

Positive Youth Development in a Sports-Based Youth Program

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Online Masters of Agriculture and Life Sciences

June 14, 2021

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Keywords: Character, Confidence, Connection, EYA Sports, Leadership, Life skills, Positive Youth Development, Program Evaluation, Sports-based youth program

Acknowledgments

Several people played a pivotal role in the completion of this project. First, I would like to thank my graduate advisory committee, Dr. Rateau, Dr. Archibald, Dr. Neighbors, and Leta Bressin, for their advice and guidance throughout. Each of you brought valuable insight from your own expertise to influence the success of my project. I want to give a special thanks to Dr. Rateau for helping me develop a body of work that means a lot to me and continuing to be reliable and patient with me over the course of the entire process. I would also like to thank Coach Brad and EYA Sports for allowing me to evaluate their program and interview their participants. The EYA Sports player development program has had a tremendous impact on my life, so I appreciate you all for allowing me to give back to a program that has given so much to myself and my community. Thank you to each of these people for your commitment to and involvement in my program evaluation.

Abstract

Positive youth development (PYD) is a framework where organizations and systems focus on promoting the health and well-being of youth rather than simply eliminating their problems (Mahoney & Lafferty, 2003). Youth programs, including sports-based programs, strive to foster PYD through the implementation of life skills building activities. Positive youth development through sport concentrates tremendously on transferring these life skills to various settings, like school, home, and the workforce (Holt et al., 2020). The concept is mainly philosophical and theoretical at its core, so the Five C's were established as a way to measure PYD. The Five C's include competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring (Lerner, et al., 2005). Using an outcome evaluation, this study determined how effective a sports-based youth program, Elite Youth of America (EYA) Sports, was at implementing positive youth development. Specifically, this study focused on activities that influenced changes in the character, confidence, and connection of program participants. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to answer the research questions, as interviews and surveys revealed the valuable insight on program operations. The data collection process revealed EYA Sports promotes character by modeling correct behaviors and helping youth develop traits of good, contributing citizens. They promote confidence by consistently encouraging their youth participants and having an intense attention to detail that allows athletes to see their growth. Lastly, the sports-based youth program promotes connection by creating a family atmosphere and being relatable and accessible to their youth.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Children around the world spend an extensive amount of time in extracurricular activities, such as sports, that directly and indirectly influence their behaviors, opinions, and perspectives on life. Sports programs are one of the most popular activities for youth as they transition from adolescence to adulthood (Papacharisis et al., 2005). Due to the abundance of participation, sports-based programs have a responsibility to intentionally foster positive development through their activities and interactions with youth. Researchers recognize that sport can be used as a vessel for enhancing positive development in youth if it teaches skills and strategies that are useful in real life (Goudas & Giannoudis, 2008). Using an outcome evaluation, this study aims to identify practical strategies for sports-based youth programs to foster positive youth development (PYD). Sports programs must acknowledge their influence on the personal growth and development of their participants by carefully planning activities that teach life skills which will prepare them for changing circumstances (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005).

Over 40 million youth participate in sports each year and stay engaged for approximately five years, so organized sports are an exceptional context for the promotion of positive development (Harrist & Witt, 2015). The ‘Big 3’ components necessary for positive youth development in youth programs include positive and sustained adult-youth relations, life skill building activities for youth, and opportunities for youth participation in and leadership of valued community activities (Lerner, 2004). Sports provide an opportunity for physical, social, and personal growth during adolescence. Research suggest that sports is an appropriate vehicle to use in youth development programs for minority male youth (Fuller et al., 2013). Individuals can measure PYD through the Five C’s, including competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring (Lerner et al., 2005).

In their model, Holt (2017) and his colleagues emphasize the idea that PYD can be promoted implicitly in sports-based youth programs rather than the program having to designate specific activities for the development of life skills. Life skills can be defined as behavior (effective communication with peers and adults), or cognitive (making decisions); interpersonal (being assertive) or intrapersonal (setting goals for oneself) (Gould & Carson, 2007). Program coordinators, coaches, or volunteers can develop a climate of PYD through everyday interactions with their athletes. High school athletes report that sport participation allowed them to build life skills that could be applied to other areas of life, such as communicating with parents (Camire et al., 2009).

Elite Youth of America (EYA) Sports is a youth development program, based in South Atlanta, Georgia, for basketball players that focuses on teaching and enhancing new skills while preparing athletes for the next level. Originating in 2013, one of the central purposes of this organization has been providing access to exceptional training, while creating a platform for athletes on the Southside to network. The owner recognized that the Southside of Atlanta, though it is full of talented basketball players, was lacking in opportunities for young players to play in front of college coaches. EYA Sports' mission is to use innovative and constructive high-quality training and technology system to provide a comprehensive program for the next college or professional athlete. Another one of EYA Sports' goals is to create an environment within the organization where participants feel welcomed. Researchers express that some characteristics, such as relatedness, relaxed climate, and enjoyment, help provide youth with opportunities to express their ideas and interact positively with adults and the environment (Ward & Parker, 2012). EYA Sports strives to establish a family atmosphere that cultivates positive development, where young athletes are consistently encouraged to reach their highest potentials. The sports-

based program has participants at all levels, including grade school, collegiate, and professional. It emphasizes the importance of developing players as a whole by providing individual and group training sessions, along with opportunities to apply the skills in real game situations through open runs, showcases, and Summer leagues.

The main purpose of positive youth development is to assist children in reaching and exceeding their potentials by focusing on strengths. Researchers emphasize the initial understanding of PYD as both a developmental process and a philosophical approach to youth programming (Lerner et al., 2015). Adolescence is an important period of development in multiple areas of life such as cognitive, emotional, physical, and social. Youth programs, including sports-based programs, strive to foster PYD through the implementation of life skills building activities. Positive youth development through sport concentrates tremendously on transferring these life skills to various settings like school, home, and the workforce (Holt et al., 2020). Though sports participation does not result in a career for all athletes, youth can learn many life lessons and adopt practical skills that will be applicable in adulthood.

For EYA Sports to continue positively impacting youth participants, an evaluation should be conducted to determine how successful the program is at accomplishing its goals and what changes can be made to increase effectiveness. Results from evaluations are used to improve program practice and serve as evidence for program effectiveness to valuable stakeholders (Berlin et al., 2007). Some of the stakeholders for this sports-based youth development program include youth and adult participants, trainers, coaches, parents, and investors. A logic model (see Appendix A) was created to outline the flow of the program from the perspective of various stakeholders including inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. Research suggests that “it is probably not the mere participation in sport that enhances positive development but the

individual's experience in sport that may be the critical factor" (Papacharisis et al., 2005). Therefore, qualitative data was collected through interviews that provided facts and helpful insight into the experiences of the youth. The data collection process in evaluations vary tremendously but usually involved pre- and post-surveys and focus groups (Berlin et al., 2007). This study relied on self-reported information to form a holistic perspective on how PYD is portrayed in EYA Sports youth development program.

