

A Place for Everyone: Assessing Recreational Opportunities for Children in Urban, Suburban, and Rural Communities Across the United States

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Introduction

- The fitness levels of children tend to decrease with age
- Children need an hour of structured and unstructured physical activity to optimize development in:
 - Physical
 - Psychosocial
 - Emotional
- Participating in sports is associated with higher GPA. However, more public and private schools are reducing physical education



Introduction

- Due to the rising cost associated with team sports, many families are looking for an alternative option outside of the school setting
- With the increase in obesity rates, it is important to find accessible and cost-effective options
- This makes community based sport programs a possible alternative



Introduction

- Researchers and private industries are looking at trends in physical fitness, but they have yet to consider the lack of physical activity resources at the community level
- The present study was designed to address the potential link of community and youth well-being across different states and communities



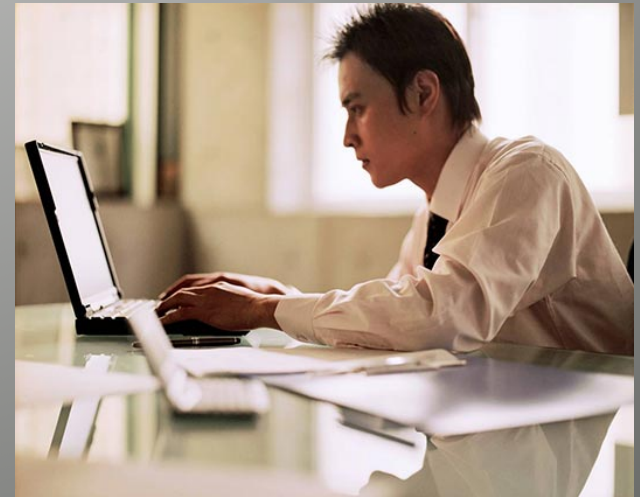
Participants

- 201 parents aged 24 to 67 ($M = 43.13$; $SD = 7.91$)
- Drawn from *urban*, *suburban*, and *rural* communities in Nevada, Mississippi, and New York
- Had children aged 6 to 18 ($M = 11.60$; $SD = 3.32$) participating in community based recreational sports

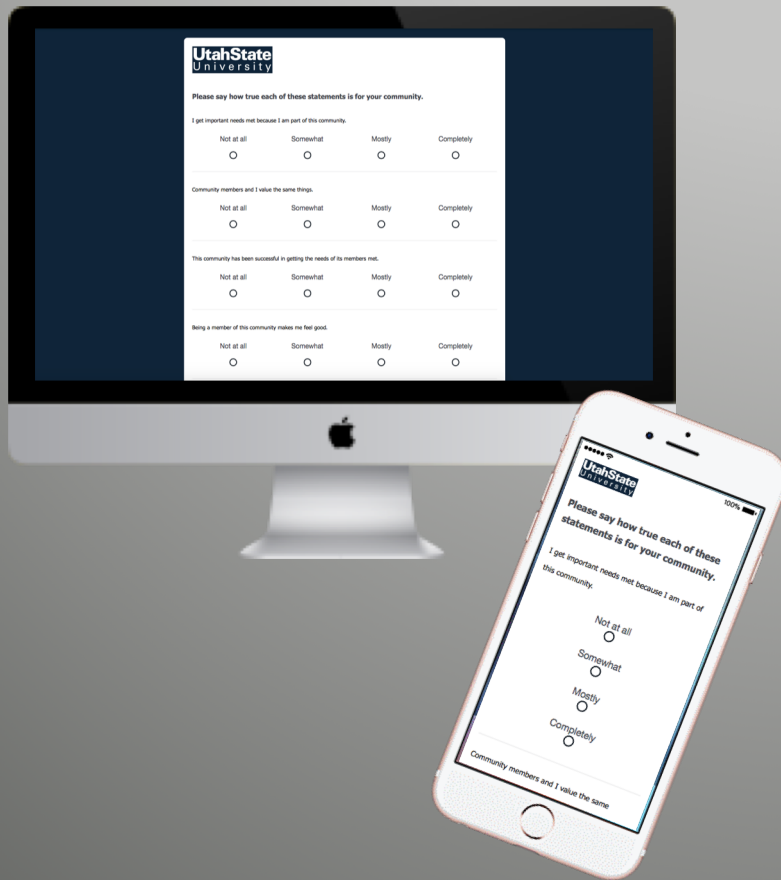


Procedures

- Relationships were established with key stakeholders (e.g., mayors, city councilmen, parks and recreation directors) in *urban, suburban, and rural* communities from the three states.
- Stakeholders were asked to distribute an online survey to families in their community who met the study's inclusion criteria:
 - Child is active in community sport
 - Child aged 6-17 years



Procedures



The 50-item online survey asked the parents perception of their *sense of community* in the community, as well as their perceptions of their children's *competence, enjoyment, commitment, and stress* in relation to community sport participation.

