AN EXAMINATION OF RISK AND RESILIENCY: THE ROLE OF ORGANIZED SPORTS AS A PROTECTIVE FACTOR

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Abstract

AN EXAMINATION OF RISK AND RESLIENCY: THE ROLE OF ORGANIZED SPORTS AS A PROTECTIVE FACTOR

by

Helibet Flores-Barriga

Currently, there is debate regarding the role of organized sports and whether or not sport involvement is a protective factor against drug and alcohol use and whether or not it is a predictor of future academic success. The findings in this study indicated that of the youth participants, 46 reported that sports involvement helped them stay away from drug and alcohol use. Of the adult participants, 37 reported a belief that sports involvement prevents youth drug and alcohol use. Adult participants agreed that youth grades are positively influenced by sports involvement. The data found would support advocating for youth sports involvement. In a clinical setting, data would support consideration of individualized intervention prevention and treatment approaches when working with at-risk youth.

_________________________, Committee Chair
David Demetral, Ph.D., LCSW

__________________________
Date
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Este proyecto está dedicado a mi familia quien me apoyo de comienzo a fin en este largo camino. Sin el apoyo y la ayuda de mi mama, mi papa, mis hermanos y mi hermana tal vez no hubiera logrado terminar este proyecto y mucho menos mi carrera. Gracias mama por abrasarme y apoyarme cuando sentía que no podía seguir adelante. Gracias a mi papa y mis hermanos y a mi hermana por estar siempre dispuestos a ayudarme con lo que fuera necesario.

Este proyecto también está dedicado a las familias Flores y Barriga- aunque fui la primera en lograr esta meta espero no sea la ultima.

This project is dedicated to my family who has supported me from start to finish in this long journey. Without the support and help from, my mom, my dad, my brothers and my sister I may not have finished this project and much less my degree. Thank you mom for hugging me and supporting me when I thought I could no longer move forward. Thank you dad, brothers and sister for always being willing to help with whatever was necessary.

This project is also dedicated to the Flores and Barriga families- although I was the first to graduate; I hope to not be the last.

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Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Sports are a commonly shared interest among people of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religious background and physical ability. People of all ages are drawn to sports and sports involvement however, this does not mean that all people like sports or have a desire for sports involvement. A negative association is often made between sport involvement and an increased drug and alcohol use rate. On the contrary, there are studies that indicate that sports involvement reduces drug and alcohol use and promotes academic success. Unfortunately, the resources to educate and promote sports involvement are not always readily available, hence there is a lack of knowledge about the role sports have as a protective factor against drug and alcohol use as well as an indicator of future academic success for at-risk adolescents.

Currently, there is debate on the role of organized sports. Some studies indicate that athletes are at higher risk for drug and alcohol use versus non-athlete peers. This study will focus on risk and resiliency and will incorporate as examination of risk and protective factors within at-risk youth. This study will evaluate the role of sports involvement as a protective factor against drug and alcohol use and as a predictor of future academic success for at-risk youth. This researcher believes that organized sports involvement acts as a protective factor against drug and alcohol use and predicts future
academic success. It is also this researcher’s belief that the use of a holistic approach and individualized intervention plans, including sports involvement, will reduce drug and alcohol use as well as promote future academic success for at-risk youth.

Background of the Problem

Drug use and abuse has been an ongoing problem, one that can be traced as far back as World War I. While tracing drug and alcohol use is easy, identifying the history of abuse is difficult due to the fact that there are multiple drug types. Identifying the history of drug use might imply individual drug type history (Robins, 1984). Although there are many individuals who use some type of given substance, there are individuals, particularly youth, who do not fall into the cycle of drug and alcohol use. Current research findings suggest that there are risk and protective factors against drug and alcohol use. The concept of risk and protective factors has called for further exploration of risk and resiliency for at-risk youth.

At-risk youth are youth who are by nature vulnerable to environmental, social, and interpersonal risk factors. They are youth who, due to the nature of their environment, are likely to engage in high-risk behavior including drug and alcohol use. The presenting study focuses on the protective factors that guide at-risk youth to resiliency. Despite the natural risk factors some youth are faced with, some youth escape the adversities they are faced with and excel into a lifetime of prosocial involvement. This research study aimed to determine the role of organized sports as a protective factor against drug and alcohol use and as a predictor of future academic success for at-risk
youth. This assumption was made based on the researcher’s perception of the lack of public knowledge regarding the benefits of organized sports involvement for youth.

From a historical point of view, there have been numerous attempts to regulate both illicit and prescription medications. After World War I, the United States Harrison Act marked a key point in time in which effort to make psychoactive drugs illegal was made. With this same effort came a reduction in physician prescribed psychoactive drugs and a decline in use among middle class individuals (Robins, 1980). Shortly after this Act, psychoactive drug use became more common among “outsider” groups such as musicians and minority groups. After World War II, use became more widespread and spread into “segregated black ghettos”. From there, use spread to urban middle-class college students and eventually became prominent among the younger siblings and to working-class youth and rural populations. The rapid spread and popularity of drug use quickly became clear. It is important to note that with the rapid development of drug use among youth, research to better understand this outbreak also increased.

Robins (1980) found that youth are frequently introduced to drugs by someone they consider a close friend. The argument can be made that youth who have friends who are substance users are at a higher risk for personal use. Individuals of lower social stratum were also likely to be users. Lastly, findings indicated that individuals are most at risk during their teen years, drug use occurs disproportionately among young urban people from minority groups with average or better IQ’s, who are disengaged from school, and those who are critical of social mores of their times. Results also showed that
the earlier the use began the more significant the issue and individuals who become frequent marijuana users are gravely predisposed to other drug use. Based on the findings of the current study, the argument is that low-income youth, who are disconnected from school, are at high risk for drug use.

In (“The Scope of the Problem,” 2004/2005) alcohol was identified as the leading contributor to injury and death, especially for people under the age of twenty-one. This article, like Robins’ (1980), found that drinking early in life is associated with increased risk for a drinking disorder during adulthood. Data obtained through this study found that White, American Indian, or Alaska Native youth, followed by Hispanic, African American and Asian youth, showed higher drinking rates. No differences were found in rates among male and female youth and older adolescents on the other hand showed that males tend to engage in more frequent and heavy drinking versus their female counterparts. Males also showed higher rates of drinking problems. This article, like others, found that minority youth are at higher risk for substance use.

Statement of the Research Problem

Currently, there is debate regarding the role of organized sports as a protective factor against drug and alcohol use and as a predictor of future academic success. It is this researcher’s belief that organized sports act as a protective factor against drug and alcohol use as well as predict future academic success for at-risk youth. The present study will explore the role of organized sports as a protective factor. The second part of the
problem is that often parents and caregivers do not have the means through which to obtain or understand the benefits of youth involvement in organized sports.

*Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of the study was to find supporting data that organized sports are perceived to be a protective factor by parents, foster parents/caregivers and youth athletes against future drug and alcohol abuse. A second purpose for this study was to determine if participation in organized sports is perceived to serve as a protective factor for future academic success.

*Theoretical Framework*

This study will focus on the debate regarding the benefits of organized sports and whether or not they act as a “protective factor” against risk factors; risk factors include drug and alcohol use. This study will also look at whether sports are an indicator of academic success. Another issue of the problem is that often parents and caregivers do not have the means through which to obtain or understand the benefits of youth involvement in organized sports. In an effort to better understand the contextual and individual components of risk and resiliency, an application of the Ecological Perspective will be used.

The Ecological Perspective gives emphasis to both the individual and the context. Fraser (1997) cited Bronfenbrenner (1979,1986), an early proponent of the theory, strongly believed that children are strongly influenced by his or her family, school, peers, neighborhood, and the community contexts in which he or she lives (Fraser, 1997).
Interactions children have within their environment and with other humans may not always necessarily be positive, but they exist nonetheless. “Based on the interplay among genetic predisposition, physiological influences (neurochemical imbalances or exposure to a disease, for example), and often conflicting forces in the social environment, human behavior is thought to be transactional and subject to the dynamics of social exchange. In the context of biological influences, the theory posits that children develop and adapt through interactions with parents, siblings, peers, teachers, coaches, religious leaders, and a variety of others” (Fraser, 1997, pp. 4). The Ecological theory is an all encompassing theory which integrates the individual and the multiple systems he or she is emerged in. An application of the Ecological theory will evoke an enhanced understanding of organized sports as a protective factor against drug and alcohol use and as an indicator of future academic success.