One of the pivotal purposes of evaluation is to make rational inferences, which can be useful to multiple stakeholders, based on results (Mertens & Wilson, 2019). It is difficult to understand the totality of a program and all of its interdependencies unless we examine it from multiple perspectives (Trochim et al., 2012). Various stakeholders, including program participants and staff, were included in the data collection process to assure the results provided useful information for everyone involved in or affected by the organization. The quality of an evaluation can be enhanced by representing a wide range of thoughts and opinions on the program (Mertens & Wilson, 2019). Evaluators must be cautious in their interactions to avoid engaging solely with individuals in positions of power, as they can create a limited or one-sided perspective. By taking a closer look at EYA Sports, we investigated everyday practices and activities that influence the accomplishment of the program's intended outcomes.

Definition of Key Terms

- **Character:** an individual's respect for societal and cultural norms; having standards for correct behaviors, a sense of right and wrong, and integrity
- **Confidence:** an internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy
- **Connection:** positive bonds with people and institutions; reflected in exchanges between the child and his/her peers, family, school, and community

- EYA Sports: a youth basketball player development program in South Atlanta, Georgia that focuses on teaching and enhancing skills in preparation for the next level
- Leadership: a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal
- Life skills: the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life
- Positive Youth Development: an organizational framework which provides an atmosphere of empowerment by involving and engaging youth in useful roles and important decisions, helping them learn about and practice self-determination, and developing the skills they need to clarify their goals for the future
- Program Evaluation: a method of study used to improve program practice and serve as evidence for program effectiveness to valuable stakeholders
- Sports-based youth program: an out-of-school-time program that uses a particular sport to facilitate learning and life skill development in youth

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project is to perform a program evaluation to determine the effectiveness of EYA Sports' implementation of positive youth development. Specifically, this study focused on activities that influenced changes in the character, confidence, and connection of program participants. Upon completion, the program will receive suggestions for improvement including evidence-based strategies that promote positive youth development in similar youth programs. This project is significant because youth programs have the power to enhance or impede adolescent development (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2015). It is important for this responsibility to be handled properly, as mismanagement or disregard could negatively impact

the youth's future in various life areas. By emphasizing the transferability of life skills from sports to real life, this research aims to highlight the fitness of sports-based programs to promote positive youth development.

Research Questions

1. How has EYA Sports impacted the development of program participants in regards to three of the Five C's: character, confidence, and connection?
2. How can a participatory utilization-focused evaluation impact the progression of a youth basketball training program?

Limitations of Project

There are some limitations to this project. First, there may have been some bias during the interviews, since I am a member of the program myself. My overall positive perspective of the program and its success could have swayed individuals one way or another during the interview. Additionally, the close relationships I have with most of the interviewees, due to our involvement in the program over the past seven years, could have both positive and negative influences on their responses to my questions.

The second limitation to this project involves the reliance on self-reported retrospective information that could have been inaccurate. For the sake of this study, all subjects who voluntarily participated were over the age of 18 but responding to questions based on their experiences as a youth in EYA Sports. Since many of the people I interviewed are still active participants of the program, it is possible that they considered their current experiences and perspectives when answering questions or simply forgot the reality of those situations in the past.

The final limitation is my lack of experience in the process of interviewing human subjects. As an amateur, I was forced to learn as I went because this was my first time

conducting interviews. However, I was sure to evaluate myself after each interview to assure that I made the needed adjustments to improve. Also, the participants were engaged and eager to talk with me, so it made the process a lot smoother.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Adolescence is a time period where children undergo a vast amount of changes in their physical appearance, cognitions, and emotions (Yurgelun-Todd, 2007). Youth development programs, specifically those involving sports, present adolescents with an interactive way to manage these changes that is both challenging and gratifying. Along with these changes, there is also an increase in risky behavior, including violence and drug use, due to factors in the child's environment and within the child (Hessler & Katz, 2010). Due to the level of uncertainty during this time period, it is important for parents, teachers, and youth program leaders to provide structure and stability for their teens. Adolescents are constantly picking up on and adopting the behaviors and attitudes of the individuals around them (Lee et al., 2004). When they are unsure of what to do or how to respond, they often rely on role models to exhibit what is considered appropriate. Various programs including religious, community service, or after-school programs, are designed to help children grow and develop into responsible and contributing citizens. Sports programs can have a direct impact on the development of skills and attributes that students can carry for the rest of their lives. Coaches sometimes feel responsible for facilitating themes such as confidence, positive affect, positive psychological capacities, and character (Vella et al., 2011). Adolescent participation in sports programs can provide a variety of experiences that help reduce problematic behaviors and encourage positive development.

Positive Youth Development (PYD)

Adolescents are often publicly portrayed as having behavior issues, so most youth programs and activities seek to identify and fix these problems. However, positive youth development takes an alternate approach, where organizations and systems focus on promoting health and well-being rather than simply eliminating problems (Mahoney & Lafferty, 2003).

PYD changes the perspective from which the adolescents are viewed by including interventions that encourage positivity through guidance, support, opportunities, and involvement. It acknowledges the fact that all children have strengths, and when they are combined with the right resources, their positive development can be amplified (Phelps, et al., 2009). With the amount of change present during adolescence, youth are challenged with learning lessons from their mishaps and mistakes. Students will not necessarily be problem free, but the implementation of PYD can instill traits and characteristics that help youth flourish and thrive in their communities.

Five C's

Positive youth development is mainly philosophical and theoretical at its core, so the Five C's were established as a way to measure PYD. The Five C's include competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring (Lerner, et al., 2005). Competence refers to a positive view of one's actions in specific areas including academics, social skills, and cognitive abilities like decision making. Confidence is an internal sense of positive self-worth and self-efficacy. Connection refers to the positive relationships with people and systems, which can be seen in interactions with peers, family, school, and the community. Character refers to the morals and values of the child, including respect, integrity, and knowing right from wrong. Caring is a sense of sympathy and empathy for others. Researchers have also developed a sixth C, contributions to self, family, community, and a civil society, which occurs on the developmental path once the Five C's have been incorporated (Lerner, et al., 2005). This paper will focus on three of the Five C's: confidence, connection, and character. The availability of activities that promote the Five C's can help steer students away from risky behaviors and toward a successful life.

Youth Programming

Various programs including religious groups, community outreach volunteers, 4-H, and boy/girl scouts, assist adolescents with positive youth development. Research suggests that PYD emerges when the youth's strengths are accompanied by the right resources in each of their settings (Balsano et al., 2009). Youth development programs use many different activities and approaches, whether it be teaching proper computer use or table etiquette, to promote PYD. The goal is not making the child more efficient in that task itself, but to instill traits and characteristics that foster better citizenship and responsible adulthood. Some researchers highlight the need for young people to learn a number of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills through stages of leadership development if they are to learn to lead. The stages include dimensions such as leadership information, leadership attitudes, communication skills, decision-making skills, and stress management skills (Holt, 2016).

