

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

The Minnesota Youth Sports Research Consortium

Helping Create Change Across Youth Sports



Disparities In Youth Soccer: Unequal Opportunities, Unequal Outcomes

Youth sports can provide a positive, meaningful context for youth development and family engagement through a sense of belonging and connection to community and civic life, and an appreciation for the importance of working together with diverse groups of people to achieve success. All of these well-documented benefits can translate into the classroom and into adult lifestyles in an ethnically and religiously pluralistic society in ways that foster academic achievement, and long-term physical, emotional and social well being. However, the influence may be minimal or non-existent as many barriers limit or prevent some children from engaging in youth sport altogether — resulting in disparate child outcomes. The primary goal of this project is to forge new connections and create synergy among U of M researchers, the Minnesota Youth Soccer Association (MYSA) and community members and leaders in Minneapolis in order to understand the experiences of children of underserved backgrounds in their pursuit of, and participation in, youth soccer. Soccer is currently one of the fastest growing and most recognized sports worldwide, and the MYSA is “the” recreational and travel level soccer provider in the state. Through individual interviews, MYSA stakeholders acting as “informants” will discuss their “situated knowledge”, experiences, perceptions and ideas for making soccer more accessible and equitable that will in sum help in the formation of policy and programmatic recommendations.

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