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University of Northern Colorado
Greeley, CO

“PROUD PARENTING” IN THE JUNIOR LIFEGUARD PROGRAM

A Thesis
Submitted in partial
Fulfillment for Graduation with honors Distinction and
The Degree of Bachelor of Science

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MAY 2022

Signature Page

“PROUD PARENTING” IN THE JUNIOR LIFEGUARD PROGRAM

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Abstract

Parental involvement has been shown to be the single most important factor in determining a child's successful participation in youth sport. Parents may be required to provide financial, emotional, and physical support. However, this involvement from parents can require significant sacrifice. Youth sports can provide children with many developmental benefits such as increases in physical, cognitive, and emotional well-being. A reason that parents may enroll their children into youth sport programs are the beliefs they maintain about the positive developmental benefits that children may obtain from participation in youth sports programs. The capacity to give this opportunity to their child(ren) may, in turn, make parents feel proud. The Junior Lifeguard (JG) program is a distinctive program that utilizes a unique environment which offers children opportunities for cognitive, physical, and emotional development. The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of parents' pride in their child(ren)'s participation in the JG program. Surveys were distributed to JG parents and thematic analyses were done to determine themes that emerged from the parents' responses. The results revealed an overarching theme of 'Opportunity' and two subthemes of 'Development' and 'Community'. Parents felt proud for being able to provide their children with developmental opportunities through enrolling and supporting their children in the JG program.

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Introduction

Parents are the single most important social factor in determining child sport participation; they provide financial, physical, and emotional support (Knight et al., 2017). The need to provide various types of support can create significant stressors on parents that cannot be ignored. While much of the literature has focused on the effects on youth development from involvement in youth sports programs, the effects on parents from being involved in these programs is a much less investigated area. Some of these demands include competitive, developmental, and personal stressors (Sutcliffe et al., 2021). One hypothesis as to why parents would enroll their children in youth sports programs, despite all the investments required, would be because parents perceive the program as offering developmental benefits for their children from participation within a sport or physical activity (PA) program. Parents may, in turn, feel proud of themselves for offering the opportunities for their child(ren).

The Junior Lifeguard (JG) program is a unique program that provides children an opportunity to gain many developmental benefits from involvement. The JG program utilizes a dynamic environment to provide children cognitive physical, and emotional development opportunities. Cognitive development can come from learning ocean safety, including learning how to read the currents in the ocean as well as procedural knowledge on how to perform specific ocean safety skills, such as CPR. Physical development opportunities come from being able to translate these learned skills into physical actions in the dynamic ocean environment including swimming in the ocean and performing previously learned procedural skills. Emotional development can come from interacting with other children of similar ages and learning social skills such as effective communication and conflict resolution. The JG program is an extremely sought-after program each year, as indicated by the high number of tryouts each year. However,

parental perspectives as to why they may, or may not, be proud to be a JG parent have yet to be assessed. The purpose of this study is to explore parents' perspectives as to why they may, or may not, be proud to be the parent of a child that participates in the JG program. The specific research question used to guide this study was: What is the specific nature of JG parents' pride regarding their child's enrollment in the JG program?

Review of The Literature

Research findings consistently indicate that participation in youth sports programs positively impacts physical health in children. With youth obesity rates in the USA on the rise, many health researchers have focused their attention on how to stop this cycle and use interventions such as physical activity (PA) and exercise (Tremblay et al., 2002). One of the main areas of investigative focus is on how to engage children in more PA and exercise (Tremblay et al., 2002). With the many benefits of PA and exercise on cardiovascular health, weight control, muscle strength, flexibility, bone density, and balance; efforts have been taken to engage more youth in PA and exercise (Taylor et al., 1985). The benefits of having active youth continue with the relationship between youth PA habits translating in PA levels in adult years (Dishman et al., 1985). This, in turn, increases the same areas of health in adulthood, along with potentially decreasing depression and anxiety rates (Taylor et al., 1985). Establishing healthy habits is critical in childhood and is one of the many benefits parents may believe their child can attain from involvement in PA/sport-based youth programs.