A longitudinal analysis of a 4-H program revealed the importance of youth development program leaders working closely with other programs to send out a common message to the youth (Bowers, et al., 2010). Positive youth development requires a combined effort from every angle of the child's life. To prepare them for adulthood, youth development programs should create an atmosphere of hope, safety, cultural appropriateness, and respect for adolescent's ability to make choices and bear responsibility (Lerner et al., 2011). Within this environment, youth are able to explore the many aspects of leadership through their involvement in the sport. Positive growth can emerge from the development of skills including the ability to perform under pressure, solve problems, meet deadlines and challenges, set goals, communicate, handle success and failure, work in a group and within a system, and receive feedback and benefit from it (Extejt & Smith, 2009).

Sports-Based Youth Programs

Sports present a unique opportunity for youth to experience fun, challenge, and enjoyment while boosting their self-esteem and reducing stress (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005). Sports use positive youth development when coaches encourage players to step outside of their comfort zone to reach their potential, while providing reassurance when they witness growth. Through physical activity and exercise, sports-based youth programs can also incorporate positive youth development through the Five C's (Holt et al., 2020). Practice and repetition can encourage both competence and confidence in students, while the social interactions, including teamwork and good sportsmanship, can promote connection, character, and caring. Researchers identified three features of effective youth-serving programs, (1) "positive and sustained relationships between youth and adults, (2) activities that build important life skills, and (3) opportunities for youth to use these life skills as both participants in and as leaders of valued community activities" (Lerner & Lerner, 2013, p. 11). These features make sports programs the ideal context because lifelong bonds can be created between coaches and players.

Additionally, while coaches may not directly teach them, the experiences the players have support the development of life skills. Researchers found that participation in high school sports influenced three life skills: initiative, respect, and teamwork/leadership (Holt et al., 2008). The behaviors associated with the concept of initiative included setting realistic goals, time management, and holding oneself accountable. Respect mainly referred to how the players treated their opponents and the referees regardless of the way in which the game is going. Teamwork and leadership behaviors included lending a helping hand when needed, cooperating with one another, and speaking up. Each of these characteristics and behaviors can emerge from incorporating PYD, which shows that they Five C's can be promoted through sports. Sports and

physical activity provide several opportunities for youth to learn what it means to be a leader in different situations while honing their skills in an enjoyable, motivating, and meaningful environment (Holt, 2016).

Five C's in Sports

Sports, especially team sports, sometimes have a negative connotation when emphasis is placed on the amount of physical contact and the intensity of the competition. However, sports participation can have a positive impact on youth that lasts well into adulthood. “The experience of participating in organized youth sports should leave the child feeling more competent in their skills, confident in their abilities, connected to their fellow athletes and coaches, and instilled with a stronger sense of character” (Miller & Siegel, 2017, p. 86).

Youth development in the Five C's have been associated with positive sport experiences (Cote et al., 2014). Of the Five C's, caring/compassion and connection represent social outcomes, while character, competence, and confidence are personal outcomes (Holt et al., 2017). The structure of team sports, such as basketball and football, where individuals must depend on one another and work together, offer youth the chance to build relationships with peers. Participation in sports-based youth programs helped adolescent boys build a sense of community, trust, teamwork, and accountability with teammates and staff (Fuller et al., 2013). Through the use of sports and physical activity, youth sports programs can help students grow across these domains and develop many resources needed for a successful transition into adulthood.

The current study highlights the influence on three of the Five C's, character, confidence, and connection, in a sports-based youth development program. While each of the Five C's are promoted in youth programming, competence and compassion did not relate to the objectives of

the evaluation. Character measurements focus on social conscience, conduct behavior, and personal values (Geldhof et al., 2013). These measures relate directly to one of EYA Sports intended outcomes involving the development of morality, integrity, and respect. Measures that assess confidence in youth pinpoint changes in self-worth and personal identity (Geldhof et al., 2013). This conceptualization of PYD is associated with the youth program's goal to increase confidence and the ability to self-motivate. The focus on connection is linked to the consideration of the program's impact on the community. Connection can be represented through ties in your neighborhood, family, school, and amongst peers (Geldhof et al., 2013). The current evaluation touches on each of these to see how the youth development program impacts their personal relationships and ability to network.

Character

Sports are filled with opportunities for character development. van Mullem et al. (2008) explain that various educational institutions add athletics programs because of how well they can promote character building in a way that is unique. While competition sometimes receives a negative connotation in regards to character development, the act influences moral and ethical values (van de Pol et al., 2020). Researchers highlight the concept of 'fair play' as a matter of morality where all participants have a shared moral responsibility to preserve the context that permits them to play by promoting prosocial behaviors. Some examples of prosocial behavior in sports include encouraging teammates and helping injured players. Additionally, the coach-player relationship encourages character development in youth. Coaches are responsible for influencing, teaching, and modeling a set of standards for their players. Research suggest that by establishing a belief system and a value-driven goal, coaches can provide an opportunity for

consistent moral growth and performance improvement for program participants (van Mullem et al., 2008).

Confidence

One of the main reasons for the heightened interest in sports during the adolescent period is its ability to increase an individual's confidence. Confidence can be defined as "an internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy and one's global self-regard" (Jones, et al., 2011). Researchers found that parents noticed increased confidence, perception of athletic competence and self-esteem in their children after participating in a sports-based youth program (Riley & Anderson-Butcher, 2012). Youth programs, in general, tend to boost the confidence of adolescents using various strategies and activities, through consistent encouragement. In a sports-based program, there are several opportunities for coaches and trainers to offer encouragement for youth during program participation (Riley & Anderson-Butcher, 2012), especially during practices and games. Riley and Anderson-Butcher (2012) also found that parents witnessed their child using this confidence in life outside of the sport.

Connection

Connection is the aspect of positive youth development which directly relates to how youth interact with other people, including peers, family, teachers/coaches, and others in the community (Lerner et al., 2005). Sports can provide the context for youth to have opportunities to learn some positive attributes that will help them thrive away from the field of play (Jones et al., 2011). Some attributes that may assist youth regarding connection include proper communication strategies, advanced decision making, and the ability to bring the best out of the people around you. This study focuses on the peer connections within EYA Sports, as young people create friendships and bonds that expose them to the idea of a diverse group working

together as one. One program in New York, called Hoops & Leaders Basketball Camp (HLBC), promotes leadership development “to improve the lives of at-risk urban youth by leveraging the game of basketball to provide them with caring mentors, leadership skills, and exposure to different educational and career paths” (Berlin et al., 2007, p. 102). Through sports, youth can spend an extensive amount of time with their peers. This allows them to be open and transparent with each other, finding similarities which will keep them connected throughout their lives.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Evaluations

Data collection consisted of a mixed mode design that was mostly qualitative, including interviews, surveys, and quantitative analyses. Qualitative research explores and understands the meaning individuals place on social or human issues (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It allows researchers to take the complexity of a situation and break it down into something that is easily understood. Quantitative approaches focus on measuring a simple set of variables to answer theory-guided research questions and hypotheses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To assess the effectiveness of this youth program, a participatory utilization-focused outcome evaluation was conducted. Outcome evaluations can be useful for demonstrating that a project is or is not achieving its goals (Mertens & Wilson, 2019). As a youth development program, it was vital for EYA Sports to reflect on their progress to assure their objectives were being met.

