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Why Can't We All Just Get Along? The Conflict between School and Club Sports in the United States

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ABSTRACT

There has been growing discontent between American school-based sports programs and those offered by youth sports clubs. Both institutions offer numerous benefits while likewise facing systematic challenges. However, there is a paucity of research focused on the pronounced conflict between school- and club-based sports programs in the United States. This article explores the conflict from a descriptive perspective. Much of the discontent between club- and school-based sports programs is based upon points of conflict surrounding athlete participation and priority. To investigate this matter, this manuscript examines (a) the status of school-based and club sports in America; (b) benefits and challenges of club- and school-based sports; and (c) the sources of conflicts between school-based and club sports. To conclude, we briefly describe possible solutions to the aforementioned conflict and provide insight regarding potential directions for future research.

KEY WORDS

Youth sport; intergroup conflict; club sports; school-based sports

Participation in and popularity of club sports in the United States has increased dramatically across the past two decades (Flanagan, 2017; Gregory, 2017; Moore, 2017). The increase has also generated a plethora of business development surrounding club sports (Gregory, 2017; Koba, 2014), helping facilitate an estimated $17 billion youth sports industry (WinterGreen Research, 2018). The increases in popularity, participation, and economic development of club sports has likewise created some conflict with well-established and traditionally accepted educational and recreational youth sports institutions at both the youth and high school levels. Specifically, this rise has created some conflict with more well-established sport institutions as some scholars have described the growth as monumentally detrimental to recreational and school-based sports (Flanagan, 2017; Gregory, 2017; Marin, 2017; Moore, 2017).

Sports are rife with conflict based upon the fact that competition is a prominent tenet or purpose of sports and games. Intergroup conflicts have always been prominent in society (Esteban, Mayoral, & Ray, 2012; Gat, 2015; Makhlouf, 2017; McDonald, Navarrete, & Van Vugt, 2012; Weisel & Böhm, 2015), and sports are certainly not an exception to this truth. Nation states waging war, multinational corporation and nation states interests, religious and ethnic group fighting, enduring guerilla warfare and street gang or sport fandom group rivalries can produce severely detrimental outcomes to members in these groups and collateral damage to those not (e.g. Cohen & Insko, 2008; Gat, 2015; Katz, 1965; Levitt & Venkatesh, 2000; Makhlouf, 2017; McDonald et al., 2012; Rovenpor et al.,

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2019). For instance, conflict caused by rivalries, competition, front office leveraging, and competing interests of leagues, owners, and athletes impact those inside and outside of the conflicting parties in sports.

Such conflicts between club- and education-based sports have become well documented in mainstream media. For example, the New York Times (2014) recently published a debate via its opinion pages focused on whether or not sports should be removed from schools. The eight contributors were well known youth sports experts or opinion leaders who responded to the prompt: "Should high schools eliminate competitive athletic teams?" Some sentiment expressed by the experts argued sports should not be in schools since the club option is available (Cook, 2012; Ripley, 2013). *The Atlantic* has published a series of articles over the past five years on both sides of the conflict – some suggesting school sports are overblown and overfunded (Flanagan, 2017; Ripley, 2013); while others argue that children's sports as a private sphere have overwhelmed children's lives (Friedman, 2013). The *Dallas Morning News* (Riddle, 2014; Smith, 2014; Wixon, 2014; Wixon & Smith, 2014) and *USA Today* (Moore, 2017) have published similar series exploring the benefits and costs of school- and club-based sports. The increasing costs in both realms, and the fact that club sports are seen as a more viable option by many Americans has undoubtedly added to the conflict(s) between the two institutions.

Yet, there is a dearth of understanding and original research exploring this phenomenon despite the exorbitant growth of club sports and the conflict it has generated for the other traditionally established youth sports institutions. Extant literature, on both institutions and youth sports in general, fails to illuminate or discuss this important conflict in any depth. While some mainstream media have provided content on the conflict few, if any, scholars have tackled the subject in a scholarly manner. Both school and club sports impact American society in a profound manner across a variety of spectrums from economics, to health care to social development. Consequently, intergroup conflict between school and club sports must be understood to provide a foundation for future research endeavors focused on minimizing negative impacts while providing potential solutions for stakeholders and society. The need to consistently and appropriately define the conflict is apparent and further scholarly examination of the conflict is necessary. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to explore and describe the areas of conflict between school-based sports and club sports in the United States.

