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Double Dipping in Youth Sports: A Study Focused on Sense of Belonging and Relationships Building Among Parents in Youth Soccer

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DOUBLE DIPPING IN YOUTH SPORTS: A STUDY FOCUSED ON SENSE OF
BELONGING AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AMONG PARENTS IN YOUTH
SOCCER

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management

by
Megan E. Davis
May 2015

Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

To understand the full spectrum of impact that youth sport organizations have, it is beneficial to look at parental involvement as an important variable of youth sport participation. As more parents understand the potential benefits for their children participating in youth sports, parental engagement is increasing on the sidelines of games and practices. The primary reason for parents to attend youth sporting practices and events is likely to support their child but there may be additional motivations parents have for increased involvement including their own relationship building. Very little research has been done on possible social benefits for parents in youth sport environments. The purpose of this study was to examine the potential that youth sport organizations have to provide an environment where parents can find a sense of belonging and build relationships with other parents within a sports league. Specifically, this study examined parental sense of belonging within the City of Clemson Parks and Recreation Department's youth soccer league. A total of 114 parents completed a questionnaire, 10 of which were selected for follow-up interviews. Sense of belonging was measured using the Sense of Belonging Index (SOBI-A). The results of this study confirmed that parental involvement within youth soccer can contribute to relationship building and a sense of belonging for parents.

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DEDICATION

I would like to thank everyone who has supported me through my undergraduate and graduate studies here at Clemson. I would like to thank my parents, Wes and Pam Davis and other members of my family for unconditional support.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

There is a considerable amount of research on the positive outcomes that youth sport organizations offer their participants. Most research surrounding youth sport organizations is focused on the different positive and negative outcomes youth sport participants may experience. Youth sports influence child development in physical, psychological and social ways. However, most parents choose a sport for their child primarily for the social interaction it can offer (Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2004). If social interaction is a main component for choosing a youth sport, then it may be equally applicable for parental involvement as well. Given the complexity of human interaction and behavior, more research on parents in youth sports is needed to identify the combination of personal and contextual factors that promote or hinder social outcomes for parents in youth sports.

Youth sport organizations are an ideal platform to provide children with social integration opportunities. Youth sports environments are developmentally significant because they provide important socialization opportunities and place adaptive demands on participants that parallel those in other important life settings related to problem solving and teamwork (Larson, 2000; Ryan and Deci 2000; Scanlan, 2002). Due to the natural components of sports, children learn social skills, teamwork, norms and ethical behavior through participation in sport. Sports help young people build confidence, relationships and social skills that then get expressed through school and community activities (Sabo & Veliz, 2008).

Given the important role parents play in youth sports, their involvement is vital in contributing to the overall success of their child's experience. The more involved parents are with the sport and the stronger the commitment or loyalty they feel to the organization, the greater their satisfaction with their child's youth sports experience (Green & Chalip, 1997). In addition, loyalty is a behavioral act that is often an outcome of involvement (Crompton, Kim, & Scott, 1997). The more involved parents are with a particular sport and/or organization, the more loyal they are to that sport and/or organization. Wiersma and Fifer (2008) discussed that involvement level varies from parent to parent and relates to what the parent hopes his/her child will gain from participating in youth sports. Involvement is described as the degree to which a person devotes him or herself to an activity or associated product (Engel & Blackwell, 1982). Parents often choose to be involved with their child's youth sports experience because they understand the value of what their child can gain from participating in youth sports (Dukes & Coakley, 2002). That understanding likely helps explain why approximately 47 million children and adolescents participate in some form of organized recreational sport or activity each year (Stuntz & Weiss, 2009).

The influence that youth sport organizations have on parents as it relates to sense of belonging or relationship building has yet to be examined. There is, however, related literature that discusses the social nature of leisure and recreation. For example, Kyle and Chick (2002) have found that repeated leisure behavior may be the result of recreationists' attachment to a specific setting or other people involved within the activity. Throughout parenthood, it is likely that there is a decline in maintaining established relationships due to the attention and focus parents give to their children. Parents' lives revolve around the

schedules of their children. At times, parenting might feel isolating due to the constant demands involved with meeting the needs of their child (Hildingsson & Thomas, 2013). As children develop an increasing need for physical activity and friendships, parents are responsible for providing opportunities that youth sports can bring. Therefore, a parent's engagement in the child's activity may be more a consequence of their personal desire for social interaction for their child.

Parent-focused research in regards to youth sport participation lacks a strong presence in the literature. While sports provide an environment in which the child can socialize, the parents may also have an opportunity to socialize within the same context (Green & Chalip, 1997). The primary reason for parents to attend youth sporting practices and events may be to support their child but there may also be more personal underlying reasons that influence their level of engagement. Dorsch, Smith and McDonough (2009) indicated an increase in parent sport engagement because of the participation of their children in youth sport. However, there are many ways to define parent involvement. Results from a recent study showed that parent involvement was based on the interactions among parents, game situations, children's preferences, parent empathy and perceived knowledge or experience (Holt, 2009). Holt's study implies that there is a need for further research to identify outcomes of involvement in youth sport, in this case, outcomes related to social benefits.

The purpose of this study was to understand how parents' sense of belonging is influenced by their child's participation in youth sports. Included in this study will be an examination of different age divisions, gender of the parent, and whether or not the parent requested to be put on a team with someone they knew.

Research Question

Research Question: Does involvement in sports lead to a greater sense of belonging among parents?

Research Question 1: Does age division influence parents level of sense of belonging within youth soccer?

H_{o1} – There will be no significant difference in sense of belonging for parents of participants in the 6 and under league compared to parents of participants in the 8 and under league.

Research Question 2: Does gender influence parents level of sense of belonging within youth soccer?

H_{o2} – There will be no significant difference in the level of sense of belonging of male or female parents who have children in the youth soccer league.

Research Question 3: How is sense of belonging of parents influenced by team requests in youth soccer?

H_{o3} – There will be no significant difference in the sense of belonging for parents who did or did not request to be on a team with someone they already knew.

The main objective of this study was to examine if parents that have children in youth sports experience a high sense of belonging and to identify any key factors that influence sense of belonging and relationship building.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to parents or legal guardians of children who were participating in the City of Clemson Parks and Recreation department's youth soccer league during the fall 2014 season.