Youth involvement in sports programs has been shown to have both positive, as well as negative, psychological effects. Youth sports programs have been shown to increase social integration through building community with others that are in similar developmental stages (Fraser et al., 2005). One of the crucial parts of adolescent development is creating a social

identity. Youth sports provide a unique opportunity that fosters the formation of a clear social identity. Social identity theory explains how allowing adolescent children to create intergroup relationships with members of their same age group can aid in development of the child's social identity development (Turner et al., 1987). A social group can be understood as a group of two or more people that share the same social identities (Campbell., 1995). This can be applied to the context of the social group created by a youth sports program. Youth share the same social identities of age and athlete, therefore allowing for intergroup relationships to develop within the sports team. Youth sports programs have been shown to have particularly beneficial effects for development of social identities due to the extended engagement in these programs. The social and physical challenges in these programs also become increasingly more complex, which leads to more bonding through problem solving as a team. The long-term strong relationships that can result from these factors of the programs allows a unique opportunity for children to develop their social identities (Bronfrenbrenner, 1999). The practice of creating healthy long-term relationships aids in social development in youth and is critical to becoming healthy social adults.

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a relevant theoretical framework for many youth sports programs and provides an outline of goals sought through involvement in those programs. PYD is defined as a strength focused view of youth development utilized to promote cognitive, emotional, and physical wellbeing of a child (Lerner et al., 2005). PYD is created by youth developing specific life skills that allow children to thrive in cognitive, emotional, and physical development. The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (NCRIM, 2002) outlines skills that will help children succeed in the areas of cognitive, emotional, and physical well-being. Physical development relies on children creating good health habits and health risk

management associated with their body. Growing critical reasoning skills and problem-solving skills contributes to cognitive development. Coping skills, conflict resolution skills, and many other skills contribute to youth positively developing in emotional and psychological areas. Recently, youth sports programs have been utilizing the PYD framework to enhance competence and confidence within children (Lerner et al., 2005). Lerner et al. presents a framework of PYD that, if all the areas of development (cognitive, emotional, and physical) are met, the five C's, which include Competence, Character, Connection, Confidence, and Compassion, will be evidenced in children. When these children in turn mature into adults, the sixth C will be accomplished of Contribution. The premise is that if children develop in these PYD areas, they will become excellent parts of the civil community and give back to the community, in turn making the next generation also have the experience of PYD. Youth sports programs are an excellent opportunity to enhance PYD in children and teach them critical skills to bring into adulthood.

Although positive developmental impacts are often the goal of youth sports programs, negative effects have also been discovered as outcomes from youth participation in sports programs such as aggressive anti-social behavior, low self-esteem, and decreased morality (Fraser-Thompson et al., 2005). Physical negative impacts include sport-related injuries and eating disorders (Fraser-Thompson et al., 2005). Risk factors for eating disorders in sports include excessive focus in the sport on aesthetics, pressure from adults, and personality traits such as perfectionism (Anshel, 2004). Risk of youth sports injuries include risk-taking and the nature of the sport (e.g., contact sports and sports that include excessive risk) (Steiner et al., 2000). Negative emotional development can result from youth perceiving themselves as not good enough which is often a result of excessive pressure to win (Wankel & Burger, 1990).

Communication from parents to children about pressure to win plays a critical role in determining if children are at an increased risk for developing some of these negative outcomes in youth sport (Wankel & Burger, 1990). This is why it is very important for parents to play a supportive, rather than a pressurized, role in their children's youth sport involvement. As children age, parents need to continue being supportive throughout various stages in development to keep their children away from the negative consequences of sport so youth can experience the positive benefits intended from youth sport involvement.

Many factors can contribute to youth experiencing positive and/or negative outcomes from involvement in youth sport programs. These factors include program design, coach influences, and parental influences (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2007). Parental influence exists on a continuum of extremely supportive to excessive pressure. Parental influences can have a particularly substantial effect on youth because youth spend the most time with parents and it can have snowball effects on family dynamics (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2007). This means that parents have a unique opportunity to shape how their child benefits, or not, from participation in sport/PA programs and should be aware of the influence they have over their child.