This manuscript highlights an important, yet unexplored phenomenon in youth sports: the intergroup conflicts between club- and education-based sports. We propose to advance youth sports research on four fronts via: 1) a theoretical understanding of intergroup conflict as it relates to these two institutions, 2) a general description of youth sports in America, 3) an overview of the status of US school and club sports, including benefits and challenges of each, and 4) an examination of sources creating conflict between the two entities. We likewise provide potential solutions to the conflict(s) while pointing to the need for effective future research to facilitate appropriate change or solution(s).

Theoretical framework

Conflict, like most group phenomena, includes social and cognitive elements and is to be expected between social groups with similar goals (Hamm-Kerwin & Doherty, 2010; Robbins, 2005). Psychology scholars have assessed the motivations, emotions and

cognitions of conflict between groups (intergroup conflict) for quite some time (Bornewasser & Bober, 1987; Chien & Ritchie, 2018; Cohen & Insko, 2008; Hamm-Kerwin & Doherty, 2010). The impact and inevitability of conflict between organizational groups has driven research on intergroup conflict recently (Bar-Tal, 2011; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1995; Rovenpor et al., 2019). In fact, Fiske (2002) suggested that intergroup conflict was social psychology's "problem of the century." Bohm, Rusch, and Baron (in press) operationalize intergroup conflict as "the perceived incompatibility of goals or values between two or more individuals, which emerges because these individuals classify themselves as members of different social groups" (p. 4). Jehn (1995) suggest a similar definition of intergroup conflict as the "perceptions by the parties involved in a group that they hold discrepant views or have interpersonal incompatibilities" (p. 257).

Tajfel (1981, 1982) suggests social comparison and ethnocentrism influences intergroup hostility between members of different organizations (see also Stenstrom, Lickel, Denson, & Miller, 2008). The parties involved with the conflict we explore in this manuscript include two different social groups: members of club and school sports groups. While group membership itself is a key component to any intergroup phenomenon, the behavior of individuals within those groups facilitates conflict. A person's emotions, perceptions and behaviors can be influenced by intergroup conflict and individual participation in intergroup conflicts can lead to negative and positive outcomes for participants and group members in a variety of ways (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Hamm-Kerwin & Doherty, 2010; McDonald et al., 2012). However, the desire to be a part of, or help, the ingroup or a willingness to hurt, or hinder, the outgroup could describe the motivation of individual behaviors of people involved with intergroup conflict (Allport, 1954; Brewer, 1999; Rovenpor et al., 2019; Weisel & Böhm, 2015). People, because their self-worth is influenced by their collective identity, are most often motivated to protect their ingroup and respond in a negative fashion to perceived threats from an outgroup (Brewer, 1999; Chien & Ritchie, 2018; Lickel, Miller, Stenstrom, Denson, & Schmader, 2006). Highly identified group members respond to perceived attacks on their ingroup with warlike responses (Lickel et al., 2006). Further, some individuals involved with intergroup conflict could seek to intentionally increase the differences or conflict between the groups (Weisel & Böhm, 2015).

Extant intergroup conflict literature provides some distinctions between the types and sources of conflict. For example, conflicts can occur based on the values, power, economic resources or some combination held or promoted by the group or organization (Katz, 1965). Scholars have also scaled conflicts from tractable (goals of low importance) to intractable (goals of high importance) (Bar-Tal, 2011). Tractable conflicts involve goals of low importance and can be compatible or partially compatible between the groups and thus likely easily resolved or exist for a short period of time. On the other hand, intractable goals include issues of great importance and are viewed as almost unsolvable by those in conflict. Intractable conflicts are long lasting and establish a foundation for hostility between the groups.

Intergroup conflict provides an appropriate theoretical frame within which to explore the conflict between two groups: club sports and school sports. This includes an exploration of the values and behaviors of members, the scale of the conflicts, and the response to conflict. Before engaging in this exploration, we first provide a brief background of the scope of youth sport in the US, then an overview of each group (club and school) in terms of its organization, and some of the perceived benefits and challenges associated with each group.

