The Essential Role of Sense of Community in a Youth Sport Program

Yen-Chun Lin, Laurence Chalip & B. Christine Green

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

The Essential Role of Sense of Community in a Youth Sport Program

Yen-Chun Lin[a], Laurence Chalip[b], and B. Christine Green[b]

[a]University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, USA; [b]University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, IL, USA

ABSTRACT

This multiphased study identifies the salient benefits that parents seek for their families from a youth sport program. Phase 1, a preseason focus group study of parents of swimmers in three clubs (N = 15), indicated parents seek a sense of community for their children and themselves, and sense of community is linked to their desire for children to learn sport and life skills. Phase 2, a postseason survey of parents in the same three clubs (N = 129), tested the relationships among coaching quality, friendships, organizational communication, sport and life skills, sense of community, parents' satisfaction, and their repeat purchase intention. Using path analysis, sense of community was identified as the key driver of satisfaction and repeat purchase intention, with swimming improvement also having a significant effect on satisfaction. These findings highlight the central role sense of community plays for participants and their families in youth sport contexts.

Parents enroll children in youth sport with the expectation it will help their children obtain physical, social, and psychological benefits (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005). However, youth sports do not spontaneously result in positive or negative effects for participants, since the impact depends on the particulars of program implementation, and the consequent experiences of children, adolescents, and their families (McCormack & Chalip, 1988; Skille, 2011). Although the degree to which competitive success is emphasized can vary among sport programs (Kirk & MacPhail, 2003), clubs and leagues at all levels are fundamentally social organizations in which athletes, parents, coaches, and administrators interact in ways that engender varying social and psychological outcomes (Bunke, Apitzsch, & Backstrom, 2011; Light, Harvey, & Memmert, 2013). Further, the social contingencies engendered by different program designs affect the social climate and social outcomes obtained by participants and their families (Chalip & Scott, 2005; Okayasu, Kawahara, & Nogawa, 2010). Thus, in order to design and deliver effective youth sport programming, it is necessary to understand the expectations and experiences of youth sport consumers.

Youth sport programs are unique in that children are users of the service but their parents are the purchasers (Green & Chalip, 1998; Howard & Madrigal, 1990) and may also play

vital roles in provision of the service through coaching, helping to run competitions, or taking administrative roles (Bowers, Chalip, & Green, 2011). Further, the degree to which parents are satisfied with their choice of youth sport program will normally predict the likelihood that they will keep their children in the program (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). Interestingly, however, parents' evaluation of a program cannot be predicted by their children's views because children tend to evaluate their programs more positively than parents do (Schwab, Wells, & Arthur-Banning, 2010), and because parents typically use different dimensions to evaluate youth sport programs than children do (Chalip, 1989). Thus, from the standpoint of program provision and program marketing, the purpose of this study was to understand what parents seek when enrolling and re-enrolling their children in a sport club or league. Conceptually, the study provides added insight into youth sport clubs and leagues by highlighting dynamics of the youth sport social environment within which learning and socialization take place.

Literature review

Expectancy-value theory was developed to explain individuals' achievement motivation (Atkinson, 1957). Eccles and colleagues (1983) proposed a model that incorporates ability beliefs, expectancies for success, and the components of subjective task values to explain students' achievement motivation in school. Then, theorists in this line of research found that parents act as interpreters of experience, and influence children's sport participation through their beliefs and values (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). Additionally, parents play central roles in children's sport experiences with the encouragement, opportunities, resources, and financial support they provide (Green & Chalip, 1997, 1998; Kalinowski, 1985). Therefore, the following literature review considers what parents want from youth sport programs and the consequent factors affecting parents' satisfaction and the retention of families in youth sport programs.

What parents want

Several factors seem important to the ongoing stability of youth sports programs because they can affect parental satisfaction and the consequent retention or loss of members. In particular, parents want coaches to provide a supportive environment for their children by engaging them and enabling them to learn sport skills (Marczak, Dworkin, Skuza, & Beyer, 2006). Parents also associate sport participation with personal and social developmental benefits (Na, 2015; Watson, 1977) and seek programs they expect will provide the benefits they seek (Holt, Tamminen, Tink, & Black, 2009; Martin, Dale, & Jackson, 2001). Parents associate these benefits particularly with programs they feel provide high quality coaching, good management, and effective communication (Brustad, 2011).

In addition to learning, parents want their children to have opportunities to interact with peers and obtain social support (Marczak et al., 2006; Partridge, Brustad, & Babkes Stellino, 2008). Parents' desire for social support among young athletes is amplified by the significance they attach to development of friendships through sport (McCarthy & Jones, 2007).

Parents are also affected by their children's sport participation. Parents can form or strengthen friendships with other adults whose children are in the same youth programs (Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2009). As this occurs, the degree to which they value the sport organization may be enhanced, with the result that their associated commitment intensifies (Clarke & Harwood, 2014; Green & Chalip, 1997). These findings are intriguing because they

suggest that the social world youth sport provides to parents may be as important as the social world that sport provides to their children. The two may depend on the sense of community parents and children obtain because sense of community affects social climate variables, such as friendships and social support (Sarason, 1974), and represents a sense of belonging and emotional safety (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Previous research has shown that the sense of community parents obtain through interactions facilitated by their child's school plays a significant role in their satisfaction with that school (Vieno, Santinello, Pastore, & Perkins, 2007) and their community (Cicognani, Albanesi, & Zani, 2008). Thus, although parents may seek programs that they expect will meet the needs of their children, they may ultimately evaluate those programs with reference to both their own social experiences and the learning and social experiences of their children.

Satisfaction and retention

As with any other service, the quality and outcomes of sport programs determine user satisfaction (Murray & Howat, 2002), their commitment to the provider (Bodet, 2012), and the likelihood that they will continue to obtain services from the provider (Crawford, Greenwell, & Andrew, 2007). These findings suggest that parental evaluations of the degree to which a program provides what they want from their children's sport programs will play a pivotal role in their ultimate satisfaction with the program and their consequent retention as customers. Further, a service provider's communications with its customers can shape expectations and interpretations of service experiences, thereby affecting customers' satisfaction and retention (Hennig-Thurau, 2000). Thus, parents' satisfaction and their retention as customers of a youth sport service are likely to be affected not merely by the degree to which the service meets their expectations for their children and themselves, but also by their evaluation of communications with the service provider and the ways those impact their evaluations of the service.

Research questions

Previous research has identified an array of experiences, benefits, and outcomes that parents seek from their children's sport programs (Marczak et al., 2006), but it is not clear which are particularly salient to parents. Further, there are hints in the literature (e.g., Dorsch et al., 2009) that what parents obtain for themselves once their children are enrolled may be no less important than what they think their children obtain. Finally, the relationships among parents' perceptions of service outcomes and their eventual satisfaction and retention as customers are not well understood. Therefore, two research questions arose:

1. What experiences are paramount to parents who expect to enroll their children in a youth sport program?
2. What are the relationships among parents' evaluations of their experiences with a youth sport program, their overall satisfaction, and the likelihood of repeat enrollment?

Setting

Competitive swimming has been widely used as a setting for the study of youth sport because it is relatively popular and is characterized by considerable social interaction, extensive training, and substantial coach surveillance (Lang, 2010). Swimmers report motives, enjoyments, and concerns about competitive swimming comparable to those found in other organized

sports (Light & Lémonie, 2010; McCarthy & Jones, 2007). Swimming thereby provides an appropriate setting for the study of youth sport.