Parental Influences on Development

As children age, they go through various transitional periods. One of the most significant is the transition related to how children view parents and the role they feel parents should be playing in their lives. Children during adolescence are transitioning from seeing their parents in a leadership role to a supporting role (Vignoli et al., 2005). Individuality is highly valued in adolescents and forming the necessary peer relationships helps create the adolescents' new identity away from their parent (Tamm, et al., 2016). It is also critical for parents to play a supporting role within this transition from childhood to adolescence so that youth feel that their

parents believe in them and their ability to manage self-care skills. This translates into youth then believing in their own self-care abilities (Burke et al., 2021). Parental models high in warmth and involvement have been shown to decrease transition issues in their children (Carlton-Ford et al., 2008). Therefore, it is important for parents to recognize the transition, and aid in the child's self-discovery phase. The maturation transition of relationships with parents is characterized by, at first, increased conflict with parents (12-16 years) followed by decreased conflict with parents (16-20 years), which may be due to the conflicting perspective from the child and parent on what the parental authoritative role may look like at this time in their lives (Hadiwijaya et al., 2016). Children are also often engaged in a competitive time in their sports career during the transition from childhood to adolescence. This may make navigating the parental role within these sport programs even more difficult due to the timing of development and push-back parents may receive from their children in their search for an independent identity in the context of a competitive sport. Education about this transition for parents is important to know so they can properly support their children at the age of adolescence. Support from parents is an essential aid in the transition from childhood to adolescence for youth.

Parental support is the most important factor in the decision for a child to start engaging in a sport (Knight et al., 2017). Parental support has been shown to play three main roles within a young athlete's life: (1) providing opportunities for engagement; (2) providing role modeling behavior as to how to engage within a sport; and (3) helping their child interpret their competitive experience (Knight et al., 2017). Parental role modeling within sports has a significant relationship with the child's attitude and continued involvement within sport contexts (Babkes & Weiss, 1999). It has also been shown that parental beliefs about competence and ability of their child have a direct relationship to their child's beliefs about their own competence

(Kimiecik et al., 1996). Parental influence has also been shown to play a vital role in the development of sportsmanship and moral or social norms within sports contexts (Elliot & Drummond., 2017). The importance cannot be understated of parental influence and support in youth sport participation.

Many studies have been conducted to unpack the nature of impact that parental pressure has on youth athletes (Knight et al., 2017). The literature reveals a consensus from these studies in that too much pressure from parents can have detrimental impacts on youth (Knight et al., 2017). These pressures can manifest by overstepping boundaries or placing excessive expectations onto their children (Ross et al., 2015). Parents may express themselves by using anger and redirecting it towards other parents or coaches (Ross et al., 2015). Parental anger has been shown to have particularly harmful effects on their children (Omli & LaVoi, 2009). Parental involvement in youth sports has become much more intense and expansive in the last decade (Smette, & Strandbu, 2018). This is due to the increased responsibility that parents may feel to be involved in their children's lives (Dunn et al., 2016). The norm of parents' involvement in sports has changed into the latest generation, and parents may feel that to be considered a "good parent" they need to be as involved as possible in all aspects of their children's lives (Dunn et al., 2016). Parents may feel more self-satisfaction from believing they are a "good parent" (Dunn et al., 2016). They also may receive a perceived increase in social status from their involvement in their children's youth sport and the other parents within the program seeing them as a "good parent" (Dunn et al., 2016). This increase in social status perceived from their peers may be extremely salient to parents and could possibly influence how they interact with their child within the programs and the specific programs parents chose to enroll their children in.