Youth sports in America

Youth sports participants have various institutional options available to them in the United States. In fact, youth sports in America have been organized on four different levels via: (1) school physical education (compulsory and not compulsory), (2) youth recreational sports, (3) school sports and (4) sports clubs (see Dixon, 2018; Seefeldt & Ewing, 1997). Physical education (PE) offered in schools often has mass participation, is led by a trained educator and focuses on a variety of health orientations, sports and skills development (Ferry, 2014). Likewise, recreational sports have mass participation with fun, social involvement, and improved physical fitness as typical developmental outcomes. Both recreational sports and PE are characterized by lower commitment and performance expectations than held by school and club sports (Dixon, 2018). While some scholars have recognized recreational sports and PE as institutional sport development for children (e.g. Seefeldt & Ewing, 1997), the similarities of school and club sports and the subsequent conflicts that have arisen is the focus of this article. School-based PE is quite different than recreational pursuits and competitive sports. The latter focuses on success, winning, competition and skill development via rigorous physical and mental training. Unlike PE and some recreational sports, competitive sports have games with the main purpose including the pursuit of winning, obtaining better skills and moving to a higher level of competition and team. Sports can be competitive in both school and club models as both have levels of competition leading to championships. However, the focus on high levels of competition and winning championships is generally more pronounced in American club sports. Yet, the lines between club, school and recreational sports can sometimes be blurred or misunderstood regarding competition and winning as an accepted fact.

Conversely, school-based sports are based on a philosophy that values *both* education and competition. Team building for school sports is often centered on a specific sport that the athlete trains for while playing for the school team during a competition season. There are a variety of youth sports organizations (e.g. Little League Baseball, Pop Warner football) across a wide range of sports that provide recreational, most often competitive, opportunities for young athletes. Club sports (also known as travel, tournament, or elite) are based upon competition, not associated with a school or local league system, but rather a club that organizes for the purpose of athlete development, high levels of competition and athlete advancement to different levels of sports competition.

It should be noted that, in America a young athlete can play for a youth sports team in a recreational league governed by the city in which they live, compete on a school-based team managed by an educational institution, and/or play for a club-based team organized by a private club entity or group. Recreational and school-based sports are well established governance options in the United States with large participation numbers. However, club sports have realized a meteoric rise in popularity and participation across the past decade or so and thereby creating some conflict with more established youth sports offerings (Hyman, 2012; Ridpath, 2018; Ripley, 2013).

School sports in America

High school sports are a staple offering in modern American culture (Dixon, 2018; Friedman, 2013; Laios, 1995; Ripley, 2013; Wixon & Smith, 2014). High schools sports

are those associated with and supported by the schools generally attended by 9th grade to 12th grade students. High school sport participation numbers have varied over the past 100 years (Friedman, 2013; National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), 2019; Ripley, 2013; Wixon & Smith, 2014). However, in more recent years, participation in those sports has steadily increased. According the National Federation of State High School Associations (National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), 2019), there are nearly 8 million boys and girls participating in high school sports today (see Table 1) and participation within the last decade has increased 7% (4% for boys and 12% for girls). Students participate in a variety of sports; the most popular sport among boys is football and the most popular sport among girls is track and field (see Tables 2 and 3). Clearly, with the large numbers of participants, sport becomes a major expense for the school systems (Ripley, 2013). Thus, why do school systems support these sport participation opportunities?

Table 1. Total high school sport participation.

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1977–1978	4,367,442	2,083,040	6,450,482
1987–1988	3,425,777	1,849,684	5,275,461
		5,275,461	
1997–1998	3,763,120	2,570,333	6,333,453
2007–2008	4,372,115	3,057,266	7,429,381
2017–2018	4,565,580	3,415,306	7,980,886

Note. Information obtained from the National Federation of State High School Associations website.

Table 2. 2017–2018 top 10 high school boys' sports by participants.

	Sport	# of Schools		Sport	# of Boys
1.	Basketball	18,510	1.	Football (11)	1,036,842
2.	Track	16,990	2.	Track	600,097
3.	Baseball	16,196	3.	Basketball	551,373
4.	Cross Country	15,463	4.	Baseball	487,097
5.	Football (11)	14,079	5.	Soccer	456,362
6.	Golf	13,524	6.	Cross Country	270,095
7.	Soccer	12,393	7.	Wrestling	245,564
8.	Wrestling	10,775	8.	Tennis	158,151
9.	Tennis	9,793	9.	Golf	144,024
10.	Swimming	7,595	10.	Swimming	138,935

Note. Information obtained from the National Federation of State High School Associations website.

Table 3. 2017–2018 top 10 high school girls' sports by participants.

	Sport	# of Schools		Sport	# of Girls
1.	Basketball	18,171	1.	Track	488,592
2.	Track	16,951	2.	Volleyball	446,583
3.	Volleyball	16,434	3.	Basketball	412,407
4.	Softball	15,544	4.	Soccer	390,482
5.	Cross Country	15,216	5.	Softball	367,861
6.	Soccer	12,007	6.	Cross Country	223,518
7.	Tennis	10,289	7.	Tennis	190,768
8.	Golf	10,289	8.	Swimming	175,594
9.	Swimming	7,961	9.	Cheer	162,669
10.	Cheer	6,877	10.	Lacrosse	96,904

Information obtained from the National Federation of State High School Associations website.