Definition of Terms

Youth sports – organized sport programs that serve participants from the age of 17 years old and under

Involvement – the degree to which a person devotes him or herself to an activity or associated product (Engel & Blackwell, 1982; Slama & Tashchian, 1985)

Community – a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings (MacQueen et al., 2007)

Sense of belonging - the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment (Hagerty et al., 1995)

Rationale

Parents' ability for relationship building is limited with accommodation to the busy schedules of their children. Parents and adults alike often identify many barriers related to personal or free time. Conversely, Dorsch et al. (2009) has found that parents interest in sport engagement increases as their children start to participate in sports. The

need for sense of belonging is an influencing factor for personal well-being among parents, children or any individual. Therefore, this study focused on achieving a better understanding of how youth sports can contribute to sense of belonging in parents.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Youth Sports

Youth sports play an integral part in social development. The popularity of organized youth sport has continued to grow, gaining a strong presence in many children and parents' daily lives (Adler & Adler, 1994; Coakley, 2009). Nearly 50 million children and adolescents participate in organized youth sports every year (Stuntz & Weiss, 2009). The impacts organized youth sports have on participants and other stakeholders are important to identify given their potential to influence youth development. Sports offer children an opportunity to interact with their peers, to provide an opportunity to belong, to develop confidence, and to learn life skills related to leadership and other traits (Dunn, Kinney, & Hofferth, 2003).

Benefits of Youth Sports

Youth sports participation leads to many benefits, with physical health being the most notable (Baranovski et al., 1992; Bouchard et al., 1988; Craig et al., 1996; Rowland and Freedson, 1994). Participation also yields many benefits related to mental health, such as low levels of anxiety and stress as well as an increase in quality of life (Calfas & Taylor, 1994). One way that involvement in leisure time and physical activity (LTPA) may maintain or enhance mental and physical health is through social integration (Berkman, et al., 2000; Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993). Research has also brought light to additional benefits of youth engaging in sports including enhanced self-esteem, social skills, and emotional development, as well as reduced health issues and dropout rates

(Keegan, 2010; Stuntz & Weiss, 2009). In addition, there is accumulating research that suggests that youth sports provide a context for children to develop and maintain relationships with each other (Yuen, Pedlar, & Mannell, 2005). Youth sport environments are developmentally significant because they provide important socialization opportunities. These sport environments place adaptive demands on participants that parallel those in other important life settings (Larson, 2000; Ryan and Deci 2000; Scanlan, 2002). Youth are able to learn important lessons related to problem solving and teamwork, and experience some of their first social groups.

Parents in Youth Sports

Youth sport organizations could not operate without parents. Studies have consistently found that parents play a pivotal role within youth sport settings (Woolger & Power, 1993). These roles range from emotional support from the sidelines to bringing snacks and Gatorade to practices and games to coaching and refereeing games. Likewise, Holt (2008) has also discussed that parents need to understand how important their involvement is and how it affects the child. The parents financially support youth sports and often provide the volunteer labor necessary to maintain their children's sport programs.

Fredricks and Eccles (2004) acknowledged that parents play three distinctive roles in their involvement with their child's youth sport: provider, interpreter, and role model. The "provider" role is responsible for giving their child the opportunity to participate. This would include transportation to and from games or the financial means to support their child's continued participation. The "interpreter" of the sport experience is how the parent emotionally reacts in adaptive ways to wins and losses. The "role model" in

parent sport involvement focuses on modeling the appropriate or ideal attributes and behaviors in sport settings.

Parents often choose to be involved with their child's youth sports games because they recognize the value of what their child can gain from participation in youth sports (Dukes & Coakley, 2002). However, some parent involvement can have a negative impact on the child's current or continued participation. Parent involvement in youth sports does not always lead to overall positive outcomes. Too much emphasis on participation may lead to parents overvaluing the outcomes that youth sports provide. A study by Holt et al. (2009) examined the positive and negative reactions that affected youth motivation to participate in sports and found that parent behaviors exponentially influence child motivation and participation in youth sports. Parents have the power based on their behavior alone to end their child's participation. Positive behaviors from parents that encouraged participation in youth sport included cheering and attentiveness. Negative behaviors included harsh feedback and yelling at the child during practices or games. Holt identified a balance between involvement and over-involvement. Fine (1987) has labeled parents as "over involved" in the sports setting when they criticize or argue with the referee rather than when they cheer and encourage the participants. Parents also have their own important experiences within youth sport. These experiences may significantly impact their own as well as the attitude their child has in youth sports (Dixon & Warner, 2012). These attitudes could lead to potential positive and negative impacts for continued participation and involvement. Both of these studies support the argument that not all parent behaviors and involvement lead to positive outcomes.

More specific to the current study, bad parent behaviors can also lead to a negative influence on social integration for both spectators and participants (Trussell & Shaw, 2012). These influences have led to spectator isolation when trying to avoid obnoxious or misbehaving parents. Parent misconduct has led to worldwide recognition regarding an immediate need for standards and procedures to ensure orderly behavior. Children watch their parents interact with coaches or officials and they learn proper or improper ways to react after winning or losing (Lauer, L., Gould, D., Roman, N., & Pierce, M., 2010). Bad parent behavior and how it may impact relationship building specifically has yet to be examined within sport literature. Bad behavior from parents at sporting events could have negative consequences for commitment levels within youth sport organizations from both a participant and a spectator standpoint. The main point is that different individuals in a social setting can significantly influence one another. Parents not only influence opposing parents, but also parents on their own teams (Holt et al., 2008). Other parent behaviors can also influence the degree to which a parent is involved in the youth sport setting.

Parent involvement is defined differently for different parents – for some, it means a positive and supportive attitude and for others, it means harsh yet honest criticism. Involvement could also vary by tasks such as transportation, snack duties, or coaching responsibilities. Holt et al. (2008) reported that parents' involvement is related to factors such as the relationship with their child and their personal experience in a sport. Parent involvement might change depending on their personal motivation or past experience within youth sport. Therefore, parents with little experience in a particular sport might feel more comfortable with lower levels of involvement opposed to

volunteering to host an end of season team party; however, that does not necessarily make one parent less committed than another.