Data for this study come from three suburban swim clubs in a southern U.S. state that came together to form a new league. All three clubs were within a 30-minute drive from one another, and all three were co-educational. Swimmers' ages ranged from 5 to 16 years. Coaches were certified and paid, but parents were expected to provide much of the labor to run each of the clubs as well as the league's meets. Clubs in the league faced keen competition for participation, with four alternative programs within the area served by the league.

The study was conducted in two phases. Phase 1 began 10 weeks prior to the start of the league's first season and was completed immediately prior to commencement of training for the season, which began at the end of May 2010. Phase 2 took place during the month of September, following the end of the league's first season. The clubs are represented here by pseudonyms: "Barracudas," "Dolphins," and "Orcas."

Method

A sequential exploratory mixed-methods design was used for this study (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). Researchers first collected qualitative focus group data related to parents' expressed needs and wants with reference to a competitive swimming program for children and adolescents (phase 1). Then, researchers subsequently collected quantitative post-season survey data to obtain parents' evaluation of the program (phase 2). Focus groups are particularly useful because they allow interaction among interviewees, a consequent exchange of ideas, and inductive identification of core themes (Morgan, 1996). This enabled preseason insight into the wants and expectations of parents and informed formulation of postseason surveys. Surveys were chosen for postseason data collection because they enabled a broad sample of parents to be queried, enabling a test of the validity, scope, and applicability of findings from the focus groups.

Participants

Phase 1

An email announcing focus groups was sent to parents from all 282 families who had been enrolled in one of the three clubs during the previous season. It was sent 10 weeks prior to the start of the summer swimming season. The number of parents who volunteered to participate varied across clubs, with a high of 12 parents for the Dolphins and a low of 7 parents for the Orcas. Fifteen parents from among those who volunteered were selected to participate in focus groups as the research protocol called for one focus group from each club with five parents in each focus group.

A third of the parents had been swimmers in their youth, while the remainder had no prior knowledge or experience of competitive swimming. All but three parents had more than one child participating in swimming (boys and girls between the ages of 4 and 11). Their children were characterized as exhibiting various levels of ability and commitment to swimming, ranging from novice to moderately competitive. All parents had been a part of their club for at least one season, and the longest term of membership was six years. All parents, aged 35–55 years, came from upper-middle income families in which at least one member had a white collar job and a college degree. All were white and four were fathers.

Phase 2

Participants were parents from 129 families whose children had participated in the league's first season. This represented a response rate of 38.2% (based on a total end-of-season league membership of 338 families). This is within the normal response rate range for surveys of randomly selected individuals, and is above average for organizational surveys (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). Only one parent per family participated in the survey, following the instruction that the parent "most involved with your child's swimming" should be the one to complete the survey. This yielded 105 mothers and 24 fathers. The preponderance of mothers is consistent with Howard and Madrigal's (1990) and Fredricks and Eccles's (2005) findings that mothers are most involved with the child's sport, particularly at younger ages.

The average age of respondents was 42.9 years (*SD* = 7.02). Nearly a quarter (23%) had been competitive swimmers. More than half (52.7%) had one child in the league; 42.6% had two children in the league; 4.7% had three or more children in the league. Each club was well represented: 35.7% of respondents were affiliated with the Barracudas, 39.5% with the Dolphins, and 24.8% with the Orcas. These percentages are consistent with the relative size of the clubs.

Procedure

Phase 1

Focus groups were conducted five weeks prior to the start of the season. Each focus group meeting was facilitated and recorded by two researchers, one serving as facilitator while the other provided support (e.g., note taking, writing ideas for display to the group). The facilitator worked to draw out contributions from all members of the group. Each focus group lasted approximately one hour.

The focus group began by reassuring parents that their individual responses during the focus group would remain confidential and that all data would be aggregated and treated as anonymous for presentation to the league's board of directors. This was to prevent parents from only expressing socially desirable opinions. The protocol was the same for parents from each club, although probes were responsive to what was said in each focus group, so could vary for each club. The protocol was divided into three sections (see Table 1).

Phase 2

The themes that emerged from phase 1 provided the conceptual base for development of the postseason survey. These were complemented with insights drawn from the research literature, observation of the summer season, and suggestions from the league's board of directors. The board of directors also suggested that the survey be conducted four weeks following the end of the summer season in order to allow for family holidays and the start of the school year. Every family that had participated in the league's first season was sent an email informing them that a survey link would be sent, and encouraging them to respond. Three days later, the survey link was sent. Four days after that they were sent a reminder, including the link, and three days later they received a final reminder (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). Once a parent clicked on the link, they were directed to an electronic survey. The opening page of the survey assured them their individual responses would be kept confidential.

The findings from phase 1 and the literature were used to identify variables for the survey. Hypotheses were formulated to specify expected relationships among the variables, as suggested by phase 1 findings and the literature. Nine hypotheses were derived:

Table 1. Phase 1 focus group protocol.

	Theme	Sample Topic
The First Section	Parents' experiences and perspectives about swimming, swimming clubs, and swimming leagues	1. Describing parents' past experiences regarding swimming-related topics (e.g., "How did you get involved in swimming as a swimmer and/or as a parent?") 2. Discussing their children's interests in the sport and what their children seemed to enjoy most about their respective club (e.g., "Why did you change to or stay with your swimming club?")
The Second Section	Parents' feelings about the new league	1. Giving pros and cons of the new league based on what they had heard about the league to that point 2. Discussing what they would like the league to achieve, preserve, or avoid
The Third Section	Parents' perspectives about organization, structure, and atmosphere, and social life within the club and the league	1. Discussing the ideal start and end of the season 2. Discussing the organization of the swim meets

H1: Satisfaction and sense of community will each have positive effects on parents' intentions to re-enroll their children in the swimming club (Crawford et al., 2007; Drengner, Steffan, & Gaus, 2012).

H2: Parents' perceptions of the quality of learning outcomes and their sense of community will each have a positive effect on their satisfaction with their children's club (Murray & Howat, 2002; phase 1; Vieno et al., 2007).

H3: The effect of sense of community on intentions to re-enroll will be higher than will the effect of satisfaction (Drengner et al., 2012).

H4: Parents' perceptions of the quality of learning outcomes for their children will be positively affected by the quality of coaching they perceive their children to have obtained and the degree to which they think their children have obtained or strengthened friendships (Holt et al., 2009; Martin et al., 2001; Murray & Howat, 2002; phase 1; Watson, 1977).

H5: Parents' perceptions of the quality of learning outcomes for their children will be positively affected by the sense of community they perceive at the club (phase 1).

H6: Parents' sense of community will be positively affected by the quality of communication they feel they have obtained from their club, as well as the friendships they and their children have obtained or strengthened (Allen, 2003; Dorsch et al., 2009; Hennig-Thurau, 2000; Light & Lémonie, 2010; phase 1).

H7: Parents' perception that their children have obtained or strengthened friendships through the club will be positively affected by their evaluation of the communications they have obtained from the club (Hennig-Thurau, 2000).

H8: Parents' perception that their children have obtained or strengthened friendships through the club will be positively affected by their evaluation of the coaching their children obtained (phase 1).

H9: Parents' perception that they have obtained or strengthened friendships through the club will be positively affected by their evaluation of the quality of communication they have obtained from the club (Hennig-Thurau, 2000).

