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The Impact of the Involvement of African- American Female's in Extra-Curricular Activities on Future Prosocial Decision-making

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Walden University
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Abstract Title Page

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Janine-Naisha Jackson

MA, Holy Names University 2017

BS, University of Phoenix, 2015

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Forensic Psychology

Walden University

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Abstract

It is important to understand what protective factors might be developed in order to prevent Black adolescent females from becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. The focus of this study was identifying the perceptions of adult Black women who grew up in an urban setting and who participated in organized sports during their adolescence. The primary research question focused on whether ten adult Black females perceived their participation in sports during adolescence served as a protective factor, thereby preventing or minimizing the participant's involvement in criminal behavior. The data was analyzed through MAXQDA software. The predominant themes from this study included responsibility, empowerment, dedication, discipline, leadership, teamwork, and prosocial decision making. The participants felt that participation in sports during their adolescence served as a protective factor and reduced their participation in criminal behavior. The participants also found that their participation in sports empowered them to make more prosocial decisions and taught them discipline and responsibility. The themes that were discovered showed that organized sports taught them teamwork and dedication, which has helped them in adulthood as well. Positive social change may result from this study if the findings can be used to develop additional opportunity for Black juvenile females growing up in urban areas.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my grandmother Dorothy Jean Bolden, who passed in 2010. My grandmother is someone I keep close to my heart, knowing that she was always here to push me. This is one of the highest honors a person can achieve. Although I am sad that she is not here to see this moment, I know she is proud, and I dedicate this work to her.

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Yolanda- Mom, you have always been the rock of the family. You are one of the reasons I choose to continue my education. You are my why. I watched you go back to school at 50 years old, and to be able to see you obtain your master's as I receive my Ph.D. is incredible. Mom, I am proud of you, and thank you for being my push. I love you.

Leah- Leah, I often say that you showed the true definition of hustle. I learned a lot from you, and I am excited that you have taught me so much about life. I would not have made it this far without your support, love, and compassion. Sister, thank you!

Nique- Nique you have given so much to me over the years. You see me when no one else would get to know, Janine. Thank you so much for taking me under your wing. You and Bear mean a lot to me. Thank you!

Adrienne- Adrienne, you have been a consistent force in my life that has pushed me to finish this degree. Friendship doesn't always last through storms, but we have. I want to thank you for being here, listening to my fears and uncertainties. Thank you for the unspoken request.

Chelsey- You are one of many people who I love and hold close. Thank you for walking this journey out with me. Thank you for siding with me and pushing me to be better.

Dawn- Dawn, I think you were one of the first African American women I knew that had a Ph.D. I appreciate your love, support, and push as I walked through this process. Thank you for showing me that all things are possible, even with hiccups.

Razon- Rose, you are indeed a friend, and I thank you. Thank you for the everlasting friendship and sisterhood that you taught me to embrace. Thank you.

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Dr. Carol- Thank you for taking the time and walking with me during this journey. You have been a silent push and supporter. I remember when I expressed to you that I would be looking to complete this degree and you encouraged me that I can do it. You have even helped me with brain storming ideas and listening to me rant about this moving slow. DC, thank you for your everlasting support.

To everyone else who is not named, I want to thank you for the encouraging words, love, and compassion during this time. Obtaining this degree has been a journey, but I have reached a milestone that not many people will reach. To every young lady and man in Oakland, CA, this is for you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Extra-curricular activities (ECA; sports) have been shown to be male dominated (Hanson, 2012). Women in sports have just started evolving to a place where they are being recognized. Title IX opened the door for many people to participate in sports. More importantly, with the passage of Title IX, women have obtained the opportunity to become active in educational sports programs and have been given equal chances to be participate in sports (Hanson, 2012). Title IX enhances students' interests and their abilities to participate in athletics, as well as provides access to obtain athletic financial assistance such as scholarships (Hanson, 2012). Title IX opens the door for many females; however, the inequality and treatment of African American females is still the same (Hanson, 2012). African American females are an important ethnicity and gender within sports. However, African American woman work extremely hard to obtain the same opportunities as men in sports. There have been laws passed to create equal opportunities for women to be seen and treated as equal in this arena (Hanson, 2012).