Impacts of a Youth Sport Program on Parents

Although considerable research has focused on the impact of involvement in a youth sports program has on athletes, it is becoming clear that more research needs to be focused on the impacts on parents, due to the many roles (e.g. coach, administrator, provider) that a parent may take on when supporting their child in youth sport (Knight et al., 2016). The impacts of involvement in youth sport on parents range from negative to positive. The negative experiences can be from the investments required in a competitive youth sport (Harwood & Knight, 2009). Benefits and/or positive experiences for parents from youth sport engagement can include new opportunities to extend their social network (Brown, 2014), as well as feelings of pride when parents observe their children making developmental gains (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008). Overall, parents who participated in youth sports were found to have less psychological distress than parents who did not have a child involved in youth sport, indicating that the stressors involved with parental youth sport participation are outweighed by the benefits from having a child involved in sports (Sutcliffe et al., 2021).

Youth sports can provoke parents to make significant investments and induce stressors. Harwood and Knight (2009) categorized these stressors into organizational, competitive, and developmental types. Organizational stressors include things such as finance and time, competitive stressors include performance and morality issues related to their child's matches, and lastly developmental stressors include educational issues and future decisions (Harwood & Knight, 2009). Other studies have highlighted the emotional stress that parents may experience while involved with youth sports. Omli and LaVoi (2012) found that parents often feel anger when watching their child participate in sports, which may result in unwanted spectator behavior. The many different roles that a sport parent takes on has been shown to increase overall life

stress (Sutcliffe et al., 2021). However, despite all these stressors, parents who have children involved in sports have reported that at the end “it’s all worth it,” which seems to indicate that the investments involved with having a child athlete are put into perspective by the overall satisfaction from the experience (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008).

Parents that have children involved in youth sports can also experience their own significant benefits from being involved with youth sports (Clarke et al., 2016). These benefits include an opportunity to extend their social networks with people that they may not have otherwise met (Legg et al., 2015) as well as improved familial relationships and an overall feeling of pride from observing their child develop life skills (Clarke et al., 2016). Parents establish baseline relationships with parents on their own child’s sports team, as well as occasionally form deeper relationships (Brown, 2014). Sports allow parents to meet other parents, as well as increase time spent with these other parents, through time spent together as spectators. Sports have also been shown to help existing familial relationships, particularly the child-parent relationship (Clarke et al., 2016). Parents perceive communication and the overall closeness to their child as improved because of their child’s sport participation (Clarke et al., 2016). Another factor that specifically contributed to parent’s satisfaction with their involvement in their child(ren)’s youth sport was the overall feeling of pride from watching their children participate (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008). This feeling of pride came specifically from watching their child develop particular life, and developmental, skills from sport participation. Observing these changes in their children confirm the perceived benefits from enrollment and can make parents feel satisfied with their initial decision, as well as investments in their child’s sport journey (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008).

Parental Reasons for Youth Sport Enrollment

Parents may enroll their children in sports programs for various reasons. Parents have been shown to enroll their children in youth sports programs due to the perceived benefits from a certain program (Dunn et al., 2003). Some of the benefits include self-reliance, autonomy, and independence (Alwin, 1989). Parents recognize the benefits that may come from enrolling their children in these activities, acting as the primary catalyst for enrollment. However, a secondary reason also sometimes exists. Parents may be influenced to enroll their children into youth sports programs due to perceived social status that participation within a specific program will give them or their children (Dunn et al., 2003). Parents that have a natural inclination and enjoyment towards sport will also expose and enroll their children into youth sports programs at a younger age (Bloom, 1985). Although many factors influence whether a child will, or will not, become an elite athlete, such as socioeconomic status, race, and gender, by far the greatest influencer is parental involvement and support (Bloom, 1985).

Participation in sports may lead to an increase in social capital (Gemar, 2021). Social capital can be defined as how different social interactions shape the larger society (Gemar, 2021). This can be applied within youth sports programs, since a sports program is a culture within itself, and smaller subcultures exist of people with similar identities (Turner et al., 1987). A particularly interesting subculture are the parents within any particular sports program. The specific interactions that parents have, can shape how the overall culture and subcultures function. Although many studies have been conducted to examine how social capital works within participants in sports, very few studies have looked at social capital within spectators or parents (Gemar, 2021). Brown (2014) proposed that children play a role in creation of social capital among parents in youth sports programs.