Benefits

There are a variety of reasons schools engage in athletic participation with many revolving around the growth of the student-athlete. The major benefits can be grouped into three categories: academic motivators, personal development, and community responsibility.

First, researchers consistently have found support for the relationship between sport participation and academic motivation. For example, Yeung (2015) points out that the majority of research in this area indicates a positive correlation between school athletic participation and academic achievement. School sports provides a safe and supportive learning environment, teaches physical activity for lifetime development, and suggests increased school attendance (Bailey, 2006; Flanagan, 2017). Bowen and Hitt (2016), further, review the numerous studies indicating students participating in athletics perform better academically and attend college at a higher rate than non-participants. Better school attendance leads to improved academic and higher grade point averages (Fejgin, 1994; Flanagan, 2017; Kelley & Carchia, 2013). This academic achievement is central to the mission of the school (Ripley, 2013).

Second, personal development refers to the growth of the student outside of specific academic achievement characteristics. The emphasis in funding and supporting school sport has been to utilize sport as an educational tool to teach those involved the value of important social values such as hard work, lifetime fitness, time management, sportsmanship, persistence, perseverance, patience and practice (Chalip, 2006; Kelley & Carchia, 2013; Moore, 2017; Ripley, 2013). Further, schools find value in providing activities (sport and otherwise) that develop students' individual skills and talents (Kelley & Carchia, 2013; Martinez, Coker, McMahon, Cohen, & Thapa, 2016). While learning these skills, students are often also provided opportunities to develop positive social relationships and leadership skills (Kelley & Carchia, 2013). High school sports highly regulate their competition to allow for this personal development (Flynn & Hensley, 2009).

Third, community responsibility is the relationship between school sport and the school, local households, and local business communities. Sports have become a major part of the social fabric and embedded into the school culture (Laios, 1995; Ridpath, 2018; Ripley, 2013; Wixon & Smith, 2014). Thus, school sports provide invaluable opportunities for school spirit, community cohesion, and civic pride (Bailey, 2006; Cook, 2012; Moore, 2017; Ripley, 2013; Van Milligan, 2014; Wixon & Smith, 2014). In the US, local communities often support their local schools with sponsorships, attending games, and parades. Scholars have argued that these kinds of community-level outcomes provide a strong rationale for government or tax-payer investment in sport (Chalip, 2006).

As noted above, there are nearly 8 million students participating in school sports as reported by the NFHS. Why do so many high school students participate in these sports? Students, with constituent encouragement, seek to grow as community citizens. Suitably trained coaches can help students develop characteristics such as: self-esteem, moral reasoning, fair play, personal responsibility, a sense of inclusion, and leadership (Bailey, 2006; Martinez et al., 2016; Yeung, 2015). In addition, students enjoy representing their local schools and communities (Bailey, 2006; Cook, 2012; Flynn & Hensley, 2009; Kelley & Carchia, 2013; Van Milligan, 2014).

Challenges

As we have discussed, sports in schools have clear benefits for the participants, the schools, and the surrounding communities. Yet, as school sport moves forward research has indicated two main challenges.

First, costs for providing sport have increased and pulled resources from other areas. Camiré (2014) discussed at length the challenges school administrators have to provide sport experiences for all students to enjoy, while also affording quality academics. As an indication of expense for school sport, as the United Kingdom added PE and School sports, there was dissent over the additional administrative structure needed to run these programs and the amount of money to run these expensive programs, especially when juxtaposed with increasing academic needs for teachers and special support (Houlihan & Green, 2006; Ripley, 2013).

In the U.S., there have been budget cuts reducing the funding given by the school systems for school sports, and placing responsibility for funding on the sports themselves (Flanagan, 2017; Riddle, 2014; Ripley, 2013). While professional sports are largely funded by media rights, ticket sales, and sponsorships, these same funding avenues are not nearly as available for school sports. Ticket sales for parents and community members to watch contests and concession stand revenue cannot cover the costs of coaches' salaries, additional insurance for sport activities, referee stipends, equipment, facilities, and transportation (Camiré, 2014; Riddle, 2014; Ripley, 2013; Smith, 2016).

This need to cover the revenue gap has caused additional fund-raising efforts to provide for school sports including participation fees (Yeung, 2015). These participation fees have led to reduced participation for lower socio-economic status students (Camiré, 2014; Flanagan, 2017). Continuing the discussion of socio-economic impact, Fejgin (1994) pointed out that some parents, who appreciate the value of sports, give their children an advantage by providing participation in summer sports camps and the club sport system. This exacerbates the socio-economic status issue, whereby in many schools students who have access to additional skill development have an advantage in securing a position on their school teams over those who only participate in school-based sport.