Problem Statement

ECA sports teach adolescents how to adapt and self-regulate (Kurtz, 2015). Sports are voluntary activities sponsored or sanctioned by a school that supplement or complement the school's instructional program but are not a part of it (Dougherty, 2015). ECAs include team and individual sports such as basketball, baseball, track and field, softball, football, band, performing arts, culture clubs, debate teams, volunteer and community services, academic clubs, and media clubs (Bartkus et al., 2012). Some of the

benefits adolescents can receive from engaging in ECA (sports) include increase in self-esteem, self-confidence, and improved academic outcomes (Duncan et al., 2015). These benefits extend beyond adolescence into a lifelong impact.

While there are numerous benefits and positive outcomes associated with participation in ECA (Bartkus et al., 2012; Duncan et al., 2015), there is a lack of available sports programs for African American female youths to participate in (Patrick, 2014.), especially in urban populations (Place, 2004). An urban population, for the sake of this study, has more than 50,000 people (Bureau, 2020). There is a lack of ECA program availability in an urban location. Since there is a lack of ECA in urban areas, this lack may increase the likelihood that African American females will become involved in the criminal justice system (Thomas, 2020). According to the Centers for Disease and Prevention Control (2020) in a study that was conducted in the United States, African American females are more likely to become involved in the criminal justice system, become a parent at an early age, be involved with drugs and alcohol, and experience homelessness (CDC, 2020). Organized sports are the primary ECA available to African American females (Place, 2004). There are a number of studies on African American youth in urban populations; however, most have focused on African American males because African American males are more likely to participate in sports than females (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). As a result, many achievement gap programs like the African American Male Achievement program have focused on African American male youth who are vulnerable to being a part of the criminal justice system. However, African

American females are also vulnerable to becoming involved in the criminal justice system. As an example, African Americans are six times more likely to be involved in drug-related offenses than other women (Thomson, 2020). The primary focus of this study is to understand how African American female adults perceive how their participation in youth team sports, such as basketball, impacted them during their K-12 education and into adulthood. A secondary focus of this study was whether adult African American females who grew up in an urban environment and participated in sports feel that sports in their youth served as a protective factor from involvement in delinquent behavior.

Cid (2017) reported that involvement in ECA has been positively associated with educational outcomes for youth and has resulted in decreased interaction with the criminal justice system. While studies on African American youth have focused on the relationship between ECAs, educational outcome (Duncan et al., 2015), and the involvement in the criminal justice system (Cid, 2017), studies have examined the impact of sports, mainly team-based sports, on female African American youth.

This study aimed to provide further insight into whether there is a perceived relationship between participation in team sports and involvement in the criminal justice system in African American urban females.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a qualitative phenomenological design. This study used a phenomenological design to understand the lived experiences of African American

females who grew up in an urban environment and participated in organized sports as adolescents. The phenomenological design allows the researcher to better understand the culmination of experiences of a specific population who share experiences (Creswell, 2018). An examination of the influence that sports have on the African American female population is needed because the influence of sports are examined primarily for males (Hanson, 2012). In this process, how team sports decrease African American female youth involvement in criminal activity was explored. Extra-curricular programs are designed by others who do not know or are aware of the actual need of this population to actively participate in sports activities, and the way to address that need is to ask those who are a part of this specified population. The nature of the study will allow research in this area to prevent involvement in criminal activities.

Research Question

Research Question: Qualitative: What are the perceptions of adult female urban African Americans about the overall influence of participating in organized sports in their youth as an alternative to involvement in criminal activities?

Second Question: Do adult female urban African Americans who participated in organized sports in their youth perceive their participation as being a protective factor in their development and less involvement in criminal activities?

Third Question: Do adult female urban African Americans who participated in organized sports in their youth perceive their participation in sports as a preventative factor in their decision to avoid delinquent activities and future criminal behavior?

Research Objectives

The goal of this study was to understand the perceptions and lived experiences of African American females who grew up in an urban area and participated in sports during their adolescence. More specifically, it researched whether these African American females feel that their participation in sports helped them to avoid being involved in criminal activity.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to increase information about the perceptions of urban African American women who played team sports during adolescents. Specifically, this study focused on whether adult African American urban women believe playing team sports was a protective factor in their choices during their adolescence as an alternative to participating in criminal activities. There is a paucity of information in the research literature on urban African American women, especially in athletics (The Women's Sports Foundation, 2016). This study contributed to the body of literature by showing the impact of sports within an African American female adult population.