Living vicariously through someone is a common term used in society. It can be defined as experiencing something indirectly or through another person (Coles et al., 2020). When this happens in the context of a parent living vicariously through their child in athletics, it typically results in an overall negative youth sport experience (Coles, et al., 2020). In order to have a positive youth experience, a youth's and parents' reasoning for why they are participating in the program must align (Holt & Knight, 2014). If the parent is living vicariously through a child, it is likely that the motives for their respective participation might not align. The lines are also often blurred when examining what a child, versus a parent, may see as supportive or negative behavior of the parent (Coles et al., 2020). For example, a parent may feel that a significant financial investment is supportive, whereas the child sees this as an increase of the parents' expectations and more pressure to not let down their parent.

It is well established that youth sports programs contribute to many positive developmental benefits for youth including emotional, physical, and psychological well-being. Parents enrollment of their children into sport/PA programs can have significant positive and negative impacts on parents as well. Parents' motives for enrolling their children into these programs is typically due to the perceived benefits of the programs. However, there can also be some secondary motives such as a natural inclination the family may have for sports involvement or a gain in social capital having a child enrolled in a particular program. A hypothesis as to why parents may feel inclined to enroll their children into youth sports programs, despite the sacrifices required, may be from the perceived developmental benefits that come from involvement in the program. This may, in turn, make parents feel proud for their provision of this opportunity for their child. Studies have been conducted investigating how parental influence effects child development, but many studies overlook parental perspectives and reasons that

parents may have for involving their children in these elite youth sports programs. This purpose of this study is to specifically explore the essence and nature of parents' pride associated with having a child that participates in the JG program.

Methods

Participants

The participants in the study were parents (N=121) of the Junior Lifeguard program that provided their email and gave consent to the Junior Lifeguard agencies to participate in the study. They were all over the age of 18 years and had one, or more, child involved or previously involved in the Junior Lifeguard program. Participants provided consent and participated in the surveys voluntarily. Demographic questions were asked of parents at the beginning of the survey. Participants self-reported as primarily Caucasian (79.9%), 46 years old or older (54.3%), female (88%), and earning an annual income of > \$125,000 per year (64.0%).

Measures

The measures employed in this study were a part of a larger survey distributed to JG parents from a broader project. First, demographic questions were asked including participant race, age, gender identity, and annual income. The survey item investigated in this study was a short answer style question with no limitations to the participants' length or style of response. The specific question investigated was, "Are you proud to be a JG parent? Please share your rationale for your response."

Procedures

The data were collected by sending out surveys using Qualtrics, an online survey program. The recruitment took place in two separate phases. The first phase took place during the spring of 2020. A recruitment letter was sent with the intention to collect data from parents

whose child(ren) participated in the JG program during summer 2020. However, the program was cancelled in the summer of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents that had received the recruitment letter had access to the survey and were able to voluntarily participate in the study based on their child(ren)'s past involvement in the program. The second phase took place in the summer of 2021. Junior lifeguard programs' instructors handed out flyers to parents of children who participated in the program that summer, which contained a QR code for a direct link to the survey. All survey responses were recorded in SPSS and downloaded as a Microsoft excel spreadsheet for further data analysis. Once the survey responses were recorded, they were kept within a password protected computer and only shared with other researchers on the project. Pseudonyms were used in place of the participants' names.

Design

The question analyzed in this study was a part of a larger survey distributed to parents in the JG program. 'Proud' was specifically used to address parents' feelings of pride surrounding their children participating in the program. The opportunity for parents to share their 'rationale' was provided to allow parents to explain exactly why they had this feeling surrounding their child(ren)'s participation in the program and to capture the essence of parents' pride. The design of the question evoked parents to reflect as to the exact reason(s) they were proud of their child(ren) and how being enrolled in the JG program played a part in this feeling.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data consisted of examination of the responses to the question, "Are you proud to be a junior lifeguard parent? Please share your rationale for your response." To analyze the question responses, a thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2014) was done on the short answer responses. The analysis was conducted first by two researchers independently, then they came

together to member-check and to ensure validity of the coding. This process specifically involved sorting through the responses to the questions, discovering themes that organically emerged from the data, and coding the occurrence of the themes. A frequency analysis of the coding was also done to support the themes found. The themes were then defined in the context of the study based off the data analysis.

