Why Sport in a Sport-Based Youth Development Program?

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Through engagement with sport and physical activity, sport-based youth development (SBYD) programs aim to support the development of youth toward a positive sense of self, enrich their human and social capital, and enhance their personal skills and competencies (Coakley, 2011; Jones et al., 2011; Perkins & Noam, 2007; Petitpas, VanRaalte, & France, 2017). Sport is deemed particularly advantageous in pursuit of these goals as it provides youth with a unique context in which to focus and apply their newly acquired and/or improved skills, attitudes, and knowledge (Turnnidge, Côté, & Hancock, 2014). However, to capitalize on the power of sport toward positive developmental outcomes, program design and interventions must be deliberate and strategic (see Jones, Edwards, Bocarro, Bunds, & Smith, 2017). Historically, such strategies have centered on curriculum development and risk prevention efforts designed under a deficit reduction framework, in which a lack of resources and support conceptually hinders the ability of youth to flourish (Coakley, 2011; Coalter & Taylor, 2010; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011). However, youth development programs have more recently begun to create and integrate their program interventions in accordance with strength-based frameworks that aim to provide youth with opportunities and resources to enhance their individual and environmental development assets. Generally speaking, the developmental asset framework provides a lens through which researchers and practitioners can more holistically consider the individual (i.e., internal assets) and environmental (i.e., external assets) factors that coexist to support, enhance, or potentially inhibit the socialization experiences and developmental processes of youth (Leffert et al., 1998). However, more research is needed to better understand the development processes and explicit transfer of skills taught and practiced to outside contexts, and qualitative approaches are critical to this work (Holt et al., 2017). Thus, the purpose of this study is to better understand the role and value of sport in such development processes and programs through the lived experiences of youth participating in a SBYD program.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 racially and economically marginalized youth, ages 10-17 years old, participating in an after-school SBYD program on the campus of a predominantly white institution (PWI) of higher learning. Data analysis utilizing both inductive and deductive coding processes (Patton, 2002; Thomas, 2006) is currently ongoing, however, an initial review of the data has revealed codes such as: a) sport and physical activity as a release, b) stress and anger management, c) non-sport development, d) dislike/enjoyment of sport and physical activity, e) confidence and f) motivation derived from sport and physical activity, g) health benefits, and h) role models. The poster presentation will further highlight the data collection and analysis, as well as the emergent codes and themes. Additionally, the poster will provide an overview of the findings in accordance with strength-based, development asset frameworks, as well as discuss the implications of this study’s findings for both scholars and practitioners in the SBYD space.