Selecting Participants: Recruitment and Consent

The participants for this study include the owner, trainers, and both current and former members of EYA Sports youth development program. To get a holistic view of the program, participant recruitment obtained a sample that shared certain characteristics of the program population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Selection criteria for trainers include: must be at least 21 years of age, must have participated in at least two program events, and must be a current member of the staff. The selection criterion for program members include: must be at least 18 years of age, must be actively participating in athletics, and must be a current member of the program (does not apply if member has graduated from high school).

Since the researcher knew most of the individuals personally, participants were recruited by personal contact via phone and email. Each participant was emailed a consent form, including

an explanation of the project's goals and intentions, to sign and return via email (see Appendix B). Informed consent forms allow participants to agree to the means of your study before providing data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Subjects were encouraged to ask questions prior to signing in order to provide a clear understanding of their expected contribution.

Conducting Interviews

Due to COVID-19, semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom. Semi-structure interviews can be implemented in a variety of ways, “with varying numbers of questions, and varying degrees of adaptation of questions and question order to accommodate the interviewee” (Rowley, 2012, p. 262). Interview questions were asked in a mostly set order, with minor modifications based on the flow of the conversation (see Appendix C). Each interview began with an ice breaker and two to three warm-up questions to build rapport and make the participant more comfortable. Descriptive questions were asked to gain insight and develop an in-depth understanding of the program (Creswell et al., 2007).

Interviews with both current and previous program participants were conducted to determine how successful EYA Sports has been in promoting PYD through character, confidence, and connection. These interviews were mainly focused on player experiences, gathering qualitative data about the impact EYA Sports has had on their lives, both personally and athletically. Process questions were asked about experiences and changes over time (Creswell et al., 2007). Following data analysis, an interview with the program owner was conducted to review the results and inquire about ways to improve based on the outcomes of the research. All interview questions were created by the researcher based on the research questions and EYA Sports' logic model (see Appendix A).

Administering Surveys

Surveys provide quantitative descriptions of trends, attitudes, and opinions of a population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, surveys were used to inquire about outcomes from program participation as it relates to PYD, including how successful EYA Sports fostered confidence, character, and connection in their youth. All surveys were administered to current and former program participants, sent and returned using an anonymous link via social media or text (see Appendix D). It was important to not overwhelm the participants with a lengthy survey. Asking someone to devote more than an hour and half of their time can be problematic, potentially allowing participants to tire or lose interest (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The researcher developed the survey by adopting Richard Lerner's Positive Youth Development Student Questionnaire and modifying it with the consideration of this project's purpose and research questions (Lerner et al., 2008). Specific items were chosen from the questionnaire depending on how well they related to the participants and the goals of the program. A few items were altered to make the statements more specific to structure and activities of EYA Sports. Surveys concluded with demographic questions including age, gender, race, and current occupation. Individuals provided self-reported perceptions of themselves during their time as a youth in EYA Sports.

Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately. For quantitative data collection, the researcher watched each interview and transcribed the information with detailed notes. Rowley (2012) suggests that researchers "listen to the recordings and transcribe them verbatim into text form, in preparation for further analysis" (p. 267). Using Tesch's Eight Steps in the Coding Process, the interviews were systematically broken down into codes (Creswell &

Creswell, 2018). Coding is a process that organizes the information by bracketing sections and writing a word that represents some category. Items that related to one another or appeared multiple times throughout the interviews became themes. These themes provided a holistic perspective of the program, identifying the many components involved and drawing the larger picture that emerges (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Qualitative research processes are emergent, meaning “the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed, and some or all phases of the process may change or shift after the researcher...begins to collect data” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, quantitative data was used to support the results found during interviews. For the quantitative data analysis, descriptive statistics were formulated from the survey data using Microsoft Excel. Following the process for analyzing the survey, provided by Lerner et al. (2008), items were rescaled from 0-12. However, all items on the questionnaire were not used, so the scales were altered to reflect the modified survey used in this study. As suggested by the core assumption of the mixed methods design, the integration of qualitative and quantitative data reveals additional insight beyond the information provided by either one alone (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Since surveys were distributed to more athletes than those that participated in interviews, the researcher was able to understand more about the commonalities of program participants during the day-to-day operations of the program.

An outline of this project was submitted to the Virginia Tech IRB (see Appendix E) and the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) determined that the proposed activity is not research involving human subjects. All willing participants provided consent and were able to withdraw from the completely voluntary study at any point. To protect their human rights, no identifiable personal information was used.

Chapter 4: Findings & Conclusions

Detailed interviews with program participants revealed specific ways that EYA Sports' has impacted the development of youth considering their character, confidence, and connection. Survey data supported these claims, as several current and former members shared information about their experience in the program. The two methods combined to create a comprehensive image of the ins and outs of this sports-based youth program.

Of the six individuals interviewed, two were female and four were male, and their time in the program varied from four to seven years. At least two themes emerged for each of the main topics.

Character

The first theme that emerged explaining how EYA Sports promotes good character was their tendency to lead by example. One athlete spoke about how she has picked up some of the trainers' behaviors, stating:

I think that definitely helped build my character in college and even in high school, just being patient with people because obviously he's (Coach Brad) patient with everybody because he's a trainer and he has a lot of people coming to him. Sometimes he might just want to get it going, but some people, it takes a little bit more time. (MP)

Another program participant elaborated on his experiences in character development by saying:

I think they promote good character just by how they act towards us, so they're like an example. They treat us with dignity, with respect, have integrity and things like that. And I think it kind of rubs off on the people that they coach up and teach. (KP)

One of the trainers in the program also detailed how the owner has been a role model for him in various ways. He praised Coach Brad for his ability to show young men the proper way to live and present themselves in society when he said:

Being around Brad, it teaches me more about the business world and how I will have to run my business. But just talking to Brad on a daily basis, he's given me some skills as far as just finding things, doing my own research, not looking for everybody else to do it for me, but me doing it on my own. And pretty much seeing him build it from the ground up by himself, it pretty much tells me that whatever I'm trying to do it can be done because somebody I know personally has done it. (CS)

The second theme revealed the sports-based program's ability to develop different traits that are characteristic of good citizens. Positive youth development strives to equip youth with the necessary life skills to be contributing adults in society. For example, one trainer stated:

I think I'd probably say accountability. They hold themselves accountable a lot more from what their parents say...when you're doing something that you want to do, you hold yourself more accountable to be a part of or to be in that environment. So I think the accountability and they're showing that they love to play. (CS)