Conceptual Framework

The qualitative phenomenology design focused on the lived experiences of the African American female who grew up in an urban environment and participated in organized sports. The phenomenology design allows for a better understanding of the experiences of African American females who participated in organized sports during their adolescence. This design allows the researcher to use open-ended questions to gain a

richer understanding of the lived experiences of the participants from the participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2018).

The strain theory was constructed by Robert K. Merton and analyzed social factors such as lack of income or quality of education that drive individuals to commit crime (Campbell, 2020). The strain theory originated in the 1930s and focused on groups who experienced social disadvantage (Merton, 1938). The strain theory also examined the inability to achieve goals and how it impacted the groups who were at a social disadvantage and their involvement with criminal activity (Merton, 1938). The strain theory also suggests that when people are experiencing stress, otherwise known as strain, their reactions sometimes lead them to participate in criminal acts (Merton, 1938). This may be a means of getting away from or coping with the stress in the moment the individual experiences stress. Individuals may respond to aggression in others by becoming violent themselves (Merton, 1938).

Merton's (1938) theory examines five ways that individuals adapt to the strains they experience when they are unable to attain goals. Conformity is the acceptance of one's cultural goals and efforts to achieve them through legitimate (lawful) actions (Merton, 1938). Innovation is the adaptation of using illegitimate means to achieve the accepted goals (Merton, 1938). In ritualism, an individual gives up the goals, but chooses appropriate actions (Merton, 1938). Retreatism describes the rejection of both the goals and the means, which leads to rebellion (Merton, 1938). Merton considers rebellion as rejecting both the acceptable goals and means and seeking a new social structure.

According to Merton's theory, when ethical standards or social interaction opportunities are blocked, rates of deviance increase. Conformity should be the norm in communities where everyone has an equal opportunity and everyone understands what acceptable goals are and the means to achieve them. In this study, African American women who grew up in urban areas where there were limited opportunities and often poor education were interviewed about their participation in organized sports. From the interviews that were conducted, the phenomenological approach allowed for a deeper exploration of the lived experiences of African American females who participated in sports during their youth. Based on Merton's (1938) strain theory, ethical standards and social interactions impact levels of deviant behavior. The focus of this study was whether African American women who participated in organized sports in their youth perceive their participation as being a protective factor against deviant behavior.

Operational Definitions

Below are the definitions of concepts and terminology used in this study to provide clarity for readers. The following terms are defined as used in this study:

Adolescents: The period following the onset of puberty during which a young person develops from a child into an adult.

African American: Black.

Criminal activity: An act that is committed and is punishable by law

Extra-curricular activities (ECA) sports: Anything that is not required for high school credit or paid employment.

Female: Woman, girl.

Girl: Denoting the sex that can bear offspring or produce eggs, distinguished biologically.

GPA: Grade point average- How students are performing academically.

Organized sports: Physical activities that are directed by adults or youth leaders that involves rules, formal competition, and practices.

Protective factors: A lower likelihood of problem outcomes or reduction of the negative impact of a risk factor on problem outcomes.

Risk factors: Something that creates problems within a community.

Urban location: 50,000 or more people.

Youth: The period between childhood and adult age.

Assumptions

It can be assumed that the women who participate in this study were truthful and honest about their experiences as African American women who have participated in sports during their youth. It was also assumed that all the participants in the study experiences may be similar but drastically different depending on their location, age, and social status.

Limitations

Interviews were conducted via Zoom. This may have influenced the participant's way of responding and level of rapport. Another limitation of this study was that woman who volunteered for this study may have been more likely to have been successfully

involved in sports than women who did not volunteer to participate in this study. The results of this study may not be generalizable to other populations.

Scope and Delimitations

This study did not cover African American males who participated in ECA organized sports in an urban population during their youth. Also, the study did not include any females who did not participate in extra-curricular sports as a youth or did not grow up in an urban setting.

Significance of the Study

Exploring the experiences of African American women who participated in ECA sports during their youth may shed light on how their participation influenced their life decisions and whether participation served as a protective factor in their lives. Very little research has been conducted on African American women who were involved in sports as juveniles. This study added additional information to the body of research on African American female adults' perceptions of how involvement in sports influenced their decisions as adolescents. It also brought clarity about their perception of whether sports involvement may decrease African American female juvenile involvement in criminal activities.