Hypothesis

It is this writer’s belief that involvement in organized sports in combination with positive role models, family support, and positive community influence, will decrease the probability of drug and alcohol use and will promote future academic success. The present study will be exploring the perceptions adults and youth athletes have on organized sports as a preventative factor towards drug and alcohol use and future academic success.
Assumptions

This study was conducted with several assumptions in mind. The first assumption made by this writer was that community organizations, such as recreation programs offer a sufficient amount of sports programs for both male and female youth. The second assumption that was made by this writer was that of the existing sports programs, the majority are sensibly priced. Third, this writer assumed that community organizations understand the value of organized sports and the preventative influence organized sports have for drug and alcohol use and promoting academic success.

This study concentrated on the perceived value youth and parents have towards organized sports. Furthermore, this study gave focus to the potential for academic success among youth who are involved in organized sports. A fourth assumption made by this writer was that youth who are involved in organized sports are also positively interested in academics. It was this writer’s belief that there is a positive relationship between organized sports and youth interest in academics.

Justification

The current study provided information regarding the benefits of youth involvement in organized and team sports. The study also presented organized and team sports as a protective factor against drug and alcohol use and future academic success. The current study also introduced the idea of incorporating organized and team sports into treatment plans and/or prevention interventions. Research indicates that there are age-related differences among younger adolescents and older adolescents. Botempo,
Cleveland, Feinberg, & Greenberg (2008) found that family and community factors were more influential among younger adolescents and for older adolescents it was found that peers and school factors were more influential. By raising awareness of the benefits of organized and team sports, interventions can be enforced by recreation departments for example, at a community level. This study also focused on the implications of organized and team sport involvement on future academic success.

Eccles & Fredricks (2006) conducted a study in which organized and team sports were presented as an indicator of future academic success for youth athletes. Eccles & Fredricks (2006) found that high school students involved in clubs and/or prosocial activities were more likely to be engaged in educational status and civic engagement after high school. Other studies too have found that involvement in organized sports, in conjunction with other protective factors, is indicative of academic success and less correlated with alcohol addiction.

The current study would provide the social work profession with insight on how to creatively engage at-risk youth and their families to participate in organized sports. The current study also presented the field with an alternate approach to prevention and or intervention.

**Delimitations**

Given the limited time allotted to conduct this study, the health benefits of being physically active were not explored. In addition, the sample size of this study was
limited. In the future, consideration should be given to increasing the sample size. In future studies should also account for gender difference.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher discusses current literature as it relates to risk and resiliency, drug and alcohol use, academic success and youth organized sport involvement and meaningful adults in youths’ lives. To effectively present this chapter, content will be divided into sections. The first section of this chapter examined risk and resiliency; risk factors followed by protective factors. Having a foundational understanding of risk and resiliency provides the means to better understand the role of organized sports as a protective factor against drug and alcohol use as well as in predictor of future academic success.

Risk and Resiliency

In a study by Botempo, Cleveland, Feinberg, & Greenberg (2008) the purpose was to compare the relative influences of risk and protective factors across several domains on adolescent substance use among a large youth sample. The results of this study found that risk factors were strong predictors of substance use outcomes compared with the protective factors, regardless of grade level or substance use type. Individual and peer risk factors were strongly related to lifetime and recent use of cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana. Botempo, Cleveland, Feinberg, & Greenberg (2008) found the community domain to be the most influential protective factor. Findings of this study suggested that the family and community factors were more salient among younger adolescents.
Whereas, peer and school factors were stronger for older adolescents. Botempo, Cleveland, Feinberg, & Greenberg (2008) stated that although lifetime and prevalence rates have declined in the last decade there is some evidence that the rate of decline is slowing or has ended. A concern is the fact that declines have occurred among the older youth thus it is important to further disseminate and sustain preventative interventions targeting relationships between adolescents, alcohol, tobacco, and other drug (ATOD) use. Further findings suggested some evidence that the effect of community cohesion was stronger among the younger youth, relative to the older youth especially for cigarette and marijuana use. The same model was found between family cohesion and lifetime cigarette and marijuana use. Overall results showed that protective factors and lifetime alcohol and marijuana use were stronger among younger youth.

Findings from this study suggest that protective factors play an important role in ATOD use, by displaying positive effects opposite of risk factors or by buffering against the effects of risk factors. The findings support the rationale for implementing preventative programs targeting diverse domains. Family-based interventions have shown promising results in preventing adolescent problem behaviors. Additionally comprehensive community-wide programs have demonstrated decreased problematic behavior among adolescents. The results of this study also support the notion that adolescent substance use is in fact associated with multiple factors including individual, family, peer and community domains.
Fernandez, Frabutt, Graves, Shelton & Williford (2005) proposed to extend research on the links between risk and protective factors for specific substances, alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana. Data analyses found that risk and protective factors differed depending on the target substance. In some cases, parental history of criminal activity was found to predict youth alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana use. Parental behavior control (how families express and maintain standards of behavior) was predictive of cigarette and marijuana use, not alcohol. Fernandez et al. (2005) stated that the uncertainties of the associations between risk and protective factors and substance use poses great threat to the possible effectiveness of mental health treatment and individualized service planning. Researchers hypothesized that: (a) older adolescents would report higher frequency of alcohol, cigarette, and marijuana use compared to younger youth; (b) male adolescents would report higher frequency of alcohol, cigarette and marijuana use compared to female adolescents; (c) a history of parental criminal involvement would be linked with higher levels of alcohol, cigarette, and marijuana use; (d) a history of parental substance use would be linked with higher levels of alcohol, cigarette and marijuana use and (e) higher levels of protective factors would be linked with lower substance use levels and would be linked most strongly with cigarette and alcohol use due to their overall higher prevalence and frequency rate among adolescents (Fernandez et al., 2005). The results of this study found that cigarettes were the most frequently used substance, preceded by alcohol and marijuana. The highest percentage of adolescents reported having tried cigarettes at least once followed by marijuana and
alcohol, respectively. Adolescents also were more likely to experiment with cigarettes and marijuana and they were also more likely to continue using cigarettes and alcohol compared to marijuana after having tried it.

Sale, Sambrano, Springer & Turner (2003) conducted a longitudinal study in which a cross-site evaluation of high-risk youth to clarify the relationships between risk and protective factors and substance use. Participants were assessed on substance use (cigarette, alcohol, and marijuana use), external risk factors including family, school, peer and neighborhood influences, and individual risk and protective factors, including self-control, family connectedness, and school connectedness. Sale, Sambrano, Springer & Turner (2003) found a strong association between peer and parental substance use norms and substance use. Individual protective factors, especially family and school connectedness were mediators of substance use. Findings also suggest that stressing the fostering of conventional anti-substance use attitude among parents and peers, the importance of parental supervision, and development of strong connections between youth and their family, peers, and school may be the most effective method of preventing and reducing substance use among high-risk youth.

Additional findings from this study indicated that youth who felt alienated from family, school, and positive peers due to negative environmental factors, were likely to experiment with alcohol and drugs than were youth who felt more connected to positive institutions. Further findings have shown that using an individual protective framework has shown that individuals with social competency, autonomy, self-control and self-
efficacy, are less likely to use than their peers (Sale, Sambrano, Springer & Turner, 2003). The model used in the current study asserts that external and internal risk and protective factors all influence substance use behaviors, and that it is the interrelationship between the internal and external factors-connectedness of youth to their families and school, that are most critical in youths’ lives.

