Barriers to Youth Sports Consumption among Asian Immigrant Families: A Comparative Study across Different Cities in the U.S.

Yilun Zhou, Old Dominion University

Conference Theme - Race Forward (Immigrant Sport)
20-minute oral presentation (including questions)
Session: Live Q&A for Race Forward (Asynchronous)

Since the 1970s, there has been a clear trend of increased youth participation in sports. Research on youth sports has also been on the rise, although the pace of this growth varied by nations, regions, and populations. To date, the literature on youth sports has been mostly culturally limited to Western families (Maccoby, 2015). Furthermore, the existing literature suggests that immigrants’ and their children’s sports involvement differ quantitatively and qualitatively from native-born residents (Diep, Leung, Thompson, Gor, & Baranwski, 2017). From a management perspective, understanding the experiences of young participants and their parents as clients of organized sports are considered the best way to design effective sports services and promote the continued growth of youth sports (de Martelaer, van Hoecke, de Knop, van Hedegem, & Theeboom, 2002). The objectives of this exploratory investigation that focused on Asian immigrant families in the U.S. were two-fold: 1) To examine the barriers to youth sports consumption experienced by Asian immigrant parents and children; 2) To explore the differences in the barriers to youth sports consumption among Asian parents and children living in different cities in the U.S.

Methods

This study employed a multiple-case studies design (Stake, 2013), which involved in-depth exploration of youth sports consumption barriers within and across selected families. In the project, we utilized multiple forms of data collection, including participant observations and face-to-face interviews. The data were collected from the fathers, mothers, and pre-adolescent children from 22 Asian immigrant families residing in two different U.S. cities (cities with large-scale and small-scale Chinese immigrants). Each family’s data were compiled as a case study narrative, on which within-case and comparative coding and analyses were conducted (Yin, 2003).

Findings and Discussions

We identified two major themes. First, several dimensions of barriers to youth sports consumption faced by Asian immigrant families were found. The majority of Asian immigrant families reported barriers caused by social and interpersonal factors, such as limited social life. Furthermore, participants reported a number of instrumental as well as societal factors (Caplan, 2007) related to the barriers to youth sports consumption, including high academic expectations for children, cultural differences, language barriers, and financial strain. Dimensions of barriers were found to be interrelated rather than separate. Second, differences were detected regarding the barriers experienced by Asian immigrant families living in different areas of the U.S. For example, families living in places with large-scale immigrant populations reported racial discrimination less of a concern than families residing in an area with few immigrants. As immigration has become far more central in the public conversation in the U.S., this study may raise interest for policymakers who aim to leverage the potential of sports to lead the increasingly ethnically diverse youth population to healthy and active lifestyles. Moreover, this paper also provides marketing insights for youth sports organizations and marketers that target Asian immigrant families.