In summary, it is important to understand the lived experiences of African American females who participated in organized sports during their adolescence. It is important to understand if these participants saw their participation in organized sports as a protective factor, serving as a deterrent from involvement in criminal activity. The next

chapter will focus on current research in the area of reducing criminal engagement, especially through organized sports. This study included a review of the literature, search strategies, and an overview of the conceptual framework.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The Chapter 2 literature review includes the search strategy and an overview of the conceptual framework using the strain theory which guided this study and is followed by related literature. The literature encompasses several studies exploring the benefits gained from sports participation. Additionally, the literature review will provide the issues of African American females and sports, coping strategies, the usage of unstructured time, self-esteem and confidence, urban surroundings, and ethnicity and gender bias experienced by African American females who participates in sports. Factors addressed in sports participation include race, ethnicity, gender, education, access, unstructured time, coping strategies, self-esteem, confidence, and location. Chapter 2 continues to examine these factors as they relate to sports. Access to extra-curricular/sports activities addresses the availability of participation for African American females in particular. Chapter 2 also examines the history of sports for the female population as a whole.

This qualitative, phenomenological study researched alternative ways to support African American females who are involved in sports and are provided more opportunities within an urban community. Therefore, this study explored the thoughts and ideas of African American females who participate in sports to determine what support they felt would be viable. The lack of available ECA sports-based programs for African American females in an urban population contributes to more involvement in the

criminal justice system (Patrick, 2014). Females, in general, are an understudied group (Harmon, 2009), and African American females are even more understudied, specifically within athletics (Harmon, 2009). This study contributed to the body of literature by highlighting the importance of African American female youth participation in extra-curricular sports-based programs.

Literature Search Strategy

For this qualitative phenomenological study, title searches were used to include keywords of sports OR athletics OR extra-curricular activities OR after school programs. Additional search terms included: urban population, female, Black, African American, coping mechanisms, and "strain theory." The primary resource for the literature search was the Walden University Library. This library was used to locate articles from multiple databases including Academic Search Complete, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Criminal Justice Database, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Political Science Complete & Business Source Complete Combined Search, ProQuest Central, PsychARTICLES, PsycEXTRA, PsychINFO, SAGE Journals, SAGE Stats, ScholarWorks, SocINDEX with Full Text, and Thoreau Multi-Database Search. Long phrases were used with Google Scholar to locate additional resources.

Strain Theory

The strain theory was constructed by Robert K. Merton and analyzes social factors such as lack of income or quality of education that drive individuals to commit

crime (Campbell, 2020). The strain theory originated in the 1930s and focused on groups

who experienced disadvantage socially (Merton, 1938). The strain theory also examined

the inability to achieve goals and how it impacted the groups who were at a disadvantage

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rejecting both the acceptable goals and means and seeking a new social structure.

According to Merton's theory, when the lack of ethical standards or social interactions

opportunities are blocked, the higher rates of deviance will also increase. Conformity

should be the norm in communities where everyone has an equal opportunity, and everyone understands what acceptable goals are and the means to achieve them.

Research conducted by Antonaccio et al. (2015) had similar findings to Merton's (1938) work; however, the authors did not agree with the approach to obtaining information because their theory has not been completely tested and it was focused on monetary achievements. In another study that was conducted by Botchkovar et al. (2017), researchers found that participants who were solely committed to monetary goals experienced a weaker sense of obligation and commitment to their goals.

In the current study, African American women who grew up in urban areas where there were limited opportunities and often poor education were interviewed about their participation in organized sports. Based on Merton's (1938) strain theory, ethical standards and social interactions impact levels of deviant behavior. The focus of this study was whether African American women who participated in ECA sports in their youth perceive their participation as being a protective factor. In this case, a protective factor would result in lowering likelihood of criminal behavior or involvement. Merton's strain theory is used to determine social interactions that can impact deviant behaviors. Using the phenomenology qualitative approach allowed us to explore the lived

experiences of African American women who grew in urban areas where the opportunities were limited and the educational system is often poorer.