Findings from Sale, Sambrano, Springer & Turner (2003) revealed that family plays a critical protective role as youth develop through adolescence and peers influence older youth more so than younger youth. Peer attitudes and perceptions of peer use were found to be strong predictors of substance use among older youth than younger youth. According to Sale, Sambrano, Springer & Turner (2003) the path from school connectedness to school performance was also found to be stronger for younger youth than for older youth, thus school plays a critical role in influencing positive behaviors that may lead to prevention of, or reductions in, substance use among younger youth. School performance is another predictor of substance use behavior in older youth. For 12 graders, poor grades were associated with substance-using peers and personal substance use. The model in this study emphasizes the critical importance of family, peers, and individual protective factors for buffering youth from substance use. Equally important is the emphasis given to prevention, which is not to make youth insensitive to their social environment, but to ensure that youth are strongly connected to positive healthy environments (Sale, Sambrano, Springer & Turner, 2003).
Benzies & Mychasiuk (2009) focused on identifying the protective factors that contributed to family resiliency. The study described resiliency to be the successful application of protective factors and to engage in adverse situations and emerge from them stronger (Bensies & Mychasiuk, 2009). This study yielded 24 protective factors that foster resiliency across three distinct but interactive levels: individual, family and community. Researchers found that resiliency develops through a family’s ability to use protective factors to successfully cope and move forth through challenging situations. Furthermore, researchers indicated that protective factors transform responses to undesirable situations so that families avoid possible negative outcomes. Benzies & Mychasiuk (2009) identified risk factors to be circumstances in which there is an increased probability of poor outcomes. The current study identified the following as individual protective factors: emotional regulation, a belief system, self-efficacy, effective coping skills, education, skills and training, health, temperament and gender. Family protective factors were identified as family structure, intimate-partner relationship stability, family cohesion, supportive parent-child interaction, stimulation environments, social support, family of origin influences, stable and adequate income, and adequate housing. Community protective factors were identified as involvement in the community, peer acceptance, supportive mentors, safe neighborhoods, access to quality childcare and school and access to quality health care (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009).

Clinkinbeard, S.S., Evans, W.P., Marsh S.C., & Thomas, R.M. (2007), studied the factors that are related to a sense of coherence (SOC) levels among youth. Research
findings indicated that social support, anger expression, family conflict and neighborhood cohesion were predictors of SOC for males and females. Marsh et al. found no significant difference in means. The SOC score for males was $M=2.945$, $SD=.412$ and for females it was $M=2.945$, $SD=.450$. Data analysis showed that males reported higher levels of anger expression, family conflict and community endorsement of gang membership. Males also reported lower SOC, but higher levels of social support and neighborhood cohesion predicted higher SOC levels. Females reported an increased level of anger expression and family conflict. Females also reported lower SOC levels, while age and higher support and neighborhood cohesion were related to higher SOC levels. Another interesting finding from this study was that males were more influenced by their perception of community norms that support gang involvement.

Risk Factors

Interparental Conflict

Fraser (1997) referenced Emery & Forehead (1994) in that interparental conflict may desensitize children from conflict and provide models of poor problem solving. Fraser (1997) found that interparental conflict may act as a barrier for future effective parenting, thus making children more vulnerable to environmental conditions and poor peer influences and parent psychopathology which exposes children to higher rates of vulnerability. Symptoms of mental health conditions may prevent parents from providing consistent care and the discipline their children need. Fraser (1997) also found that lack of support and treatment, for parents with psychopathology may increase child risk by
exerting a negative effect on the marital relationship and the overall cohesiveness of the family. Poor parenting, including poor and inconsistent family practices, forms the basis of Patterson’s (1982) theory of coercive family process. Patterson’s theory posits that parental inconsistencies teach children to use adverse behavior to meet social goals within the family, at school, and in other settings. Poor family practices may not necessarily cause familial problems, but poor parenting may exacerbate such behavior (Fraser, p.23, 1997).

**Gender**

Fraser (1997) work referenced Luthar & Zigler (1991) and Morisset (1993) in which evidence was found that males are better respondents to stressors like family discord and divorce than females. According to this study, females frequently present more prolonged disturbance versus males. Fraser (1997) also cited Compas, Hinden, & Gerhardt (1995) and Patterson, Reid & Dishion (1992) who found that males are more likely to engage in aggressive and antisocial behavior than are females. One study found that girls are more likely to struggle academically and have higher rates of mental health conditions as was found in Werner and Smith (1982) and cited by Fraser (1997). Future findings may suggest that gender contributes to certain mental health conditions, but this has not yet been concluded. Gender expectations have changed, as have the comparative rates for social and health problems. Gender differences may represent fundamental biological differences between males and females and changing beliefs, values, and norms (Fraser, 1997).
Drugs and Alcohol

In an article published by the American Journal of Public Health (“Editorial: The Natural History,” 1997) alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine were the only recognized psychoactive substances that are available without a doctor’s prescription. Caffeine is the only drug that is entirely unregulated. This might be due to a lack of societal damage, but only physical damage to initially health persons. Alcohol and tobacco are only legally available to individuals of a specific age group. Unfortunately, most youth experiment with these substances before they are of legal consumption age. The article provides a history of the use of both legally and illicitly used drugs. Furthermore, this article found that legal drugs are more commonly and regularly used than are illicit drugs, the use persists longer, and they are less often discontinued during early adulthood (“Editorial: The Natural History”, 1995).

Bigal, Cody, Dent, Earleywine, Newcomb, & Sussman (2004) conducted a study in which their purpose was to summarize the theoretical basis for targeted prevention programs as they apply to different high-risk groups. Bigal et al. (2004) explain the advantages and disadvantages of different definitions of risk and discuss strategies for preventing drug use and related problems in high-risk youth. The present study found that teens who use drugs frequently develop unusual beliefs that interfere with problem solving, coping adaptations, and achieving goals. These beliefs subsequently lead to greater social isolation and depression. Furthermore, Bigal et al. (2004) stated that
substance-using teens enter adult roles at a much earlier stage than non-substance using teens.

The Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD, 2000-2010) identified several noteworthy statistics. One worth mentioning was that among youth between the ages of 12 through 17, the rate of alcohol use declined from 17.6 percent in 2004 to 16.5 percent. During that same period, youth binge drinking also declined during that period from 11.1 percent to 9.9 percent (SADD 2000-2010). A second statistic found by SADD (2000-2010) indicated that in 2005, 85.6 percent of youth between the ages of 12 through 17, reported either strongly or somewhat strongly disapproving of their peers having one or two alcoholic beverages almost daily. SADD (2000-2010) also found that two-fifths of 8th graders and almost three-fourths of all 10th graders (73%) considered marijuana easily accessible compared to 86 percent of 12th graders who reported marijuana was easily accessible. In 2005, 15.5 percent of youth between the ages of 12 through 17 indicated, that in the past month, someone had approached them with selling drugs (SADD 2000-2010). Youth who were approached by someone selling drugs were more likely to use. Youth who believed their parents would disapprove of their using a substance were less likely to have used an illicit drug in their lifetime (SADD 2000-2010).

Protective Factors

Caring and Supportive Adults

Charney, Morgan, Southwick & Vythilingam (2005) examined the role mentors play in promoting resilience in at-risk youth. The study looked at the contributions a non-
parental adult can make such as providing reliable support, communicate moral values, teach information and skills, inspire, motivate, enhance interpersonal relatedness, and foster self-esteem. Current research on the role of mentors has found that the mentors are critical in the lives of, especially, at-risk youth. Findings from Charney, Morgan, Southwick & Vythilingam (2005) have found that for children in Big Brother and Big Sister (a mentoring program) those who meet regularly with their Big Brother/Big Sister for approximately one year were less likely to binge drink, use illegal drugs, and skip school. The same study found that depression scores were higher for children on the waitlist than for those who had been involved in the program for at least three years. According to Charney, Morgan, Southwick & Vythilingam (2005) at-risk children who have a mentor, particularly a non-parental kin mentor, display less problem behaviors and more positive attitudes towards school, greater efficiency, and less marijuana use. These children were also less involved in nonviolent delinquency and have lower levels of anxiety and depression.