One of the participants also expressed:

I would say my character has definitely been developed in being more selfless and being more positive with people around me. (KP)

EYA Sports assisted in helping these young people mature, as explained by one member:

It helped me grow up a lot honestly...so as the program grew, I grew along with it in the sense that my mentality started to shift a little more. I understood more about like hard

work and my work ethic had to be at a certain level if I really wanted to produce and play basketball at another level. It put everything in perspective. (BP)

Confidence

One theme regarding EYA Sports' influence on the confidence of its participants was helping youth realize their potential through consistent encouragement. For example, one participant expressed:

And like just his (Coach Brad, trainer/founder) words of encouragement, telling me that, you know, you are that guy, you are a really good player, you're going to have a big season, things like that. Those words of kind of like affirmation, I think really last year took my confidence to a whole different level...sometimes you can't tell if you're getting better and just that positive feedback and constructive criticism too, like it helps you to build yourself. (KP)

While another athlete passionately explained:

They're (trainers) always in your ear about things, giving constructive criticism, I think it's important. It really boosts your confidence to know that somebody is always in your corner and they're always going to be willing to help you. (MP)

The positive reinforcement given to the young players helps develop an encouraging environment where everyone involved can benefit, even when things are not going so well. One participant elaborated on EYA Sports' atmosphere by saying:

Well I think the biggest thing, especially going back to when I was in high school, being in an EYA Sports environment, like organization, it's huge. Coach Brad has made it a safe place to fail basically. So you can make mistakes and get better from it, and he never put me down about it or anything like that. Like, he's very much encouraging. (KP)

The second theme that stood out in relation to confidence was EYA Sports' intense attention to detail allowing players to vividly see their growth. One program member explained:

They (trainers) really emphasize the little things and things like footwork and different things that people oftentimes overlook. It's like those little things that make the great players great...they explain why it needs to be done a certain way so that it's effective in game situations. (KP)

The program owner talked about how his experience plays a prominent role in the attention to detail by stating:

The experiences over the years and seeing so many different players, I kind of have an idea of what it looks like at every level...just to give you an example, if you got a scale of one to five, five being of course collegiate or professional level, and you get a kid that's a one or two. And that's not the first kid that you've worked with that was a one or a two, but you know what a five looks like, and you know how to get them to a three four or five. (BS)

EYA Sports' first participant supported the owner's claim when he stated:

The level that they're teaching at, it varies. At one time, he could teach somebody who's just now learning basketball, but on the flip side, they (trainers) can also teach very advanced people. So I feel like the balance between shows that they're able and very qualified. (BP)

Connection

The first theme regarding how connected the participants are to other members was the presence of a family atmosphere within the program. For instance, when asked to rate how connected they feel to the other participants, one member said:

It's easily a 10, it's more like it's a family feel...as you go along with the program, you just kind of mesh together. Everybody gravitates towards each other. (BP)

Another participant reinforced this idea when she enthusiastically expressed:

Definitely a 10! I think it's really cool that we're all brought up in this space...and we're all supporting each other and it's not like it's forced or anything. It just kind of comes naturally, so I think that atmosphere is definitely there...I think EYA Sports has definitely given me a family aspect outside of my own family. (MP)

Some of the participants elaborated on the longevity of the relationships they've built while in the program. One participant stated:

I made some friends that are going to be my friends forever. (RP)

While another athlete explained:

A big thing for me is just like working with people over the years has definitely helped me grow relationships with people I work with and with Coach Brad as well. (KP)

When asked about the one thing that he has learned during his time in the program that has had the greatest impact on his life, the first participant of EYA Sports said:

The one thing I can truly say is loyalty and that's in a sense of loyalty to the people, loyalty to the brand, and just loyalty to yourself...it's always good to have a consistent foundation and you know who's been there with you from the jump and who's been there with you through all the stages of your life. (BP)

The second theme concerns how accessible and relatable the trainers are for their youth. EYA Sports staff serve as dependable adults in their participants' lives, teaching and guiding them in their journeys. The program owner spoke about how he stays connected with his players by saying:

By having consistent communication even in the gym and outside the gym...and just being that resource whenever someone needs it. (BS)

Another trainer elaborated on his close connection with the youth, stating:

I have a connection where they can come talk to me face to face a lot more...I'm near, so they don't have to find me...they're able to access me a lot more than the other people they will see. (CS)

All of the trainers and most program participants reside on the Southside of Atlanta. They were raised in the area and have been a part of the community for the majority of their life. The shared reality makes them feel even more connected to the youth. When asked what makes him feel qualified to train these young people, one trainer mentioned:

The fact that I've come up from the same area they come from, so I know exactly what they're going through. (CS)

Unexpected Outcomes

Two unexpected themes emerged from the interviews with both participants and members of the EYA Sports staff. Each of these themes represent an important aspect of the overall development of youth, offering lessons which they can carry with them throughout their lives. The first of the unexpected themes involves helping youth develop and practice leadership behaviors. Multiple participants detailed their personal experiences with leadership development. One athlete said:

I guess just being like more concerned with others. Like if I'm working out with somebody younger than me, then I feel it's my role to be that older person, a leader, and just do what you're supposed to do and let them see how. I kind of just lead them and let

them follow type stuff. I wasn't really caring about that before I started working out with them. (RP)

While another player expressed:

I think just really getting outside of myself more...everybody's there to get better. So you're encouraging them, they're lifting others up, so it kind of forces you to become that team player kind of mindset. I'm here to get better, but you know, everybody else is too, and I'm here to help others and build others up as well

Another participant talked about how she experienced leadership and later began to practice some leadership behaviors herself, stating:

I remember when I first came in, I had you, Jada, Brent, and everyone else telling me, like when I was younger too, just telling me what to do and things like that. Like I'm not doing it right, just encouraging me. So I came in with people that wanted to see me be great in this or that aspect. And I think, now that I'm older, I can do it to younger kids...Coach Brad encouraged me to encourage others. (MP)

EYA Sports' staff are able to witness the young people obtain these skills, evident when the program owner mentions:

Eye contact, the communication they have, that sense of awareness, responsibility, you know? That's been some of the major ones that I've seen. (BS)

The second unexpected outcome revealed EYA Sports' focus on the attainment of valuable life lessons. One athlete expressed:

I would say one thing that sticks out to me, I would probably say kind of trusting the process in a sense...It's often really hard because you never really know exactly what's going to happen or what your future looks like. But, I mean one thing Coach Brad

emphasized is just running your own race and trusting your process. Everything will work out if you continue to put in the work and things like that...just kind of embracing your journey and understanding that everybody's journey is not the same. Even though it may look like somebody has it better at the moment, you never know when your time is coming. (KP)

A different program participant talked about the drive needed to reach success, stating:

It would probably that for whatever you want, you gotta work for it. Like with everything, even if it's school, work, basketball, like you gotta put in that time to be successful because if you don't then you won't be successful. (RP)

Each of the trainers also elaborated on the lessons that they emphasize with their youth. One trainer said:

Every participant has learned from me, never take anything in life for granted...if you're going to do it, be wholeheartedly in everything that you do because it's not given to you. And it can be taken away from you in the drop of a dime, you never know. (BS)

Another trainer claimed:

One thing I always say with all of them, make yourself uncomfortable. When you're working out, if you're comfortable then you're not really getting better. I talked with them about that with life as well. When you put yourself in a situation that you're uncomfortable, it forces you to adapt and change, so that situation becomes comfortable. (CS)

While these themes are not the main focus of this project, they highlight the program's emphasis on the complete development of the young people. EYA Sports staff do their best to prepare the youth for the future by teaching them lessons that can be applied to various areas of their lives.