Parent Involvement in Youth Sports

Commitment and involvement are two distinct concepts, although many people use the terms interchangeably. Leisure commitment is described as “those personal and behavioral mechanisms that bind individuals to consistent patterns of leisure behavior” (Kim et al., 1997, p. 323). Involvement is an unobservable state of motivation, arousal or interest toward a recreational activity or associated product (Havitz & Dimanche, 1990). Involvement reflects the *degree* to which a person devotes him or herself to an activity or associated product (Engel & Blackwell, 1982; Peter & Olson, 1987; Slama & Tashchian, 1985; Zaichkowsky, 1985). Different degrees of involvement vary based on length of time in the activity or what expected roles that person may hold in that activity. Examining leisure involvement provides insight into the meaning participants derive from their leisure experiences and the underlying motivations governing leisure behavior (Havitz & Dimanche, 1990; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; McIntyre, 1989). Regular leisure activity may be the result of an individual’s attachment to a specific setting or other people involved with the activity (Kyle & Chick, 2007). The degree of parent involvement is dependent on the meaning and motivations for the parent to be present. Parents who understand the positive opportunities found in youth sports will reflect that in the degree to which they are involved. Parent involvement in youth sport might also have been influenced by gender differences related to youth sport and parental involvement. For example, Messner and Bozada-Deas (2009) found self-perception of mothers and fathers to be different, mothers see themselves as giving more positive

support and being more actively involved in an athlete sport activity than fathers do. This might be due to the fact that mothers feel more responsible for family life and childcare than fathers. Therefore, a mother's perception and/or definition of involvement in youth sport could be different from a father's.

Wiersma and Fifer (2008) discussed that involvement level varies from parent to parent and relates to what the parent hopes his/her child will gain from participation in youth sports. When parents see their child benefit from participation in youth sports, their level of involvement and appreciation is increased. A study on enduring involvement by Havitz and Howard (1995) found that individuals who attach a certain level of appreciation to the particular activity are thought to experience an enduring involvement. Trussell and Shaw (2012) found that parent levels of involvement were judged as they related to their children's sport participation. The study identified that most parents were highly critical of absent parents. Absent parents were seen as unsupportive for their children or for the team as a whole. One implication of this study is that parent involvement within youth sport could be the result of perceived judgment from other parents or a lack of sense of belonging.

Wuerth et al. (2004) found that the involvement of the parent increases the overall chances that the athlete will continue to participate and transition through the different stages of sports competition: initiation, developmental, and mastery. In a recent study also related to parent involvement in youth sport, Holt et al. (2008) observed that parent involvement was identified by dynamic interactions between parents and other parents, game situations, children's performances, parents' empathy and their perceived knowledge and experience. An increased level of enduring, lasting appreciation, and

situational involvement occurs when parents are choosing to be involved in a particular sport for their child (Havitz & Howard, 1995). Therefore, involvement in the youth sport environment can provide opportunities for parents to feel a deeper connection or sense of belonging.

Parent Sense of Belonging in Youth Sports

Sense of Community

Individuals have many different types of social groups, also known as communities, which can vary in size and purpose. Organized youth sports fit the criteria for community. MacQueen et al. (2001) defined community as “a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings (pg. 1927).” Sense of community is important to any individual because of its association with numerous life quality enhancing benefits. These benefits, in community settings, are associated most commonly with mental and physical well-being (Berkman et al., 2000; Davidson & Cotter, 1991; Deflem, 1989). In organizational settings, sense of community is linked to program retention (Kellett & Wagner, 2011; McCole, Jacobs, Lindley, & McAvoy, 2012; Warner, Shapiro, Dixon, Ridinger, & Harrison, 2011), satisfaction, and stress reduction (Klein & D’Aunno, 1986). This research brings light to the importance of sense of community, as it influences factors such as relationship building and sense of belonging. Youth sports can be an effective environment for building community among participants (Clopton, 2009; Swyers, 2010; Warner & Dixon, 2011). Sports can provide a platform for the development of shared meanings through participation and social learning, which

in turn is conducive to the emergence of community and related benefits (Yuen, Pedlar, & Mannell, 2005). Youth sport activities that are social in nature may encourage interactions among people and thereby contribute to the generation of social capital and community. Sports can create, enhance and promote community at the local level (Clopton, 2007; Kelley & Dixon, 2011; Swyers, 2010; Warner & Dixon, 2011; Warner et al., 2011).

An important component of community is the social integration that takes place among individuals. This integration is what might be most important for inclusion of individuals and belongingness to that specific group. Social integration refers to the degree of embeddedness in a network of social ties and roles and is conceptualized as sense of community (Cohen, 2004). Social integration enhances the perception of available coping resources and support and can help reduce stress by reducing the perceived threat of challenging situations (Berkman et al., 2000; Cohen, 2004). Thus, perceived social integration can have a direct effect on health by reducing psychological and physiological stress (Mock et al., 2010). Because leisure time and physical activity (LTPA) can facilitate an enhanced sense of social integration, it may enhance well-being (Mock, Fraser, Knutson, & Prier, 2010). Fox (1999) also found this same link between physical activity and well-being. Sense of belonging in sports leagues is only one benefit related to personal well-being. Naturally, there is a desire for social interaction and belonging within a group. Participation in youth sports may be the outcome of a desire for social interaction (Kyle & Chick, 2007). Organized youth sports provide an ideal setting for social interaction and sense of belonging to occur. Once the desire for social interaction has been fulfilled, continued sport participation is highly likely based on those

social interactions. Dixon and Warner (2012) found similar themes from Kyle and Chick (2007) that represent the likelihood of continued sport participation if the parents are experiencing social outcomes as a result of their child's sport.

Although parents invest time, money and emotional energy in sport-related activities for their children, there has been limited research regarding the parent's personal benefits as related to their children's participation in youth sport leagues. There could be benefits for the parents in youth sports similar to the benefits for the participants in youth sports. Dorsch et al. (2009) highlighted the importance of parent-peer relationships in youth sport and noted that parents frequently spoke about the opportunities to meet others in the community through youth sport (Warner, Kerwin, & Walker, 2013). In general, parents' lack of ability for relationship building in life is due to accommodation to the busy schedules of their children. Youth sports might provide parents with that opportunity for relationship building. Building and establishing relationships might lead to a beneficial and deeper connection with the people and the environment around them. That deeper connection could be a result of characteristics such as trustworthiness, connectedness, comfort, and loyalty.

Loyalty

A parent's involvement in youth sports could be a result of their overall satisfaction with the youth sport league. The more involved a parent is with a particular sport and/or organization the more loyal he/she becomes to that sport and/or organization (Crompton, Kim, & Scott, 1997). Commitment to the sport or organization means there is a level of obligation towards the other people involved within the sport organization.

Several studies have found that certain elements in the sport community (such as common purpose, competition, shared emotional connection, trust, and fulfillment of needs) build a sense of belonging and community among sport settings (McMillian & Chavis, 1986; Warner & Dixon, 2011). This resulting sense of community can lead to higher commitment levels, increased satisfaction, and increased persistence in sport for the participants (Warner, 2010). Other studies found in the literature identify similar findings related to sense of community. In addition, the more involved parents are with the sport and the stronger commitment they feel to the organization, the more their satisfaction with their child's youth sports activity and thus more loyal (Green & Chalip, 1997). Baker and Crompton (2000) state that loyalty is committed behavior to a particular person or activity. Loyalty is a behavioral act that is often an outcome of involvement (Crompton, Kim, & Scott, 1997). Levels of sense of belonging in a youth sport program might be a good indication for loyalty towards a particular organization. More research is needed to further analyze the connection between loyalty and sense of belonging.

Sense of Belonging

According to Maslow (1954), humans need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance among their social groups, regardless if these groups are large or small. Sport is related to sense of belonging because it represents a social institution that offers a collective social experience for participants that can provide the context for belonging. The instinctive social nature of youth sports allows for many opportunities to form friendships that can lead to social well-being. Sense of belonging, defined by Hagerty et al. (1992), is the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that

individuals feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment (p. 173). Sense of belonging can be seen in terms of the degree to which an individual feels connected to a certain group. Sense of belonging can lead to higher levels of relationship building and sense of community (Kyle & Chick, 2007). Therefore, relationship building and community can be gained from the sense of belonging that parents may have within the youth sports environment. Sense of belonging may be relevant to all individuals involved in the youth sports setting, not just to the participants.

Although children's sport participation may be for the primary benefit of the child, it may have important positive and negative implications in terms of the parents' lives and family life in general (Trussell & Shaw, 2012). Parents who balance work and family life often neglect their own personal lives. Barriers, such as work, household duties and other responsibilities that affect time management can add significant stress to parents, leaving them with no outlet to rejuvenate and restore their mental, physical and social health (Henderson et al., 1988). While the sport activity provides an environment in which the child can socialize, the parents can also gain the opportunity to socialize within the organization (Green & Chalip, 1997). Research by Wuerth, Lee and Alfermann (2004) found that most parents choose a sport for their child for the social interaction the activity provides for the child. That social interaction facilitates a sense of belonging for a particular group or team for both parents and participants. Team or league loyalty might be developed from engaging with others at sport practices and games. A recent study found that parents might develop team identification, form social capital and embrace sense of belonging while at practices or games (Gau & Kim, 2012; Wann, 2000). Key contributors to sense of belonging and relationship building were not

identified. This study strengthens the need for more literature on parents in youth sports to identify what influences their personal experiences and benefits.

Parents feel responsible for choosing an environment that is best for their child. It may also be important for parents to feel a part of the group as much as their child feels they belong on a team. Sense of belonging can indicate, among many other things, the existence of a good feeling among supporters derived from an emotional bond. More literature is needed to address how youth sport environments can contribute to parents' social well-being.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Participants

The participants in this study were parents or guardians who have children participating in the City of Clemson youth soccer league. The soccer league was held during the fall at Nettles Park, located in Clemson, South Carolina. The league was designed for participants from the age of 6 to 15 years old. The current study examined the 6 and under (n=64), and the 8 and under (n=82) divisions of youth soccer participants. Between these two divisions, there were 146 potential participants (with one only one parent filling out the survey); there could be overlap from each league if parents had children in each age division. There were six teams for the 6 & under league and eight teams for the 8 & under league. The City of Clemson youth soccer league was chosen based on convenience of the location and timing of the year. The league is six weeks long with games and practices alternating two or three times each week.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected using a mixed methods approach. Questionnaires measuring sense of belonging were first administered during league play. After all surveys were collected, follow-up interviews were conducted.

The scale that was used to measure sense of belonging was the Sense of Belonging Instrument (SOBI-A), which has a total of eight questions. Answers were recorded using a scale that measures responses on a 4 point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree with no neutral option. The SOBI-A questionnaire was revised

to focus participants' responses on their experiences with their child's youth soccer team.

The questions are as follows:

1. It is important to me that I am valued or accepted by others.
2. In the past, I have felt valued and important to others.
3. I have qualities that can be important to others.
4. I am working on fitting in better with those around me.
5. I want to be a part of things going on around me.
6. It is important for me that my thoughts and opinions are valued.
7. Generally, other people recognize my strengths and good points.
8. I can make myself fit in anywhere.

The questionnaire can be found in Appendix B. Questions focus on sense of belonging as it pertains to the youth sport league and answers do not have implications for overall sense of belonging. Basic demographic information was also collected at the end of the questionnaire. This information asked the ages of the parent and child, whether or not they made team requests, and if participants knew other parents prior to their personal association with the youth sport organization.

Coaches in both age divisions of the soccer league received notification via email about the study and that parents would be invited to participate in the study. This coordination assisted in recruiting participants for the study. Recruitment of participants took place before, during, and after each soccer practice when parents were invited to participate in the study.

The researcher then began to schedule interviews with parents/guardians to gather further data on sense of belonging. The objective of the interviews was to go more in depth with data collection to identify any themes related to sense of belonging in the context of their involvement with youth sports. Interview participants were contacted through email or phone based on the contact information they provided at the end of the questionnaire. Interviews were conducted either on the phone or in-person at a location

that best suited the parent being interviewed. Most interviews were conducted in locations such as local coffee shops, gyms, or other sport practice fields/gyms. This study utilized semi-structured interview questions based on the results from the survey. See Appendix C. Audio recordings of each conversation were documented after gaining consent from the participants before each interview. Immediately following the interview, the researcher recorded additional notes regarding the interview as well as any non-verbal observations (such as pauses, difficulty answering questions, etc.) reflected during the interview.

Reliability and Validity

Glesne (1999) and Creswell (2007) suggested that prolonged engagement in the research site and with the research participants supports trustworthiness of findings in qualitative research. Glesne (1999) characterized such engagement as time at the site, time conducting interviews, and time spent with respondents. The current study incorporated these characteristics to increase reliability and validity. Someone with personal knowledge of youth sports conducted the study.

The SOBI-A has been administered in other studies to identify sense of belonging in afterschool programs (Jones, 2003) as well as sense of belonging in nurses (Hagerty & Patusky, 2003; Newhouse, Hoffman, Suflita, & Hairston, 2007; Winter-Collins & McDaniel, 2000). Previous content reliability was measured at .83 for the entire instrument and .72 for the antecedent portion (Hagerty, 1995). For the qualitative analysis, the study used an additional reviewer to measure inter-rater reliability, in which the researcher had someone else find or contradict themes originally identified. Member checking also helped ensure validity of the data. The researcher sent themes found

throughout the interview to the participants of the study to ensure that their recorded thoughts were being represented accurately.

Data Analysis

The data collected from this study helped analyze the impact that parents involvement in youth sports has on the overall sense of belonging among parents. After statistical analysis of the mean scores of each participant, a variety of independent sample t-tests determined if there were any differences in sense of belonging scores for parents in two different age divisions, by gender, and by team request status.

Each audio-recorded interview was transcribed and summarized by the researcher. Themes were developed through a process called thematic analysis, which is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Results from this data attempted to draw potential conclusions regarding sense of belonging among parents within youth sport organizations that administer soccer leagues.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine if the City of Clemson Parks and Recreation Department youth soccer league influenced parents' sense of belonging and ability to build relationships. In addition, this study attempted to determine if there were any differences between the participants sense of belonging based on the parent's gender, age division of their child, and whether or not the parent requested to be on a team with anyone he/she already knew. The following is a description of the participants in this study, the research questions, hypotheses and results of the statistical analysis of the questionnaire and thematic analysis of the interviews. The main objective of this study was to examine if a child's involvement in youth sports influences parents' sense of belonging.

Description of Participants

The number of participants in this study was 114. All participants in this study were parents or guardians between the ages of 28 to 72 years old. The majority of youth soccer parents in this study were in their 30s and the mean age of the sample was 39 years old. Most parents reported having more than one child. Several different parents in this study had children participating in both 6 & under and 8 & under leagues simultaneously. In the cases when parents had a child in each age division, the researcher had them fill out a survey for only one of their child's age divisions. Over half of the participants in this study were female (60%).

Quantitative Analysis

The data from the sense of belonging scale and questionnaire were entered and analyzed using SPSS statistical software. The total number of participants who filled out a survey was 114 parents or guardians. Some surveys were removed from the study, as they did not match our specific league criteria. Summing the given answers and dividing by the total number of questions answered determined the SOBI-A scores for this study. The range of possible scores was 0 to 4. All participants answered all SOBI related components. Once all of the data were entered into SPSS, reliability of the scale was tested. Although support for the validity and reliability of the SOBI-P exists (Choenarom, Williams, & Hagerty, 2005; Hagerty & Patusky, 1995), little research on this measure has been conducted in leisure and recreation. Reliability for this study was measured at .76 compared to .72 in a previous study conducted on nurses (Hagerty, 1995). Nunnally (1978) suggests that in preliminary research, an instrument reliability coefficient of .7 or higher is acceptable.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question: Does involvement in sports lead to a greater sense of belonging among parents?

The overall mean for the entire sample was reported at 2.99 for sense of belonging based on the SOBI-A questionnaire used in the survey. The highest reported score was 3.85 and the lowest reported score was 1.45. See Table I for the mean scores for all questions in the SOBI analysis. The mean sense of belonging score reported (2.99) was relatively high for this study, indicating that parents reported higher levels of

sense of belonging opposed to having no sense of belonging within youth soccer. The lowest reported mean score in the questionnaire was pertaining to other social groups, in which parents reported feeling closer to people in other groups (such as church groups or other organizations).

Table I. *Mean Scores For Each Question in SOBI-A*

SOBI Question	Mean Score
1. It is important to me that I am valued by others.	2.93
2. In the past, I have felt valued and important to others.	3.30
3. I have qualities that can be important to others.	3.31
4. I am working on fitting in better with those around me.	2.63
5. I want to be a part of things going on around me.	3.23
6. It is important to me that my thoughts and opinions are valued.	3.17
7. Generally, other people recognize my strengths and good points.	3.15
8. I can make myself fit in anywhere	2.99
9. I consider my child's sport practices or games a place to socialize	2.85
10. I feel closer to the people in my child's soccer league compared to other groups that I am a part of (i.e. churches, organizations, clubs).	2.10
11. There are social benefits I receive by staying for my child's soccer practices and games.	3.00
Total SOBI Mean = 2.99	

Research Question 2: Does age division influence parents level of sense of belonging within youth soccer?

Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant difference in sense of belonging between parents of children in the 6 & under division compared to the 8 & under division.

Table II. *Comparison Between 2 Age Divisions of Parents in Youth Soccer*

Age Division of Child	N	Mean	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
6 & Under	46	2.956	-0.457	0.623
8 & Under	71	2.989		

As reported in Table II, results from the t-test analysis indicate that a statistically significant difference did not exist between sense of belonging scores of parents from the two age divisions. The mean score for those with children in the 6 and under league was scored a 2.96 and in the 8 and under league it was a 2.99. Therefore, we failed to reject H_1 . Regardless of what division the child participated in, sense of belonging scores reported were nearly identical between the two groups.

Research Question 3: Does gender influence parents level of sense of belonging within youth soccer?

Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant difference in sense of belonging between male and female parents.

Table III. *Comparison Between Gender and SOBI Scores*

Gender of Parent	N	Mean	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	36	2.978	0.111	0.912
Female	53	2.970		

As indicated in Table III, a statistically significant difference was not found in a comparison of male and female parents/guardians' scores on the sense of belonging instrument. In fact, results for Hypothesis 2 showed nearly identical scores between female parents (2.97) and male parents (2.98) in both age divisions. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 could not be rejected.

Research Question 4: How is sense of belonging of parents influenced by team requests in youth soccer?

Hypothesis 3: There will be no significant difference in sense of belonging scores based on whether parents requested to be on a team with another parent they were previously associated with.

Table IV. *Comparison Between Parents Who Made Team Requests or Not*

Requested Someone They Know	N	Mean	<i>t</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
Yes	58	2.937	-1.89	0.236
No	59	3.014		

Results for Hypothesis 3 indicate the largest difference in means between these two groups in light of all paired comparisons. However, after an independent sample *t*-test, results indicated that there was not a statistically significance difference on the sense of belonging scale between parents who requested to be on a specific team and those who did not make a team request.

A series of independent t-tests failed to reveal a statistically significant difference between any of the groupings related to this study. Groupings that showed no statistical significance included gender, age division of the child, as well as whether or not parents requested to be on a team with someone they know.

Qualitative Analysis

Of the 114 participants who submitted their questionnaire, ten of those participants were interviewed to further explore the overall research questions. Using thematic analysis (or thematic coding), a number of themes were found after determining a level of saturation. The following themes, related to sense of belonging, were developed through thematic analysis: relationship building, involvement, and the social atmosphere. Listed in Table 5 are the pseudonyms for each interview participant.

Table V. *Interview Participants*

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	League
Parent 1	Female	38	8U
Parent 2	Female	41	8U
Parent 3	Male	39	8U
Parent 4	Male	43	6U & 8U
Parent 5	Female	38	6U & 8U
Parent 6	Female	37	6U
Parent 7	Male	40	6U
Parent 8	Female	42	6U
Parent 9	Male	36	8U
Parent 10	Male	39	6U & 8U

Relationship Building

Youth sport does provide an opportunity to build relationships with other parents. One participant stated, “I do feel that youth soccer has given our family an opportunity to expand our involvement with additional families in Clemson.” Another participant showed the exact same feeling by stating, “You get to see people you wouldn’t normally see.”

However, parents do not feel that those relationships are what influenced their engagement on the sideline of games and practices. Parents were consistent in expressing that their engagement on the sidelines is not altered by relationships with other parents. They are there to support their child first and foremost. One parent stated, “my relationship to other parents is secondary to my son’s relationship to the coach and teammates.”

While youth sport apparently helped strengthen relationships, they typically were not where relationships originated. One participant commented, “the soccer involvement helped strengthen the bond but was not the source of it.” Another participant said something very similar by stating, “soccer served to enhance relationships that I previously had with other parents.”

Several parents reported that it is important but not necessary to feel a sense of belonging on a child’s sport team. Again, this theme references that the ultimate outcome of parent involvement is to benefit the child. As a parent stated, “If parents feel a level of involvement or belonging, it helps the child’s overall experience as well as their own.” Overall, this type of situation was a win-win.

Not everyone will feel a sense of belonging on their child's sport team. Two of the participants directly stated that they did not build relationships or feel a strong sense of belonging. One parent expressed, "I think it's unique in the sense that Clemson is a tight knit community, that in itself makes it unique – everyone knows it's a small town – everyone knows everyone." Some parents believed that there was opportunity to build relationships but there were some barriers to it as well. That participant expressed this thought by saying, "yes, in the fact that the opportunity was there, but no because really we only interact for an hour two days a week for a short time." A parent who actually shared that he felt isolated from other parents felt that, "as long as the child doesn't feel the isolation then it's fine."

Negative factors that influenced relationship building included hardcore parents, but parents acknowledged that having older or younger children either playing on a different field or on the sidelines causes the largest distraction. Many parents indicated that having to watch their other children made it difficult to truly connect with other parents on more than just a surface level.

Involvement

Some parents felt pressured to be more involved based on relationships with other parents on their team. One parent expressed this in the following statement: "My relationship with that coach provided extra pressure to rethink (my) answer and changed (my) mind to help when I could...now I help coach the team whenever I'm not traveling."

The primary reason for parents to be at games and practices was to support their child. Other reasons included to give back to the community and to set an example for their children. One parent expressed this theme by stating "I think that when a parent

feels some level of involvement, it makes it a more positive experience for them. This positivity will influence their behavior toward practice and games, which the child can pick up on and will help them keep positive about those things as well.” Involvement or the level of involvement was more focused on kids themselves.

Atmosphere

Youth sport does provide a unique environment for parents to socialize. Although there was no indication that youth sport provided parents with the opportunity to build relationships, they did mention that it is a great place for them to interact with other families. Parents identified environmental and social factors in the atmosphere that influenced sense of belonging in youth sport settings.

Societal

Participants expressed numerous social factors that positively and negatively influenced sense of belonging in youth sports. The most commonly identified factor was good communication. This communication could be between the parents themselves, or from the organization to the families participating. Organization in communication from the agency hosting the league was important as well as the organization and coordination among parents on the team to provide snacks, carpooling and other needs was beneficial. Coaching also had an impact on the overall social experience for parents. If a coach was less experienced or too intense, parents were concerned about their child’s level of enjoyment rather than their own social time. The last factor mentioned that influenced sense of belonging was socio-economic status. Some parents stated that “you see some of your lower SES families and you are forced to interact with them when you wouldn’t normally interact with them.” Another parent commented about SES saying “I believe

SES at least in this entity is a key role, which is something I cannot control. It seemed like people that were affiliated directly with the university cliqued together which kind of makes sense.”

Environmental

Participants also identified environmental factors that influenced the ability or willingness to build relationships and influences sense of belonging. The one common environmental factor that influenced sense of belonging was the seating and layout of the field. One participant during an interview stated “bench style seating is way more comfortable and inviting to have conversations with other parents. Sitting in rows along the side of the field makes it easy to be cut off from other parents on the team.” In this case, a long row of seating did not contribute to social components for parents to build relationships.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to examine if there were social benefits for parents involved in youth sports as related to sense of belonging and relationship building. The results indicated that age divisions of participants in youth soccer did not influence parents' sense of belonging or ability to build relationships. This study also determined that gender was not an influencing factor on overall sense of belonging. However, follow-up interviews suggested a pattern regarding a desire to feel a sense of belonging with other parents present at youth soccer.

Summary of Findings

The main objective of this study was to examine if a child's involvement in youth sports can influence parents' sense of belonging. The mean sense of belonging score reported in this study was relatively high for parents in both age divisions. Follow-up independent t-tests found no significant difference based on gender of the parent or guardian, league or team request status with respect to sense of belonging. However, interviews found three themes (relationship building, involvement and the social atmosphere) that appear to influence the ability to gain a sense of belonging among parents.

Literature related to social behavior suggests that men benefit from social relationships just as much as women and that small communities support higher levels of social integration (House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988). Therefore, it is encouraging that this study found that men had the same level of sense of belonging as women.

Perhaps the most surprising results came from comparing sense of belonging scores of parents with any team requests that were made. Half of the parents in this study requested to be on a team with another parent they knew. Team requests were made for various reasons including transportation and carpooling, wanting to make their child more comfortable, and wanting to spend time with established friends. Despite any true significant difference between the two groups, the overall mean sense of belonging scores of the group that did not make any team requests was actually higher than the group that did make a team request. This might imply that parents might have a greater chance to build sense of belonging and relationships when they do not influence their own environment.

Implications

Findings from this study support previous literature. Sense of belonging and relationship building are two social factors that are present in social groups. Youth sports may provide a context for not only children to develop and maintain relationships with each other, as Yuen (2005) discussed, but also the same for parents. In this study, parents indicated that their participation at games and practices was not out of a need to build relationships or feel a sense of belonging, but it was an added benefit as they supported their children. As Gau and Kim (2012) pointed out in their study, parents might gain social capital and embrace sense of belonging while at practices or games. This study provides further support for their findings.

Many parents believed that better relationships built on the sideline with other parents influenced their children's satisfaction with the soccer league. That is, parents who did feel a higher sense of belonging felt they were contributing to their child's

overall experience as well. This finding is also supported by previous literature. Parents often choose to be involved with their child's youth sports experience because they recognize the value of what their child can gain from participating in youth sports, including building friendships, developing teamwork, and learning valuable social skills (Dukes & Coakley, 2002). This study highlighted similar themes related to parents' desires to be involved in hopes of enhancing their child's youth sport experience. This study found that although parents' participation was not self-centered, it still provided them with some benefits. Although children's sport participation may be for the primary benefit of the child, it may have important positive and negative implications in terms of the parents' lives (Trussell & Shaw, 2012).

Parents who have deep roots to the local University or the city might feel more of an obligation to be involved or engaged more than parents who have not been in or connected to the geographic location for as long. It might be easier for parents who grew up in the community to engage in more volunteer opportunities and to navigate around social constraints due to the commitment they feel toward the community. The idea of giving to the community because the community gives to you is something that might have an impact on social benefits and barriers for parents in youth sports.

Another promising result of this study is the idea of parents wanting to be a role model for their child. Fredricks and Eccles (2004) acknowledged that parents play three distinctive roles in their involvement with their child's youth sport: provider, interpreter, and role model. Out of any of the three roles Fredricks and Eccles (2004) discussed, parents in this study only mentioned the aspect of being a role model. The idea of parents wanting to set a good example for behavior and social skills was something that was

mentioned by numerous participants. Parents wanted to show acceptable behavior by not lashing out at other parents, coaches or children. This could help explain why the sense of belonging mean for the participants in this study was relatively high. Reflecting positive behaviors could have been a way for parents to be an example for their children but also to be an example for positive parent behavior on the soccer field for games and practices.

There are numerous ways that youth sport organizations may help facilitate a socialization and increase relationship building opportunities for parents. Babysitting services offered from the youth sport organization would help minimize any social constraints for parents with multiple kids at youth sport practices. If parents are worried about watching younger kids, they are probably less likely to engage in social opportunities that might take their attention away from their young children. Youth sport organizations that offer a babysitting service for parents that have multiple kids might contribute to sense of belonging and especially relationship building at their child's practices and games.

Perhaps another way to increase socialization and relationship building among parents is through providing more opportunities to do so. Practitioners should focus on finding ways to promote youth sport as a social opportunity for parents. Many of the youth soccer teams have end of year parties to celebrate the season. It might be more beneficial to have a mixer for the parents at the beginning of the season, to introduce parents to one another. Youth sport organizations could possibly gain much more than they would be spending in regards to a parent social event. Parties and social events could bring parents closer and increase involvement and volunteer efforts within the

league. If we can frame practices and games in a way that recognizes parents as an important part of the environment, parents might then also find the youth sport environment to be a beneficial place for them to experience leisure.

The physical environment for youth soccer seemed to impact the parents' ability to interact with other parents and thus perhaps their sense of belonging. Because most parents bring their own fold-up chair to games and practices, it causes an unintentional row of spectators that does not encourage a sense of belonging. More social benefits may come from paying close attention to the layout of sports fields. Sitting in clusters opposed to rows might be more beneficial for parents to socialize and feel a greater sense of belonging. Attention to details in the physical environment is crucial in reducing social barriers. Youth sport organizations should increase efforts in making sidelines a socially comfortable environment in attempts to reduce isolation among parents.

Limitations

Because this study was a cross-sectional study focused on the social factors of parents at one given point of time, limitations were present. First, this study was only looking at parents of soccer players in just two age divisions during one season. The results found in this group of participants do not imply that research conducted in a different soccer league or with a different sport will produce the same findings. That is, the data from this soccer league do not determine knowledge of sense of belonging for any other soccer league. Second, weather had a negative affect on data collection due to cancelled practices and games. Third, the soccer league in this study had a very short season, approximately five to six weeks in length. This short time frame made data collection from all teams challenging. Collecting data over five weeks might have caused

discrepancies in the results. Depending on what point in the season I collected a survey or conducted an interview with a parent could have been influenced by their experience up to that point, meaning I was unable to collect data from every participant at the same exact time. And finally, the schedules of parents with young children can be difficult to plan around and thus scheduling follow-up interviewing was also time consuming.

Future Research

More research regarding social outcomes for parents in youth sports is needed. Future studies should test social components with a pre- and post- test survey design. This will help determine any changes that occur based on sideline interactions and participation with other parents in the soccer league. Future studies should also include other groups of parents who do not have children in youth sports to better understand the impact of parent involvement in youth sport and the impact on sense of belonging. In addition, future research should report differences in diversity as it relates to ethnicity or even same sex couples.

Comparing youth soccer to other youth recreation activities, such as basketball, boy scouts, dance, or karate might also show interesting distinctions based on the different environments. Travel teams are likely to have a very different social environment for parents, given the higher levels of commitment for the participants. A comparison between travel teams and standard youth sport leagues could show differences in social benefits and constraints. One thing future research should report is whether or not the youth sport organization has a code of conduct for parents or any resources to educate parents on contributing to a positive youth sport environment.

It might also be beneficial for future research to study the different types of physical environments in youth sports. The physical differences between a soccer field and a baseball field might have serious implications for any barriers to socialization for parents based on the setting. Making comparisons between each sport could provide great insight for the parent or spectator experience in youth sports.

Finally, it would also be beneficial to look at other social factors that might be present for parents at youth sports, such as sense of community, closeness, and fulfillment of needs. In general, future research should aim to measure what factors are allowing parents to experience (or not experience) community through their children's youth sport activities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, youth sports provide the potential for parents to build relationships and feel a sense of belonging with other parents. The results of this study highlight the potential for parents to build relationships and feel a strong sense of belonging within youth soccer. In addition, it also points to considerations a recreation professional may make to help facilitate social interaction environmental features of their facility that can take away from the parent experience. Although the primary focus in youth sports is on its participants, the findings from this study identify social benefits for parents who attend practices and games and should be taken into consideration as researchers continue to explore the impact youth sports may have on parents in addition to participants.

APPENDICES

Appendix A:

IRB Approval

Sense of Belonging Among Parents in Youth Sports

Description of the Study and Your Part in It

Denise Anderson and Megan Davis are inviting you to take part in a research study. Denise Anderson is a faculty member in the Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management Department at Clemson University. Megan Davis is a student at Clemson University, running this study with the help of Denise Anderson. The purpose of this study is to determine if parental involvement within a youth sport organization (specifically the City of Clemson Parks and Recreation youth soccer league) can contribute to relationship building and a sense of belonging for parents.

Your part in the study will be to participate in a very brief survey followed up with an interview looking specifically into a sense of belonging within your child's soccer league. The interviews will be audio recorded only for the use of the researcher.

It will take you about 5 minutes to complete the survey and 60 minutes for an interview to be in this study. The interview may be scheduled at an alternative time for convenience.

Risks and Discomforts

We do not know of any risks or discomforts to you in this research study.

Possible Benefits

We do not know of any way you would benefit directly from taking part in this study. However, this research may help us to understand how youth sport settings may contribute to a sense of belonging and building relationships as a parent.

Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality

Participant information will be concealed and coded after surveys and interviews are complete. Audio recordings of each interview will be destroyed immediately after analysis of the information. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy and confidentiality. We will not tell anybody outside of the research team that you were in this study or what information we collected about you in particular.

Choosing to Be in the Study

You do not have to be in this study. You may choose not to take part and you may choose to stop taking part at any time. You will not be punished in any way if you decide not to be in the study or to stop taking part in the study.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Denise Anderson at Clemson University at 864-656-5679.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-6460 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC's toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

A copy of this form will be given to you.

Dear Dr. Anderson and Ms. Davis,

The Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) reviewed the protocol identified above using exempt review procedures and a **determination was made on September 10, 2014** that the proposed activities involving human participants qualify as **Exempt under category B2**, based on federal regulations 45 CFR 46. This exemption is valid for all sites with a research site letter on file. The approved consent document is attached for distribution. **Your protocol will expire on May 31, 2015.**

The expiration date indicated above was based on the completion date you entered on the IRB application. If an extension is necessary, the PI should submit an Exempt Protocol Extension Request form, <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/forms.html>, at least three weeks before the expiration date. Please refer to our website for more information on the extension procedures, <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/guidance/reviewprocess.html>.

No change in this approved research protocol can be initiated without the IRB's approval. This includes any proposed revisions or amendments to the protocol or consent form. Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects, any complications, and/or any adverse events must be reported to the Office of Research Compliance (ORC) immediately. All team members are required to review the "Responsibilities of Principal Investigators" and the "Responsibilities of Research Team Members" available at <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/regulations.html>.

The Clemson University IRB is committed to facilitating ethical research and protecting the rights of human subjects. Please contact us if you have any questions and use the IRB number and title in all communications regarding this study.

Good luck with your study.

All the best,
Nalinee

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Appendix B:
Sense of Belonging Questionnaire (SOBI-A Revised)

Instructions: Here are some statements with which you may or may not agree. Using the key listed below, circle the number that most closely reflects your feelings about each statement as it relates to your experience with youth soccer.

- SD** = Strongly Disagree
D = Disagree
A = Agree
SA = Strongly Agree

As it relates to your involvement in youth soccer:	SD	D	A	SA
1. It is important to me that I am valued or accepted by others.	1	2	3	4
2. In the past, I have felt valued and important to others.	1	2	3	4
3. I have qualities that can be important to others.	1	2	3	4
4. I am working on fitting in better with those around me.	1	2	3	4
5. I want to be a part of things going on around me.	1	2	3	4
6. It is important to me that my thoughts and opinions are valued.	1	2	3	4
7. Generally, other people recognize my strengths and good points.	1	2	3	4
8. I can make myself fit in anywhere.	1	2	3	4
9. I consider my child's sport practices or games a place to socialize.	1	2	3	4
10. I feel closer to the people in my child's soccer league compared to other groups that I am a part of (i.e. churches, organizations, clubs).	1	2	3	4
11. There are social benefits I receive by staying for my child's soccer practices and games.	1	2	3	4

Additional comments on any statements listed above:

12. Do you stay to watch or hang out at your child's soccer practices & games?

YES or **NO**

13. Did you request to be on a team with someone you know? (Circle one.)

YES or **NO**

14. How many other parents do you know on your team? (Please indicate a number.)

15. How many relationships with other parents have you gained through your child's participation in youth sports? (Please indicate a number.)

16. Is there anything about your child's soccer environment that takes away from your ability or desire to build relationships or feel like you belong? If yes, please explain.

YES or **NO**

17. What is one suggestion you would make to improve the soccer league?

Additional comments regarding the questions 12-16:

FOLLOW-UP INFORMATION:

Name:

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Age of Child(ren)

Playing Soccer:

Child's Team Name:

If you are willing to be a part of a short follow-up interview on the role of youth sport in parents' lives, please provide your preferred contact information:

Phone/Email:

Appendix C:
Follow-up Interview Script and Questions

Hello, _____. Thank you for your time and agreeing to meet with me to further discuss sense of belonging as it pertains to your child's youth soccer practice. Do you mind if I record this conversation? The recording will only be used by the researcher to verify information discussed in this meeting. All of the questions you will be asked is in reference to your child's youth soccer team. So with that in mind, let's move into the first question.

1. How long have you been involved in your child's youth soccer league?
2. Do you feel that being apart of your child's soccer team has given you opportunities to build relationships with other parents on the team?
3. Do you feel like your relationship with other parents on the team is key to your personal involvement with your child's soccer team?
4. What made you want to be involved in your child's soccer practices and games?
5. Do you feel a sense of belonging with other parents and members of your child's soccer team? Have you built any relationships with other parents on the team just based on your child's interest or involvement?
6. Do you feel like youth sport settings provide a unique opportunity for parents to build relationships and socialize?
7. Would you describe your child's soccer team as one of your social circles?
8. Have you built relationships with other parents on your child's team that have lead to activities or gatherings outside the youth sport setting?
9. Do you think it is important for parents (in general) to feel like they belong in their child's youth soccer team?
10. What key factors do you think need to be present for parents to be able to feel like they belong within a youth sport setting?
11. Are there negative factors that can influence sense of belonging or relationship building within you child's youth soccer team? What are those things that negatively impact parent-to-parent relationships?

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