Charney, Morgan, Southwick & Vythilingam (2005) specifically focused on the role of nonparental adult natural mentors and the precise importance they have for at-risk youth. This study found that one of the ways that natural mentors foster resilience in at-risk children is acting as a buffer against the development of depression and anxiety. Suggestions have been made that having a mentor moderates the relationship between depression, social support, and relationship problems. While natural non-parental mentors foster resilience in children and adolescents, kin mentors have been found to foster
greater resilience among children and youth. Charney, Morgan, Southwick & Vythilingam (2005) found that repetitive imitation of a mentor’s cognitive strategies and behaviors, specific areas of the brain become activated, new neuronal branches and connections are formed, synaptic transmission increases, and size and shape of stimulated cortical areas change. Furthermore, they state that if behaviors are imitated for an extended period, behaviors can become habits. Mentors are imperative in the lives of at-risk youth in multiple arenas of their lives. Consequently, mentors may be saving the lives of their mentees.

An examination by Colon, Esparza, & Sanchez (2008) focused on the role of natural mentoring relationships in the academic performance of urban, diverse, Latino high school students. Participants in this study were asked about the mentor’s demographic characteristics and the characteristics of their mentoring relationships. Results from Colon, Esparza, & Sanchez (2008) found that the presence of a mentor was associated with fewer absences, higher educational expectations, and greater expectancies for success, and sense of school belongingness. The mentor’s educational level, frequency of contact, relationship period and support type provided by the mentor, were associated to the participants’ academic outcomes (Colon, Esparza, & Sanchez, 2008). Colon, Esparza & Sanchez (2008) described natural mentoring relationships as relationships between youth and adults that develop as a result of the adolescents social networking. Natural mentoring relationships are not as developed as was referenced by Colon, Esparza, & Sanchez (2008) from Behrendt, Bingenheirmer, & Zimmerman
Colon, Esparza, & Sanchez identified natural mentors to include adults like teachers, extended family members, and pastors. This study referenced Werner and Smith (1982), which found that children who are exposed to poverty and family instability that later became healthy and competent adults, had had at least one extra-familial constant adult who provided emotional support. The support of a non-parental adult protected youth from the negative effects of poverty and family instability (Colon, Esparza, & Sanchez, 2008). DuBois and Silverthorn (2005) were referenced by Colon, Esparza, & (2008) to show results from a nationally representative data set that adolescents and young adults who had a natural mentor were more likely to graduate from high school and attend college, compared to their peers who did not have a mentor.

de Anda (2001) conducted an examination in which a first year mentoring program was evaluated. The program was designed for at-risk youth in a low-income urban setting with high rates of youth and violent crimes. The study asked open-ended questions before and after program involvement regarding the mentees relationship with his or her mentor. Overall mentees were generally satisfied with the relationship with their mentors. Two mentors who played a lead role were also interviewed with open-ended questions about their perception of the relationship.

Results from de Anda (2001) found that in recent times, mentoring has become perceived as a preventative intervention for at-risk youth. Risk areas as was stated by de Anda (2001) include dropping out of school, poor academic achievement and educational aspirations, criminal/delinquent behavior, gang affiliations, and substance
abuse. The first purpose for the given relationship was to provide a supportive adult role model who would further the mentees social and emotional development, help improve his/her academic career as well as help with career motivation and achievement. The second purpose was also to expand the youth’s life experiences, redirect them from at-risk behaviors, and to foster self-esteem (de Anda, 2001). Findings from this study showed that mentees wanted someone to talk to and someone with whom they could share time and activities. Significant number of mentees stated that they wanted a mentor to talk with because it was difficult to talk with his/her family members. When mentees were asked if they would discontinue their participation in the program the overall response was that having someone to talk to was important (de Anda, 2001). Findings revealed that mentors’ positive characteristics included being a good match with the same personality, being responsible, fun, athletic, adventurous, loves to read, outgoing, reliable, honest, and someone who can align with the mentee (de Anda, 2001). When two of the lead adult mentors were interviewed as to why they decided to join the program, both conquered they did it because they felt a sense of community and had the desire to help meet the needs of the youth. When asked how they saw the relationship between themselves and the mentee, one interviewee stated that he saw himself as a confidant and sounding board. A second interviewee stated she saw her relationship with her mentee as varying, depending on the needs of her mentee. The second interviewee was willing to take on multiple roles with her mentee; often taking on a motherly role, a sisterly role, and at times even a fatherly role (de Anda, 2001). There was a mutual understanding that
their relationship was a special type of friendship that offers a supportive and trustworthy listener and a caring sounding board. This study found that mentees looked for someone they could trust, someone who could be supportive and nonjudgmental as well as someone with whom they could have fun.

DeJong (2004) conducted a study using the Big Brother Big Sister Program. Fifty-one participants in Big Brother Big Sisters of Victoria volunteered to examine the relationships between metaphor use and mentoring. DeJong (2004) referenced Rhodes (2002) when defining the role of a mentor as an older experienced adult, who is over the age of twenty-one, and who agreed to a formal program-based relationship with a non-familial younger individual. The purpose of this study was to examine the strengths and limitations of metaphor use in the mentoring process at Big Brother Big Sisters Victoria. The study focused on determining whether or not metaphors were used when mentor and mentee thought of one or when interacting with one another. A second focus was to determine what kinds of metaphors were used. Thirdly, it asked if metaphors strengthen the relationship and fostered a more intimate relationship. Lastly, it asked if a conversation between mentor and mentee on relational metaphors would be beneficial to their relationship.

DeJong (2004) found that the presence, or lack thereof, of a mentor is critical in a youth’s life. This study focused on two variables: the amount of change between program and post-program, and the difference between those in a mentoring relationship and those merely on the wait list (DeJong, 2004). Results indicated that although problematic
behavior increased among all teens, those who had a mentor increased at a much slower rate than teens without a mentor. This study also found that teens whose mentors were non-familial were better able to face challenges. Further examination of the Big Brother Big Sisters Program revealed that children from lower income and single parent families who were involved in the Big Brother Big Sisters program graduated from high school, college or university at a higher rate than the national average (DeJong, 2004).

Aronowitz (2005) explored the process through which adolescents develop resilience and change their risk behaviors despite stressors in their environment. Findings from this study provided information regarding specific behaviors that promote positive outcomes in at-risk youth. The article highlighted the importance of early intervention, especially among younger children, because children who live in high stress environments are at a much higher risk of engaging in risk behavior at an earlier age. Aronowitz (2005) referenced Donovan, Jessor & Costa (1991) who found that intervening with younger youth has proven that the longer youth delay engagement in risky behavior the less likely they are to start and for those who have started they are likely to quit. Results from Aronowitz (2005) found that adolescents who felt connected with a caring, competent, and responsible adult were able to foresee a positive future for him or herself. When it came to raising expectations, participants discussed a kind of coaching by adults that held them to higher expectations that they would otherwise not have had. Coaching entailed informants’ description of coaching as ongoing encouragement, support, and motivation that helped supersede struggles. Respectable
coaches instilled a belief in the youth’s ability to succeed and showed genuine concern for him or her. Aronowitz (2005) found that having a connected relationship with a caring, competent and responsible adult decreased risk behaviors.

**Organized Sports**

Multiple studies have attempted to determine whether sports involvement acts as a protective factor against alcohol use. Eccles, Peck & Vida (2008) conducted a study using pattern-centered methods to examine how adolescents’ alcohol use and sports activities are related both to childhood sports and problem behavior as well as to heavy drinking during adulthood. According to Eccles, Peck & Vida (2008) sports involvement has been seen as a protective factor for healthy development due to its shared characteristics with other health-enhancing activities. This study referenced Eccles, & Gootman (2002) in that involvement in extracurricular activities provides opportunities for adolescents to interact with positive peers, to develop competencies and skills and exercise autonomy, which promote a variety of forms of healthy development including decreased alcohol use. Eccles, Peck & Vida (2008) has found that sports involvement has been associated with various indicators of affirmative youth development. Results from Eccles, Peck & Vida (2008) found that sports participation alone is not enough to drive the relationship between sports and alcohol use.