The second challenge facing schools is the burden to prove athletics is not causing a distraction to the academic mission of the school. There is opposition challenging the researched value of athletics and suggests there is over spending on sports in schools. Legislators would consider cutting school athletics if proof can be given to the lack of educational value of school sports (Ward, 2008). Bowen and Hitt (2016) concede that over emphasis of school sport does exist. Schools in Arkansas have misappropriated funding designated for computer technology and used it for athletic funding. Arkansas spends nearly "3 percent of its per-pupil expenditure" (Ward, 2008, p .574) on athletics. A school in southwestern Texas, upon hiring a new principal, discovered an imbalance of spending and realized the amount that could be shifted to improving the academic output. Upon this realization, the principal cancelled the majority of school sports (Ripley, 2013). The school diverted nearly $150,000 in funds to refocus on academics (Ripley, 2013). These are a few instances of how schools can overemphasize sports and/or address issues with that overemphasis.

Continuing the discussion of a distraction to the mission, the threat of overemphasis on winning is real. The idea that we need to win and win championships has permeated into

school sports (Johnson, Giannoulakis, & Scott, 2017). This mindset shift from valuing the opportunity to participate to winning championships has changed the expectations of stakeholders regarding school sports. To those school sport stakeholders, winning has become a requirement of administrators (Johnson et al., 2017).

American club sports

The club sport system in the United States has been described as "a loosely governed constellation that includes everything from development academies affiliated with professional sports franchises to regional squads run by moonlighting coaches with little experience" (Gregory, 2017, para., p. 4). While some focus of this system is on developing mass participation opportunities, more often the pay-for-play club system in the US is focused on elite athletes and the development and nurturing of athletes who want to continue to develop elite or high performance sport skills and compete in elite or high performance (rather than recreational) sport opportunities (DeBosscher, Sotiriadou, & Van Bottenburg, 2013; Green, 2005; Kelley & Carchia, 2013; Moore, 2017). The club system in the US has grown exponentially in the past 10–20 years, where WinterGreen Research (2018) estimates its growth at 55% since 2010, and places it at a current value of $17 Billion.

Benefits

The benefits of the club sport system are many. For example, scholars have suggested that club sport provides more opportunities for children to play (Blackwell, 2017; Hyman, 2012; Schroder, 2016; Wixon, 2014). For the athletes themselves club sports can provide better coaching and athlete development (Blackwell, 2017; Gehman, 2015; Gregory, 2017; Smith, 2014; Van Milligan, 2014). It also provides a higher competitive level than much school sport, which leads to athlete development of sport skills (Blackwell, 2017; Flynn & Hensley, 2009; Gregory, 2017; Moore, 2017; Reid, 2015; Smith, 2014), athlete development of emotional skills including resilience (Smith, 2014; Wixon & Smith, 2014), and exposure to opportunities at the college and professional levels (Cook, 2012; Flynn & Hensley, 2009; Gehman, 2015; Hyman, 2012; Kelley & Carchia, 2013; Moore, 2017; Reid, 2015; Van Milligan, 2014; Winkler, 2015), and sometimes even for children to have the opportunity to play in high school (Gregory, 2017). Some suggest that the unregulated nature of this system allows athletes to improve faster because they can practice and play virtually as much as they want (Gregory, 2017; Hyman, 2012; Wixon, 2014). At a social level, club sports can bring together children from diverse backgrounds and allow more social opportunities for children, especially if they travel together (Gregory, 2017; Newhouse-Bailey, Dixon, & Warner, 2015).

For parents and families, some argue that club sport, particularly travel sport provides opportunities for parents to bond with their children (Schroder, 2016), for parents to show their children support (Gregory, 2017; Newhouse-Bailey et al., 2015), and social opportunities for parents (Gregory, 2017; Hyman, 2012; Riddle, 2014). For communities, club sports provide jobs (Gregory, 2017; Hyman, 2012; Schroder, 2016; Smith, 2014). The massive tournaments also provide economic impact including hotel stays, food, and transportation (Gregory, 2017; Hyman, 2012; Riddle, 2014). Thus, there is a strong pull

for communities to support and even partner with club sport programs, bolstering what some would call the youth sport commercial enterprise (Hyman, 2012).

Challenges

While the benefits of club sports in the US are numerous, there are also a number of challenges, many of them stemming from the lack of regulation of clubs or the system (Gregory, 2017; Hyman, 2012; Solomon & Farrey, 2018). The main challenges of club sports can be grouped into five categories: financial concerns, diversity concerns, players' experience, parental behavior, and coach behavior.

First, a number of scholars and practitioners have expressed concern over the cost (and rising cost) of club sport in the pay for play model (Blackwell, 2017; Flanagan, 2017; Flynn & Hensley, 2009; Gehman, 2015; Gregory, 2017; Hyman, 2012; Koba, 2014; Newhouse-Bailey et al., 2015; Schroder, 2016; Smith, 2014; Solomon & Farrey, 2018; Sullivan, 2015). In one sense, the lure of money creates issues surrounding the ethics of making money off of child labor (Hyman, 2012; Schroder, 2016). Another issue is the lack of oversight on what clubs or coaches are allowed to charge for their services. Some have even questioned taxation issues and accountability for the large amounts of unreported cash flowing through both the large and small club sport operations (Gregory, 2017; Hyman, 2012).

Second are issues of diversity. While some suggest that as club sport becomes more popular that access and opportunity increase, some even suggest that elite competition is being watered down by wider access (Blackwell, 2017). However, most argue that club sport is the domain of those who can afford it, restricting access for lower SES children and families (Flanagan, 2017; Hyman, 2012; Newhouse-Bailey et al., 2015). While some clubs offer scholarships and assistance to those from lower SES situations, some have argued that those children become vulnerable to exploitation (Hyman, 2012).

Third, there are numerous challenges related to the player experience. A number of scholars argue that clubs demand excessive time commitments from participants that lead to a number of issues including lack of other childhood experiences (Blackwell, 2017; Flanagan, 2017; Flynn & Hensley, 2009; Smith, 2014; Sullivan, 2015), overuse injuries (Flanagan, 2017; Flynn & Hensley, 2009; Hyman, 2012; Reid, 2015), and burnout (Blackwell, 2017; Gregory, 2017; Hyman, 2012; Newhouse-Bailey et al., 2015). Some clubs promote early specialization, which can lead to overuse injuries and limit healthy exploration of other sport options (Flynn & Hensley, 2009; Reed, 2016; Wixon, 2014). Finally, children report that over-commitment to their club sport removes the joy of participation. Some participants report that it feels more like a job than a leisure activity (Hyman, 2012; Schroder, 2016).

Fourth, there are issues with parental behavior. A number of studies examine the challenges of over-involved parents, particularly those that place a high pressure to perform on the coaches and the children (Flynn & Hensley, 2009; Gregory, 2017; Hyman, 2012; Schroder, 2016). Hyman (2012), for example, discusses the culture of commodification that can come with elite club sport, where parents essentially attempt to buy their child's excellence in sport. This commodification mentality places a high pressure on coaches to produce an elite athlete (regardless of skill), and pressure on the child to ensure

a yield on the investment. Interestingly, many families are willing to support their child's elite sport experience, at the cost of family vacations, other children's activities, and even additional debt, for the opportunity at a college scholarship or professional career in sport, defending their choice as the cost of pursuing a dream (Newhouse-Bailey et al., 2015).

Finally, there are challenges with coach behavior. While some sport clubs have highly trained professional coaches, there are many with no training whatsoever, especially in the psychology or development of children (Gregory, 2017; Hyman, 2012; Schroder, 2016; Solomon & Farrey, 2018). This can lead to participant issues ranging from a lack of enjoyment to physical and verbal abuse (Hyman, 2012; Schroder, 2016).

Table 4. Sources of conflict between school and club youth sports.

Conflict Sources	School	Club
Values	(1) Competition for competition's sake (citations) (2) Sport for all (mass participation) (3) Participation driven (4) General, liberal education through sports (1) Team centric (2) Emphasis on participation (3) Play for community and school (4) Community pride/representation (5) Educator coaching (6) Character development	(1) Purported elite competition (2) Limited (elite, exclusive, "select") participation (3) Performance driven (4) Sport-based (performance & skill acquisition) education (1) Individual athlete-centric (2) Emphasis on winning/performing (1) Play for competition, winning & individual advancement (1) Club pride/representation (2) "Professional" coaching (3) Recruiting, showcasing talent and college placement (4) Specialization
Power	(1) School leadership holds power over coaches. (2) High level of player control due to no pass no play. (1) Schools have boundaries for attendance, which bounds rosters. (1) Athletic Associations set calendars for sport participation. Seasons are limited in length. (1) Strong governance through athletic associations. (1) Club athletes and families view "school ball" as a secondary priority due to financial commitment to club team and potential of college scholarship.	(1) Club coach has power over player. (2) Low level of player control; if you are good, you are in. (3) Player and family hold power over team to join. Roster movement almost limitless. (1) Tournaments and seasons can be year round. There are no limits to length of seasons. (1) Limited governance as groups host tournaments, not regulation of coaches and teams. (1) Athletes and families view club as the priority due to financial commitment to club team and potential of college scholarship.
Economics	(1) Tax, bonds & tuition bound (2) Coaches salary limited (3) Drain on school system in some cases (1) Emphasis on football (one sport) both in funding and revenue distribution	(1) Player family financial investment (2) Coaches' salary priority (3) Parent funded (4) Cities and municipalities capitalizing on sport tourism

Sources of conflict between school and club sports

While school and club sports have benefits and challenges, the rise of club sports has created some significant conflicts with school sports that warrant investigation. As we previously described, the club sports phenomenon has received little attention in sport management literature and scholarship exploring the conflict that has arisen between club and school sports is virtually non-existent. Seemingly all youth sport stakeholders (managers, coaches, players, parents) experience the conflict between club and school sports in America. The values (right versus wrong) espoused, power (influence on behavior) exhibited, and economic resources held by both institutions are sources of conflict between school and club sports in the United States (see Table 4). There are seemingly numerous conflicts between the two institutions; we explore those that focus on values, power, and economics below. It is critically important to understand that we are discussing the purported mission or purpose, or commonly held American perceptions, of both institutions with regard to values, power, and economics. Likewise, it should be noted that our discussion is general in nature and contextual factors should be considered for each description of the values, power, and economics of school and club sports. For instance, while we argue that club sports value elite competition more than school sports in general, there are certainly instances and counter examples of this notion.

School and club sports seemingly hold disparate values and these differences create conflicts between the institutions. For instance, while both value competition, there is a difference between how the two institutions describe the importance of competition. Elite competition is central to the purported mission of club sports while competition for competition's sake is generally more descriptive of school sports. A stark difference between school and club sports includes the notion that club sports are more selective or exclusive with regard to participation while school sports try to operate from a "sports for all" philosophy, including as many participants as there is capacity. A greater emphasis is placed on winning, individual performance, and sport/athletic skill development in club sports as compared to school sports (Reid, 2015). Placing an emphasis on winning over other outcomes of sport participation can generate well-documented behaviors considered to be detrimental to young athletes. A few examples include sport specialization (Reed, 2016), overuse injuries and unethical behaviors by coaches, parents and other leaders. Another general perception held by many Americans, or how clubs market themselves, involves the conviction that club coaches are "professional" coaches while school coaches are educators (Gregory, 2017; Smith, 2014). Club sports also are viewed as the better institution for recruiting, individual athlete showcasing and college placement in the overwhelming majority of sports (not football) for youth sports athletes.

Such differences generate a myriad of conflicts between the institutions (Flynn & Hensley, 2009; Gregory, 2017). This is especially true given the fact that most youth sport athletes participating in club sports also play sports for their schools (Mape, 2017; Reid, 2015; Stankovich, 2014; Van Milligan, 2014; Winkler, 2015). The focus on the individual athlete rather than the team, a common perception of club sports, can certainly cause problems for school coaches and leaders who emphasize team play (Reid, 2015). While the culture of club sports fosters a focus on the individual athlete through showcasing and recruiting, teamwork and team play are emphasized in school sports. This cultural difference can create a large chasm between school coaches and club families.

The great emphasis on elite competition and teams that club sports athletes are exposed to can likewise generate conflict with school-based leaders and programs. The perception that club sports value professional, excellent coaching more than school sports obviously generates perceptual and attitudinal conflicts between school coaches and club sports stakeholders. College placement and recruiting for youth sports athletes is seemingly a strength held by club sports and this factor produces gaps in perceptions of priority, importance, equity and value between institutional stakeholders.