Survey Results

Twenty-three current and former program participants, 14 males and 9 females, completed the survey. Among the participants, 16 are currently still playing basketball, either collegiately or professionally, two are currently coaching or training, and five have occupations outside of sports. Seven respondents were between the ages of 18-20, ten were 21-23, and six were age 24 or older.

Results from the survey reinforced many of the themes that emerged from the interviews. Survey items were rescaled so that each of the three C's could be represented on a 100-point scale. For items that reflected the program's promotion of character, EYA Sports received an 87.2%. Additionally, when asked about how much the program has influenced their character development, 22 of 23 participants responded 'a great deal' or 'a lot'. EYA Sports received a 79.6% regarding the confidence the program instills in its youth, and 21 members felt that their participation impacted their confidence 'a great deal' or 'a lot'. While interviews revealed more information on the participants' connection to one another, surveys helped explain how connected youth were to the adults on the EYA Sports staff. The program earned a 96.5%, reflecting an extremely close connection between the players and trainers. All respondents believed that EYA Sports impacted their connection 'a great deal' or 'a lot'

Discussion

Each of the individuals who participated in the interviews were devoted to the EYA Sports program and eager to talk with me. They were engaged throughout our conversation and provided valuable feedback to help me answer my research questions. Surprisingly, gaining participants for the interviews was a lot easier than getting people to complete the survey. Building rapport with these individuals came easily, as I have built close relationships with them

over the years of my own participation in the program. On the other hand, the EYA Sports owner was not able to provide me with contact information for the former participants. All survey participants had to be 18 years of age or older, so I had to find creative ways to distribute the survey to the former program members. Nonetheless, all participants made my first experience collecting data with human subjects an enjoyable and smooth process.

During the interviews, two themes emerged for each of the three C's identifying ways that the program promotes these characteristics in their youth:

Character

1. Leading by example/being a role model
2. Helping develop character traits of good, contributing citizens

Neither of these themes came as a surprise to me, as young people in youth programs tend to look up to the adults on the staff. Whether it is a coach or someone who volunteers, youth often seek out reliable adults for guidance and advice. Lerner (2011) and his colleagues suggests that programs can optimize the healthy development of their young people by aligning their strengths with the resources surrounding them, such as the capacity of adults to provide a nurturing and positive setting where their strengths can be enhanced and directed. Modeling appropriate behaviors becomes even more crucial during the adolescent period, as teens are learning what it takes to be a competent adult. Researchers suggest that “positive psychological growth is most likely to occur when young athletes are engaged in a desired activity within an appropriate environment (context) and surrounded by caring adult mentors and a positive group or community (external assets)” (Holt et al., 2017, p. 4). EYA Sports embodies this description, offering a suitable atmosphere with people who genuinely care about your future. A key idea associated with PYD involves a sixth C, named contribution, which suggests that proper

development of the Five C's will lead youth to make multifaceted contributions to themselves, their families, communities, and civil societies (Phelps et al., 2009). Using character development, this sports-based youth program instills traits, including selflessness, loyalty, and integrity, which allow youth to successfully contribute to their societies during adulthood.

Confidence

1. Helping youth realize their potential through consistent encouragement
2. Having an intense attention to detail that allows players to vividly see their growth

Each of these themes highlight a specific way in which EYA Sports instills confidence in their participants while also increasing their competence as basketball players. Promoting confidence in every player can be difficult in team sports environment considering the fact that teamwork is often praised over individual success or progression (Lawford, 2003). However, this program has evolved into a setting where encouragement and praise come from various people. Just as the coaches and trainers want to see you get better, your peers and fellow EYA Sports participants also wish to watch you become your best self. Researchers explain that coaches can be great sources of encouragement for young athletes, especially when they are still learning and may become frustrated with early failures (Miller & Seigel, 2017). One participant mentioned, "us just supporting each other means the world because I mean we're all we got at the end of the day," while another participant stated, "y'all are in the same kind of walk...and it's good to see everybody's successes and stuff". Positive reinforcement and constructive criticism play a prominent role in an individual's portrayal of confidence. The encouraging environment allows youth to feel like they belong and are a part of something bigger than themselves (Holt et al., 2017). Being able to see the fruits of their labor and witness their personal growth, through

increased productivity or efficiency, young athletes in EYA Sports were able to boost their confidence while participating in the program.

Connection

1. Creating and sustaining a family atmosphere
2. Being relatable and accessible to youth

As a member of EYA Sports, I was well aware of the connectivity and closeness among program participants as youth and throughout our adult lives. Most of the people that were interviewed had been associated with the program since its origin, so they all have a deeply rooted commitment to the mission and connection to one another. Creating a safe environment for young people to express themselves is an important component in practicing positive youth development. Ward and Parker (2012) emphasize the need for youth programs to provide students with a voice that allows them to express their ideas and interact positively with adults and that environment. One participant described the EYA Sports environment as a “safe space to fail” when elaborating on the level of comfort among all people involved. Further, both interviews and surveys uncovered participants’ and staff perspectives on the strong bonds created within the program. EYA Sports cultivated PYD by fostering positive relationships and offering opportunities for self-exploration in an understanding and trusting environment (Fuller et al., 2013). Trainers at EYA Sports were raised in the same area under similar circumstances as their program participants. Therefore, they have the ability to get to know their youth beneath the surface, making it a point to find similarities that may reveal a common interest or shared experiences.

Additionally, two unexpected themes revealed EYA Sports’ dedication to their participants overall development:

1. Helping youth develop and practice leadership behaviors
2. Teaching valuable life lessons that are applicable in various contexts outside of sports

While the themes were unexpected for the intentions of the study, they did not come as a shock, as many sports-based programs encourage leadership development and the transferability of life skills. Gillard and Witt (2008) highlight the need to encourage older youth to mentor younger ones. This is evident in EYA Sports, as one participant said, “Coach Brad encouraged me to encourage others.” One of the most important aspects of the PYD framework is combining each of the components to develop an all-around individual. Building life skills involves setting higher expectations for yourself and holding yourself accountable for your behaviors (Holt et al., 2017). Interviews detailed several instances of this personal growth within the minds of program participants. Specifically, trainers witnessed changes in the accountability and overall maturity, while one athlete spoke about the mentality shift that helped him grow up. Holt (2017) and his colleagues coined the term transfer activity to describe activities which promote the transfer of personal and social skills learned in sport to other life situations. Most sports-based youth programs operate under the assumption that all participants will not continue to pursue the sport as a career. Therefore, young people must be able to apply the lessons they learned to help them adapt in other contexts. Studies show that since some life skills are not directly taught, students must be active producers of their own experiences (Holt et al., 2008). Experience is often the best teacher when it comes to the attainment of life skills, and it is the responsibility of the program to provide opportunities for youth to practice these behaviors.