Eitle, McNulty Eitle & Tuner (2003) conducted a study in which attention was given to the widely held notion that sports participation reduces risk of substance use with preteens and young adults. The study found that among African Americans,
greater the extent of high school sports involvement the less risk there is for drug and alcohol use. Findings for this study suggest that sports involvement is related to high rates of drug and alcohol use for white individuals. According to the Deterrence Hypothesis, sports involvement may reduce the likelihood of deviance through multiple ways including peer associations, strict athlete supervision in terms of training and regulations, increased social relationships, self-expression through sports versus expression through deviant behavior (Eitle, McNulty Eitle, & Turner, 2003).

Eccles & Fredricks (2006) conducted an examination on the relationships between participation in high school extracurricular contexts and developmental outcomes in adolescence and young adulthood among an economically diverse sample of African American and European American youth. The study found that activity participation is positively linked to academic outcomes including grades, test scores, school engagements and educational aspirations. Extracurricular involvement was associated with lower dropout rates and decreased problem behavior in areas of delinquency and substance use. There are indications that the benefits of activity participation in reducing problematic behavior are especially strong among high-risk youth.

Wichstrom & Wichstrom (2009) looked at whether participation in organized sports during adolescence predicts increased smoking, alcohol consumption, and cannabis use starting in late adolescence and into adulthood. Wichstrom & Wichstrom (2009) looked at whether increased drug use varied depending on sport type (team versus individual sports); skills needed like endurance, strength or technical and level of
competition. Further findings showed that initial levels of participation in organized sports predicted growth in alcohol intoxication. Findings also indicated that individuals in team sports had greater alcohol intoxication but lower tobacco and cannabis use during their adolescent years and early adulthood versus those involved in technical or strength sports. Findings showed that endurance sports predicted reduced growth in alcohol intoxication and tobacco use, whereas technical or strength sports predicted growth in alcohol and tobacco use. This study concluded that participation in team sports during late adolescence and early adulthood might increase the growth in alcohol intoxication during late adolescence, as well as early adulthood, and that participation in team and endurance sports may reduce future increase and cannabis use.

_Academics_

Barr-Anderson, Fox, Neumark-Sztainer & Wall (2010) examine the associations between team sports participation, physical activity, and academic outcomes in middle and high school students. The results of this study found physical activity and team sports participation were independently associated with high grade point averages and for high school aged boys only sports team participation was independently associated with a high grade point average. Among middle school students, a positive association between physical activity and grade point average is not differentiated from the relationship between sports team participation and a higher grade point average. In conclusion, Barr-Anderson, Fox, Neumark-Sztainer & Wall (2010) found that regardless of whether academic success was related to physical activity or participation on team sports, the
findings indicated a positive association between physical activity involvement and academic achievement among students.

Belgrave, Clark & Nasim (2008) conducted an exploratory study to examine the relative contributions of academic achievement, peer drug use, and neighborhood attachment on alcohol and marijuana use among high-risk African American adolescents. Researchers found that academic achievement and peer drug use were significant predictors of alcohol and marijuana use among African American youth. The primary variables in this study were academic achievement, peer drug use and neighborhood attachment, as well as past 30-day alcohol and marijuana use. Researchers were especially interested in finding out which study variable was most influential in recent alcohol and marijuana use. High academic achievement was associated with lower levels of drug use. Belgrave, Clark & Nasim (2008) found that academic achievement and peer drug use were significant predictors of adolescent drug use. Further findings reported that lower academic achievement or having peers that engage in drug use are more likely to use alcohol and smoke marijuana versus their counterparts.

Bartko & Eccles (2003) used a person-oriented approach to examine the participation of adolescents on constructive, organized activities and relaxed leisure activities. The goals of the study were to identify differing profiles of involvement in activities and the relationship to psychosocial indicators for the various groups. Activity profiles were created using cluster analytic techniques for adolescents’ responses in multiple domains. Bartko & Eccles (2003) found that adolescents’ activity participation
was related to their psychological and behavioral functioning and that the profiles of participation across activity settings provided a more holistic view for teens’ choices than do single variable models. Furthermore, findings indicated meaningful and consistent differences across a range of psychosocial indicators including academic performance, problem behaviors, and mental health. Overall, the presenting study found that participation in structured prosocial activities was associated with positive functioning, while poor functioning was associated with decreased prosocial activity involvement.

Summary

The literature on risk and resiliency presented in this study supports the need for individualized intervention and prevention approaches when working with at-risk youth. While there is room for debate on the role of sports as protective factors, some findings do suggest that sports involvement is a protective factor for at-risk youth. In the literature, a supportive adult was determined to be a critical component in the lives of at-risk youth and their healthy development. The presenting study was based on a review of existing literature, which highlights the risk and resiliency and the implications of risk and protective factors for at-risk youth.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

The perceived value of sports participation among athletes of all ages has proved controversial. Some studies have found that organized and team sports have greater positive influence over athletes and other studies have found the contrary. While the debate is far from settled, the fact that organized and team sports can be a protective factor against drug and alcohol use and predict greater academic success remains true. This researcher’s study supports this argument and encourages the promotion of youth involvement in organized and team sports.

Study Design

A quantitative design was used in presenting this study. This method facilitated the researcher’s ability to convert data to a numerical form and complete a statistical analysis to better understand perception youth, parents and foster parents/caregivers have on the value of organized youth sports (Babbie & Rubin, 2008 p.479). This design would also facilitate data to interpret the relationship between organized sports, drug and alcohol use and academic success. The research used preexisting literature such as research articles, journals and books relevant to risk and risk factors, resiliency and protective factors, organized sports and academic success. Preexisting literature was used to support the current study.
Variables

The purpose for this study was to assess the perceived value of organized sports by youth athletes, parents, and foster parents/caregivers. The independent variable in this study was the organized sport while the dependent variable was the perceived value youth athletes, parents, and foster parents/caregivers had towards organized sports.

Participants

Subjects were youth athletes from the City of West Sacramento Parks & Recreation 2009 Jr. NBA league. Youth athlete (referred to from here on after as the youth) subjects ranged in age between 6 and 17 years of age and were both male and female. Subjects were also the parent(s), or foster parents/caregiver(s) (referred to here on after as the adults) of the youth athlete. This study did not consider adult age.

In order to obtain the stated subjects, contact was made with management from the City of West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department. A letter of support was issued to the researcher in support of the study. The letter also gave permission for the researcher to make contact with current Jr. NBA youth athletes and their adult to administer the questionnaires, granted they signed the consent form. The researcher chose to survey the Jr. NBA program because it is diverse in age and gender and has a multitude of teams, hence allowing for a large sample size.

Instrumentation

The questionnaires used for this study consisted of one youth athlete questionnaire (see Appendix E) and one parent questionnaire (see Appendix D). The
youth athlete questionnaire consisted of nineteen liker-scale scale and fill in the blanks questions. The parent questionnaire consisted of ten liker-scale questions. The questions for the youth athlete and parent survey were designed to elicit youth athlete and parent perception of the value of organized sports. All three questionnaires were designed to be clear in content, direct, evoke as little critical thinking as possible lastly, the questionnaires were designed to elicit honest responses from all subjects. The questions for the questionnaires were based on input obtained from present or past athletes and from current coaches. It was this writer’s hope that the data collected via the questionnaires would be in accordance with the literature findings.

Data Gathering Procedures

In order to obtain cooperation from the City of West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department (COWS, Parks & Rec) this researcher contacted the department director, the division manager, and the division supervisor to obtain permission to administer questionnaires to current youth athletes and their parents. In order to obtain written permission from the department, a letter of support was obtained from the division manager. The letter of support obtained by this researcher included the purpose of the study, the benefits of the study to the sports division, and the level of risk to the agency’s population. The letter also included a brief synopsis of the study methodology.

