

Parent Goals and Verbal Sideline Behavior in Organized Youth Sport

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The present study examined the alignment of goals parents construct for their children with parent verbal sideline behavior at the earliest stage of youth sport. Semistructured interviews, parent journals, and in situ observation were employed with 4 parents over the initial 15 months of their children's organized sport participation. Parent goals were categorized within the multiple goals framework (Caughlin, 2010; O'Keefe & Shepherd, 1987), verbal sideline behaviors were categorized using Holt, Tamminen, Black, Sehn, and Wall's (2008) framework, and case narratives were constructed to offer an interpretation of the interplay of parent goals and verbal sideline behavior. Parents largely wanted their children to learn about sport and have fun; however, parents also reported changing some of their goals over time based on child outcomes and their evolving perceptions of the youth sport context. Often parent goals did not seem to align with verbal sideline behaviors. Findings highlight the development of parent goals over the earliest stage of their children's organized youth sport participation, multiple forms of these goals (e.g., personal, conventional, task, ego), and both consistencies and inconsistencies between these goals and verbal sideline behavior.

Keywords: communication, multiple goals theory, parent sport socialization, sport parenting

More than 44 million children participate in community-based sports leagues in the United States (National Council of Youth Sports, 2008). Because parents are the principal provid-

ers of these experiences (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005), youth sport is an important context for family communication. Parents are in a position to praise, instruct, and critique their children in youth sport, and when this occurs during competitive events, such communication is referred to as parent verbal sideline behavior. There has been recent empirical interest in parent verbal sideline behavior (Holt, Tamminen, Black, Sehn, & Wall, 2008); however, there is a substantial gap in our understanding of factors that underlie this form of communication. Because verbal behavior is typically enacted to achieve goals (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Dillard, 1990; Wilson, 2002), one way to address this gap is to simultaneously consider parent verbal sideline behavior and the goals parents have for their children in organized youth sport.

Interpersonal communication researchers define interaction goals as desired end states that a person hopes to attain or maintain while interacting with others (see Caughlin, 2010; Wilson, 2002). Within this literature, the multiple goals perspective specifies three categories of goals

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that are relevant to interpersonal communication: (a) instrumental goals, which are related to overcoming obstacles or completing a specific task; (b) identity goals, which are related to portraying a desired image of the self and significant others; and (c) relational goals, which are associated with the development and maintenance of relationships (Caughlin, 2010; O'Keefe & Shepherd, 1987; Wilson, 2014). These goals do not exist independent of one another, as individuals typically pursue multiple goals simultaneously during communication episodes (Berger, 2005). Thus, even if a parent's primary goal is an instrumental outcome, identity and relational considerations may shape the communication behavior. This can create dilemmas when the act of pursuing an instrumental outcome threatens the identity of the speaker and/or recipient, and the relational qualities between them (Goldsmith, Lindholm, & Bute, 2006).

Applied to organized youth sport, the multiple goals perspective suggests that parent verbal sideline behavior is shaped by a combination of instrumental, identity, and relational concerns. Instrumental goals can vary widely, ranging from the improvement of an athlete's performance, which might prompt a parent to communicate in a controlling fashion from the sideline, to the enhancement of self-worth, which might prompt warm and supportive comments from the parent. Identity goals lead parents to communicate in ways that create a desirable image of themselves (e.g., by presenting themselves as knowledgeable or respectful) and their children (e.g., by presenting their child as competent or successful). Finally, relational goals lead parents to communicate in ways that enhance feelings of closeness with individuals for whom the parent maintains a vested interest (e.g., athletes, coaches, peers). Beyond offering a descriptive account of the goals parents hold, exploring parent goals and communication in organized youth sport can extend knowledge of the potential interplay of cognition and behavior in youth sport parents.

Parent verbal sideline behavior is a significant form of communication because it represents the primary method of parent involvement during a child's sporting events. The one-way nature of this communication affords both supportive and controlling verbal sideline behaviors and may offer a window to goals possessed

by the parent. Moreover, because organized youth sport occurs primarily in a public setting (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004), parent verbal sideline behavior is observable, increasing the salience of identity management to parents. Finally, families, youth sport organizations, and broader society are cognizant that the tenor of parent verbal sideline behavior in youth sport can impact young athletes. This is evidenced by numerous books on youth sport parenting (Smoll & Smith, 2012), media reports of inappropriate parenting behavior in organized youth sport (Nack & Munson, 2000), and policies designed to limit the proximity of spectators to athletes during youth sport contests. In light of these factors, observing parent verbal sideline behavior is an important undertaking for advancing scholarship on parent involvement in organized youth sport.

Multiple observational frameworks have been created to determine the nature of parent verbal sideline behavior (Holt et al., 2008; Kidman, McKenzie, & McKenzie, 1999). In drawing on the conceptual split of autonomy-supportive and controlling behaviors offered by Grolnick and colleagues (Grolnick, Deci, & Ryan, 1997), Holt and colleagues' framework is potentially useful for examining theoretical connections between parent goals and verbal sideline behavior. According to Holt and colleagues, praise/encouragement refers to general supportive comments (e.g., "That's the way Danielle, good work!"), performance-contingent feedback refers to comments intended to improve performance (e.g., "Way to deliver the pass Ben!"), instruction refers to direct commands (e.g., "Shoot the ball Bree!"), striking a balance refers to finding equilibrium in the positive and negative valence of a comment (e.g., "No, c'mon Jonny . . . okay, good try!"), negative comments refers to general negative comments made toward athletes (e.g., "You're playing too slow Jaime!"), and derogatory comments refers to belittling and potentially harmful comments directed toward athletes (e.g., "That's pathetic Kevin!"). In viewing specific parenting practices through a lens of more global parenting styles, Holt and colleagues highlight a number of person- and context-related factors that have the potential to influence parents' sideline behaviors (e.g., policy issues, game criticality, spectator intensity, parents' perceived knowledge).

Beyond the need to examine observable behaviors in physical activity settings (Smith, Dorsch, & Monsma, 2012; Watson & Shannon, 2010), it is important to address factors that might underlie such behaviors. Communication scholars have urged investigators to address the connection between goals and interpersonal communication behavior (see Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; Keck & Samp, 2007). Targeting parent goals is potentially valuable because goals are (a) inherent in multiple facets of interpersonal relationships (Berger, 2005), (b) related to how others make judgments about an individual's behavior (Caughlin, 2010), and (c) constructed in a variety of institutional and cultural contexts (Wilson, 2014). Describing parent goals, verbal sideline behavior, and the possible tie between the two can advance knowledge of parent-child relationships as well as the norms and expectations experienced by parents in organized youth sport. In light of this potential and calls for greater attention to youth sport parenting (Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2009; Fredricks & Eccles, 2004), the purposes of the present study were to (a) document the goals four parents constructed for their children at the earliest stage of youth sport involvement, (b) document the verbal sideline behavior these parents displayed at their children's events, and (c) interpret how parents' goals may align with their verbal sideline behavior.

Method

Design and Methodology

A longitudinal, collective case study design (Stake, 2005) was employed to capture parent goals and verbal sideline behaviors over the initial 15 months of organized youth sport participation. This research was conducted as part of a larger study of youth sport parenting (Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, in press). To address the research aims, an interpretive approach was adopted, grounding the research in the belief that knowledge is constructed over time through social interaction and is unique to the individuals who construct it (Schmidt, 2007). In the present study, parents' goals for their children's participation were constructed based on personal experiences and their perceptions of the expectations of others (i.e., group norms). The research team interpreted parents'

stated goals, the recorded verbal sideline behaviors, and potential links between the two.

Participants

Participants were four first-time youth sport parents (two mothers, two fathers) from four families in the Midwest United States. Upon institutional review board approval, parents were recruited from a large youth soccer league. Parents were specifically targeted who had children participating for the first time in youth sport and who expected their children to continue over multiple seasons. The participants had a range of sport backgrounds, from no formal playing experience through college-level experience. Participant ages ranged from 30 to 43 years. They were White, lived in suburban or rural locales, reported upper-middle class family incomes, held college degrees, and were married. Participants were parents of two male children and two female children. Of the four children, two participated in five youth sport seasons (spanning 4 to 12 weeks each) over the 15-month study period while one took part in four seasons and one took part in two seasons. Three of the children were 5 years old and one was 6 years old at the onset of the study. Further information on the respective participants is available in Dorsch and colleagues (in press). The participants, as well as family members and coaches, have been assigned pseudonyms in the present report.

Data Collection

Three forms of qualitative data (semistructured interviews, parent journals, and in situ observations) were collected over a period lasting 15 months. Prior to the first game of the child's initial sport season, and again subsequent to each season of participation, semistructured interviews containing open-ended questions (e.g., "Tell me about your decision to sign Alex up for soccer this season.") and follow-up probes (e.g., "What did you hope he would gain from the experience?") were conducted with parent participants to facilitate discussion of participants' experiences as youth sport parents. In discussing their broader experiences, parents communicated their hopes, expectations, and desires for their children's participation. Over the course of the project, participants took part in 19 interviews lasting in total approximately

12 hours. As a second data collection strategy, parents completed journals about their sport parenting experiences. Parents were prompted to write freely about their experiences as youth sport parents and asked to describe observations, experiences, thoughts, or emotions linked to their children's sport participation. Over the course of the project, participants returned 72 parent journals, ranging in length from 1/4 of a page to two typed pages. As a final data collection strategy, in situ audio recordings of each parent were obtained via embedded digital recorder. Obtaining data in this fashion was considered the best method for attaining an ecologically valid depiction of parent verbal sideline behavior. Parent recordings commenced upon the parent's arrival on the sideline and concluded following the contest. Immediately upon arrival, the parent was outfitted with a lapel microphone, and provided with a digital recording device to place in her/his pocket. In all cases, the device was already recording when the researcher gave it to the participant. Parent recordings were made once per competitive athletic season of the child's participation. Over the course of the study, this amounted to 14 in situ recordings lasting in total nearly 14.5 hours. Direct observations were recorded and interpretive memos were also made to assist in contextualizing parent verbal sideline behaviors during the data analysis phase. Additionally, 110 hours of direct observation conducted across lessons, practices, and competitions assisted in the interpretation of in situ data.

Data Analysis

Digital recordings of interviews and verbal sideline behavior, respectively, were transcribed verbatim using *Dragon NaturallySpeaking 10* computer software. All electronic transcripts were cross-checked for accuracy against the original recordings. Interpretive memos were transcribed directly and *QSR NVivo9* computer software was used to assist with categorizing, storing, and retrieving all forms of data for subsequent analyses.

A three-step data analysis procedure was employed to address study aims. First, a systematic search of parent interview and journal data was conducted and all data pertaining to parents' goals for their children's sport participation were coded inductively. These data were

deemed reflective of parent goals when parents described desired end states that they hoped they, their child, or their family would attain or maintain through the child's organized youth sport involvement. In some interviews, these were prompted by specific questions or probes (e.g., "What did you hope to see as a result of Alex's participation in organized youth sport?"); in other cases, parents chose to discuss their goals without specific prompting from researchers (e.g., "I hope her participation allows us to spend more quality time together outside the home."). In total, 23 pages of coded text pertained to parents' goals for their children's sport participation. Roughly 14 of these pages were drawn from interview data and roughly nine from journal data. Parent goals were classified as instrumental, identity, or relational according to the multiple goals framework. Within these categories, quotations were inductively coded into subcategories and labeled based on shared characteristics. A constant comparative approach was used in the coding of parent goals. To organize these data, a time-ordered data matrix was constructed for each participant upon completion of this coding process.

The second step of analysis entailed classifying in situ verbal sideline behaviors. Initially, all verbalizations relative to sport were isolated. Episodes of verbal sideline behavior included parent comments directed toward their children, and comments made to or about other athletes, spectators, coaches, and officials. In some cases, longer comments were broken into multiple episodes. Extraneous comments not related to the child or sport context were not used in the analysis. Episodes of parent verbal sideline behavior were then classified within the Holt and colleagues (2008) framework as praise/encouragement, performance-contingent feedback, instruction, striking a balance, negative, or derogatory.

The final step of analysis entailed the construction of case narratives. These narratives integrate information from the time-ordered matrices and the in situ behavior tables to offer an interpretation of each parent's involvement experience in organized youth sport. Specifically, incorporating quotations (a) the initial goals held by each parent for their children's sport participation were described, (b) potential links between parent goals and verbal sideline

behavior over the course of the study were proposed, and (c) an interpretation of how multiple goals were reflected in parents' verbal sideline behavior was constructed. Each step was undertaken by the first author. Due to the longitudinal nature of the data, verbal sideline behaviors from a given season were examined in light of parent goals articulated during that season.

To ensure a trustworthy analytic process, the third author served as a peer debriefer (Creswell, 2007) during the initial stages of data analysis. The peer debriefer examined the first author's interpretations and provided feedback to enhance the first author's classification of parent goals within the multiple goals perspective. The second and fourth authors served as critical friends throughout data analysis (Hill, 2002). They offered continual critique of the first author's own interests and values. Following the first author's coding of parent goals, the first and fourth authors met to discuss the labeling and assignment of goals within subcategories and categories. Following the first author's construction of case narratives, the first and second authors met to discuss the conceptual links between parent goals and verbal sideline behavior. Together, these meetings led to substantive edits to the clusters of descriptive subcategories that fell within the multiple goals framework as well as edits to the case narratives.

Results

Parents articulated 43 specific goals related to their children's sport participation. Parent goals were classified into four subcategories of instrumental goals (avoid negative sport outcomes, develop as an athlete, grow as an individual, enjoy sport experience), two subcategories of identity goals (maintain a positive image as a parent and manage others' perceptions of child), and two subcategories of relational goals (enhance family relationships and build relationships with others). Although a great deal of overlap existed in parents' experiences, each parent case afforded unique interpretation of parent goals, verbal sideline behaviors, and the potential link of the two. The following case narratives integrate these data to offer an interpretation of each parent's involvement experience in organized youth sport.

Holly

Over her son's initial 15 months of sport participation, 14 of Holly's 30 sport-related goals were interpreted as instrumental (see Table 1). Holly wanted Greg to avoid negative sport outcomes such as burnout, to develop as an athlete by learning about sport, to grow as an individual by trying new things, and to enjoy his sport experience by performing well. Seven of Holly's sport-related goals were interpreted as identity-related. Holly wanted to maintain a positive image as a sport parent by having Greg reflect well on her, and wanted to manage others' perceptions of Greg by him maintaining a good attitude. Lastly, nine of Holly's sport-related goals were interpreted as relational. Holly wanted to enhance family relationships by spending time together and wanted to see Greg build relationships with others by meeting other children and making new friends.

Holly displayed 558 verbal sideline behaviors across her son Greg's four seasonal athletic competitions. Forty-three percent of these verbal sideline behaviors were interpreted as instructive, with the highest proportion coming in Season 5. A combined 8% of behaviors were interpreted as negative or derogatory, though nearly one-quarter of her behaviors fell into these categories in Season 4 (basketball; see Table 1). Holly's verbal sideline behaviors reflected multiple goals simultaneously. In most cases, we interpreted her instruction as a means to achieve instrumental outcomes; however, identity and relational concerns were also evident. Interviews and journals provided evidence of Holly's desire for Greg's play to reflect well on her and her aspiration to become part of the "in crowd." When asked about her sport parenting style during Season 1, Holly stated frankly, "I really put a lot of emphasis on learning . . . although clearly I want [Greg] to be a star too." The latter goal was captured during a Season 1 in situ recording as she spoke to her husband Anthony about Greg not wanting to play offense where she thought his performance would stand out more: "I don't know why he asked to be a defender. I don't know why he doesn't want to be on offense where he can score a goal."

Holly made a similar proportion of negative and derogatory comments about Greg's performances during Seasons 3 and 4. In one episode, captured during a Season 3 in situ recording,

Table 1
Time-Ordered Matrix of Holly's Specific Goals for Greg's Participation in Organized Youth Sport and Verbal Sideline Behavior by Category

Goal category	Subcategory	Goal	Season					
			B	1	2	3	4	5
Instrumental	Avoid negative sport outcomes	Avoid overlap/overload/burnout			X	X	X	
		Develop as an athlete		X				
	Grow as an individual	Improve technical skills			X	X		
		Learn about the sport	X	X	X	X	X	X
		Learn which sports are most enjoyable						X
		Prepare to get a scholarship		X	X		X	
		Become more confident		X				
		Keep goals in perspective			X			
		Learn balance and structure		X				
		Learn to work hard/commit/finish					X	
		Learn value of exercise/activity		X				
		Try new things/Get out of comfort zone				X	X	
	Enjoy sport experience	Have a good season/Perform well	X	X		X	X	X
		Have fun/Be happy	X	X		X		X
Identity	Maintain a positive image as a parent	Avoid other parents' negative views			X		X	
		Become part of the "in crowd"		X		X	X	
	Manage others' perceptions of child	Have child reflect well on parents	X				X	X
		Have child blend in with teammates			X			
Relational	Enhance family relationships	Have other parents notice child's ability					X	
		Maintain child's good attitude			X			
		See child compare well to other athletes	X					
	Build relationships with others	Feel support from family			X			
		Have something to talk about			X			
		Spend time together			X	X		
		Avoid letting down coach					X	
		Get to know other families				X	X	
		Learn sportsmanship	X					
		Learn how to work with others	X	X				
Meet other children/Make new friends	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Respect adults/authority figures	X		X	X				

Behavior category	Season					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Praise/encouragement	57		35	10	46	148
	34%		27%	19%	22%	27%
Performance-contingent feedback	28		31	12	44	115
	17%		24%	22%	21%	21%
Instruction	71		50	17	104	242
	43%		38%	31%	50%	43%
Striking a balance	3		2	2	1	8
	2%		2%	4%	<1%	1%
Negative comments	5		10	10	9	34
	3%		8%	19%	4%	6%
Derogatory comments	2		2	3	4	11
	1%		2%	6%	2%	2%
Total behaviors observed	166		130	54	208	558

Note. Verbal sideline data were collected during Season 1 (spring soccer), Season 3 (fall soccer), Season 4 (winter basketball), and Season 5 (spring soccer). No verbal sideline data were collected during Season 2 (summer swimming and soccer lessons) because Holly did not participate verbally on the sideline during Greg's lessons. Percentages correspond to behaviors by category within a season/event.

Holly commented to a parent peer on the sideline, "That was kind of a wimpy throw." This negative statement was followed by a less negatively valenced instructive comment directed toward Greg on the field, "Greg, *throw* the ball!" Communication episodes such as these were interpreted as reflecting identity and relational goals, in addition to the instrumental goal of wanting Greg to improve his performance. In pursuing identity goals, Holly seemed to want Greg's sport outcomes to reflect well on her as a sport parent (as she stated during interviews in Seasons 1, 4, and 5). However, she also remained cognizant of the image she was portraying to others on the sideline, describing during Seasons 2 and 4 a desire to avoid other parents' negative views. Holly often seemed to adapt her verbal sideline behavior based on relational concerns as well. For instance, when Greg accidentally scored against his own goalie in a Season 5 soccer match, we observed Holly strike a balance in her verbal sideline behavior. Her immediate response ("It's all right . . .") was indicative of encouragement, and was followed by somewhat derogatory (i.e., sarcastic in tone) performance-contingent feedback (" . . . Just remember, you're going *that* way. You're a defender!"). After a brief pause, she offered positively valenced instruction: "No big deal, you just go *that* way."

Toward the end of the 15-month period, Holly shared multiple, and potentially conflicting, goals. Specifically, Holly implied during a Season 4 interview that she was equally concerned with avoiding other parents' negative views as with Greg learning to respect adults/authority figures: "[When he] had a bad attitude, or if he talked back, or if he was mean, I would definitely say something to him right there, but I wouldn't yell and scream. I would wait 'til I got home [to do that]." Holly's identity concerns reflected a potential conflict with her instrumental and relational concerns tied to Greg's participation. Indeed, early in the study she prioritized instrumental outcomes, stating in a Season 2 interview: "I find myself thinking that if we can keep him good at soccer maybe he could get a scholarship . . . for me, that's a long-term goal." However, we documented a transformation over the course of the 15 months, as was evident in our Season 5 interview: "For a while I thought maybe I was becoming one of those people who eat sleep and

breathe it, and I got caught up in all the stuff he could do to get him a scholarship, and now I feel like I'm normal again." This change provides evidence that Holly weighted her goals and verbal sideline behavior based on an evolving perception of what was most important in organized youth sport.

Trina

Over her daughter's initial 15 months of participation, 10 of Trina's 22 sport-related goals were interpreted as instrumental (see Table 2). Trina wanted Leslie to avoid negative sport outcomes such as injury, develop as an athlete by improving her technical skills, grow as an individual by getting out of her comfort zone, and enjoy her sport experience by getting a trophy. Over the course of the study, five of Trina's sport-related goals were interpreted as identity-related. Within this category, Trina's goals shifted from a concern about her own image as a youth sport parent (wanting Leslie to reflect well on her) to a concern about Leslie's own image as an athlete. Specifically, she wanted Leslie to blend in with other athletes and to compare well to her teammates in skill. Lastly, seven of Trina's sport-related goals were interpreted as relational. Trina wanted to enhance family relationships by spending time with Leslie and the rest of the family and wanted to see Leslie build relationships with others through improved social skills.

Trina displayed 103 verbal sideline behaviors across her daughter Leslie's two seasonal athletic competitions. Forty-eight percent of her verbal sideline behaviors were interpreted as praise/encouragement, whereas a combined 11% were interpreted as negative or derogatory. Her verbal sideline behavior remained relatively unchanged in volume and proportion from Season 1 to Season 5 (see Table 2). Trina's verbal (and nonverbal) sideline behaviors reflected multiple goals simultaneously. In most cases, we interpreted her use of praise/encouragement as a means to reinforce instrumental outcomes; however, identity and relational concerns were also evident. For instance, one of Trina's identity goals was to avoid other parents' negative views. This desire was revealed in a Season 1 interview: "There are several people that I will not sit by anymore because they're either yelling at the kids or the

Table 2
Time-Ordered Matrix of Trina’s Specific Goals for Leslie’s Participation in Organized Youth Sport and Verbal Sideline Behavior by Category

Goal category	Subcategory	Goal	Season					
			B	1	2	3	4	5
Instrumental	Avoid negative sport outcomes	Avoid injury		X				
		Develop as an athlete	X					
	Grow as an individual	Gain coordination	X					
		Improve technical skills	X					
		Learn about the sport	X	X				
		Become more confident						X
	Enjoy sport experience	Learn value of exercise/activity						X
		Try new things/Get out of comfort zone	X					X
		Get a trophy		X				
		Have a good season/Perform well						X
Identity	Maintain a positive image as a parent	Have fun/Be happy	X	X				X
		Avoid other parents’ negative views		X				
	Manage others’ perceptions of child	Have child reflect well on parents	X	X				
		Control child’s on-field emotions	X	X				
	Relational	Enhance family relationships	Have child blend in with teammates					X
			See child compare well to other athletes					X
		Build relationships with others	Feel support from family					X
			Spend time together		X			
Relational	Build relationships with others	Get along with teammates	X					
		Improve child’s social skills		X				
	Learn sportsmanship						X	
	Learn how to work with others	X						
		Meet other children/Make new friends		X				

Behavior category	Season					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Praise/encouragement	25				24	49
	48%				47%	48%
Performance-contingent feedback	8				8	16
	15%				16%	16%
Instruction	13				12	25
	25%				24%	24%
Striking a balance	1				1	2
	2%				2%	2%
Negative comments	4				5	9
	8%				10%	9%
Derogatory comments	1				1	2
	2%				2%	2%
Total behaviors observed	52				51	103

Note. Verbal sideline data were collected during Season 1 (spring soccer) and Season 5 (spring soccer). No verbal sideline data were collected during Seasons 2–4 because Leslie did not participate in organized youth sport during these seasons. Percentages correspond to behaviors by category within a season/event.

referee, and I can’t deal with that. So, I go out of my way to not be *that* parent.” From a relational aspect, Trina wanted Leslie to feel support from the family: “Supporting your kid in what they’re doing . . . I think it’s just being very supportive of your kid and making sure that your kid knows that you are supporting everybody.”

Trina made a number of negative and derogatory comments over the course of the study; however, these comments were typically made about other parents, coaches, or the general sport context rather than to or about Leslie. For instance, when Leslie’s team was playing a clearly inferior opponent during Season 1, she made a negative comment to another parent for

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cheering loudly after the team's third goal: "We're winning three to nothing already. We *don't* need to rub it in." This in situ statement was followed by a positively valenced comment directed at Leslie: "Way to be there Leslie . . . you're doing a good job honey!" Communication episodes such as this indicated that while Trina cared about instrumental, identity, and relational outcomes with the children, identity and relational concerns were less likely to shape her verbal exchanges with parent peers.

One of the unique aspects of Leslie's participation was that she played soccer during Season 1 and did not participate again in organized youth sport until Season 5. In a Season 5 journal entry, Trina articulated an understanding that Leslie was not one of the better athletes on her team. We interpreted this as leading to an adjusted set of goals for Leslie's participation. Specifically, Trina's goals in Season 5 shifted from Leslie's development as an athlete to her growth as an individual. Although her goals evolved, Trina's verbal sideline behavior did not. Namely, we observed Trina continue to strike a balance by framing in situ criticisms of Leslie in a joking and/or laughing manner (e.g., "Leslie, what are you doing honey?") and by making negative comments (e.g., "Good grief, c'mon Leslie.") under her breath and not within earshot of Leslie. On one occasion during Season 5 we observed Trina begin to comment on the way Leslie was positioned as the goalkeeper. However, rather than finish the comment herself, she told her husband: "Paul, you better go down there and tell her not to be *in* the goal . . ." This exchange typified Trina's multiple goals in that she wanted to avoid other parents' negative views of how she communicated with her daughter (an identity goal), to have Leslie avoid negative sport outcomes (an instrumental goal), and to have Leslie feel support from the family (a relational goal).

Scott

Over his daughter's initial 15 months of participation, 12 of Scott's 18 sport-related goals were interpreted as instrumental (see Table 3). Scott wanted Kaylee to avoid negative sport outcomes like being turned off to sport, to develop as an athlete by learning which sports are most enjoyable, to grow as an individual by learning to work hard, and to enjoy her sport

experience by being happy. Just one of Scott's goals was interpreted as identity-related. Specifically, he wanted to manage others' perceptions of Kaylee by seeing her compare well to other athletes. Finally, five of Scott's sport-related goals were interpreted as relational. Scott wanted to enhance family relationships by spending time together and wanted to see Kaylee build relationships with others by learning how to work with others.

Scott displayed 106 verbal sideline behaviors across his daughter Kaylee's four seasonal athletic competitions. Twenty-eight percent of his behaviors were interpreted as performance-contingent feedback, with comparable percentages of behaviors falling into the praise/encouragement and instruction categories, respectively. His instructive behaviors peaked during Season 2 (track and field), when 36% of his verbalizations were interpreted as instructional (see Table 3). Scott's verbal sideline behaviors reflected multiple goals simultaneously. In most cases, we interpreted his performance-contingent feedback as a means to achieve instrumental outcomes; however, identity and relational concerns seemed to shape these exchanges. For instance, many episodes of performance-contingent feedback captured during in situ observations (e.g., "Well done Kaylee, that was a lot of work to get the ball!") appeared to be shaped by identity (e.g., wanting to see Kaylee compare well to other athletes) and relational (e.g., wanting Kaylee to feel support from the family) concerns that Scott shared in subsequent interviews. Despite Scott's wealth of knowledge and experience in sport, we noted that most of the instruction and performance-contingent feedback he provided was inaudible to Kaylee on the field. In addition, although Scott had the highest proportion of negatively valenced comments among the study participants, not once did we observe him direct a negative comment toward Kaylee. Rather, Scott typically whispered these comments to himself or spoke them to his wife on the sidelines. This potentially underscores the importance he felt in maintaining a positive image as a youth sport parent and a warm relationship with his daughter.

In Kaylee's first season of organized youth soccer, we observed Scott attempt to strike a balance by whispering instruction to himself (e.g., "You've got to hold it there Kaylee." or

Table 3
Time-Ordered Matrix of Scott's Specific Goals for Kaylee's Participation in Organized Youth Sport and Verbal Sideline Behavior by Category

Goal category	Subcategory	Goal	Season					
			B	1	2	3	4	5
Instrumental	Avoid negative sport outcomes	Avoid being turned off to sport		X	X	X		X
		Avoid injury		X		X		
	Develop as an athlete	Become more competitive				X		
		Improve technical skills			X	X		X
		Learn about the sport	X	X		X		X
	Grow as an individual	Learn which sports are most enjoyable	X		X	X		
		Keep goals in perspective			X			
		Learn to work hard/commit/finish		X	X			
		Learn value of exercise/activity				X		X
		Try new things/Get out of comfort zone		X		X		
Enjoy sport experience	Have a good season/Perform well				X		X	
	Have fun/Be happy	X	X	X	X		X	
Identity	Manage others' perceptions of child	See child compare well to other athletes		X				X
Relational	Enhance family relationships	Feel support from family		X				
		Spend time together				X		X
	Build relationships with others	Learn sportsmanship				X		
		Learn how to work with others	X			X		X
		Meet other children/Make new friends				X	X	

Behavior category	Season					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Praise/encouragement	3	10	12		2	27
	25%	26%	36%		9%	25%
Performance-contingent feedback	2	11	9		8	30
	17%	28%	27%		36%	28%
Instruction	4	14	4		6	28
	33%	36%	12%		27%	26%
Striking a balance	0	1	2		0	3
	0%	3%	6%		0%	3%
Negative comments	3	3	6		5	17
	25%	8%	18%		23%	16%
Derogatory comments	0	0	0		1	1
	0%	0%	0%		5%	1%
Total behaviors observed	12	39	33		22	106

Note. Verbal sideline data were collected during Season 1 (spring soccer), Season 2 (summer track and field), Season 3 (fall soccer), and Season 5 (spring soccer). No verbal sideline data were collected during Season 4 because Kaylee did not participate in organized youth sport during that season. Percentages correspond to behaviors by category within a season/event.

“Run upfield Kaylee.”), directing the performance-contingent feedback toward his wife (e.g., “That’s a play she needs to make as a defender.”), or delaying his communication altogether until after the competition. In a Season 1 interview, Scott shared his desire to make sure Kaylee felt support from the family and this was manifest in him not providing instruction or making negative or derogatory comments in

front of other people at her events. This pattern of interaction appeared to change during Kaylee’s initial season of track and field when Scott became more involved in her participation. At her first meet, we observed Scott pull Kaylee to the side of the track to question her decision not to run one of the races she had signed up for: “Do you want to run the 1600? It’s only four laps around.” By questioning her decision not to

run without demanding that she did, we interpreted this communication episode as driven by an instrumental goal (not wanting Kaylee to be turned off to sport) and an identity goal (wanting to see Kaylee compare well to other athletes). The discrepancy between Scott's communication with Kaylee in soccer and track and field provides evidence that the sport context itself, and perhaps his background in the respective sports, influenced his verbal sideline behavior.

Craig

Over his son's initial 15 months of participation, 18 of Craig's 28 sport-related goals were interpreted as instrumental (see Table 4). Craig wanted Alex to avoid negative sport outcomes like putting pressure on himself, to develop as an athlete by learning about the sport, to grow as an individual by learning about the value of exercise and activity, and to enjoy his sport experience by having something that is his domain. Just two of Craig's sport-related goals were interpreted as identity-related and both focused on managing others' perceptions of Alex. Specifically, Craig wanted Alex to learn to control his on-field emotions and to compare well to other athletes in sport. Finally, eight of Craig's sport-related goals were interpreted as relational. Craig wanted to enhance family relationships by spending time with the family and wanted to see Alex build relationships with others by learning sportsmanship and making new friends.

Craig displayed 118 verbal sideline behaviors across his son Alex's four seasonal athletic competitions. Thirty-seven percent of these behaviors were interpreted as praise/encouragement and 33% were interpreted as performance-contingent feedback. Although 12% of his verbal sideline behaviors were interpreted as negative, no derogatory behaviors were observed in situ. The volume of Craig's total verbal sideline behavior increased with each season of Alex's soccer participation (16 in Season 1, 27 in Season 3, and 62 in Season 5) as did the number of negative verbal behaviors (from 1 to 2 to 11; see Table 4). Craig's verbal sideline behaviors reflected multiple goals simultaneously. In most cases, we interpreted his praise/encouragement as a means to achieve instrumental outcomes; however, identity and/or

relational concerns were also evident. For instance, during an interview following Season 1 Craig admitted that Alex's and other parents' reactions to his praise/encouragement would influence his future verbal sideline behavior. Additionally, although we observed Craig offer more negative comments as the study progressed (e.g., "Geez Alex, get back here."), these episodes seemed to be shaped more by identity and relational rather than instrumental concerns. Indeed, during a Season 5 soccer match, Alex was confused and lined up on the wrong side of the pitch prior to the start of the half. Craig's initial reaction was to yell toward Alex; however, after Craig moved to the front of his chair and called "Alex . . ." he waved him off, laughed, and whispered to himself: ". . . oh Alex, you're at the wrong end of the field." With this, we observed Craig strike a balance by withholding a verbal behavior that may have accomplished an instrumental goal at the possible detriment of identity (e.g., maintaining a positive image of himself and Alex) and relational (e.g., wanting Alex to feel supported) goals.

We interpreted a potential tension between two of Craig's instrumental goals for Alex early in his sport participation. Specifically, during a Season 1 interview, Craig articulated a desire to see Alex have fun and be happy while also wanting him to learn to deal with failure: "I don't want him to feel bad, but I know he needs to learn to deal with [it] . . . I take it as a reality of sports. There will be failure and it will be good for him to experience it." Craig reflected during a Season 3 interview that on multiple occasions conflicting goals forced him into a difficult emotional position: "You don't want to see your kid sad and crying and frustrated and miserable . . . It's not [something] I enjoy, but it's something that he can benefit from and grow from."

Craig was frequently observed using halftime as an opportunity to manage Alex's on-field emotions. During Season 3 Alex was visibly upset about having to play a soccer game in the rain and mud. Craig's verbal sideline behavior that day seemed to strike a balance between encouragement and instruction: "It's okay to get dirty today chief." This in situ exchange was also interpreted as reflecting Craig's desire to see Alex compare well with other athletes and perform well. During Season 3, when a negative

Table 4
Time-Ordered Matrix of Craig’s Specific Goals for Alex’s Participation in Organized Youth Sport and Verbal Sideline Behavior by Category

Goal category	Subcategory	Goal	Season						
			B	1	2	3	4	5	
Instrumental	Avoid negative sport outcomes	Avoid injury		X					
		Avoid overlap/overload/burnout					X		
		Avoid putting pressure on self				X			
	Develop as an athlete	Improve technical skills				X	X	X	X
		Learn about the sport	X			X	X	X	X
		Learn which sports are most enjoyable				X		X	X
	Grow as an individual	Become a good person					X		
		Become self-reliant						X	
		Keep goals in perspective			X				
		Learn balance and structure				X			X
		Learn to work hard/commit/finish				X	X		
		Learn to deal with failure and success	X	X		X		X	X
	Enjoy sport experience	Learn value of exercise/activity	X	X	X	X	X		
		Try new things/Get out of comfort zone						X	
		Be interested/motivated				X	X	X	
Have a good season/Perform well			X		X	X		X	
Have fun/Be happy		X		X	X	X	X	X	
Have something that is child’s domain			X		X				
Identity	Manage others’ perceptions of child	Control child’s on-field emotions	X	X					
		See child compare well to other athletes							X
Relational	Enhance family relationships	Feel support from family							X
		Spend time together	X	X	X	X			
	Build relationships with others	Get along with teammates	X						
		Improve child’s social skills	X						
		Learn sportsmanship		X			X	X	
		Learn how to work with others		X					
Meet other children/Make new friends	X		X			X	X		
Respect adults/authority figures					X				

Behavior category	Season					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Praise/encouragement	7		9	7	21	44
	44%		33%	54%	34%	37%
Performance-contingent feedback	4		10	6	19	39
	25%		37%	46%	31%	33%
Instruction	3		3	0	9	15
	19%		11%	0%	15%	13%
Striking a balance	1		3	0	2	6
	6%		11%	0%	3%	5%
Negative comments	1		2	0	11	14
	6%		7%	0%	18%	12%
Derogatory comments	0		0	0	0	0
	0%		0%	0%	0%	0%
Total behaviors observed	16		27	13	62	118

Note. Verbal sideline data were collected during Season 1 (spring soccer), Season 3 (fall soccer), Season 4 (winter basketball), and Season 5 (spring soccer). No verbal sideline data were collected during Season 2 (summer tennis lessons) because Craig did not participate verbally on the sideline during Alex’s lessons. Percentages correspond to behaviors by category within a season/event.

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comment may have been warranted, Craig commented instead to his wife and another parent in attendance: "He's looking a little sluggish [today]." Indeed, very rarely did we observe Craig direct negative or derogatory comments toward Alex. This changed in Season 5 when Craig was much more willing to offer negative feedback to Alex on the soccer pitch. He described in our Season 5 interview that this transformation was closely tied to the fact that Alex was now participating in his third season of organized soccer: "Over time, when he plays the same sport over and over again, I guess I have the expectation that he'll be learning and picking up things as he goes along." This transformation indicated that Craig's goals were potentially influenced by Alex's increasing ability, Craig's own expectations of that ability, and the competitive environment in which Alex was participating.

Discussion

The current study was designed to investigate the potential link of parent goals and verbal sideline behavior during the earliest stage of organized youth sport involvement. Data from parent interviews, journals, and in situ observations offered initial evidence for this link and support past research suggesting that parenting practices are typically enacted to achieve parental goals and values (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Dillard, 1990; Wilson, 2002). Moreover, consistent with the multiple goals perspective (Caughlin, 2010; O'Keefe & Shepherd, 1987), the instrumental, identity, and relational goals parents sought through their children's youth sport participation were not mutually exclusive, as parent verbal sideline behavior often reflected multiple goals simultaneously (Wilson, 2014).

Adopting a multiple goals perspective (Caughlin, 2010; O'Keefe & Shepherd, 1987) in the present study was particularly useful for thinking about parents' attempts to manage potentially conflicting goals. Because identity and relational considerations often shaped parents' pursuit of instrumental outcomes, we interpreted parents as pursuing multiple goals that were made relevant by the immediate youth sport context (see Berger, 2005; Caughlin, 2010; Wilson, 2014). In the present study, parents sought a wide range of instrumental out-

comes that impacted their verbal sideline behavior. Importantly, parents' identity goals seemed to temper these behaviors, leading parents in most cases to communicate in ways that created a desirable image of themselves and their children (Dillard, 1990; Goldsmith et al., 2006). For example, in many situations, parents wanted to offer performance-contingent feedback (e.g., "you're going the wrong direction!") and yet chose not to say it loud enough for their children to hear. This finding aligns with Hample and Dallinger (1987), who discussed the use of "editing" to deal with goal conflict. In the present study, it is plausible that parents may have edited different amounts or for different reasons based on the goals they held for their children's sport participation. Finally, we interpreted parents' relational goals as leading parents to communicate in ways that enhanced feelings of closeness with their children and significant others (e.g., coaches, peers) in the organized youth sport context. Often this communication came in the form of "temporal segmenting," whereby parents would prioritize one goal immediately (in public), and another, conflicting goal later (in private). Together, these mechanisms afford a clearer understanding of parents' attempts to manage potentially conflicting goals in organized youth sport.

The sport motivation literature, particularly that grounded in achievement goal perspectives, also offers a framework for understanding our findings. According to Nicholls (1984), individuals differ in the criteria by which they define success in achievement contexts. When an individual is task involved, the goal of action is to develop mastery, improvement, or learning; when an individual is ego involved, the goal is to demonstrate ability relative to others (Roberts, Treasure, & Conroy, 2012). In line with the multiple goals perspective, this framework posits that individuals may seek multiple achievement goals simultaneously in an effort to develop and demonstrate competence (Roberts, 2012). Although achievement goal perspectives have been widely used to study young athletes' goal orientation and involvement (Roberts), as well as coach-, parent-, and peer-created motivational sport contexts (e.g., Keegan, Harwood, Spray, & Lavallee, 2009), none have to our knowledge been used to understand parent verbal sideline behaviors. Such application of achievement goal perspectives could be useful

for researchers attempting to map parents' goals to their verbal sideline behavior.

In the present study, parent verbal sideline behavior largely aligned with task goals for their children's participation (e.g., improve technical skills, learn to work hard/commit/finish). However, a number of episodes of verbal sideline behavior also seemed closely linked to parents' ego goals (e.g., compare well to other athletes, prepare to get a scholarship). These behaviors were interpreted as direct manifestations of parents' latent desires for their children's participation in organized youth sport. In some cases, parents expressed disappointment or shame for holding such desires, suggesting that tension may stem from the co-existence of task and ego goals. It is also possible that parents interpreted dissonance between their children's goals and the goals they themselves held for their children (see Duda & Hom, 1993). Another important consideration is the social aspect of parents' sport-related goals. In the present study, parent verbal sideline behavior seemed to be impacted by parents' social ambitions for their children's participation (e.g., meet other children/make new friends, become part of the "in crowd"), aligning with sport research on social goals (e.g., Allen, 2003; Stuntz & Weiss, 2009). Given the potential overlap of parents' task, ego, and social goals, future studies should explicitly address the goal orientations sport parents maintain for their children as well as the more specific goal involvement patterns parents exhibit through their verbal communications.

Findings from the present research suggest that parents are attuned to their children in youth sport, adjusting their goals based on the early successes and failures of their children and the overall tenor of the parent-child relationship. For instance, after it became evident that Leslie was not one of the better players on her Season 5 soccer team, Trina's focus shifted from Leslie's status as an athlete to her growth as an individual through sport. Scott's parenting behaviors also appeared to be impacted by Kaylee's sport experiences. For example, when Kaylee decided not to run the 1600m at a Season 2 track meet, Scott remarked, "It's only four laps around." It was clear Scott wanted Kaylee to participate in the event and we interpreted his verbal sideline behavior as controlling. These two examples align with the grounded theory

produced by Holt and colleagues (2008), which highlighted the impact of parent-child interactions and the achievement-related performances of the child on parent involvement behavior.

Parents also adjusted their verbal sideline behavior based on factors related to the organized youth sport context (see Holt et al., 2008). This was especially true for Craig, who described parents as collectively shaping one another's verbal sideline behavior: "You're part of a social group and together you all have similar expectations, but the group also keeps you in line—it places boundaries, I guess, on where you're likely to go [verbally]." Holly's son, Scott's daughter, and Craig's son sampled a range of sports over their initial 15 months of participation. This allowed exploration of the potential impact of sport type and setting on these parents' goals and verbal sideline behavior. Indeed, our inspection of their verbal sideline behavior across sport type and setting highlighted the potential impact of context-related factors. Most notably, it was evident that Holly and Craig exhibited more verbal sideline behaviors in soccer (an outdoor sport) than basketball (an indoor sport), whereas Scott exhibited more verbal sideline behaviors in track & field (an individual sport) than soccer (a team sport). The impact of the sport context is not surprising given the family level and broader social transitions involved in becoming a sport parent for the first time and then adapting to new contexts. In an effort to better understand parents' verbal sideline behavior, researchers should conduct theoretically informed longitudinal research across other key transition points in a child's athletic career (e.g., recreational to travel to elite, primary school to middle school to high school).

The present work could be extended by attending to how parent goals translate into verbal sideline behavior at different levels of sport. This would extend past research on achievement goals conducted with elite athletes and their parents (Gershgoren, Tenenbaum, Gershgoren, & Eklund, 2011; Harwood & Swain, 1998) and would build on parent verbal sideline behavior research (Holt et al., 2008; Kidman et al., 1999). Holt and colleagues' research can be used to guide such studies, having classified parents' verbal sideline behavior on a continuum from controlling to supportive. Developmentally, controlling and supportive parenting styles/practices are salient to the parent-child relationship (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Grolnick et al., 1997) and may be impacted

by parents' goals for their children in organized youth sport. Examining parents' goals along with potential moderators of parent verbal sideline behavior (e.g., parent and child sex, child age, level of sport participation) would be especially valuable, building upon extant work on parent and child sex on parents' goal beliefs and parenting practices in youth sport (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005).

While the findings extend understanding of parenting in sport, this research area can be advanced by addressing study limitations. For example, all the parents were upper-middle class and married, possessing the time and resources to support their children's participation. Because parent expectations can be influenced by factors such as education, income, cultural expectations, and family structure (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004), future work should incorporate a range of parent and family backgrounds. Moreover, future work could illuminate a wider span of parent communication contexts (e.g., at home, in the car) and address some of the nonverbal forms of parent behavior that were observed in the present investigation. This would extend the current findings, which were delimited to parents' verbal behavior during sporting events, and draw attention to the ways parent goals can shape both actions and words.

Another limitation pertains to parent reports of their goals. First-time sport parents may share goals they think are appropriate for athletes at the initial stage of youth sport instead of goals they actually hold. In the present study parents wanted their children to achieve task-related, mastery outcomes and wanted to project this as important. They also wanted their children to be highly competent so their children (and they as parents) would compare well to others. Parents' initial goals were not based on experience as a sport parent, and therefore may reflect personal achievement goal orientations. Subsequent seasonal goals, however, may have been modified and/or grounded in the organized youth sport climate. Beyond this achievement goal theory interpretation, Wilson's (2014) distinction of conventional and personal goals suggests that parents may possess multiple, and often conflicting, subsets of goals for their children's youth sport participation. In the present study, this created dilemmas for some parents when the act of pursuing an instrumental outcome threatened their or their child's identity, or the parent-child relationship. Importantly, parents with different achievement orienta-

tions may respond to such dilemmas differently. In some cases, opposing goals may lead parents to prioritize one goal over others (e.g., limiting instruction or performance-contingent feedback because they prioritize the social aspects of sport, or providing instruction or performance-contingent feedback—sometimes negatively—because they prioritize performance goals). Future work that explores these psychological dilemmas may offer valuable knowledge on sport parenting.

Although obtaining in situ data was considered the best method for attaining an ecologically valid depiction of parent verbal sideline behavior, parents may have censored their verbalizations when fitted with the recording device. Despite this limitation, one advantage of collecting data in this manner is that the recorders picked up not only comments that were said loudly enough for the athlete and/or other parents on the sideline to hear, but also comments that were said softly to oneself. This is important when considering the difference between making a negative or derogatory remark so that the child (or other parents) can hear it versus making it softly such that others wouldn't hear it (i.e., "editing"). It is also worth acknowledging the potential limitation of having only collected in situ data from each parent on one occasion per season. Future studies could assess parent verbal sideline behavior both within and across seasons, offering a more fine-grained understanding of potential changes in parents' verbal sideline behavior.

A final limitation pertains to having to make judgments about how to classify goals and how to interpret potential links between goals and verbal sideline behavior. These judgments were informed by numerous interviews, parent journals, and direct observations over 15 months, yet they are subject to our predispositions and interpretive lens. As a result, it is impossible to know for sure what goals parents have in the moment. Indeed, inferring goals from behaviors raises issues, because a given behavior can result from different goals. Moreover, one goal or many goals can drive a behavior. Our work suggests that multiple goals will often impact verbal sideline behavior of new sport parents and that further work corroborating this interpretation is warranted. In pursuing this work, it is vital to incorporate child perceptions of the ways that parent goals may impact verbal sideline behavior. Despite parent reports of overwhelmingly supportive goals for their children, young athletes do not always perceive verbal com-

munication from their parents as supportive (Stein, Raedeke, & Glenn, 1999). One explanation for why parent verbal sideline behavior may be perceived by athletes as nonsupportive has to do with differing views on the goals underpinning communications and a mismatching of parent and athlete goals. With divergence in goals, verbal sideline behavior can be perceived as controlling and may threaten the child's perceptions of autonomy and self-worth (Caughlin, 2010). This is important given the established association between parent involvement in child activities and child outcomes such as achievement and motivation (Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992).

The present work answers calls for an intensified focus on parent involvement in youth sport (Brustad, 1992; Fredricks & Eccles, 2004) and meaningfully extends emerging youth sport parenting knowledge (Dorsch et al., 2009; Knight & Holt, 2013). An important finding is that parents largely wanted their children to learn about sport and have fun, yet also adjusted their goals over time based on their children's experiences and their evolving perceptions of the organized youth sport context. Continued efforts to understand youth sport parent goals and verbal sideline behaviors will enrich the respective sport psychology and communication knowledge bases as well as direct practitioners toward strategies for maximizing the positive developmental potential of organized youth sport.

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