The History of Sports

The history of sports or athletics has evolved in many ways in the last 120 years. Playing sports was a leisure activity, and it was not a regular job as it is now where people are being paid for playing sports (WSP, 2016). Sports overall have changed the dynamic of how people interact with each other and have grown on a different scale. The history of the women in sports is important because woman did not have the same rights as men and their jobs were to stay home and take care of the children or the household. An individual can even go back to slavery days and examine how exactly women, even more so African American women, were used and not valued. As women have pursued becoming more involved with leisure activities, people have tried to ignore the division that gender causes in the world of athletics (WSP, 2016). The African American girl/woman has been overlooked and understudied (Smith-Evans et al., 2014). The lack of opportunities for African American females in ECA opportunities have been a struggle over the years (WSP, 2016).

Access to Sports Activities

Minority girls receive less than an equal opportunity to participate in sports (Goss-Graves et al., 2015). African American girls have less opportunities to obtain any type of scholarship, unlike the boys within their age bracket (Goss-Graves et al., 2015). Researchers state that girls are less likely to participate in sports because they are not

interested in sports; however, African American girls do not participate because of the lack of opportunity to do so (Goss-Graves et al., 2015). Males and White girls have more of a chance to participate in sports than African American girls (Goss-Graves et al., 2015).

Exploring different types of social dynamics brings awareness to African American females who are at a higher risk for being trafficked, involved in crime, and at risk for early pregnancy (CDC, 2020). This also occurs in areas that have limited access to public parks, trails, and recreation facilities (Goss-Graves et al., 2015). African American girls' participation in ECAs can also increase African American girls' ability to attend college with a wider variety of choices (Goss-Graves et al., 2015).

Furthering Education

Educational opportunities historically have not been afforded to the African American race (Patrick, 2014). Dating back to the days of slavery where it was against the law for African Americans to learn, furthering education for the African American race has been a challenge (Patrick, 2014). Evolvement to obtain education rights has been through activists like Cornell West, Bobby Austin, Michael Carter, Robert Hill, Joe Louis Clark, Ramona Edelin, Nathan Hare, Katherine Butler Jones, Aaron Lloyd Dixon, Daniel Hale Williams, Mae C. Jemison, Kelly Miller, Alexander Crummell, Patrick Francis Healy, Henry Ossian Flipper, and Alexander Twilight (Patrick, 2014). Some significant innovators in education are Ernest Everett Just, Percy Julian, Inez Beverly Prosser, James West, Rick Kittles, Fannie C. Williams, Benjamin Banneker, and more. The founder of

the educational fight for African Americans was Booker T. Washington (Washington, 2009).

As all these activists have helped advance the educational system for African Americans, Booker T. Washington helped advance the education system for African Americans post-Civil War (Washington, 2009). Washington provided education resources to those of African American descent to show all races deserve access to education (Washington, 2009). Brown vs. Board of Education (BVBE) is a case that helped eliminate segregation in schools, also known as the idea of separate but equal (O'Brine & Kritsonis, 2008). In the supreme court decision for BVBE, it was ruled that educational institutions will not only be for White people but for all races (O'Brine & Kritsonis, 2008). BVBE paved the way for many people to obtain an education. The decision of BVBE brought light to how the educational system works; however, how can people be expected to function in a society where they were kept separated and not offered an opportunity to interact with people who look different and have different ideologies (O'Brine & Kritsonis, 2008)? As the fight for equal rights is still a struggle for the African American population as whole, the rights for African American women in educational institutions is still a challenge as well.

In examining the impact of academic achievement, discipline, attendance, and graduation from high school on African American males, the study of the impact of these on African American females is just as important. There are few sources that have researched how this population's graduation rate is affected. According to the Center for

Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), every 24 hours, there are 15 victims of at-risk behaviors that lead to violent crime such as homicide and 1,300 youth who end up in the emergency room due to some type of violence (2020). The CDC also conducted a Youth Risk Behavior Survey in 2017 that examined high-risk substance use, sexual behavior, violence, and at-risk media behaviors. The report showed that females were at a much higher risk of being bullied and will not participate in activities because of safety concerns, which could contribute to the failure of their academic success (CDC, 2020). The report also showed that African American females who live in certain demographic locations are influenced by at-risk behaviors which include unprotected sexual activity and negative social media behaviors which include sexting, alcohol and tobacco use, illegal substance use, fighting and/or truancy (Hasenfratz & Knafo, 2015). The world of sex trafficking is a dangerous entity because women are more at risk for violence (CDC, 2020). It is more important than ever to develop the academic minds and physical activities of African American females to incorporate self-esteem, confidence, and self-worth, which leads to providing an escape from the experiences of socio-economic hardships and trauma. It is important to protect future African American female generations from becoming statistics.