Once the letter of support was finalized, it was determined by the researcher and the division supervisor that questionnaires could be administered starting December 4, 2009. Subjects had a maximum of 20 minutes to complete their questionnaire. This
researcher distributed a blank questionnaire to each subject. Youth athletes received a demographics questionnaire, and a youth questionnaire. Adults received only a Parent or Foster Parent/Caregiver questionnaire. Subjects were instructed to maintain their questionnaire face down. When all subjects received a copy of the questionnaire, they were instructed to complete them. Subjects were informed at the beginning of questionnaire administration to place their completed questionnaire (face down) in the file folder labeled COMPLETED YOUTH QUESTIONNAIRES or COMPLETED PARENT QUESTIONNAIRES. Lastly, subjects were asked to leave the area once they completed their questionnaires. Data collection took place from December 4, 2009 through January 9, 2010. Once the researcher collected the completed questionnaires, the researcher personally scored them. A variety of figures were used to show the findings.

Protection of Human Subjects

The parent, youth, and demographics questionnaires were all designed by the researcher and were submitted to the California State University, Sacramento Division of Social Work Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects for review. Subsequent to review by the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, modifications were made to the youth, and parent consent form. Additionally a third consent form was created specifically for foster parents/caregivers. Modifications were also made to the design of the study on the Human Subjects application. All forms were then resubmitted to the committee. Upon the second review, the protocol for human subjects was approved by the California State University, Sacramento approval number 09-10-027.
Chapter 4
DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

Questionnaires were administered to male and female youth, their parents, and foster parents/caregivers from the West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department Jr. NBA sports Division. Fifty-three male and female youth questionnaires were completed and returned to the researcher. Forty-two parent and foster parent/caregiver questionnaires were completed and returned to the researcher.

Following is a figure to show the ages of youth participants.

![Age Distribution Bar Chart]

*Figure 1. Youth Participant Age*

**Age of Youth Participants**

For the current study, the average age was 10 years old, making up 18% of the total respondents. Specifically, one participant reported being six years old, ten
participants reported being seven years old, ten participants reported being eight years old, four participants reported being nine years old, five reported being ten, three reported being eleven, seven reported being twelve, five reported being thirteen, five reported being fourteen, and two participants reported being seventeen.

Following is a figure showing the ethnicity of the youth respondents.

![Ethnicity Bar Chart](chart.png)

**Figure 2. Ethnicity**

**Youth Athlete Ethnicity**

For this study, 77% (21 respondents) were Caucasian; 13% (7 respondents) were Hispanic; Asian Indian’s were represented by 8% (4 respondents); 1% (1 respondent) identified as Pacific Islander and 20% (11 respondents) identified as other.

Following is a figure to show respondents grade level.
For this study 22% of the total respondents were in the second grade; 17% of the respondents were in third grade and 13% were in seventh grade. This study had two respondents in the first grade; twelve respondents in the second grade; nine in the third grade; three in the fourth grade; six in the fifth grade; five in the sixth grade; seven in the seventh grade; four in the eighth grade; four in the ninth grade; one in eleventh grade and one in twelfth grade.

Following is a figure showing youth participant grade point averages.
For this study, 28 respondents reported their current grade point average (GPA). Reported GPA’s ranged from 1.5 to 4.0; 9% (5 of 53) of the respondents had a 4.0 GPA; 6% (3 of 53) had a 3.5 GPA; 9% (5 of 53) had a 3.0 GPA; 6% (3 of 53) had a 2.5 GPA; 4% (3 of 53) had a 3.80 GPA; 4% (2 of 53) had a 3.9 GPA. Of the 28 respondents, one had a 3.20; one had a 2.75; one had a 2.80; one had a 3.30; one had a 3.4; one had a 1.5 and one had a 3.75 GPA.

The following figure illustrates how many respondents reported having to maintain a certain grade point average in order to play sports.

*Figure 4. Grade Point Averages*

*Participant Grade Point Averages (GPA)*
Of the total respondents 57% stated they had to maintain a specific GPA in order to be involved in organized sports. Forty-three percent of the respondents stated they did not have to maintain a specific GPA.

The following is a figure that highlights the range of years athletes have played sports.
Figure 6. Years Playing

Number of Years Playing Sports

For this study, 6 respondents or 11% stated they have been playing sports for less than one year. Ten respondents or 19% stated they have been playing between 1 to 2 years. Fifteen respondents or 28% stated they had been playing sports between 3 to 4 years. Two respondents or 1% stated they had been playing between 5 to 6 years. Fourteen respondents or 26% stated they had been playing between 7 to 8 years and 6 respondents or 11% stated they had been playing 9 years or more.

The following figure demonstrates the number of respondents who stated they play for more than one organization.
Figure 7. “I Play for More Than One Organization”

Multiple Organization Involvement

For this study 58% of the respondents stated that they play sports for more than one organization and 42% stated they only play for one organization.

The following figure highlights the degree to which participants feel that being involved in sports is their own choice.
Figure 8. “Playing Sports is My Choice”

Sports Involvement is a Personal Choice

Out of the 53 total respondents 55% (20 of 53) strongly agreed that being involved in sports is their own choice; 38% (20 of 53) of the respondents stated that agreed that being involved in sports is their choice; 3.8% (2 of 53) stated that they felt neutral about their choice in sports involvement.

The following figure displays the percentage of respondents who stated they planned on going to college.
Figure 9. “I Plan on Attending College”

Plans of Attending College

For the current study 91% (48 of 53) of the respondents stated they planned on going to college. 6% (3 of 53) of the respondents stated they did not plan on attending college.

The following figure shows the number of respondents who want to play sports in college.
Figure 10. “I Plan to Play College Sports”

Desire to Play Sports in College

For this question there was a total of 40 respondents; 70% (37 of 40) stated they wanted to play sports in college and 5.7% (3 of 40) stated they did not want to play sports in college.

The following figure presents the number of hours spent playing sports.
For this study 26% (14 of 53) of the respondents stated they played between 0 to 5 hours per week; 40% (21 of 53) of the respondents stated they play between 5 to 10 hours per week; 26% (14 of 53) of the respondents stated they play between 10 to 20 hours per week and 7.5% (4 of 53) of the respondents stated they play for 20 hours or more.

The following figure demonstrates the number of respondents who thought sports teach them life skills.
Figure 12. “Playing Sports Teaches Me Skills I Can Apply”

Skills Learned

For the current research 98% (52 of 53) respondents agreed the playing sports teaches them skills they can apply to other areas of their life. 3.8% (2 of 53) did not think sports teach them skills they can apply to other areas of their life.

The following figures shows the various areas respondents thought they could apply learned skills.
Figure 13. Skills Learned

Skills Learned That Can Be Applied to Life Areas

Of the total respondents 31 respondents or 58% stated they could apply skills learned to changing their behavior; 36 respondents or 70% stated they could apply the skills they have learned to changing their attitude; 35 respondents or 66% stated they could apply they learned skills to changing their listening skills; 22 of the respondents or 42% stated they could apply their new skills to changing their assertiveness; 31 respondents or 58% stated they could apply new skills to change their social relationships and 22 or 42% of the respondents stated they could use their new skills to change family.

The following figure shows that respondents thought sports teach them.
Figure 14. “What Do Sports Teach You”

Sports Teach

For this study 91% respondents stated playing sports teaches them self-confidence; 66% respondents stated sports teaches them leadership skills; 53% respondents stated playing sports teaches them to stay away from alcohol; 53% respondents stated they learn to stay away from alcohol; 55% stated that playing sports teaches them to stay away from drugs; 70% stated that playing sports taught them to how to follow rules; 51% respondents stated that playing sports teaches them how to solve problems; 68% of the respondents stated that playing sports teaches them how to respect authority and lastly 7.5% respondents stated that playing sports teaches them other skills.

The following figure highlights the percentage of respondents’ friends are supportive of them playing sports.
Figure 15. “Are Your Friends Supportive of You Playing Sports”

Are Respondents Friends Supportive of them Playing Sports

For this study 98% (52 of 53) of respondents stated that their friends were sportive of them playing sports.