Conclusion

This evaluation helped create a holistic view of the EYA Sports program, identifying specific ways in which the program promotes character, confidence, and connection in its youth.

Character is promoted by being a role model/leading by example and helping youth develop character traits of good contributing citizens. Confidence is promoted by having an intense attention to detail which allows young athletes to vividly see their growth and helping youth realize their potential through consistent encouragement. Connection is promoted by creating a sustainable family atmosphere and being relatable and accessible to the youth. EYA Sports also fosters positive youth development by allowing youth to develop and practice leadership behaviors and teaching them valuable life lessons which they can apply to various life contexts. Researchers identify the 'Big 3' characteristics of programs that promote positive youth development as having positive and sustained adult-youth relations, life skill building activities, and opportunities for youth to participate in and lead activities in their community (Holt et al., 2017). EYA Sports implements each of these aspects in their day-to-day operations, which validates their fitness for PYD promotion.

The program should be a lot more intentional in their efforts to develop high character individuals. While portraying the right way to behave will allow the youth to learn through observation and imitation, EYA Sports should incorporate specific activities to initiate character development. Researchers have become more and more skeptical about the popular assumption the sport builds character due to the lack of strong evidence to support the claim (Holt et al., 2008). Many of the examples in the literature reflect implicit character development, but EYA Sports must adopt more straightforward activities like feeding the homeless, participating in a 5K for cancer, or hosting a fundraising event for a local charity. Additionally, these events will increase community involvement for youth and bring more awareness to the program.

Being confident in your self and your ability to perform at a high level can be challenging for some people, both youth and adults. To continue encouraging this mindset, EYA Sports' staff

and participants should keep enhancing the already extremely motivating environment. During an interview, one participant spoke about not knowing whether or not your game is improving. Those words of encouragement and consistent motivation from individuals in the program can assist the athletes in seeing the progress for themselves. Oftentimes, confidence in sports originates from experience and repetition. As these young athletes continue to progress, they will develop their game by working on their skills during training. When needed, the youth will rely on their hard work to help them prevail in moments of uncertainty.

EYA Sports participants' connection to other members and adults in the program is an ideal representation of what a sports-based youth program should strive for. Qualitative and quantitative research methods suggest that EYA Sports values the creation of rich and meaningful relationships with its participants. Though all interviewees were over the age of 18, they expressed how the tightness of the bonds made during adolescence have laid the foundation for the longevity of their friendships. Every member has a network of individuals in the program who feel similar to family. Adults and older participants act as siblings or role models for the younger athletes, guiding them in the right direction and being available when they have questions or need advice. "As with any mentoring relationship, early encouragement can set the stage for continued persistence" (Miller & Seigel, 2017, p. 90). Almost everyone involved has a connection to the Southside community, where participants share the desire to prove their excellence compared to players in other parts of Atlanta. The program has done an exceptional job promoting connection and should keep forming stronger relationships with its members.

Chapter 5: Recommendations

Following the completion of each interview, the program participant or EYA Sports staff member was asked where they thought the program could go next and how they could improve.

A comprehensive list of recommendations was created:

1. More social media presence/exposure
2. More advertisement/spreading awareness
3. Hiring more staff/trainers
4. Expanding the program to different geographical locations
5. Adding more services for youth (i.e. weight training, conditioning, team tournaments with showcases, etc.)
6. Providing camps/clinics for college participants
7. Getting a facility where all services can be provided in one area

Future program evaluations with the Elite Youth of America Sports Player Development Program should dive deeper into the day-to-day operations. Evaluators should try to get first hand data by observing and taking notes to help increase the reliability of the claims made during interviews. Additionally, while it is unlikely that the participants recalled and provided false information, future evaluations should include youth participants to understand the impact EYA Sports has on the minds of adolescents. The inclusion of retrospective self-report data could interfere with the reliability of the interviews. Finally, future sports-based program evaluations with EYA Sports should include all of the Five C's to understand the totality of the program's promotion of positive youth development. Each of the Five C's came up in the interviews but were not expanded upon for the sake of this study. There are several other changes that can be made to improve this project, but these three are the most logical and feasible.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: EYA Sports Logic Model

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	ST outcomes	MT outcomes	LT outcomes
Trainers	Training sessions	More on-court experience	Improvement in basketball skillset	Increase in confidence and ability to self-motivate	Creation of family environment where participants feel welcomed to return
Gym locations or facilities	Panel discussions with previous participants (with Q&A)	Gratification (winning)	Increase in basketball IQ	Better performance on school teams	Belief in the talent on the Southside
Equipment (basketballs, jump ropes, testing, etc.)	Showcases	College offers/interest	Connection with interested college coaches	Emergence of leadership qualities	Development of character (respect, morality, integrity, etc.)
Weekly payments from parents	AAU Tournaments		Increased awareness of positionality in relation to other players	Increase in support for local players	
Volunteers	Summer League				
	Film Sessions		Body development (bigger, faster, stronger)	Official visits and college offers	
Assumptions:					

EYA Sports does not give praise for external recognition, like rankings and offers. Instead, there is a standard of excellence that every participant must buy into by working harder than those around them. This approach is effective for the audience because most basketball players in the area are used to working for the things that they want in life. The program is about more than basketball, as the relationships built create a sense of comfort and family. Facilities are provided throughout the duration of the program.

Context:

Program is held at various gym locations on the Southside of Atlanta, GA, including schools, colleges, and churches. Participants usually come from an underprivileged background with a drive and hunger for more in life than what they've been given by their parents/guardians.

Appendix B: Consent Form

Recruitment Emails

EYA Sports Participant Interview

External Inbox x



Da'Ja Green <dajag@vt.edu>
to kjaysta23

Wed, May 19, 3:05 PM ☆ ↶ ⋮

Hello,

My name is Da'Ja Green, and I am currently working towards the completion of my Masters degree in Leadership Studies. I will be conducting a program evaluation on the promotion of positive youth development within a sports-based youth program called EYA Sports. Part of this project involves multiple semi-structured, video interviews with employees and participants of this program. For this study, we are seeking to improve the implementation of program strategies that foster positive youth development. If you have actively participated in this program, as a member or worker, would you like to help me by being a part of a recorded Zoom interview? This interview should not take more than 15 minutes. The interview will be conducted by myself and is completely voluntary.