ECAs are highly recognized in after school programs. The effect of ECAs in Latin America and the Caribbean showed there is a need for the ECAs (Cid, 2017). After school programs or ECAs include sports, music, recreation, tutoring, and other activities outside of education. (Cid, 2017). After school programs can be used as violence

prevention programs for students in general (Cid, 2017). The interventions using after school programs as a violence prevention program is positive because it targets the dropout rates, poor academic performances, lack of motivation, too much idle time, and low quantity and quality of adult supervision (Cid, 2017). Lack of adult supervision in poorer environments can contribute to delinquent behaviors among juveniles (Cid, 2017).

Cid (2017) used a sample size ranged from 46 to 2,999 participants, and there were five different locations in Caribbean and Latin America countries that were examined (Cid, 2017). The five countries that were examined had low-income economies (Cid, 2017). Haiti fell under the low-income economics. There were two upper middle-income economies, which were Jamaica and Peru (Cid, 2017). The last two countries had the highest economic income, which were Uruguay and Venezuela. The participants ranged from ages 6 to 20 years old (Cid, 2017).

The program provided training for youth who were at risk from poorer neighborhoods (Cid, 2017). The afterschool program used sports such as soccer and rugby to teach youth self-control, respecting others, and how to socialize amongst peers, family and friends (Cid, 2017). This program was designed to deter youth from participating in delinquent behaviors, so it provided free activities for youth to participate in (Cid, 2017). In order to draw a conclusion of whether these programs worked, the authors followed up with a qualitative approach that included surveys and questionnaires (Cid, 2017). The study found that those who participated in the study in Peru saw a decrease in physical aggression with an increase in positive self-perception (Cid, 2017).

In Haiti and Jamaica, there was a decrease in aggressive behavior and anger amongst the youth (Cid, 2017).

The limitations of this study were that there was not a lot of information for Latin America and Caribbean participants and the authors had to include two quasi-experimental evaluations (Cid, 2017). This also led to small sample sizes for this study. The recommendations are there needs to be more in-depth research around the interventions and missing data (Cid, 2017). The information that is obtained will vary from city to city and country to country. In learning about the different programs, there is a need to have other data to compare the findings to. Going forward, one should examine the positive effects of ECAs such as team building, self-regulation and monitoring, stress release, personal mentoring, increasing time with positive adult supervision, and the family's inclusion in the program.

Unstructured Time

Children and adults need structure. There is an old saying that it takes a village to raise a child. In all cases it is true since everyone that is part of a child's life will have some type of impact on them. The impact may be positive and or negative, but no matter the type of impact, this must be something that is teaching the child or youth a lesson. Structure is something that recreation centers are able to provide for youth (Kurtz, 2015). Most of the children who are at recreation centers for an extensive amount of time want and need to be involved in structured activities (Kurtz, 2015). Children are placed into school to obtain an education and structure their days so that they become routine and

learn how to adapt to something new (Kurtz, 2015). ECA teach children how to adapt to something new and self-regulate (Kurtz, 2015). In a study conducted by Kurtz (2015) he states "Since the 1960s, our country has experienced an almost 50 percent increase in the labor force participation rate of women. Today, almost 76 percent of women with school-age children are working, either in homes of two-parent earners or homes of single-parent earners. While this change to the U.S. workforce has been positive, we have largely been unable to mitigate ancillary impacts to working families, including an increase in unsupervised time for youths" (p. 17). This study showed that a lot of youth who participate in delinquent behavior have both parents and there is so much time spent unsupervised (Kurtz, 2015). Time spent unsupervised is alarming because children need some type of structure and guidance. Since there are a lot of working-class people now, they have to find some other way to provide support to youth and recreation centers are one. Most times, the crimes that youth participate in occur between the hours of 3:00pm and 7:00pm which is the times that most parents and children are either at work and/or school (Kurtz, 2015). According to Kurtz (2015), "Youths who participate in extra-curricular activities are more likely than non-participants to have higher self-esteem, greater academic achievement and lower incidences of delinquency" (p. 20). All in all, youth who participate in juvenile delinquent behaviors come from unstructured time. Recreation centers and families have to find a way to become more involved with their youth and young adults.