The following figure shows the number of respondents’ parents that were supportive of them playing sports.
For this study 98% (52 of 53) of respondents stated that their parents were supportive of them playing sports.

The following figure displays the number of respondents who feel that playing sports helps them avoid using drugs and alcohol.
Figure 17. “Sports Help Me Avoid Drug and Alcohol Use”

Does Playing Sports Help Avoid Using Drugs and Alcohol

For this study 87% (46 of 53) respondents stated that playing sports helps them avoid using drugs and alcohol; 7.5% (4 of 53) of the respondents stated that sports do not help them avoid drugs and alcohol.

Following is a figure that illustrates how important youth participation in sports is to parents.
Figure 18. “My Child’s Participation in Sports Is Important”

*My Child’s Participation in Sports is of High Importance*

For the current study 60% (25 of 42) respondents strongly agreed that their child's participation in organized sports is of high importance to them; 40% (17 of 42) of the respondents stated that they agree that their child's participation in sports is of importance to them.

The following figure presents the number of respondents that believe sports involvement will help prevent drug and alcohol use.
For the current study 57% (24 of 42) of the respondents strongly agreed to the believe that sports involvement will help prevent drug and alcohol use. Thirty percent (13 of 42) of respondents agreed to the believe that organized sports involvement will help prevent drug and alcohol use. One percent (4 of 42) respondents were neutral to the belief and 0.2% (1 of 42) disagreed.

The following figure demonstrates respondents belief that grades are positively influenced by sports involvement.
54

Figure 20. Grades Are Positively Influenced by Sports

Parents Belief that Grades are Positively Influenced by Sports Involvement

For the current study 24% (10 of 42) respondents strongly agreed that childrens grades are positively influenced by his/her involvement in organized sports. Forty-five percent (19 of 42) of the respondents agreed that childrens grades are positively influenced by his or her involvement in sports. Twenty-six percent (11 of 42) of the respondents were neutral to the belief that sports involvement positively influences childrens grades. Five percent (2 of 42) respondents disagreed to the belief that grades are positively influenced by sports involvement.

The following figure displays that youth who are involved in sports are likely to do better in school versus those who are not.
Figure 21. Sports Involvement Equals Academic Success

Sports Involvement Equals Academic Success

For this study 36% (15 of 42) respondents strongly agreed that they believe children who are involved in sports are likely to do better in school versus their peers who are not. Thirty-eight (16 of 42) agreed to the belief; 26% (11 of 42) were neutral to the belief that youth who are involved in sports are more likely to do well in school versus those who are not.

The following figure presents that sports prevent youth from gang involvement.
For this study 57% (24 of 42) of the respondents strongly agreed that sports involvement prevents youth from gang involvement. Thirty-one percent (13 of 42) of respondents agreed to the belief; 1% were neutral and 0.2% disagreed to the belief that sports involvement prevents gang involvement.
Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

In this study, focus was on risk and resiliency, risk and protective factors, and the role organized sports plays as a protective factor against drug and alcohol use and a predictor of future academic success. Youth participants of the Jr. NBA basketball league and from the local parks and recreation department, their parents, and foster parents/caregivers, were given questionnaires. The purpose of the questionnaire was to identify youth and adult perceptions towards organized sports and their role as a protective factor against drug and alcohol use and as a predictor of future academic success. It is this writer’s belief that organized sports act as a protective factor against drug and alcohol use. It is also this writer’s belief that organized sports involvement is a predictor of future academic success. Knowledge of this interpretation would be beneficial to the field of social work in that new individualized intervention plans for at-risk youth could emerge from these findings.

Results of the Study

This study’s results in this study indicate that overall, both parents and adolescents thought sports involvement is positively associated with drug and alcohol prevention as well as an indicator of academic success. Adolescents strongly agreed that being involved in sports is their personal choice and not someone’s imposition. Furthermore, the majority of adolescent participants further indicated that they had plans
of going to college. Additional findings indicated that adolescent participants reported being able to apply learned skills to other life areas such as changing their behavior, improving their attitude, listening skills, become more assertive, and to improve their social and family relationships. Furthermore, findings revealed that through sports involvement, adolescent participants were able to learn self-confidence, leadership skills, ways to help stay away from drugs and alcohol, how to better follow rules, develop more effective problem solving skills, and how to better respect authority figures. Findings also showed that adolescents reported having friends and family who are supportive of their sports involvement. The study’s findings found that both adolescents and adults agreed that sports involvement helps avoid drug and alcohol use. Additionally, findings showed that adults value sports involvement and consider sports important. Results found that adults felt grades were positively influenced by sports involvement and that sports involvement is a direct indicator of academic success.

Evaluation

Current existing research on risk and resiliency evaluates internal and external factors (including environmental) risk and protective factors and examines the various impacts at an individual and societal level. Findings in this field indicate that adolescents who are by nature placed in low-income families and who are of color are especially vulnerable to engage in high-risk behaviors. Although many at-risk youth align with the call of their environment, there are those who succeed in the face of adversity. Findings identified internal and external protective factors that superimpose resilience within
youth. Literature findings relevant to this study found that at-risk youth who have at least one positive adult in their life are less likely to engage in at-risk behavior and that if they do, they are likely to stop earlier than youth who do not have a positive adult in their life. In terms of organized sports acting as a protective factor, findings were inconsistent. Some studies found that organized sports involvement was a protective factor. Others found that sports involvement was not a protective factor and still, other studies found neutral results. Literature findings relevant to academics indicated that the type of sport played a role and contributes to academic success and/or academic failure as well as drug and alcohol use. Some studies found rates correlating to endurance sports, while others found rates that were more closely related to team sports. Findings suggested that team sports were associated to higher alcohol and substance use. Endurance sports were less associated with high rates of alcohol and substance use.

Implications for Social Work

The gaps in the literature suggest the need for continued research being as there are inconsistent findings. Some studies found organized sports act as protective factors, whereas others indicated organized sports are not a protective factor. What these findings imply for the social work field is that more attention should be given to promote organized sports involvement among youth. When developing treatment and intervention plans for at-risk youth, social work professionals should consider current knowledge regarding risk and resiliency and incorporate external protective factors to promote adolescent resiliency. Connecting adolescents with a positive adult mentor or providing
resources to community agencies where prosocial activities and community involvement are valued is essential to prevention and promotion. A third implication for the social work field is the need for a better understanding of a holistic approach to treatment and intervention. Having a developed understanding of the association between physical well being and mental health is important to meet the needs of adolescents who would be resilient and driven by prosocial and athletic involvement.

In the event that social work professionals fail to recognize the importance of organized sports as a protective factor against drug and alcohol use and as an indicator of future academic success, a disservice would be done to clients who would benefit from a holistic approach. In an effort to better serve clients of the social work profession, and to provide the best and highest quality services it is imperative to treat clients with dignity and respect using a holistic and individualized approach.

Suggestions for Future Research

This researcher believes it is critical for youth and adults to have a full understanding of the protective factor role organized sports play. It is this writer’s recommendation that future research, involving knowledge of risk and resiliency be considered as a means through which to promote resilience among youth. Conducting face-to-face interviews with youth athletes and adults would provide a way through which existing knowledge is to be obtained. A second recommendation for future research would be to have a larger sample size, thus allowing results to be more generalized to the greater population. A fourth strong recommendation for future research
in this field would be to consider and track gender differences and outcomes within risk and resiliency.

Summary

Given that the field of study is recent, it is understandable that findings would be inconsistent. Consequently, this leaves multiple gaps regarding the knowledge and research on the actual role of protective factors in the prevention of drug and alcohol use and as an indicator of future academic success for adolescents. This researcher believes that it is critical that every child and adolescent have the opportunity to reach his or her full potential in life. This researcher further believes that every child and adolescent deserves the opportunity to be involved in prosocial and organized team sports as there is much to be learned through that involvement. It is also this researcher’s belief that organized sports teach applicable and practical skills that promote resilience as well as promote academic success.
APPENDIX A

PARENT CONSENT FORM

Parent Informed Consent Form

My name is Helibet Flores and I am a second year master level social work student at Sacramento State University, Division of Social Work. As part of the degree requirement, I am required to conduct a research study on a topic of my choice. I have chosen to conduct a study in which I explore the benefits of organized sports for youth.