Measures

Sense of Community variables:

- *Membership*: “I put a lot of time and effort into being part of this community”
- *Influence*: “I have influence over what this community is like”
- *Reinforcement of Needs*: “I get important needs met because I am part of this community”
- *Shared Emotional Connection*: “Members of this community care about each other”

Measures

Child Outcome variables:

- *Competence*: “Compared to most of your child's other activities, how good is your child at sport?”
- *Enjoyment*: “My child has fun participating in recreational sport”
- *Commitment*: “How dedicated is your child to participating in recreational sport for the remainder of this year?”
- *Stress*: “How often has your child felt that he/she was unable to control the important things in recreational sport?”

Data Analysis

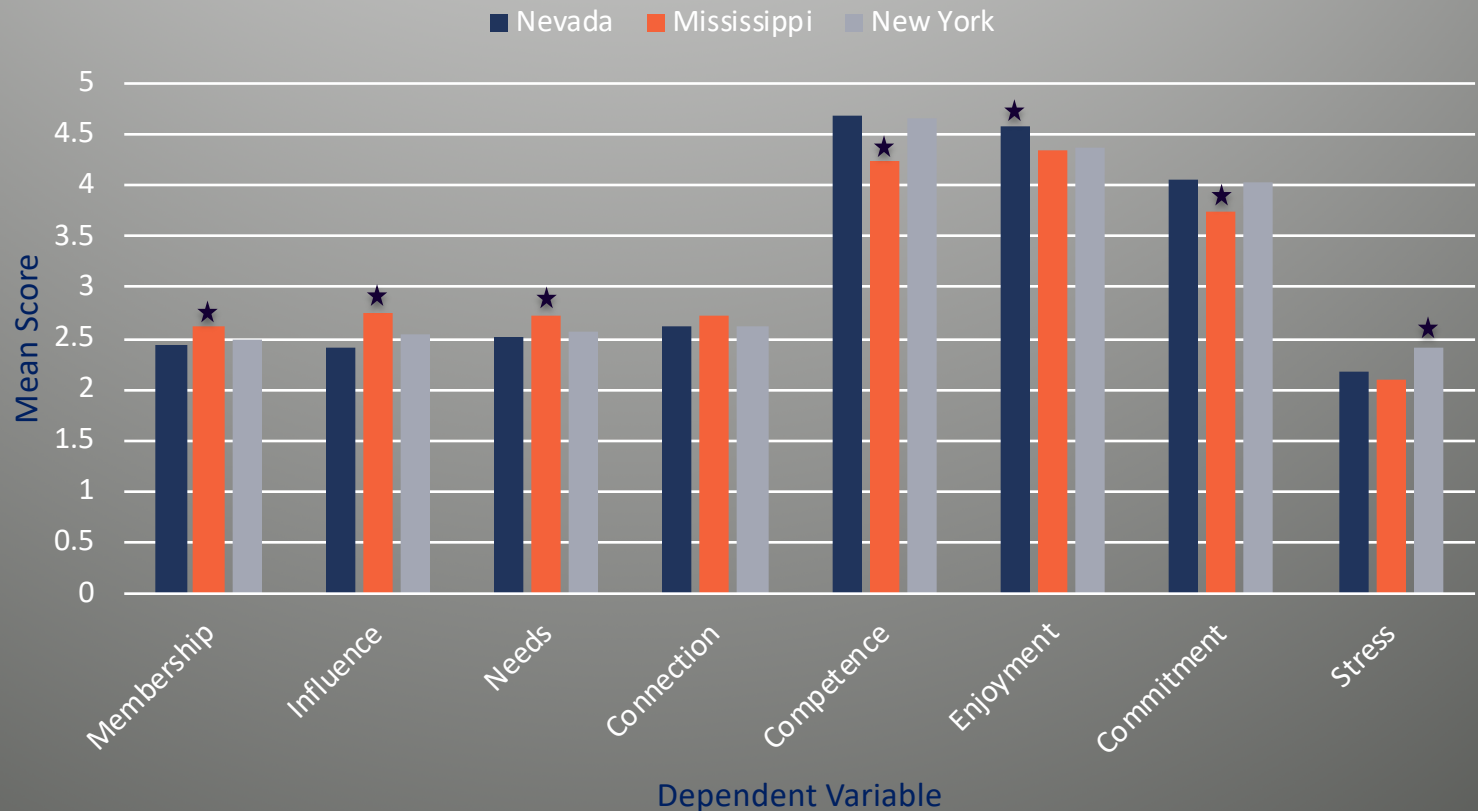
- Bivariate correlations were calculated and descriptive statistics were examined across all eight DVs
- A MANOVA was conducted to examine the impact of state (*Nevada, Mississippi, and New York*) and setting (*urban, suburban, and rural*) on the eight dependent variables
- Tukey post-hoc tests were conducted and output was examined to determine significant group differences across *states* and *settings*.