Da'Ja Green
Wofford College Class of 2020
OMALS Graduate Student
Virginia Tech Women's Basketball
Virginia Tech
dajag@vt.edu

EYA Sports Staff Interview

External Inbox x



Da'Ja Green <dajag@vt.edu>
to eyasports

Sat, May 15, 5:51 PM ☆ ↶ ⋮

Hello,

My name is Da'Ja Green, and I am currently working towards the completion of my Masters degree in Leadership Studies. I will be conducting a program evaluation on the promotion of positive youth development within a sports-based youth program called EYA Sports. Part of this project involves multiple semi-structured, video interviews with employees and participants of this program. For this study, we are seeking to improve the implementation of program strategies that foster positive youth development. If you have actively participated in this program, as a member or worker, would you like to help me by being a part of a recorded Zoom interview? This interview should not take more than 15 minutes. The interview will be conducted by myself and is completely voluntary.

Da'Ja Green
Wofford College Class of 2020
OMALS Graduate Student
Virginia Tech Women's Basketball
Virginia Tech
dajag@vt.edu

Interview Scheduling

Da'Ja Green <dajag@vt.edu>
to KJ

Great! Below you'll find the information for your interview on Friday, May 21st, at 11:30am. See you then!

Da'Ja

Da'Ja Green is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: EYA Sports Participant Interview K
Time: May 21, 2021 11:30 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/86359472818>

APPENDIX C: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

EYA Sports Program Evaluation on Positive Youth Development
Interview Protocol**Protocol**

The interviewer will follow a set protocol for each meeting that includes:

- Greeting
- Interview Guidelines
- Questions and Answers
- Closing Statement

Greeting

Hello _____, it's Da'Ja Green, and I am currently working towards the completion of my Masters degree at Virginia Tech. I will be conducting my evaluation, through interviews and surveys, on the Elite Youth of America (EYA) Sports Player Development Program. These recorded interviews will provide feedback that will not only guide my project but will also allow for Coach Brad and EYA Sports to continue enhancing the program for future participants. Please answer the following questions to the best of your abilities.

Interview Guidelines

I want to inform you that this interview will be audio recorded. Are you okay with me recording? Everything we talk about today will be completely confidential, and none of your personal information will be used in my report. You may opt out of the interview at any point. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Warm-Up Questions

- How long have you been/were you a member of EYA Sports?
- How often do/did you participate in activities offered by EYA Sports?

Interview Questions

To begin, I want to learn about how EYA has affected you in your development of life skills.

1. Confidence is defined as an internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy. In your opinion, how has EYA affected your confidence? **In what ways has EYA affected the confidence of its participants?**
2. In positive youth development (PYD) character refers to an individual's respect for societal and cultural norms. It can be identified as having standards for correct behaviors, a sense of right and wrong, and integrity. What changes did you see in your character while participating in the program? **What changes did you see in the youths' character while participating in the program?**

3. Connection emphasizes positive bonds with people and institutions. On a scale from 1-10, how connected do you feel to the other athletes in EYA? Explain. **How have you connected with the students in this program?**
4. Tell me about a time in the past two years where you felt confident in yourself. How, if at all, did you being in EYA Sports contribute to that experience? **Tell me about a time in the past two years when you've seen young people come through the program and gain confidence.**
5. What is one thing you learned during your time in the program which you feel has had the greatest impact on your life? **What is one thing you taught the youth participants that you feel will have the greatest impact on their lives?**

Now, I want to learn more about the program operations, including several events and activities.

6. Which EYA Sports events and activities did you participate in? **Which EYA Sports events and activities did you administer?**
7. Do you believe that the trainers are qualified? How so? **What makes you qualified to train these young athletes?**
8. What are some things EYA Sports employees do to promote good character? **What are some things that EYA Sports does to promote good character?**
9. How has EYA Sports' networking influenced you personally? **How has EYA Sports influenced you personally?**
10. What suggestions would you make to improve EYA Sports? **What suggestions would you make to improve EYA Sports?**

Closing Statement

I really appreciate your contribution to my project. If you want to see your transcript or if you want to see the report, once it's done, I have no problem sharing it with you. All of the information that you gave me today is really going to help, not only with my project, but with the development of the program, so thank you and great job.

***Key:

EYA Sports Participant Questions

EYA Sports Staff Questions

APPENDIX D: EYA Sports Participant Survey

Hello,

Thank you for participating in this survey! Please answer the following questions based on your experiences with EYA Sports Player Development program. Once you are done, please email your completed survey to dajag@vt.edu.



Think back to when you were youth participant in EYA Sports. For the following phrases, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree based on your experience.

I enjoy being with people who are different than I am (i.e. race, gender, ethnicity, etc.).

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

I often get mad at myself.

Adults in EYA Sports make me feel useful and important.

When I am an adult, I'm sure I will have a good life.

I hardly ever do things I know I shouldn't do.

Trainers at EYA Sports push me to be the best I can be.

It is important for me to accept responsibility for my actions when I make a mistake or get in trouble.

Adults in EYA listen to what I have to say.

I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

I get a lot of encouragement at EYA Sports.

All in all, I am glad I am me.

I do my best, even when I have a job I don't like.

Based on you current status, rank the extent to which you feel EYA help develop your...

Confidence: an internal sense of overall self-worth and self-efficacy

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all

Character: respect for societal and cultural norms; a sense of right and wrong; integrity

Connection: positive bonds with people and institutions

What is your sex?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

What is your race?

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Other

How old are you?

- 18-20
- 21-23
- 24+

What is your current occupation?

- Student-Athlete
- Professional Athlete
- Coach/Trainer
- Other



APPENDIX E: Virginia Tech IRB Approval Letter



Division of Scholarly Integrity and
Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120 (MC 0497)
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-3732
irb@vt.edu
<http://www.research.vt.edu/sirc/hrpp>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 23, 2021
TO: Richard James Rateau
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572)
PROTOCOL TITLE: Positive Youth Development in a Sports-Based Youth Program
IRB NUMBER: 21-387

Based on the submitted project description and items listed in the Special Instructions section found on Page 2, the Virginia Tech Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) has determined that the proposed activity is not research involving human subjects as defined by HHS and FDA regulations.

Further review and approval by the Virginia Tech Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) is not required because this is not human research. This determination applies only to the activities described in the submitted project description and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made you must immediately submit an Amendment to the HRPP for a new determination. Your amendment must include a description of the changes and you must upload all revised documents. At that time, the HRPP will review the submission activities to confirm the original "Not Research" decision or to advise if a new application must be made.

If there are additional undisclosed components that you feel merit a change in this initial determination please contact our office for a consultation.

Please be aware that receiving a "Not Research" Determination is not the same as IRB review and approval of the activity. You are NOT to use IRB consent forms or templates for these activities. If you have any questions, please contact the Virginia Tech HRPP office at 540-231-3732 or irb@vt.edu.

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Determined As: **Not Research**
Protocol Determination Date: **April 23, 2021**

ASSOCIATED FUNDING:

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this protocol, if required.