Results

Thematic analysis revealed an overarching theme of ‘Opportunity’ and two subthemes of ‘Development’ and ‘Community’. Opportunity was defined as a chance for parents or children to gain something of value by participation in the program. Development was defined as parents’ perceptions for growth in cognitive, physical, or emotional development from involvement in the program. Lastly, Community was defined as a parent or a child gaining a sense that they are part of a group or that participation in the program is a positive reflection within their community. All parents (N=121) reported being proud to be a JG parent. Analysis further focused on the parents’ rationale as to why they felt proud to be a JG parent.

Opportunity

The largest percentage (46%) of parents’ responses directly mentioned that they were proud because their children, and/or they, received an opportunity to gain something of value from involvement in the JG program. The type of opportunity manifested in two forms: (1) the opportunity for development and (2) the opportunity for community. The most common parent responses mentioned children gaining opportunities to acquire specific developmental skills. These developmental skills included cognitive, emotional, and physical development obtained by their children. Other common responses, when detailing the type of opportunity gained from

involvement in the program, included opportunity for their children or by the parents themselves to gain a sense of community from participation in the JG program. Quotes that reflect this include:

“Wonderful opportunity for kids” - Sally

“Proud to support my community and proud to be able to provide the opportunity for my child” -

Jenny

“I’m happy to have my kids involved in something that is active, fun, and provides learning opportunities.” - Martha

“I’m proud of my kid for participating and I’m proud of myself for providing him the opportunity” -Steven

When parents explained further about their rationale as to why they felt proud, many parents mentioned that being able to provide this opportunity for their child was the biggest contributor to the feeling of being a proud parent. Most parents commented on their children’s accomplishments and the skills their children developed from the program rather than what the parents themselves may have received from participation in the JG program. Parents mentioned how giving this opportunity to their children made them feel proud of themselves. Providing opportunities for their child’s development was the biggest contributor to parents’ rationale as to why they felt proud to be a JG parent.

Development

Development was defined as a means for cognitive, emotional, or physical growth. Nearly half (49%) of responses from parents directly mentioned being proud of the developmental strides that they observed from their children out of participation within the JG program. Parents mentioned believing that cognitive, emotional, and physical development was

gained in their children from participation in the JG program. Cognitive development was specifically mentioned in 34% of responses. Cognitive development was most often reported in the form of learning. When parents mentioned what learning they perceived as most prevalent, they often included the child learning something related to ocean safety or learning life-saving procedural skills such as CPR. Emotional development was noted in 19% of responses. Parents often reported thinking their child gained a greater sense of self-confidence or feeling more comfortable in the ocean, when commenting about their child's growth emotionally. Parents also noticed physical development from the program. Physical development was noted in 11% of responses. Parents commented on specific physical skills their child has developed, such as increased swimming capability, as well as an overall perception of the JG program as beneficial for keeping their child physically active.

“It has such a good reputation, and it is so helpful in teaching ocean/beach safety. And I love the professionalism of the lifeguards. There is a lot of pride in this organization.”

“The programs offerings are in-line with the type of activities I feel help my child experience healthy growth physically and emotionally.” - John

“It shows that My Daughter has stamina and is an athlete” -Shannon

“She is brave and confident in the program.” – Hunter

Parents that implicated development as the reason they were proud, either answered in the form of being proud of their children for having made these developmental gains or being proud of themselves for being able to provide this opportunity for their child to participate and develop positively. It was evident that parents perceived and valued all forms of development in their children throughout the responses even though the responses varied in the specific type of development that the parents chose to comment on.