Nearly seven million school-aged children lack after-school care (Hill et al., 2015). Studies indicate that the frequency of violent crimes such as robbery, sexual assault, and aggravated assault are approximately four times greater during the out-of-school time when youth are not occupied with extra-curricular activities (Hill et al., 2015). The time that children spend participating in constructive activities that encourage life and social skills is greatly needed to counteract the potential for delinquency (Hill et al., 2015). Participating in delinquent behaviors is especially true for students in underprivileged urban school districts, particularly those who are African American (CDC, 2020). These students have higher than average rates of school failure, truancy, dropout, disciplinary infractions, and may develop poor relationships with school personnel (CDC, 2020). When also considering how challenging the transition to relational strains, the need for programming to promote skills for addressing the multitude of barriers for success faced by students becomes paramount (CDC, 2020). Students decline scholastically and demonstrate poor socioemotional skills (Hill et al., 2015). To address these challenges, Norfolk Public Schools (NPS) and the City of Norfolk's Recreation, Parks and Open Space (NRPOS) approached the Darden College of Education at Old Dominion University (ODU) to develop, implement, and support an in- and after-school program to enhance the achievement of struggling, urban middle-school students (Hill et al., 2015). This collaborative program, CARE (Character and Resilience Education) Now, was particularly relevant because of Norfolk's high rate of poverty, which is most recently reported to be at 18.2% overall with some parts of the city as high

as 44% (City Data, 2014). With continued budget cuts, partnerships are in higher need than ever (Hill et al., 2015). It is the social and collective responsibility of service agencies, public schools, and university systems to address the challenges of today's youth (Hill et al., 2015)

Coping Using Sports

Coping is something that all individuals are learning. As adults get older, they teach children how to react when something takes place. Living in a world where some youth see crime and trauma every day brings so much attention to the need for coping skills and mechanisms (Lewensohn et al., 2015). "Violence has different manifestations which include bullying, physical fights, carrying weapons and others" (Lewensohn, et al., 2015, p. 167). These things have led to social problems among youth and young adults and it has become harmful to their upbringing (Lewensohn et al., 2015). "After school hours, unstructured activities that lack adult supervision have negative effects including antisocial behaviors and the risk of being involved in crime and violence" (Lewensohn, et al., 2015, p. 10). There are several reasons why the youth display delinquent behaviors.

Lewensohn et al. (2015), conducted a study that consisted of "622 Israeli adolescents, aged 14–19 (Jews: M = 16.01, SD = 1.19; Arabs: M = 16.56, SD = .97), living in southern Israel. The five participating schools represented different types of communities in southern Israel, namely city, development town,1 communal village, Bedouin city and Bedouin village (Lewensohn et al., 2015). Jews accounted for 42.5 % (N = 265) and boys for 42.8 % (N = 266) of the sample population (boys within Jewish

sample; N = 118, 44.5 %; boys within Arab sample; N = 148, 41.5 %) (Lewensohn et al., 2015). The parents of the Jewish adolescents were significantly more educated: whereas 67.1 % of Jewish fathers had above high school education, only 24.9 % of Arab fathers had post-high school education (v2 = 208.7, p B .001) (Lewensohn et al., 2015). The gap was even greater among mothers: 73.2 % of the Jewish mothers as compared to 16.6 % of Arab mothers had a post-high school education (v2 = 325.82, p B .001)" (Lewensohn, et al., 2015, p. 170). The authors used the Sense of Coherence (SOC; Antonovsky, 1987) which included using a series of semantic differential items on a seven-point Likert-type scale, with anchoring phrases at each end. High scores indicated a strong SOC. In this study, they measured SOC by the short form scale which consisted of 13 items, and is highly correlated to the original long version. (Lewensohn et al., 2015).

Lewensohn et al. (2015) examined different groups and considered how much these different groups were exposed to criminal activities. This finding is important because if one compares two different cities, one's exposure to crime may be considerably different. For example, the crime rates and types may be different in a suburb than in the inner city (Lewensohn et al., 2015). If this is the case, one has to ensure that they consider the economic status of the area as well (Lewensohn et al., 2015). Some children who participate in criminal activities may do so because the parents are always working, they are being abused by someone in the home, and/or being neglected (Lewensohn et al., 2015). All of these contributed to coping skills of the child - when things are rough the child can use extra-curricular activity to help process these

emotions (Lewensohn et al., 2015). The limitations of this study was that the data was based only on teenagers' self-reporting, subjective and retrospective answers (Lewensohn et al., 2015). The second limitation is that the authors should have considered using cross-sectional nature of study (Lewensohn et al., 2015). All in all, this is a good article because it pertains to the things that youth and young adults face during their time that is not structured.