The model resulting from these predictions is shown in Figure 1. Hypothesis 3 predicts a significant difference between the two pathways shown in the model that affect the likelihood that parents will re-enroll their children at the swimming club.

Measures

The hypotheses called for measures of: (1) the likelihood that parents would re-enroll their children the next season, (2) their overall satisfaction, (3) the degree to which they felt their children had learned, (4) their sense of community with reference to the club, (5) the quality of
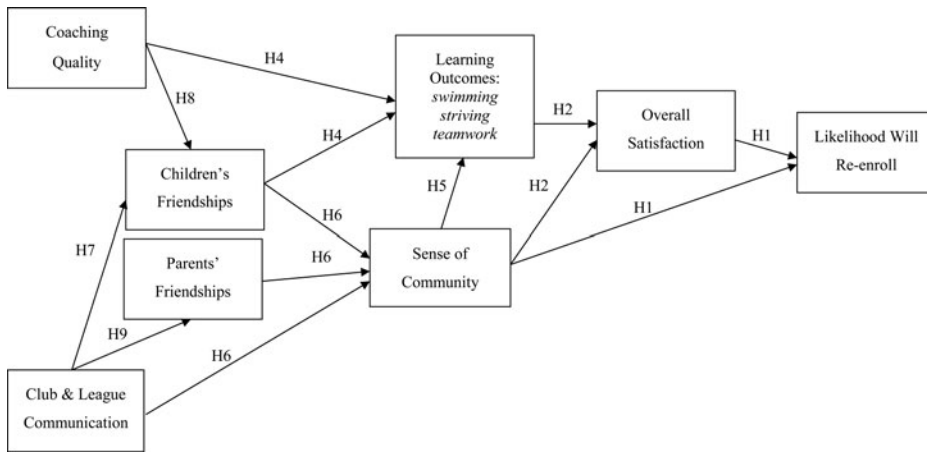
Figure 1. Hypothesized model of relationships among variables.

coaching, (6) the quality of the club and league communication, (7) the degree to which they felt that their children had obtained or strengthened friendships, and (8) the degree to which they felt they had obtained or strengthened friendships. Each of these measures is described below.

To measure the likelihood parents would enroll their children the next season, respondents rated the likelihood their families would participate in the league next year on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from "definitely will not participate" to "will definitely participate."

Parents' satisfaction with their experiences with the club and the league were measured using the three-item scale developed by Nicolao, Irwin, and Goodman (2009). The scale is particularly useful for this context because it is designed to measure happiness with purchase of experiences rather than material products. Items were modified to refer specifically to swimming. The three items were (a) "When you think about your family's participation in swimming this past season, how happy does it make you?" (b) "How much did your family's participation in swimming this past season contribute to the family's overall happiness?" (c) "To what extent do you think the time and money spent on swimming this past season would have been better spent on something else—some other activity that would have made your family happier?" Items were measured on a 10-point semantic differential scale, with higher scores representing higher levels of happiness with the choice to participate. Nicolao and his colleagues report an alpha of .86 for the original measure, and that it differentiates purchases that are known to be positive from those known to be negative. In this study, the measure obtained an alpha of .73. Items were averaged to obtain a composite measure.

Learning was measured with reference to the three types of learning parents had specified in the phase 1 focus groups. Parents' perception regarding the degree to which their children improved swimming skills was measured by the item "My child(ren) improved their swimming a lot this season." Their perception regarding learning to strive was measured using the item, "My child(ren) learned to set goals and strive by swimming this season." Their perception regarding learning teamwork was measured by the item, "My child(ren) learned about teamwork by swimming this season." Each was rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

Theoretically, sense of community breaks down into four dimensions: need fulfillment, membership, influence, and emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Two items representing each dimension were taken from established measures (Obst & White, 2004;

Peterson, Speer, & McMillan, 2008) and were phrased with reference to the "swimming club." Each was measured on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Although the original reports of these measures retain the four dimensional model of sense of community, in this study the items did not break down into four different dimensions, as the alpha for all eight times together was .92. Principal component analysis of the eight items confirmed their unidimensionality as only the first eigenvalue exceeded unity, and a one factor solution captured 64.5% of the variance in the original eight items. Further, the items loaded comparably onto the first principal component (ranging from .77 to .87). Consequently, the eight items were averaged here to yield a single measure of sense of community.

Following consultation with the league's board of directors, the league's most senior coach, and former swimming coaches, coaching was measured with reference to nine different components of the job: coaching freestyle, coaching backstroke, coaching breaststroke, coaching butterfly, coaching starts, coaching turns, communicating with swimmers, communicating with parents, and management. Parents evaluated each on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from "very poor" to "excellent." Exploratory factor analysis yielded only a single dimension from these nine items, as only one eigenvalue exceeded unity, and a single factor solution explained 67.2% of the variance in the original nine items. It was concluded that parents rated coaching globally. Since item loadings ranged from .70 to .91, the factor (first principal component) score was exported for use in subsequent analyses. Higher scores represent more positive evaluations.

Communications in this league took place through the clubs and in three different ways: emailing members; posting announcements on the bulletin board at each club's pool; and putting announcements, forms, and competition results onto each club's website. Each was evaluated using items that read, "I would rate the club's [website, email communication, communication using the bulletin board] as" after which the respondent rated each on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from "very ineffective" to "very effective." To obtain a composite measure of communication, the three items were averaged. The alpha for the three items was .70.

To measure parents' perceptions that their children had improved their friendships, two items were constructed. The first read, "My child(ren) gained new friendships by swimming this season." The second read, "My child(ren) strengthened existing friendships by swimming this season." Each was rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The two items were highly correlated ($r = .75$). The items were averaged for subsequent analysis.

Parents' perceptions that they had improved their friendships were measured using two items that were identical to those regarding their children, except that "My child(ren) was replaced with "I." The two items were highly correlated ($r = .79$). The items were averaged for subsequent analysis.

Parents' ratings of their own and their children's friendships through the club were highly correlated ($r = .80$). However, because the hypotheses treat the two as distinct, they are analyzed separately here.

Analysis

Phase 1
Each focus group was audio-taped and subsequently transcribed. Notes and transcripts from each focus group were first analyzed inductively and separately using a qualitative descriptive

approach (Sandelowski, 2000) by the two researchers who conducted the focus group plus one additional researcher who was added to the data analysis team in order to maintain objectivity. Each researcher first identified open codes by identifying topic areas and concepts found in the transcript. Then each researcher synthesized the open codes to create axial codes. All three then met to go over their coding and resolve any differences. For any difference in axial codes, open codes were referenced to enable resolution. Differences were slight and readily resolved consensually.

Once the focus group for each club had been analyzed, the findings from each were then compared, and commonalities and differences were identified. This was done in a single large group for which all coders were present to contribute to the analysis. Since different coders might choose different labels for a common code, thematic similarity or difference was determined by consensual discussion with reference to the open codes that had been used to form the axial codes. In each case, differences among the axial codes were found to be due to idiographic aspects of a single club (e.g., its facility, its coaches). There was no axial code that applied to two clubs but not a third. However, four codes – learning swimming, learning life skills, sense of community for children, and sense of community for parents– were found to be common among the clubs, which comprised two themes –learning and sense of community. Each was mentioned repeatedly in each focus group.

