withdrew due to the negative experience with a coach. Noting these reports allows us to learn how coaches can adapt their coaching styles in the future to improve sport for young athletes.

White, S., Duda, J., & Keller, M. (1998). The relationship between goal orientation and

perceived purposes of sport among youth sport participants. *Journal of Sport Behavior*. 21(4). 474-484

White, Duda, and Keller looked at the relationship between goal orientation and the way in which youth viewed the purpose of sport. They reported that sport involvement should

provide and expect good sportsmanship and conduct, increase the desire to compete, and promote an active lifestyle for youth athletes. The study found that males perceived sport as a vehicle to heighten status and popularity with peers, teach deceptive behaviors and superiority over others and encourage competitiveness when compared to female youth participants. This was one of the first studies that revealed this idea of sport for the basis of deceptive behaviors and a superior attitude. On a more positive note, they found that task oriented athletes found sport as an enhancement of positive characteristics such as self-esteem and respectfulness. These individuals were hypothesized to gain the most enjoyment from youth sports.

The study showed that not all responses about youth sports will be positive. Many times we only see the benefits of youth sport and ignore some of the damages that it can cause if not operated correctly. The report that males felt that sport taught deceptive behaviors can be due to many factors. One in particular could be as a result of their coach which once again reiterates the importance of the coaching styles that are provided to our youth.

Wong, E., & Bridges, L. (1995). A model of motivational orientation of youth sport: some preliminary work. *Adolescence*. 30(118). 437-452

A sample of 108 boys was analyzed quantitatively to assess perceived competence, perceived control, competitive trait anxiety, and motivational orientation in sport.

Additionally, 12 coaches were observed two games in order to record coaching behaviors during competition. They found that both coaching behaviors and children's trait anxiety had an effect on the perception of control. The current study and past research indicated that players' self-perceptions and motivational orientation are significantly related to the coaching behavior with an emphasis on their feedback. Coaches in this study tended to

give more instructive feedback than encouragement and also were more individually directed than team-directed. However, negative reactions/behavior of the coach was low. From the study we are able to see how a coach's behavior can affect their players. Players are different and so a coach who gives instructional feedback with a lack of encouragement it may benefit one player but not the other. Wong and Bridges help us to view optimal coaching from an internal standpoint and how it relates to trait anxiety and motivation. Youth athletes may not be able to understand or express this type of effect of the coach on their personality.

APPENDIX C

INSTRUMENTATION

The study that we are performing is looking at the ways in which young athletes your age describe all the qualities of a great coach. I know that you have just finished playing soccer under the direction of a coach but I don't want you to think of them right now. I want you to imagine the type of coach that you would really enjoy playing for and try to answer the following questions in the best way that you can.

1. Describe a great coach from your opinion.
2. Describe how a great coach acts towards his/her players.
3. Describe how a great coach would act in a stressful situation. What about a situation that is not stressful?
4. Describe a how a great coach would talk to you.
5. Describe how a great coach can motivate you to be the best that you can be.
6. Describe how a great coach would make important team-related decisions.

Further open-ended questions were used in order to clarify and attain deeper elaborations of the athlete's experiences (Patton, 2002). An example of a probing question would be:

I heard you mention _____; can you tell me more about that?

What did you mean when you said _____?

APPENDIX D

INFORMED ASSENT/CONSENT



COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND KINESIOLOGY

MINOR'S ASSENT

Hello,

I am Krisha Parker, a graduate student at Georgia Southern University, and I am conducting a study on Generations Z's views on optimal coaching.

You are being asked to participate in a project that will be used to learn about youth's preferences in coaches. If you agree to be part of the project, you will talk with me. I will ask you a few questions that you may answer in any way that you feel comfortable. The questions will be about your views of a great coach. It will take 20 to 30 minutes for you to do this project.

You do not have to do this project. You can stop whenever you want. If you do not want to answer any questions, it is ok, nothing bad will happen. You can refuse to do the project even if your parents say you can.

No one will see the answers to the questions that I ask you. All of the answers that you give me will be kept in a locked cabinet in a room at Georgia Southern University, and only I or my advisor will see your answers. We are not going to put your name on the answers that you give us, so no one will be able to know which answers were yours.

If you or your parent/guardian has any questions about this form or the project, please call me at (910) 389-1193 or my advisor, Dr. Dan Czech, at (912) 478-5267. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-478-0843. Thank you!

If you understand the information above and want to do the project, please sign your name on the line below:

Yes, I will participate in this project: _____

Child's Name: _____

Investigator's Signature: _____

Date: _____



COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND KINESIOLOGY

PARENTAL INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of youth's perceptions of optimal coaching. The study will allow us to understand how youth's perceptions have changed across generations.

If you give permission, your child will have the opportunity to participate in an open-ended interview. Your child will be asked about the characteristics that describe a great coach. The study will take approximately 20-30 minutes for your child to participate.

Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. The risks from participating in this study are very minimal and should only deal with speaking with a stranger about their views of optimal coaching; however, your child will be told that he or she may stop participating at any time without any penalty. Your child may choose to not answer any question(s) he/she does not wish to for any reason. Your child may refuse to participate even if you agree to her/his participation.

In order to protect the confidentiality of the child, a number and not the child's name will appear on all of the information recorded during the experiment. All information pertaining to the study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in an office at Georgia Southern University. No one at the Dixon Schools will see the information recorded about your child.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study at any time, please feel free to contact Krisha Parker, Health & Kinesiology major, at (910)389-1193, or Dr. Dan Czech, advisor, at (912)478-5267. For questions concerning your child's rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-478-0843.

If you are giving permission for your child to participate in the experiment, please sign the form below. Thank you very much for your time.

Krisha Parker
Health & Kinesiology Major

Dr. Dan Czech
Health & Kinesiology
Professor of Sport Psychology

Investigator's Signature _____

Child's Name: _____

Parent or Guardian's Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX E
IRB APPROVAL

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs Institutional Review Board (IRB)		
Phone: 912-478-0843		Veazey Hall 2021 P. O. Box 8005 Statesboro, GA 30460
Fax: 912-478-0719	IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	

To: Krishna Parker
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Dan Czech
P.O. Box 8076

CC: Charles E. Patterson
Associate Vice President for Research

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Date: February 23, 2010

Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered H10226 and titled "Preferred Coaching Styles in Youth Sports: A Qualitative Inquiry of Soccer Players from Generation Z", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable. You are authorized to enroll up to 12 subjects.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.

This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter. If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer