

Aleš Sekot

*Faculty of Sport Studies, Masaryk University, Czech Republic*

## ABSTRACT

An essay is rooted in the exploration of broader complex context of the phenomenon of physical motion and sportive activities in contemporary sedentary society. It is at that time the topical problem of pointed parenting styles that is freshen and enliven in the context of educational support aiming to active life orientation, including regular sportive activities. The specific accents and educational methods of parenting are playing crucial role in this respect at the level of authoritative, authoritarian, liberal and neglecting styles (Sekot, 2019). Parenting styles prefiguring motivation of children to regular sportive activities and responsible attitude to life. And such process is going under way of socialization factors and impacts, bringing up to date the sociological links and context of mutual relation to motivation of children and youth to sport also in the context of organizational sportive activities out of the family. Nowadays we face forming socially and culturally determined relation child – parents – trainer (coach). Like this relation yields in the context of the climate of consumerist postmodern society adoring top elite athletes. Such cultural milieu forms potential conflicts of interests of motivation, experience and pointing separate participants of such „triangle“. Given situation aim our effort to the crucial topic of parental responsibility as well as to growing educational and socialization importance of trainers and coaches. During the synergic process are pervaded practical aspects of the importance of age and motivation; but parental role is in this respect utterly essential and indispensable. Parental role is growing when parents play modelling role by way of mutual sportive activities with children. Thus, as it is in the essay substantiate with relevant research pieces of information and empirical data on parental role in motivation of children to regular physical activity and sport.

**Keywords:** parenting; sport; physical activity, trainer; sedentary

This text addresses the broader context of the phenomenon of exercise and sports activities in contemporary sedentary society, in which the determined education of children by their parents to adopt an active approach to life is becoming increasingly important, and regular exercise forms an integral part of it (Sekot, 2015). The issue of parenting styles is relevant, since whether the style adopted is authoritarian, authoritative, liberal or neglectful, it has influence on children's and young people's motivations for doing sport. This takes place within the concurrent process involving socialization factors; thus updating the sociological contexts of young people's relationships with sport, in particular the context of motivation for sports activities outside the family framework, in an organized sporting environment. Hence a new, socially and culturally conditioned relationship is created between the child, the parents and the trainer, which – in a consumer society climate and its adoration of elite sportspeople – brings possible clashes of motivations, experiences and directions of the actors involved in this triangle. This focuses our attention on both the issue of parental responsibility and the growing educational and socializing importance of the trainer. In a synergic process, linked issues emerge that are connected with the importance of age and motivation for the purposeful guidance of the child towards sports, where the influence of the parents is absolutely essential and irreplaceable,

and strong also in these cases where parents influence their children by undertaking regular joint sports activities with them. This is shown in the book's empirical findings about parental approaches to children's and young people's sports.

Sport is inescapably linked with the culture of society. It is thus an expression of specific notions, ideas, values and perspectives, through which people assume their positions in the world, seek their place in it, explain its workings to themselves and measure the importance of the things around them. They consider what is and what is not right and natural; what is advantageous and disadvantageous; what can bring a material profit and what 'merely' brings joy from healthy exercise. In itself, sport is usually not the cause of particular changes in character, attitudes or behaviour. It is always involved in a coaction with the influences exerted by the specifics of the given social and cultural environment, in the broader context of socialisation and education processes (McElroy, 2002).

The topic of *parental education* and authority for the *motivation*, intensity, level, direction and, last but certainly not least, *adherence* of children to sporting and physical activities is certainly directly or indirectly linked with the cultural and social climate. Thus we face in our society the issue of substantial cultural change that generates fundamental shifts in the sphere of value orientations of socially and economically differentiated groups, layers or classes of the population. This change is substantially stimulated by the culturally revolutionary phenomenon of a *consumer society*, reflecting the essence and the ethos of its modern or post-modern characteristics, accompanied by a number of ambiguous or crisis-generating processes, exposing masses of people to transformations in individual consumption, the existence of mass culture and a growing tendency to consumerism and economic egocentrism. Viewed through the prism of the situation and developmental trends in sporting and physical activities, one of the most serious indirect consequences of consumerism for both the individual and society is a process that has been described with a global perspective as *sedentarism*. It is a phenomenon concurrent with a technologically advanced, consumer and materially rich society, where the need for physical exertion gradually disappears and so does, subsequently, the level of regular physical activity in the everyday lives of masses of people. Thus we speak of *sedentary society*, in which in consequence of the dynamic development of technology in all areas of social life the traditional demands placed on people in terms of physical exertion decrease, particularly in three areas that concern practically everyone: in the majority of employments, that is in the field of *work*, in the *home* and in the *individual forms of transport*. Instead of physically strenuous activities, most people in our cultural sphere today are placed, especially at work and in individual transport, in sedentary activities, which are characteristic of a sedentary consumer society. In this and other contexts, the issue of *insufficiency of physical activity* is thus grounded in the elementary question: Why is physical activity important? The answer is clear and fundamental: Because humans are genetically programmed for physical activity and a sedentary way of life is detrimental to them, being an unnatural form of physical passivity and accelerating the progress of our civilisation diseases as heart attacks, diabetes and high blood pressure (McElroy, 2002).

This creates a situation where regular healthy physical and mental development, supporting regular physical activity, becomes a matter of individual choice, personal will and perceptiveness towards the socialising and educational influences of the environment. This updates in a specific way the educational role of the family and parents as the primary opinion leaders, who are able powerfully to form and influence the values of their children and thus to contribute to the relations they create for themselves towards physical activities, which in our cultural sphere largely take the form of sports, in activities often undertaken outdoors, in participation in sporting games and leisure-time activities linked with physical exertion and movement. Just in sedentary society mostly children and youth are involved in prolonging capacity of leisure time in passive physically position in front of PC screen as a loss of natural regular sportive physical activity and as an independent part of healthy individual complex development and active attitude to life.

If we study the process of how an individual's values are formed, then in our culture in particular two highly stimulating processes are acting together on children and young people. *Socialisation* is a life-long, all-pervading and spontaneous process by which individuals or groups adjust themselves to the world around them, adopting its fundamental values, norms, rules, habits, customs and cultural patterns in everyday life, especially in contact with other individuals and groups. Unlike

socialisation, *education* is a purposeful action on an individual by parents, the wider family, teachers, educators, trainers and institutions and organisation, with the aim of influencing the development of the individual and their personality.

*Family* plays a key and decisive role in the purposeful upbringing of children. In line with their cultural, educational, economic and social level, parents influence their children, and theory distinguishes four parenting styles. A parenting style here means a theoretical construct reflecting the fundamental and characteristic strategies and methods used by parents primarily to form the lives of their children. The quality and importance of these educational activities are usually amplified by the amount of time parents spend with their children. This is particularly so when at least one of the parents shares leisure-time activities with their child, thus persuasively demonstrating to them their interest in and care for them. A parenting style is thus an expression of a *special behaviour of parents towards children*, which reflects the broader conception and strategy of parental educational practices. Diana Baumrind was the pioneer in conceiving a typology of parenting styles. Her research has established a basic three-step model of parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive), which was then developed further by other scholars, usually into four-step models. Baumrind's research was informed by two bipolar fundamental constituents – responsiveness vs non-responsiveness and demandingness vs non-demandingness – that generate the forms of parenting styles (Baumrind, 1967, p. 43–88). Current theoretical models of parenting styles tend to distinguish four of them: authoritarian, authoritative, liberal (or permissive) and neglectful.

*Authoritarian:* Parents emphasise unconditional obedience and discipline, and this is enforced by punishment. They pursue the principle that the child needs to be overseen, not heard out or even have their worries and problems empathetically shared. Authoritarian parents prefer the use of punishment over the child's inner adoption of discipline, and fail to appreciate the irreplaceability of the feedback between their decision-making and their child's feelings and opinions. Motivation of parents for sport of their children is mostly rooted in success in the field of performance sportive activities focused on respective profitable career of sport star; in some cases as a consequence of unrealized sportive aspirations of father or mother.

*Authoritative:* Positive relations between parents and the child are created, and binding precepts and rules that cannot be overstepped are asserted. There is an emphasis on creating positive values and an active approach to life. Parents always take care to create a positive, friendly relationship with their child; they not only emphasise the necessity of respect for rules and order, but also consider the child's inner life and derive their parental authority in part from respecting the opinions, feelings and needs of the child. They seek to prevent problems in upbringing rather than dealing with them in an authoritarian manner. Where parents are consistently demanding yet perceptive of the child's values, a beneficial form of cultivating the child is gradually created, giving the child in later life a greater chance of being a successful, well-received, magnanimous and competent independent individual, one able adequately to determine and co-create their active life path. Generally speaking, this parenting style is considered the *optimal* way to bring up responsible adults who freely express their opinions and actively approach the challenges and obligations of life (Spera, 2005). Parents mostly as a highly esteemed opinion leader share sportive activities with their children forming natural way for whole life adherence to regular physical activities on the levels responding nature, talent, and desire or value orientation of their children.

*Liberal:* This style is based on not enforcing respect for the code of family life and the rules of desirable behaviour and actions, in line with the principle 'children are just children, let them have freedom'. Although the rules that have been established may often be strict, they are not always consistently enforced and respected. Coercion is only used in extreme cases of truly serious problems. A liberal, permissive style of parenting that is not based on giving orders is characterised by a low expectation threshold as far as the following are concerned: the child's behaviour and aspirations, the satisfaction of their basic needs and creation of life-long stabilising values. As such, this parenting style does not lead systematically to an inner awareness of correct behaviour. The adequate parental role slips into that of 'friendship' or 'camaraderie', lacking the vital function of natural authority and 'opinion leadership', remote from fixed, irreplaceable rules, rewards and punishments. However, under certain circumstances this can open the way for an independent

– or perhaps self-sufficient - development of the child in adulthood. Motivation relating to regular sportive activities is not systematic, more “space” in this respect is held on to children contemporaries, schoolmates, school trainers or motivation rooted in admiration of mass media sportive stars.

*Neglectful*: Under this style, parents entirely fail to inculcate in their child the fundamental positive values of life, disregarding not just their needs and interests, but also education and professional training, ignoring the rules of healthy eating habits and an active life style. Parents show no interest in their child’s school duties and do not consider it necessary to be informed about where or with whom their child spends their leisure time. The child lacks sufficient adequate counsels, impulses and *stimuli* to create the preconditions for a meaningful and responsible life in adulthood; lack of parental interest frequently also affects the areas of nourishment and hygiene habits. Often there is a significant gap between the parents’ interest in their child and the energy needed to satisfy their needs, often including their fundamental needs. General lack of interest of parents regarding motivation or even adherence for systematic sport of their children leave “broad colourful space” for impact of the street and bad or good luck.

Naturally, in many actual cases there is an overlap between these academically constructed categories, or their boundaries become blurred. Evidently, however, one thing is true: the building and maintaining of a *positive* relationship with the child and the stabilising of a natural and healthy *parental authority* demonstrates most clearly a correct and positively directed parenting style, and is of cardinal importance for the bringing up of children (Sekot, 2019).

It is important to note that in the creation of parenting styles factors such as the child’s temperament and medical condition and especially the cultural level of the parents often play crucial roles. Parents who provide adequate care to their children lead them to healthy dietary habits, emphasise the importance of personal responsibility for health, while allowing for an adequate measure of independence and decision making, create good conditions for the establishment of life-long social competencies and an active approach to life. This form of *positive parenting style* is also beneficial for the ability to maintain solid interpersonal relationships.

*Leisure time* is an important platform for a wide spectrum of activities that importantly affect people’s lives, the maturing of their values and their physical development. It is therefore also irreplaceable, providing a unique basis for the creation of feelings of life satisfaction and personal welfare, for the cultivation of a healthy and actively thinking and acting personality. For children and young people, this may on the one hand mean increasing consumption of their leisure time ‘permanently connected’ to electronic media; but on the other it opens the options for active leisure, especially via sports and other physical activities; cultivating the ability consistently and systematically to maintain good health and peak physical and mental condition.

Beyond its fundamental educational functions, aimed at purposeful influence over the child’s values, the family is usually also intimately linked with the process of *socialisation*, that is the adjustment of a person to the habits, customs and norms of the surrounding world, the given cultural environment. As a rule, parents seek within their own norms and values for their child to become an independent, sovereign adult. The participation of children and young people in sports activities is generally influenced by the availability of opportunities, support given by family members, friends, opinion leaders and role models, the closest community and finally also the perceptiveness of the potential child participant in sports activities (Stassen et al., 2011, p. 273–278) .

The study of the broader frames of socialisation, education and leisure time focuses on its two forms: organised leisure and non-organised leisure. Participation in organised activities is generally seen as a factor in the development of an individual’s strong traits in the sense of their healthy maturing towards the ‘ideal adulthood’; while socially-focused activities taking place out of the sight of adults are, by contrast, seen as a context for potential multidimensional involvement in risky or delinquent behaviour. Multiple involvements in *organised forms of leisure* potentially increase the educational and socialisation effect that contribute to comprehensive personal development (Campione & Smetana, 2014).

These effects are made stronger still by the *breadth* of the wide spectrum of organised leisure activities (for example, a combination of sport with an interest in artistic activities), their *intensity* (for example, time spent in sports training), *internally grounded interest* (for example, looking forward to training time or a family cycle trip at the weekend) and *duration* (for example, persistence in football or athletic training). Thanks to parental authority, such efforts stand the greatest chance of initiating and developing children's leisure time activities, their focus, intensity and aspirational expectations. With age, the participation of adolescents in organised leisure time under adult supervision gradually decreases, as, for example, intensive training in competitive sports might become remote from the original desire for victory and performance. Furthermore, other options for self-actualisation are open to young people, especially in the field of professional training. However, young people usually carry the valuable assets of activeness, respect for authority, purposefulness, life-long friendly relationships and collective cooperation from the arena of organised leisure activities into their future lives. These are compatible with the demands of the contemporary world, necessitating not just the pursuit of personal ambitions but also an ability to adjust and be flexible (Amato & Fowler, 2002, p. 703).

In extreme cases, permanently or largely unstructured, *non-organised leisure* tends to be typical of a non-stimulating family environment. Leisure time spent without proper supervision by, or even lack of interest from, parents may lead to often aimless after-school-hours meetings with friends and peers and directionless loafing around, producing feelings of futility, pointlessness and obliviousness. Patterns of behaviour are adopted that are in sharp contrast to the ethos and the principles of an active approach to life. Overall, active participation in organised leisure time activities under the leadership or supervision of adults can be seen as a suitable environment for the healthy personal development of adolescents in the context of extracurricular forms of socialisation and educational activities, where *forms of parental motivation* usually play a primary initiating role (Telama, Yang, Vikari, et al., 2005).

An unmistakable, and in fact irreplaceable, source of relevant information in this area of sports – that is, the uncovering and investigation of many colourful influences of parental models of behaviour in the environment of the organised sports of their children – are the trainers, coaches, teachers, managers of sports grounds and organisers of sports events for young people. Despite this fact, the voices of the trainers and young people's sports organisers are not heard loudly enough. Scholars in this field are therefore increasing their efforts to describe and understand the role of *trainers* in the context of the often colourful attitudes and behaviour of parents, which reflect parents' educational methods or styles that they apply in a promising ambitious environment, dynamically developing the potential sporting career of their child. An adequate degree of parental encouragement, to achieve a higher level of ability and performance, and the sharing of joy from participation in sports, certainly help to create harmonic educational and socialising effects. By contrast, unrealistic parental demands and expectation can be a source of stress and fear of failure, thus weakening the natural enjoyment of sports, causing children a loss of faith in their own abilities and deteriorating self-confidence. Parents do not always well understand, or are willing or able adequately to share, the sporting experiences of their children. The evaluations of participation in sports by parents on the one hand and children on the other can differ considerably, even if there are cases where the child outwardly declares motivations and objectives that are identical with the parents'. Such impulsive positions on sport can be moderated and compensated for by interactions with trainers, who with their expert insight can contribute towards adequate harmony between parents' and children's positions, especially in the field of organised sports' meaning and objectives, which can often be problematic (Côté & Hay, 2001).

Here, the optimal educational style, appropriately supporting the sporting career of the child, is that where the parents provide suitable, appropriate and effective logistical, financial and emotional support. By contrast, a sustained critical approach on the part of the parents, impatiently awaiting the fulfilment of high aspirations, tends to be counterproductive. Such an approach overestimates the value of victory, and creates inappropriate pressures on targets being met that have been set by the parents, but which neither the children involved in sports nor their trainers have fully identified with.

Highly *negative expressions* of the parental relationship with their children's sports include, first of all, complaints about the progress and outcomes of sports training, pursued in a manner that undermines the authority of the trainers, and in many cases also the relations between parents and children (Gould, Lauer, Rolo, et al., 2006a, b). Examples include such protests – they are not necessarily rare and are often tactless – against alleged underrating of the sporting child in team nominations, or concerning the quality of the training, or even questioning the abilities of the trainers themselves, who might be accused of incompetence or unwillingness to accommodate methods conducive to an effective increase in sporting performance. The child's confidence or trust in their own ability to enter and establish themselves in the field of sports depends on a number of everyday experiences: the family environment, school, the time spent shared with peers and, more recently, the perception of sports in the media as the most popular form of mass culture. In cases where the parents in their education methods emphasise the value of performance that is grounded in learning, enjoyment of the result and directing the child towards the management of tasks and achieving victory, there is a greater likelihood of the child inclining towards sporting and physical activities, which by their very nature are associated with endurance, performance and victory ((Ross, Mallett, & Parkes, 2015).

## Reference

- Amato, P. R., & Fowler, F. (2002). Parenting practices, child adjustment, and family diversity. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64(3), 703–709
- Baumrind, D. (1967). Child care practices anteceding three patterns of preschool behavior. *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, 75(1), 43–53.
- Campione, J. & Smetana, N. (2014). Adolescent Development in Interpersonal and Societal. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 57(1), 255–84.
- Côté, J., & Hay, J. (2001). Family Influences on Youth Sport Performance and Participation. *Psychological Foundations of Sport*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon Publishers, 503–519.
- Gould, D., Lauer, L., Rolo, C., Jannes, C., & Pennisi, N. (2006). The Role of Parents in Tennis Success: Focus Group Interviews with Junior Coaches, *The Sport Psychologist*.(3).
- Gould, D., Lauer, L., Rolo, S., Jannes, C., & Pennisi, N. (2008). Understanding the Role Parents Play in Tennis Success: A National Survey of Junior Tennis Coaches. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*. (2).
- McElroy, M. (2002). *A Social Analysis of Inactivity*. Champaign: Human Kinetics.
- Ross, A. J., Mallett, C. J., & Parkes, J. F. (2015). The Influence of Parent Sport Behaviours on Children's Development: Youth Coach and Administrator Perspectives. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 10(4), 605–630.
- Sekot, A. *Pohybové aktivity pohledem sociologie*. (2019). Brno: Masarykova univerzita.
- Sekot, A. *Rodiče a sport dětí*. (2019). Brno: Masarykova univerzita.
- Spera, Ch. (2005). A Review of the Relationship Among Parenting Practices, Parenting Styles, and Adolescent School Achievement. *Educational Psychology Review*, 17(2), 125–146.
- Stassen, B. K. (2011). *The Developing Person Through the Life Span*. New York: Worth Publishing, 273–274.

Telama, R., Yang, X., Vikari, J., Valimaki, I., Wanne, O., & Raitakari, O. (2005). Physical activity from childhood to adulthood: a 21- year tracking study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 28, 267–273.

Vella, S., Oades, L. & Crowe, T. (2011). The Role of the Coach in Facilitating Positive Youth Development: Moving from Theory to Practice. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 3, 65–72.

### **Contact Information**

sekot@fsps.muni.cz