Phase 2

Since the sample size does not support the maximum likelihood estimation of structural equation modeling (Bentler & Chou, 1987), path analysis (Li, 1975) was used to model and test the pathways specified by the hypotheses. The variables and sample size are appropriate for the OLS regressions required by path analysis. Tests for linear restrictions (Katos, Lawler, & Seddighi, 2000, pp. 40–59) were first conducted to assure that the relationships among variables were comparable for each club. There were no statistically significant differences among the clubs on any relationship, so the data were pooled to estimate and test coefficients in the path analysis.

Results

Phase 1

Although idiographic issues having to do with specifics of club administration varied among the three focus groups, there was substantial consistency regarding fundamental concerns. First, parents sought a strong sense of community from their swimming clubs, both for their children and, more generally, for themselves and their families. Second, parents wanted that community to foster continued learning and improvement for their children. These two themes were salient throughout all three focus groups. Parents' responses to each section of the protocol were always couched in terms of learning and community. Codes, subthemes, and themes generated during analysis of the focus group data are diagrammed in Figure 2.

A desire for community
Parents' desire for community was an overarching need in all clubs, and manifested itself in varying ways. It began with their children's day-to-day experiences at the club.
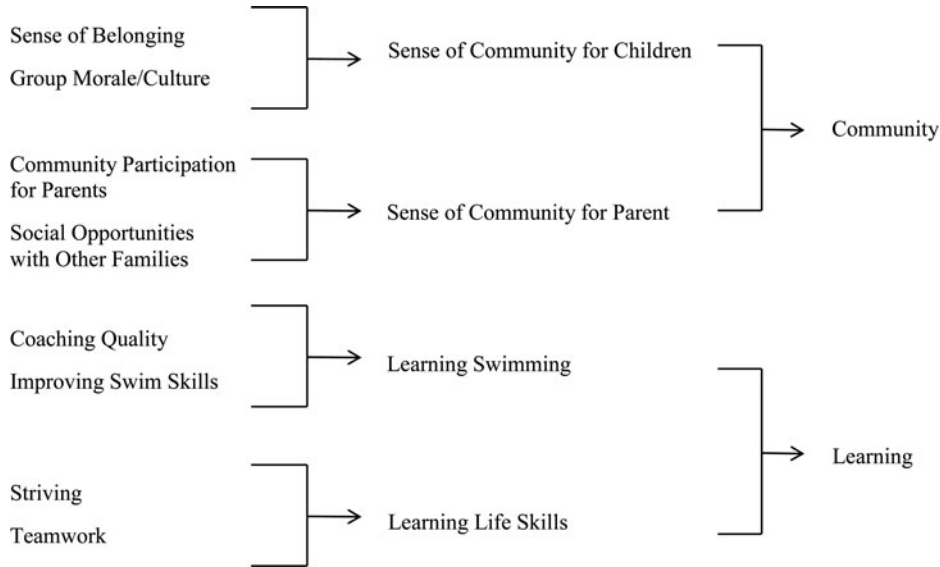
Figure 2. Coding levels.

Sense of community for children

This subtheme included *sense of belonging* and *group morale*. Throughout the focus groups, parents emphasized the need for children to enjoy participating in competitive swimming in order for them to find camaraderie and a consequent sense of belonging. They felt that this was driven particularly by the ways that coaches treated children, which built positive group morale and a commitment to the club. As a parent from the Dolphins described it:

> [The coaches] were so into the kids, and they were so into making it fun for the kids. … They knew all the kids' names. They were excited to see them. They were really fun and goofy. …. My daughter wanted to go every day. She didn't want to miss a day of swimming, and it wasn't competitive.

Sense of community for parents

Not only did the parents desire a sense of community for their children, but they also wanted one for themselves. This subtheme included *community participation for parents* and *social opportunities with other families*. Parents described the social opportunity brought about by their children's involvement with the club, and how volunteering at practices and meets created a stronger community through increased parental involvement. A parent from the Orcas explained community participation this way:

> We have met so many people in the neighborhood. I think it really helps bring the community together, just seeing all the parents involved here, cheerlead[ing] kids on and … just the camaraderie. And there's something really special about that in a community … How you really build a community is by people in a community contributing to the community. And not just for your own child, but for the other children that are in your community.

The sense of community derived, at least in part, from the process of co-creating the club and the league, particularly in the requisite volunteer activities. As a parent from the Orcas put it, "This is a volunteer organization and your support is going to help your child." A parent from the Dolphins described the social opportunity, "There's a lot to be done at swim meets …. It's a good way to meet some of the parents …. I've done [a lot, and] I really appreciate those folks who are willing to help out and all."

Parents were adamant that they chose their club because they found or expected a nurturing atmosphere, safe environment, and competent coaches, all of which promoted the sense of community that they were after. This is important because it highlights again that these parents felt that the development of swimming skills went hand-in-hand with the sense of community on the club. The two were intertwined. A parent from the Barracudas linked the two this way:

> A friend had suggested [the Barracudas], and when I came out [the year before the club joined the new league], I found that [the administration was] incredibly accommodating and tried to help everyone …. It really impressed me on a daily basis how the coaches interacted with the children, and how they came first …. I think if they have a really good sense of camaraderie—the team spirit—doing their little pep rallies before the swim meets and really getting the kids feeling they're part of something, it's really important.

After analyzing the parents' focus group discussions, it was clear that parents from all three clubs were looking to their respective clubs to foster a sense of community. Further, their desires reflected diverse aspects of a sense of community for themselves as well as their children. In particular, the development of strong club communities was deemed to be a necessary condition for their children to be motivated to develop swimming skills.

A desire for learning

Even though a sense of community was seen to be a key for their children's learning, having their children become skilled swimmers also emerged as a theme.

Learning swimming

This subtheme, including *improving swimming skills* and *coaching quality*, was consistent across all three clubs. It was generally agreed parents first enroll their children in swimming to ensure they will be safe around water. This was important to parents because swimming well has safety as well as competitive value. One parent from the Orcas said, "When I realized we had the [swimming club] here, it was a great opportunity to get my child at that time into swimming just to improve [his] swimming and improve [his] confidence." Another commented, "My whole [attitude] was, you have to be able to understand [that] in an emergency [in the water], you just cannot panic."

Learning life skills

Parents also viewed participation on a swimming team as an opportunity to gain life skills children cannot get through simple swimming lessons. This is a strong advantage club membership has over lessons. For instance, parents felt swimming club participation should teach children the life skills of *teamwork* and *striving*. For example, a parent from the Barracudas said:

> I think that the fact that the 9-year-olds see the six-year-olds as participating in their team—the 6-year-olds got the points for the team—I think that's encouraging. They'll cheer more for each other knowing that. And the relays in the older groups don't have enough kids, and they have to scramble and grab the youngest kid who can barely swim across. It's [good] because they need this kid to make them able to participate, and the kid really gets this sense of need and appreciation. So the kid sets goals and works to achieve them, and that's just fabulous.

Of course, having their children become skilled competitive swimmers was also important to these parents, but they saw that as a function of the club as a whole and not merely the coaches. A parent from the Dolphins put it this way, "The most important things are … a

combination of people in the water and out of [it] … and showing them exactly what they want to do and how to move different parts of their body."