Power, as an influence on behavior, is monumentally important with regard to the creation of conflict between school and club sports. Both school and club sports believe young athletes should make sport a priority in their young lives, and each will make arguments that their athletic system is the best option for the athlete. Perhaps the greatest source of conflict between school and club sports surrounds athlete sharing and control of said athlete (Gregory, 2017; Reid, 2015; Van Milligan, 2014; Winkler, 2015). Athletes that participate in both school and club sports are inherently being shared by the institutions (Mape, 2017; Stankovich, 2014; Van Milligan, 2014; Winkler, 2015). This has caused some club coaches to set boundaries for what an athlete can do within the school program (Winkler, 2015). Currently, U.S. soccer academies have prohibited their athletes from participation in high school sports (Reid, 2015; Van Milligan, 2014; Winkler, 2015). Management of the athletes in these circumstances generates a myriad of potential problems. Outside of football, club coaches have gained more power regarding college scholarships. College coaches are watching the club contests to find their future athletes (Reid, 2015; Van Milligan, 2014; Winkler, 2015). So, if you want a college scholarship you better listen to the club coach. Since coaches in both realms aren't working together, the child suffers from issues such as overuse, burnout, and commitment (Reid, 2015; Van Milligan, 2014; Winkler, 2015). Another issue that has developed from this power struggle is the respect or disrespect for, more times than not, the high school coach (Reid, 2015; Winkler, 2015).

Finally, economic factors continue to shape both structures. School sports struggle with how to spend a limited budget to attain both academic and athletic goals. As school sports struggle with limited budgets, this stretches their capacity to maintain affordability (and provide for a broad range of participants), yet provide quality training and competition (Friedman, 2013; Ripley, 2014; Smith, 2016). Club sports struggle with ways to maintain their revenue streams by attracting more participants, while retaining their elite status in training and competition (Blackwell, 2017; Hyman, 2012). Federal, state, and local governments attempt to both control and capitalize on the privatization of sport clubs, which create great opportunity for municipal revenue-generation, but also create issues for taxation and fiduciary regulation (Hyman, 2012). Many have argued that a lack of oversight and regulation allows sport clubs to make millions of dollars off of children with little accountability (e.g. Gregory, 2017; Hyman, 2012). Yet, local governments in particular are hesitant to reign-in a lucrative source of economic impact for their municipalities.

Resolution and conclusion

This article provides a foundational understanding of the burgeoning conflict between school- and club-based sports in America. It provides an overview of both institutions

while discussing the areas of conflict focused on values, power and economics. This article has highlighted the importance of understanding the psychological and sociological forces underlying intergroup conflict between club and youth sports. While understanding of the conflict is necessary and monumentally valuable, it is likewise important to provide potential solutions or resolutions to the conflict. We believe the following are potential responses to the conflict between school- and club-based sports:

(1) Maintain status quo (Mape, 2017): both institutions continue operating as they presently conduct business.
(2) Maintain status quo but organize effective conflict management systems (Phillpots & Grix, 2014; Winkler, 2015): club and school sports continue with same governance system but develop a conflict management system to affect positive, beneficial change and resolution.
(3) Maintain status quo but legislate reform: both institutions are forced to reform via government and NGBs.
(4) Force athlete participation choice (Reid, 2015; Van Milligan, 2014): youth sports athletes choose school or club governance and are effectively only in that system thereby not allowed to participate in the other.
(5) Maintain both institutions, but club sports manage high school teams: school systems partner with local clubs to hire coaches who are employed to only coach (not teach) during school season.
(6) Cessation of high school sports (Cook, 2012; Ridpath, 2018; Van Milligan, 2014): similar to European model with high schools focusing only on academic mission.

As we have described, conflict between school and club sports in America is problematic and seemingly getting worse. Solutions are needed because the youth sports athlete is caught in the middle without much voice or power in either the conflict or possible resolutions (Winkler, 2015). This fact seems counterproductive and directly against the purpose of youth sports participation. Thus, we believe it is time for American leaders in sport and outside sport to figure out a way to put the best interest of the child at the forefront of a solution.

Understanding that conflict will likely never be completely resolved (Cohen & Insko, 2008; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Fiske, 2002), future research can certainly aid participants, families, sport leaders, and American society by providing sport managers, coaches, administrators and policy makers with evidence-based recommendations to dissipate and manage conflicts. Such research should explore the conflict in more depth via various methods and contexts while seeking possible solutions to the conflicts. For example, much of the existing research has taken a top-down perspective, relying on perceptions of policy-makers, scholars, and administrators. We need to hear the voices of coaches in both systems, including their perceptions of conflicts and their ideas for mitigation. And perhaps most importantly, we need to understand more the perspectives of the participants – how they perceive their experiences and the conflict between them and their ideas for having a voice in their own participation experience (Hyman, 2012; Newhouse-Bailey et al., 2015). In gathering perspectives and engaging in meaningful dialogue about the challenges and opportunities in sport (Allport, 1954; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003), we will

certainly move toward a sport system that optimizes the youth sport experience for the central focus of that experience – the participants themselves.

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