Community

Parents noted in their responses two aspects of community that contributed to their rationale for feeling proud. The first aspect of community that was important to parents was that participation in the JG program resulted in the sense that they were a part of a larger group. The second aspect of community that was valued by parents was the positive reflection that participation within the JG program had in their larger community. Responses that noted ‘Community’ as an important reason as to why parents were proud either manifested in the form of improvement in geographical community or family community. Many of the parents’ responses noted that participation was seen as important within their family unit. Parents noted that their other older children had participated in the program in the past and being a part of the JG program was important for their family traditions. The second type of ‘Community’ that contributed to parents feeling proud to be a JG parent, was within their geographical community. Many parents said that they were proud because after their children were a part of the program, other parents in their city knew that their child could be trusted at the beach. These responses revealed that it was important to the parents that other parents in their community knew that their child was safe and trustworthy in water or ocean environments. Many parents mentioned that the JG programs’ reputation was seen as valuable, and that they are proud to be a JG parent due to the reputation of the program being associated with them and their children.

“Can not speak highly enough of the program. We are a family of lifeguards and JGs. Love it.” -

Monica

“There is a certain reputation that goes with a child knowing they have attended the camps - including swim safety, ocean awareness and team skills.” -Julia

“We live at the beach and I want other parents to know he is trustworthy at the beach” -Colin

Parents felt proud that the JG program gave their children positive connotation within the family unit as well as in the geographical community. Community was often noted as an important factor in parents' overall feelings of pride.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the nature and essence of parents' pride from having their child(ren) involved in the JG program. There was evidence found in the parents' responses that the main reason parents felt proud to be a JG parent was the overall opportunity the program gave to their children and/or themselves to gain something of value. The two main types of gains from the program were an opportunity for development and an opportunity for gaining community.

To be able to participate within the JG program, children must first pass a swimming proficiency test. The JG program also has an extremely well-respected reputation, as noted by parents, which adds to the desire for children and parents to be participants in the program. This swimming test, combined with competition from other parents due to the highly sought-after nature of the program, makes the JG program a highly competitive program to be admitted into. This resulted in all of the parents reporting that they were proud to be parents involved with the JG program. Since 100% of the parents reported 'yes' to the initial question, the analysis focused on parents' rationale as to why they felt proud to be a JG parent.

Parents seemed to focus on the rationale that the program provides an opportunity for either themselves or their children. Being able to provide an opportunity to their children was by far seen as the most important reason as to why parents, themselves, felt proud. This rationale coincides with the findings in Coakley (2006), that children's achievements today in sport are directly attributed to their parents. Parents' provision of the opportunity to participate in the JG

program for their children translated onto the parents capacity to be a 'good parent' and thus, made the parents themselves feel proud. The current neo-liberal view in youth sports emphasizes that parents are the sole ones responsible for controlling their children (Coakley, 2006). This includes which particular youth sports, or extracurricular activities, the children are able to participate in. By providing the opportunity for their children to participate in the JG program, the opportunities made available through the JG program were therefore given to the child by the parent by allowing and supporting their participation within the JG program. Parents feel proud of themselves for being able to give their child the gift of opportunity.

The biggest type of opportunity noted as a rationale for being proud was providing their children an opportunity to receive developmental benefits from involvement with the JG program. Parents noted three types of development they were proud of within their responses: cognitive, emotional, and physical. The development that parents most often reported was cognitive development and learning through the JG program. This was seen most often as the children learning safety skills or specific procedural skills related to the lifeguard profession. Parents seemed to value cognitive gains in their children the most and cited this as the reason that they most often feel proud of their children for participating in the JG program. Another type of development cited as being important to parents was emotional development. Parents seemed to be proud of their children for making self-esteem gains or for feeling more comfortable or confident in the ocean environment. The last type of development was physical development. Parents responded by saying that children either gained specific physical skills or an overall gain in physical competency. All three types of development were seen as valuable to parents, however cognitive was cited the most as to why the parents were proud of their children, indicating that cognitive development was overall the most important to parents. This is

noteworthy since the JG program is a summer youth program that incorporates both physical and cognitive development, but parents seemed to focus more on the cognitive gains made by their children. These results give insight into why parents may make the various sacrifices required to have their child participate in a youth sports program. Parents are required to invest financial, emotional, and logistical resources to maintain their child's participation in a youth sport (Sutcliffe et. al., 2021). Parents valuing potential benefits for their children above all else is consistent with previous findings from Pracht and colleagues (2020) which cited child growth as the main motivation for parents to enroll their children in youth sports programs.