In fact, parents were quite articulate about their desire for the best possible training conditions for their children. They talked about the need for adequate lane time and space and noted being a good swimmer did not necessarily qualify someone as a good coach. They felt communicating well with swimmers was a vital coaching skill (coaching quality). This included being able to communicate in ways children and adolescents would understand, as well as providing feedback during competitions. The parents wanted substantial feedback for their children when they were training and also when they were competing. In fact, this very desire had caused the three clubs to break away and form their own league, as a parent from the Dolphins explained:

> That was one of [the] things that I wanted to see improved in the new league. I was a stroke judge and I always see the benefit of disqualifying a kid and then writing down the reason why the kid got disqualified so the coach can then correct it. Otherwise, the kid's going to get disqualified next week and just go, "I don't get it."

Parents also explained that learning to swim well should be a prerequisite for competition. Learning came first. A parent from the Barracudas summarized it by saying, "They should be able to demonstrate that they can do the stroke during practice before they're allowed to compete."

Parents were articulate about the vital role learning should play in their children's competitive swimming experience. Learning to swim well was paramount. Yet for these parents, participating with the club was about more than just that; it was also about learning teamwork and the value of striving. Learning was not merely a matter of training; it was also a consequence of the right club atmosphere.

Phase 2

Findings from the focus groups suggested a complex set of relationships among coaching, learning, club administration, friendships, sense of community, satisfaction, and retention. Nine hypotheses were proposed in the Method section, which formed a model illustrated in Figure 1. The regressions required testing the proposed model, and results for all hypotheses except hypothesis 3 are summarized in Table 2. The resulting model, including the strength of prediction for each endogenous variable, is shown in Figure 3.

Examination of Table 2 and Figure 3 shows that hypotheses 1, 6, 8, and 9 were fully supported, while hypothesis 2 was partially supported. Hypothesis 5 was supported with reference to improvement in swimming, but not with reference to learning to strive or learning teamwork. Hypothesis 4 was supported with reference to learning to strive, and partially supported with reference to learning teamwork and improvement in swimming. Hypothesis 7 was not supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted sense of community will have a stronger effect on likelihood of re-enrolling than would overall satisfaction. Although the standardized regression weight for the direct effect of sense of community ($B = .22$) was larger than the standardized regression weight for satisfaction ($B = .17$), the two were not significantly different; $t(126) = 0.93$, $p = .36$. However, sense of community had an additional indirect effect through its effect on satisfaction, although the additional effect was small. Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Table 2. Summary of regressions for hypothesis tests.

Dependable Variable	Test	Independent Variable	Test Value	Hypothesis Test
Likelihood Will Re-enroll $R^2 = .37$	Hierarchical Regression	1st block Overall Satisfaction 2nd block Overall Satisfaction Sense of Community	$F(1,127) = 52.37^{***}$ $t(127) = 7.24^{***}$ $\triangle F(1,126) = 15.47^{***}$ $t(126) = 3.20^{**}$ $t(126) = 3.93^{***}$	H1 fully supported
Overall Satisfaction $R^2 = .51$	Regression	Sense of Community Improve Swimming Learn Teamwork Learn to Strive	$t(124) = 5.43^{***}$ $t(124) = 3.71^{***}$ $t(124) = 0.92$ $t(124) = 1.13$	H2 partially supported
Improve Swimming $R^2 = .32$	Hierarchical Regression	1st block Sense of Community 2nd block Sense of Community Children's Friendship Parents' Friendship 3rd block Sense of Community Children's Friendship Parents' Friendship Coaching Quality Club & League Communication	$F(1,127) = 47.85^{***}$ $t(127) = 6.92^{***}$ $\triangle F(3,125) = 1.01$ $\triangle F(5,123) = 4.6^{*}$ $t(123) = 1.09$ $t(123) = .79$ $t(123) = .62$ $t(123) = 2.86^{*}$ $t(123) = .64$	H5 fully supported H4 partially supported
Learn to Strive $R^2 = .56$	Hierarchical Regression	1st block Sense of Community 2nd block Sense of Community Children's Friendship Parents' Friendship 3rd block Sense of Community Children's Friendship Parents' Friendship Coaching Quality Club & League Communication	$F(1,127) = 87.82^{***}$ $t(127) = 9.37^{***}$ $\triangle F(3,125) = 14.36^{***}$ $t(125) = 3.13^{*}$ $t(125) = 3.90^{**}$ $t(125) = .65$ $\triangle F(5,123) = 9.42^{***}$ $t(123) = .06$ $t(123) = 3.75^{***}$ $t(123) = 1.38$ $t(123) = 3.71^{***}$ $t(123) = 1.74$	H5 not supported H4 fully supported
Learn Teamwork $R^2 = .56$	Hierarchical Regression	1st block Sense of Community 2nd block Sense of Community Children's Friendship Parents' Friendship 3rd block Sense of Community Children's Friendship Parents' Friendship Coaching Quality Club & League Communication	$F(1,127) = 75.95^{***}$ $t(127) = 8.72^{***}$ $\triangle F(3,125) = 22.86^{***}$ $t(125) = 2.07^{*}$ $t(125) = 4.99^{***}$ $t(125) = .71$ $\triangle F(5,123) = 5.35^{*}$ $t(123) = .06$ $t(123) = 5.01^{***}$ $t(123) = 1.13$ $t(123) = 1.49$ $t(123) = 2.70^{**}$	H5 not supported H4 partially supported
Sense of Community $R^2 = .63$	Regression	Children's Friendship Parents' Friendship Club & League Communication	$t(125) = 3.07^{*}$ $t(125) = 4.70^{***}$ $t(125) = 4.74^{***}$	H6 fully supported
Children's Friendship $R^2 = .25$	Regression	Club & League Communication Coaching Quality	$t(126) = 1.12$ $t(126) = 5.44^{***}$	H7 not supported H8 fully supported
Parents' Friendship $R^2 = .08$	Regression	Club & League Communication	$t(127) = 3.41^{*}$	H9 fully supported

Note. $N = 129$.
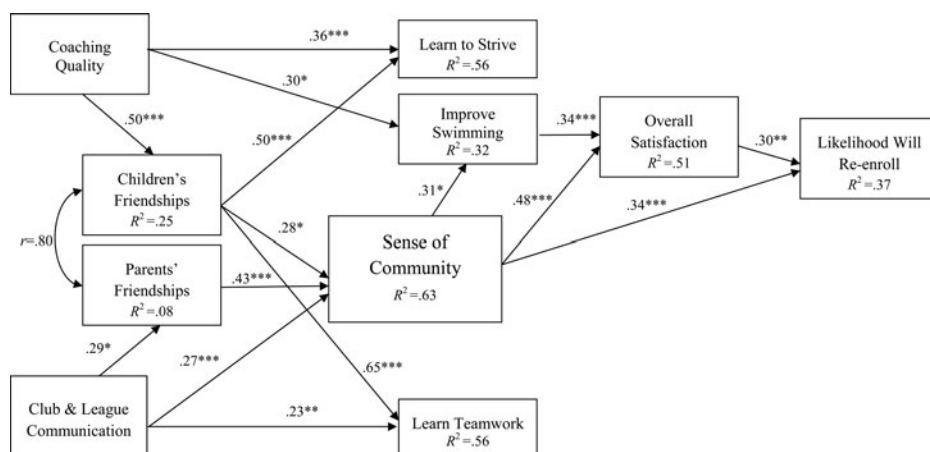$^{*}p < .05.$ $^{**}p < .01.$ $^{***}p < .001.$

Figure 3. Path analysis for parents' overall satisfaction and likelihood of re-enrolling. Standardized coefficients are shown. $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$. $***p < .001$.

Discussion

Overall findings

There is substantial consistency between the findings in phase 1 and phase 2. The focal role played by sense of community, as described by focus group participants prior to the start of the season, was demonstrated again by responses to the postseason surveys. The fact that sense of community surfaced as pivotal both before and after the season, and using either qualitative or quantitative methods, indicates the robustness (Wimsatt, 2007) of this finding. Although there have been hints in the literature that sense of community may be as important in sport as it has been shown to be in other contexts (e.g., Lyons & Dionigi, 2007; Warner, Dixon, & Chalip, 2012), the vast majority of work on the social world of sport programs has focused on friendships and social behaviors, rather than the psychological sense of community that those may engender. Sense of community can provide a useful conceptual and practical underpinning for the development of sport clubs and programs.

It is particularly interesting that the parents in phase 1 described coaching as a necessary but insufficient requirement for their children to learn to swim well. They felt that a sense of community was also necessary because it established the necessary social climate to motivate their children to develop swimming skills. Findings in phase 2 confirmed that relationship. This finding is consistent with work demonstrating that a positive social climate in the classroom can motivate students to learn (Patrick, Kaplan, & Ryan, 2011), and thereby enhance students' learning (Fraser, 2000). Previous work on the development of sport skills has concentrated almost exclusively on the physiological, biomechanical, and motor learning aspects of skill development. The effect of the social world of sport on the development of sport skills has been ignored, even though studies of young athletes find the social life obtained through sport is important to them (Allen, 2003; Light & Lémonie, 2010). The findings from both phases of this study suggest good coaching, like good classroom teaching, requires much more than skill instruction. A supportive social environment must also be nurtured.

Sense of community is not a certain outcome of sport programs. Unless it is carefully managed, the competitive nature of sport can undermine sense of community, especially in youth sport leagues (Chalip & Scott, 2005). In order to foster a sense of community in-and-through

sport, competitive contingencies and the social environment associated with sport participation must be balanced and negotiated. In the case of youth sport, this is necessary for parents and children alike.

Relationships among variables

It is particularly noteworthy that parents' sense of community had direct and indirect effects on the likelihood parents would re-enroll their children in the program, and also direct effects on satisfaction and parents' sense their children had improved their swimming. These findings are consistent with predictions deriving from phase 1. The direct effect of sense of community on likelihood of re-enrollment was amplified by its indirect effect through satisfaction. Consequently, sense of community appears to play a pivotal role in parents' evaluation and intentions regarding their club and their league.

Nevertheless, sense of community did not predict parents' perceptions that their children had learned to strive or that they had learned teamwork, as had been hypothesized. Striving and teamwork were predicted by parents' perceptions that their children had improved or strengthened their friendships. This effect of friendships is consistent with what parents had to say in phase1, insomuch as they described the social climate at training and competitions as intrinsic to teamwork and as an essential motivation for their children to strive. Although, coaching was expected to have a direct effect on teamwork, the effect was actually indirect, as it was mediated by friendships. This is consistent with ways children and adolescents describe team cohesion (Martin, Carron, Eys, & Loughead, 2011). It would appear teamwork in youth sport is nurtured by cultivating a social climate that fosters friendships among athletes.

As expected, parents' perceptions of coaching quality did predict their sense that children had learned to strive. This effect was amplified by an indirect effect through children's friendships. The combined direct and indirect effects of coaching quality were confirmed hierarchically, suggesting that social relationships with teammates as well as with the coach play a role in teaching young athletes to strive. Once again, the effects coaches have on friendships appear as important for desired outcomes as are the direct effects coaches have on other outcomes.

Similarly, coaching quality had a direct effect on children's improvement of swimming. There was also a small indirect effect through the effect on children's friendships and the flow-on effect into sense of community, which then affected parents' perceptions that their children had improved their swimming. The effect of coaching quality on swimming improvement is intuitive insomuch as the better the coaching, the better the expected skill improvement. The additional direct and mediating effect of sense of community is consistent with the ways parents in phase 1 described swimming development as a responsibility of the club as a community rather than merely a result of good coaching. Once again, the social world the club provides to young athletes and their parents plays a pivotal role in parents' perceptions of the quality of outcomes. Parents who participated in phase 1 made a strong case that their children should learn to strive and should learn teamwork, but neither striving nor teamwork affected parents' overall satisfaction or likelihood they would re-enroll. This is not to say striving and teamwork were not valued by these parents. They may value striving and teamwork as added benefits from the competitive swimming experience, but their children's program is ultimately evaluated with reference to children's skill development and the social benefits parents and children obtain.

Club and league communication had the expected effect on sense of community and parents' friendships but not on children's friendships. This may be due to the nature of club and league communications, which were almost entirely targeted at parents. The swimmers

relied more on their coaches as sources of information. Nevertheless, the direct effect of club and league communication on parents' ratings of the degree to which their children had learned teamwork was unexpected. It was expected that the effect of communications on learning teamwork would be mediated by an effect of communications on children's friendships–an effect that was not found. In work settings, employees' evaluations of their organization's communications have significant effects on their perceptions of the organization's social climate (Muchinsky, 1977), while their perceptions of the organization's social climate affect their involvement, including their ratings of teamwork (Shadur, Kienzle, & Rodwell, 1999). The same may hold true when parents evaluate the development of teamwork that their children experience.

Practical implications

Taken as a whole, the pathways of impact found here demonstrate the pivotal role played by parents' sense of community at their children's sport club. Their sense of community mediates the effects of friendships on their satisfaction and likelihood of repeat purchase, and it has direct effects on their perceptions of core service quality, satisfaction, and likelihood of repeat purchase, with added indirect effects on the latter two. Good youth sport is not merely about skills and competition; the quality of social experiences is also pivotal. From the standpoint of practice, this suggests that club administration should focus as much on the quality of social life provided as it does on the quality of sport being delivered. To be specific, two elements can be initiated and institutionalized immediately. One element is to enhance the two-way communication between parents and coaches. The other element is to incorporate parents' inputs of program administration and using positive phrasing and inclusive language that implies ownership, such as "your league," in announcements to members. A system of social events needs to be designed to foster a long-term and strong sense of community. Three kinds of social events can be used to create or strengthen children and parents' friendships: arrange and introduce hosting for newcomers at preseason events, allow for segmentation of social event interest to increase the likelihood of participation, and include rituals and ceremonies in events that bookend the season.

Limitations and future research

The central role played by sense of community calls for further exploration. The ways that it is cultivated or inhibited in sport settings need to be examined. Variations in styles, content, and contexts of communication should be explored, and the ramifications sense of community has on skill development are clearly important. Findings here suggest the conceptual and practical value of future work that ascertains the means by which coaches might develop and capitalize on a sense of community for purposes of improving sport skills.

This study was initiated to understand the wants and expectations that parents of child and adolescent athletes have, because parents are the purchasers of their children's sport experiences. This is not to say the expectations and needs of children and adolescents are irrelevant. Research on the purchase decisions of families indicates children and adolescents do influence their parents' evaluation of products and services, and their choices, especially for purchases that affect the child or adolescent (Lackman & Lanasa, 1993). Although this suggests some eventual congruence in evaluations parents and children make regarding a potential purchase, parents and their children do differ in the ways they view the sport experience (Chalip, 1989; Schwab et al., 2010). The relative influence children and adolescents have on

their parents' evaluation of a youth sport program, the pathways of that influence, and the consequent impact on parents' satisfaction and commitment to the program each warrant further work. The findings here suggest the relative impact of parents' friendships also needs to be considered.

The league studied here was typical insomuch as parent volunteers administered each club, negotiated for pool time, managed communications, and ran the weekly swimming meets. Although sport volunteers have been widely studied, there is a dearth of studies examining the effect volunteer work has on parents' social experiences and evaluations of their children's youth sport programs. Given the vital role sense of community was shown to have here, future work should examine the social environment and impact of parents' roles as volunteers for their children's programs.

The neighborhoods from which these parents came were all upper-middle-class, and were predominantly white. The expectations parents have for their children's sport programs can vary as a function of social class and ethnicity, particularly with reference to things like striving and teamwork (Watson, 1977). Evidence also suggests social class affects the ways sense of community is experienced in organizations (Speer, Peterson, Armstead, & Allen, 2013). It is not clear whether the expectations of working class or wealthy parents differ from those found here, and it is unclear whether children learning teamwork or striving might impact the eventual satisfaction or sense of community of working class or wealthy parents (as neither did in this study). Differences that might be associated with ethnicity are also unclear. Further work is needed to explore differences due to expectations and evaluation of outcomes that derive from values grounded in social class and ethnicity.

Theory (e.g., McMillan & Chavis, 1986) and empirical work in nonsport settings (e.g., Obst & White, 2004; Peterson et al., 2008) suggest sense of community is multidimensional, but in this study it was found to be unidimensional. It is possible the youth sport setting renders a global sense of community, or that a more sport-specific measure could tease out the multiple dimensions (Warner, Kerwin, & Walker, 2013). It might also be the case that need fulfillment, membership, influence, and emotional connection find their expression in subtle forms of interaction among parents in the youth sport setting. Ethnographic research in youth sport is needed to identify the ways that sense of community is facilitated or hindered in youth sport clubs.

The focus groups yielded two key dimensions to be incorporated into the postseason surveys, which resulted in a complex model of relationships. Nevertheless, these two dimensions derived from 15 self-selected parents in three focus groups. The postseason survey was cross-sectional. It is possible a longitudinal study incorporating more parents in a greater diversity of focus groups and surveys could identify and test dimensions more predictively, and might then be able to segment those as a function of demographic or psychographic characteristics. Future work should explore that possibility.

Research suggests parents are socialized into the youth sport context particularly through their interactions with other parents, and the attitudes they adopt affect their children's goals and commitments (Clarke & Harwood, 2014; Green & Chalip, 1997). Presumably, longer or more intense periods of time in a youth sport setting should cause parent beliefs, opinions, and values to intensify or change. The direction of intensification or change should depend on the subculture. This study did not examine the socialization of parents into their club's subculture, nor did it study the effects of parents' socialization on their interactions with children (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). Yet, if sense of community matters, then the effect of club beliefs, values, and opinions should matter. Ethnographic research could explore that possibility.

The league studied here provided a single sport (swimming), and provided competition only during the summer months. Although it has been suggested elsewhere that competitive swimming is like other youth sport experiences (Lang, 2010), replication of this work in other sports could identify similarities and differences among sports. Similarly, since many youth sports (including swimming) offer year round training and competition, it would be useful to determine the degree to which the relationships among variables in this study, especially the pivotal role of sense of community, inhere in youth sport club environments characterized by a greater intensity of training and competition.

The response rate of the postseason survey (38.2%) is within the expected range for surveys of this type (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). However, the sample size of 129 limits the statistical procedures that can be applied. Further, this study was limited to a single league. Future work might obtain a larger sample and might be able to identify boundary conditions on particular findings if larger leagues and multiple leagues were studied. The relationships among variables and the pathways of causation might also be tested more robustly using longitudinal research techniques.

Concluding observations

Several studies have suggested that sports can be used to elevate the sense of community that local residents feel for the places they live (e.g., Glover & Bates, 2006; Tonts, 2005). Those studies argue that participation in sport strengthens the sense of connection to the community in which the sport organization resides. It is reasonable to expect that the degree to which families find a sense of community at their sport club will mediate or, possibly, moderate that effect. If so, then it is not only in the club's interest to cultivate a sense of community among members; it is also in the community's interest.

References

Allen, J. B. (2003). Social motivation in youth sport. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *25*, 551–567.

Atkinson, J. W. (1957). Motivational determinants of risk taking behavior. *Psychological Review*, *64*, 359–372.

Baruch, Y., & Holtom, B. C. (2008). Survey response rate levels and trends in organizational research. *Human Relations*, *61*, 1139–1160.

Bentler, P. M., & Chou, C.-P. (1987). Practical issues in structural equation modeling. *Sociological Methods & Research*, *16*, 78–117.

Bodet, G. (2012). Loyalty in sport participation services: An examination of the mediating role of psychological commitment. *Journal of Sport Management*, *26*, 30–42.

Bowers, M., Chalip, L., & Green, B. C. (2011). Beyond the façade: Youth sport development in the United States and the illusion of synergy. In B. Houlihan & M. Green (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of sports development* (pp. 173–183). London, England: Routledge.

Brustad, R. J. (2011). Enhancing coach-parent relationships in youth sports: Increasing harmony and minimizing hassle. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, *6*, 33–36.

Bunke, S., Apitzsch, E., & Backstrom, M. (2011). Social influence in relation to current and intended physical activity among adolescents. *European Journal of Sport Science*, *11*, 259–267.

Chalip, L. (1989). The post-season assessment survey: A simple tool for sports organization development. *New Zealand Journal of Sports Medicine*, 17, 28–30.

Chalip, L., & Scott, E. P. (2005). Centrifugal social forces in a youth sport league. *Sport Management Review*, *8*, 43–67.

Cicognani, E., Albanesi, C., & Zani, B. (2008). The impact of residential context on adolescents' subjective well being. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, *18*, 558–575.

Clarke, N. J., & Harwood, C. G. (2014). Parenting experiences in elite youth football: A phenomenological study. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise*, *15*, 528–537.

Crawford, S. Z., Greenwell, T. C., & Andrew, D. P. S. (2007). Exploring the relationship between perceptions of quality in basic instruction programs and repeat participation. *Physical Educator*, *64*, 65–72.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano-Clark, V. L. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2009). *Mail and Internet surveys: The tailored design method* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.

Dorsch, T. E., Smith, A. L., & McDonough, M. H. (2009). Parents' perceptions of child-to-parent socialization in organized youth sport. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *31*, 444–468.

Drengner, J., Steffan, J., & Gaus, H. (2012). Creating loyalty in collective hedonic services: The role of satisfaction and psychological sense of community. *Schmalenbach Business Review*, *64*, 59–76.

Eccles, J. S., Adler, T. F., Futterman, R., Goff, S. B., Kaczala, C. M., Meece, J. L., & Midgley, C. (1983). Expectancies, values, and academic behaviors. In J. T. Spence (Ed.), *Achievement and achievement motivation* (pp. 75–146). San Francisco, CA: W. H. Freeman.

Fraser, B. J. (2000). Instructional environment. In A. E. Kazdin (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of psychology* (pp. 308–311). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Fraser-Thomas, J. L., Côté, J., & Deakin, J. (2005). Youth sport programs: An avenue to foster positive youth development. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, *10*, 19–40.

Fredricks, J. A., & Eccles, J. S. (2004). Parental influences on youth involvement in sports. In M. Weiss (Ed.), *Developmental sport and exercise psychology: A lifespan perspective* (pp. 145–164). Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology.

Fredricks, J. A., & Eccles, J. S. (2005). Family socialization, gender, and sport motivation and involvement. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *27*, 3–31.

Glover, T. D., & Bates, N. R. (2006). Recapturing a sense of neighborhood since lost:Nostalgia and the formation of First String, a Community Team Inc. *Leisure Studies*, *25*, 329–351.

Green, B. C., & Chalip, L. (1997). Enduring involvement in youth soccer: The socialization of parent and child. *Journal of Leisure Research*, *29*, 61–77.

Green, B. G., & Chalip, L. (1998). Antecedents and consequences of parental purchase involvement in youth sport. *Leisure Sciences*, 20, 95–109.

Hennig-Thurau, T. (2000). Relationship quality and customer retention through strategic communication of customer skills. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *16*, 55–79.

Holt, N. L., Tamminen, K. A., Tink, L. N., & Black, D. E. (2009). An interpretive analysis of life skills associated with sport participation. *Qualitative Research in Sport & Exercise*, *1*, 160–175.

Howard, D. R., & Madrigal, R. (1990). Who makes the decision: The parent or the child? An analysis of the perceived influence of parents and children on the purchase of recreation services. *Journal of Leisure Research*, *22*, 244–258.

Kalinowski, A. G. (1985). The development of Olympic swimmers. In B. S. Bloom (Ed.), *Developing talent in young people* (pp. 139–192). New York, NY: Ballantine Books.

Katos, A., Lawler, K. A., & Seddighi, H. (2000). *Econometrics: A practical approach*. London, England: Routledge.

Kirk, D., & MacPhail, A. (2003). Social positioning and the construction of a youth sport club. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *38*, 23–44.

Lackman, C., & Lanasa, J. M. (1993). Family decision-making theory: An overview and assessment. *Psychology & Marketing*, *10*, 81–93.

Lang, M. (2010). Surveillance and conformity in competitive youth swimming. *Sport, Education & Society*, *15*, 19–37.

Li, C. (1975). *Path analysis: A primer*. Pacific Grove, CA: Boxwood Press.

Light, R., Harvey, S., & Memmert, D. (2013). Why children join and stay in sports clubs: Case studies in Australian, French and German swimming clubs. *Sport, Education & Society*, *18*, 550–566.

Light, R., & Lémonie, Y. (2010). A case study of children's reasons for joining and remaining in a French swimming club. *Asian Journal of Exercise and Sports Medicine*, *7*, 27–33.

Lyons, K., & Dionigi, R. (2007). Transcending emotional community: A qualitative examination of older adults and masters' sports participation. *Leisure Sciences*, *29*, 375–389.

Marczak, M. S., Dworkin, J., Skuza, J., & Beyer, J. (2006). What's up? What young teens and parents want from youth programs? *New Directions for Youth Development*, *112*, 45–56.

Martin, L. J., Carron, A. V., Eys, M. A., & Loughead, T. (2011). Children's perceptions of cohesion. *Sport & Exercise Psychology Review*, *7*, 11–24.

Martin, S. B., Dale, G. A., & Jackson, A. W. (2001). Youth coaching preferences of adolescent athletes and their parents. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, *24*, 197–212.

McCarthy, P. J., & Jones, M. V. (2007). A qualitative study of sport enjoyment in the sampling years. *The Sport Psychologist*, *21*, 400–416.

McCormack, J. B., & Chalip, L. (1988). Sport as socialization: A critique of methodological premises. *The Social Science Journal*, *25*, 83–92.

McMillan, D., & Chavis, D. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *14*, 6–23.

Morgan, D. L. (1996). Focus groups. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *22*, 129–152.

Muchinsky, P. M. (1977). Organizational communication: Relationships to organizational climate and job satisfaction. *Academy of Management Journal*, *20*, 592–607.

Murray, D., & Howat, G. (2002). The relationships among service quality, value, satisfaction, and future intentions of customers at an Australian sports and leisure centre. *Sport Management Review*, *5*, 25–43.

Na, J. (2015). Parents' perceptions of their children's experiences in physical education and youth sport. *The Physical Educator*, *72*, 139–167.

Nicolao, L., Irwin, J. R., & Goodman, J. K. (2009). Happiness for sale: Do experiential purchases make consumers happier than material purchases? *Journal of Consumer Research*, *36*, 188–198.

Obst, P. L., & White, K. M. (2004). Revisiting the sense of community index: A confirmatory factor analysis. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *32*, 691–705.

Okayasu, I., Kawahara, Y., & Nogawa, H. (2010). The relationship between community sport clubs and social capital in Japan: A comparative study between the comprehensive community sport clubs and the traditional community sport clubs. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *45*, 163–186.

Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1985). A conceptual model of service quality and its implications for future research. *Journal of Marketing*, *49*, 41–50.

Partridge, J. A., Brustad, R. J., & Babkes Stellino, M. (2008). Social influence in sport. In T.S. Horn (Ed.), *Advances in sport psychology* (pp. 270–291). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Patrick, H., Kaplan, A., & Ryan, A. M. (2011). Positive classroom motivational environments: Convergence between mastery goal structure and classroom social climate. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *103*, 337–382.

Peterson, N. A., Speer, P. W., & McMillan, D. W. (2008). Validation of a brief sense of community scale: Confirmation of the principal theory of sense of community. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *36*, 61–73.

Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing & Health*, *23*, 334–340.

Sarason, S. B. (1974). *The psychological sense of community: Prospects for a community psychology*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Schwab, K. A., Wells, M. S., & Arthur-Banning, S. (2010). Experiences in youth sports: A comparison between players' and parents' perspectives. *Journal of Sport Administration & Supervision*, *2*, 41–51.

Shadur, M. A., Kienzle, R., & Rodwell, J. J. (1999). The relationship between organizational climate and employee perceptions of involvement: The importance of support. *Group & Organization Management*, *24*, 479–503.

Skille, E. (2011). The conventions of sport clubs: Enabling and constraining the implementation of social goods through sport. *Sport, Education & Society*, *16*, 241–253.

Speer, P., Peterson, N., Armstead, T., & Allen, C. (2013). The influence of participation, gender and organizational sense of community on psychological empowerment: The moderating effects of income. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *51*, 103–113.

Tonts, M. (2005). Competitive sport and social capital in rural Australia. *Journal of Rural Studies*, *21*, 137–149.

Vieno, A., Santinello, M., Pastore, M., & Perkins, D. D. (2007). Social support, sense of community in school, and self-efficacy as resources during early adolescence: An integrative model. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *39*, 177–190.

Warner, S., Dixon, M. A., & Chalip, L. (2012). The impact of formal versus informal sport: Mapping the differences in sense of community. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 40, 983–1003.

Warner, S., Kerwin, S., & Walker, M. (2013). Examine sense of community in sport: Developing the multidimensional SCS' scale. *Journal of Sport Management*, *27*, 349–362.

Watson, G. G. (1977). Games, socialization and parental values: Social class differences in parental evaluation of Little League baseball. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *12*(1), 17–48.

Wimsatt, W. C. (2007). *Re-engineering philosophy for limited beings: Piecewise approximations to reality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.