Descriptive statistics (all participants, $N = 201$)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	α
Membership	2.50	.38	1-4	.76
Influence	2.54	.42	1-4	.81
Needs	2.58	.43	1-4	.69
Connection	2.64	.45	1-4	.84
Competence	4.55	.95	1-7	.78
Enjoyment	4.45	.45	1-5	.77
Commitment	3.95	.61	1-5	.82
Stress	2.22	.56	1-5	.74

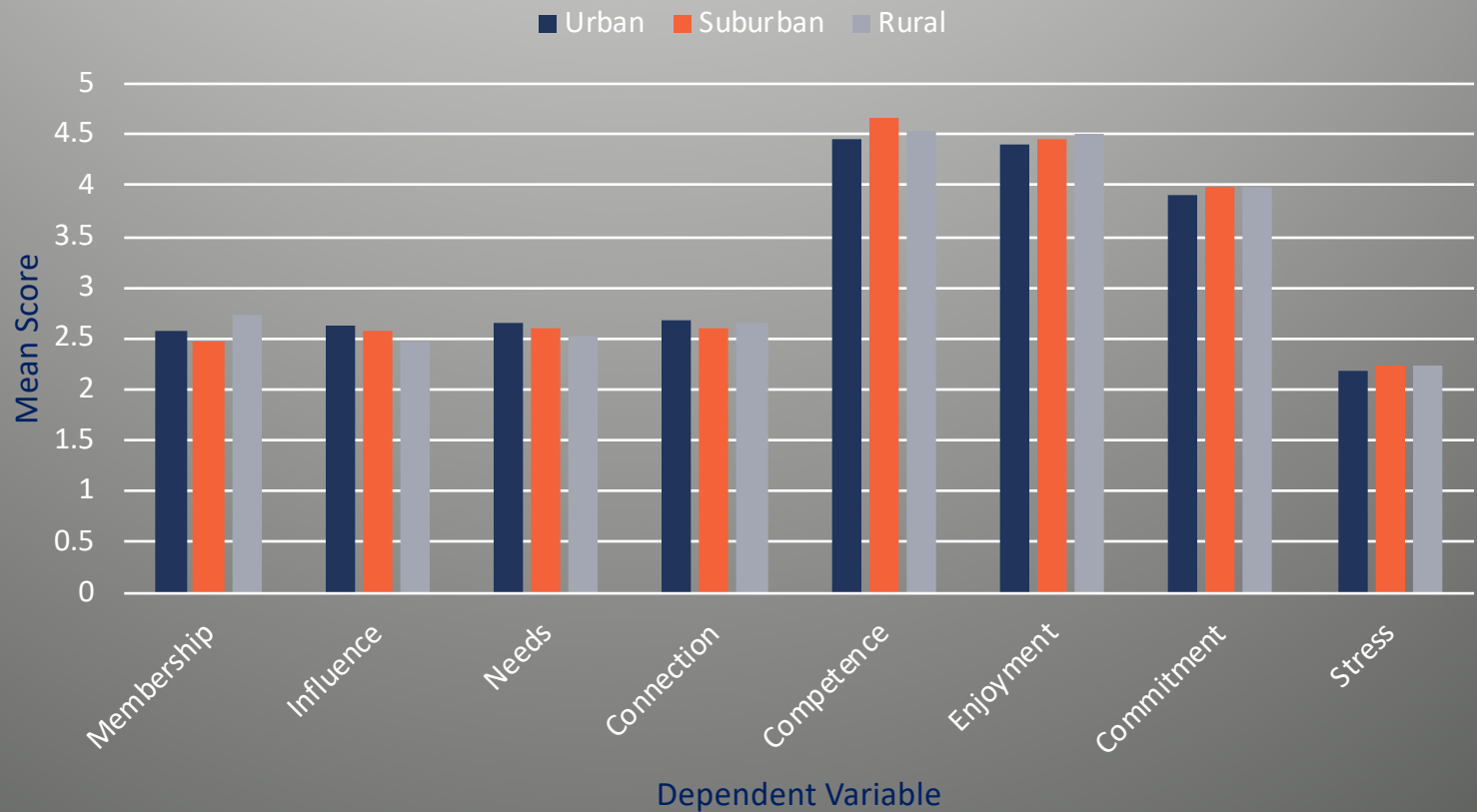
Main Effects (State)

- When comparing the eight DVs across *Nevada*, *Mississippi*, and *New York*, significant differences were detected for all variables except for *Connection*.



Main Effects (Setting)

- When comparing the eight DVs across *urban*, *suburban*, and *rural* settings settings, no significant differences were detected.



Interaction Effect (State x Setting)

- When comparing the eight DVs across *state* (Nevada, Mississippi, and New York) and *setting* (urban, suburban, and rural) the only significant difference was on Sense of Community: *Influence*



Interpreting the data

- Results suggest that state is a more important factor than the type of community.
- Results also suggest that Mississippi is unique in the impact has on parents' perceptions of sense of community and young recreational athletes' sport-related outcomes.



Limitations

- Survey respondents were self-selected from among the nine partner communities
- Survey responses were limited to a single parent participant from each family
- No consideration of the impact of infrastructure or community level influences on child outcomes



Conclusions

- Present findings may help inform the design of programs, facilities, and initiatives to provide more community level recreation opportunities for youth
- Future efforts could examine the improvement of physical and psychological well-being of the children in these and other targeted communities
- Researchers should seek a deeper understanding through open-ended responses



THANK YOU!



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