The purpose of the current study is to find supporting data that organized sports act as preventative factors against drug and alcohol use. A second purpose for this study is to find data that supports the statement that organized sports also promote academic success. Lastly, given the financial state of the economy this researcher finds a third purpose to be, to show that investing money, time and support to youth sports is of value to the community and the individual youths life.

The current study will present supporting data towards organized sports to parents, caregivers, legal guardians, the Parks & Recreation Department and the community of West Sacramento so as to promote the continued efforts to maintain programs such as the Jr. NBA (basketball) program.

I would like to solicit your participation in the current study; your participation should only take approximately 15-20 minutes of your time. If you decide to withdraw from the study at any point, you may do so without any consequences. No monetary or materialistic compensation will be offered for your participation.

Please be aware that it has been determined by the Human Subjects Board of Sacramento State University that this study may present “minimal risk” to its subjects-Research is approved at “minimal risk” when the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated for participants are no greater than what might be encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests [Federal Policy §46.102(i)]. (Note that only “minimal risk” is defined in the federal regulations.) as is stated in the Policies and Procedures of the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, California State University, Sacramento.

You are asked to carefully read and respond to a set of questions and statements in the form of a questionnaire. Please understand that your participation is entirely voluntary.
Signing this form will serve as an indicator that you are willingly participating in this effort. If you decide to participate, your personal responses will be kept confidential. If before, during, or after completing this survey you have any further questions, comments or concerns please call Helibet Flores at (916) 505-7143 or Dr. Demetral at (916) 278-7168.

I ________________________________ have read (or have had read to me) and understand the above and agree to take part in this study.

Participants' Signature: _______________________       Date: ____________
My name is Helibet Flores and I am a second year master level social work student at Sacramento State University, Division of Social Work. As part of the degree requirement, I am required to conduct a research study on a topic of my choice. I have chosen to conduct a study in which I explore the benefits of organized sports for youth.

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I ________________________________ have read (or have had read to me) and understand the above and agree to take part in this study.

Participants' Signature: ______________________            Date: ____________
APPENDIX C

YOUTH CONSENT FORM

Youth Informed Consent Form

My name is Helibet Flores and I am a second year master level social work student at Sacramento State University, Division of Social Work. As part of the degree requirement, I am required to conduct a research study on a topic of my choice. I have chosen to conduct a study in which I explore the benefits of organized sports for youth.

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You are asked to carefully read and respond to a set of questions and statements in the form of a questionnaire. Please understand that your participation is entirely voluntary. Signing this form will serve as an indicator that you are willingly participating in this effort. If you decide to participate, your personal responses will be kept confidential. If
before, during, or after completing this survey you have any further questions, comments
or concerns please call Helibet Flores at (916) 505-7143 or Dr. Demetral at (916) 278-
7168.

I __________________________________________ have read (or have had read to me) and
understand the above and agree to take part in this study.

Participants' Signature: ___________________________ Date: ____________
APPENDIX D

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Parent Survey

Please read the question thoroughly; then circle the number that best describes your position about the statement.

1) My child’s participation in sports is of high importance to me?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) I believe my child will positively develop as a result of his/her participation in organized sports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) Since your child became involved in organized sports he/she has become more assertive?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) Since my child began organized sports he/she is better at following the rules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5) My child has become more interested in organized sports versus individualized activities such as video games, computer games

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6) My child has demonstrated increased interest in organized sports?
Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly    Disagree
5-------------------------------

7) I believe that organized sports involvement will help prevent alcohol and drug use

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly    Disagree
5-------------------------------

8) I believe that my child's grades are positively influenced by his/her involvement in organized sports?

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly    Disagree
5-------------------------------

9) I believe that children who are involved in organized sports are likely to do better in school than their peers who are not involved in organized sports

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly    Disagree
5-------------------------------

10) I believe that organized sports prevent youth in from gang involvement?

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly    Disagree
5-------------------------------
APPENDIX E

YOUTH QUESTIONNAIRE

Youth Athlete Survey

What is your age?
_____________________________

What is your ethnic background:
Caucasian_____ African American_____ Hispanic_____ Latino_____ Filipino_____ 
Native American_____ Asian Indian_____ Chinese_____ Asian_____ Hmong_____ Mien 
_____ Korean_____ Thai_____ Cuban_____ Pacific Islander_____ Russian_____ Other 
(please specify) _______________

What is your grade level?
_____________________________

What is your Grade Point Average (G.P.A.)?
__________________________________

Do you have to maintain a certain G.P.A. in order to play sports?
No_____ Yes_____ if so, what does it have to be? _____

How long have you been playing sports?
Less than one year_____ 1-2 years_____ 3-4 years_____ 5-6 years_____ 7-8 years 
_____ 9 years or more_____ 

Do you play sports for another organization?
Yes_____ No_____ 

Have you ever tried or experimented with any drugs?
No_____ Yes_____, how many times? ______

Have you ever tried alcohol?
Please read each statement and then select the answer that best describes your feelings or thoughts.

1) Being involved in organized sports is my own choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) I would rather be playing sports than hanging out with people who do not play sports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) After a sports game I like to _____________________________ to relax and celebrate.

4) Why do you play sports?

- Fun_____ Friends_____ Popularity_____ health_____ something to do_____
- Keeps you out of trouble_____ something you are good at_____ Challenges you_____
- Rewarding_____ Other_____

5) Do you plan on going to college?

Yes _____ No _____
If yes, do you want to play sports in college? Yes _____ No _____

6) How many hours a week do you spend playing sports?

- 0-5 _____  5-10_____  10-20 ____  20 or more____

7) Do you think that playing sports helps you learn skills you can apply to other areas of your life?

No _____ Yes _____ If yes, please specify:

Behavior_____ Attitude_____ Listening skills_____ Assertiveness_____ Social relationships_____ Family_____
8) What do you think playing sports teaches you?

Self-confidence _____ Leadership skills _____ Stay away from drugs _____
Stay away from alcohol _____ Do not get involved in gangs _____ How to follow rules _____
How to solve problems _____ How to respect authority _____ Other _____

9) Are you friends supportive of you playing sports?

Yes _____ No _____

10) Are your parents supportive of you playing sports?

Yes _____ No _____

11) Do you feel playing sports helps you to avoid using drugs/alcohol?

Yes _____ No _____
APPENDIX F

LETTER OF SUPPORT

CITY OF WEST SACRAMENTO

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is in support of Helibet Flores’ research, A Study on the Benefits of Youth Sports.

The purpose of the current study as presented by the research is to find supporting data that organized sports acts as a preventative factor against drug and alcohol use. A second purpose for this study is to find data that supports the statement that organized sports also promote academic success. Lastly, given the financial state of the economy this researcher finds a third purpose to be, to show that investing money, time and support into youth sports is of value to the community and the individuals in the youths life.

The current study will present supporting data towards organized sports to parents, caregivers, legal guardians, the Parks & Recreation Department and the community of West Sacramento so as to promote the continued efforts to maintain programs such as the Jr. NBA (basketball) program.

I, Paul Reyes, Recreation Center Manager at the City of West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department have discussed the current research topic and have seen the questionnaires parents and youth athletes will be administered; after doing so it is my determination that there is “No Risk”.

The Parks & Recreation Department and I fully support Helibet’s research study and understand that her study will help our division promote the benefits of organized sports among the individual athletes and the community therefore we have no reservations in allowing Helibet to have contact with and use the Departments population for her data collection.

[Signature]
[Name]
[Title]
City of West Sacramento Parks & Recreation Department

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REFERENCES


The motivation, skills, and Decision-Making Model of “Drug Abuse” prevention.