The other big contributor to parents feeling pride was gaining an opportunity for themselves or their child to receive positive impacts within their communities from their child participating in the program. This was seen in the geographical and family community. Within the family community, the parents felt proud because the JG program was "a part of their family," or reported that they were "a JG family." These findings are consistent with previous findings of the reciprocal model of child and families in sport (Weiss & Hayashi, 1995). The child's participation in a certain sport has been shown to increase that parents' interest to that sport (Weiss & Hayashi, 1995). These growing interests made the sports family begin to identify with being a "JG family," so when their other children then participated within the program, it made the parents feel a growing sense of their identity within the JG community and resulted in the feeling of pride. The family had a positive impression of the JG program from the past, so the new child's involvement is seen as very worthwhile within the family unit.

Parents also reported feeling proud due to the positive reflection that participation had within the geographical community. The parents responded saying they were proud because of either having the reputation of the program associated with themselves or their children now or

the fact that other parents within their city knew that their child was trustworthy at the beach.

Both types of responses speak to the parents feeling that the program provides benefits within the community around them. The reputation of the program was seen as positive within their community and the parents felt proud to have that reputation associated with them. The responses indicated that parents wanted others in their communities to know that they were involved with the JG program. This was shown by wearing JG merchandise to demonstrate their involvement and commitment to the JG program. Participating in the JG program also made other parents view their child as trustworthy. This was because the other parents knew that the child had participated and learned the ocean safety knowledge that the program has to offer. Other parents are aware that the program is reliable in teaching children these essential ocean safety skills, and therefore resulted in trust from the parents that the other children could play safely with their children on the beach and not endanger their children from not knowing how to play safely at the beach. Many parents commented on how important this safety knowledge was to have in the place that they lived due to its proximity to the beach. Parents were proud that their children were seen as trustworthy to the community, and that they had provided this opportunity for their children to gain this knowledge.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study and areas that future researchers could expand upon. Junior Lifeguard agencies modified or cancelled their summer programs during the summer of 2020 to accommodate to CDC recommendations during the COVID-19 pandemic. This created a gap in data collection during this time. The short answer question asked, “Are you proud to be a junior lifeguard parent? Please share your rationale for your response,” May have also limited the type of responses parents gave. Parents may have felt inclined to always answer

yes or positively to this question due to the nature of the questions, which may be why all of the responses received were positive or a “yes.” This study was also limited to short answer responses as opposed to an in-depth investigation into the parents’ rationale through interviews.

Conclusion and Future Directions

Future studies should be conducted to gain a deeper understanding of parents’ rationales for their pride associated with provision of opportunity for their children to participate in the JG program. Conducting interviews with parents to give them more freedom to answer this question could lead to a richer analyses and ultimately broader understanding. Future research should also include investigation of this topic in other youth sports and PYD programs beyond the JG program. The findings from this study reveal insight into what parents may want their children to gain from participation in a youth sports program, however it would be interesting to investigate what parents of other youth sports programs may value or identify as their sources of pride. Results of the current study also hinted that culture in a specific region may influence what parents are proud of seeing in their children. A cross-cultural analysis of what parents in different cultures and regions may value would add to this body of knowledge about parents’ pride in youth sports.

Findings indicated that parents were proud of observing developmental gains in their children as well as a positive reflection in the community from participation in the JG program. This study was important because it revealed what parents value relative to their pride associated with their children’s participation in the JG program. These results provide potential insight as to why parents make the many sacrifices required for youth sport participation and what areas parents value from participation in a youth sports program. Future youth sports programs can utilize this knowledge to integrate techniques into their programs to increase opportunities for

their participants to gain these developmental benefits. Increasing opportunities for children to make developmental strides in areas that parents value will keep parents enrolling their children into youth sports programs and increase youth involved in sports.

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