Self-Esteem/Confidence

A sense of belonging is something that is important to youth and young adults. The culture of belonging begins with the family structure that the child is born into (Ruvalcaba et al., 2017). Ruvalcaba et al. (2017) speak about how important the supportive system is as they transition into adulthood. Family, schools and other adults play a major role in a youth feeling apart or belonging (Ruvalcaba et al., 2017). If this structure is damaged for a youth and young adult as a child, the child is at greater risk to becoming a part of delinquent behaviors (Ruvalcaba et al., 2017). The family, school and adults are protective factors that youth or children look for (Ruvalcaba et al., 2017). As any child would, they want to be protected and cared for so it is up to the parents to help provide that structure.

Belonging to social groups that are a part of ECA showed that the youth who involved in these activities overcame challenges (Ruvalcaba et al., 2017). Ruvalcaba et al. (2017) expressed that sports groups have a major relationship building component that is attached to it. The authors also found that it teaches tolerance and overcoming

challenges amongst youth (Ruvalcaba et al., 2017). The youth are able to self-regulate when things get tough on them. The involvement in extra-curricular activities also decrease the symptoms of anxiety and depression (Ruvalcaba et al., 2017). Typically, young girls report symptoms of depression (Ruvalcaba et al., 2017) but young boys experience it as well. In this study there had been an increase in self-esteem, autonomy, conviction, and coping skills (Ruvalcaba et al, 2017). These extra-curricular activities also included religious behaviors, volunteer work and artistic groups (Ruvalcaba et al., 2017.

The authors obtained this information by using a socio-demographic that included age, gender, school, grade and belonging (Ruvalcaba et al., 2017). The instrument that was used to obtain this data was the Bar-On emotional questionnaire, which is a 48 item, Likert type scale and it measured 6 dimensions that included intrapersonal competencies, anger management, adaptability, positive emotions, optimism and self-concept (Ruvalcaba et al., 2017). There were 840 adolescents age 12-17 with the mean age of 14.3 years old (Ruvalcaba et al., 2017). The study included 44% male participation and 56% female participation and they were provided with informed consent (Ruvalcaba et al., 2017).

Ruvalcaba et al. (2017) used serval different instruments to evaluate their information of both positive and negative outcomes for this study. The positive outcomes used the Bar-On emotional questionnaire, the resilience scale for adolescent, and the negative outcomes used the children manifest anxiety scale, children depression

inventory, and disruptive behavior scale (Ruvalcaba et al., 2017). The measures were administered in a high school and middle school areas and SPSS19 statistical program was used (Ruvalcaba et al., 2017). This study showed the increase in positive behavior of those who participated in extra-curricular activities, even for females (Ruvalcaba et al., 2017). Some may say that extra-curricular activities increase aggressive behaviors amongst youth and young adults; however, it teaches one how to regulate their feelings if they are being corrected in that moment (Ruvalcaba et al., 2017). This study focused on the increase in positive behaviors for those who participated in extra-curricular activities. The researchers also found that sports groups have a strong relationship building component which allows youth to build meaningful relationships.

Urban Areas

Urban communities where the African American population mostly attend school tend to be located in impoverished areas (Carey, 2020). The homes in these communities consist of parents who teach survival instincts instead of practical skills needed for academic success (Carey, 2020). These areas consist of low income and uneducated families (Carey, 2020). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 28% of students are now enrolling into character schools which are heavily populated with minority ethnic groups (Kena et al., 2015). According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAFPCS), charter schools are schools that provide high-quality instruction from teachers who have the autonomy to design a classroom that fits their students' needs (2020). In reviewing the statistics, African American students

make up 78% and Latino students make up 80% of high school students who graduate while their counterparts Pacific Islanders and Asian students make up 91% (Criminal Justice Fact Sheet, 2020). The African American female is incarcerated three times more than their Caucasian or Hispanic female counterparts (BJS, 2011). In addition, African American women are also three times more likely to be incarcerated for non-violent offenses (Carson, 2015). African American high school dropouts are more highly affected than other ethnicities because they are more likely to become involved in the criminal justice system and have higher rates of dependence on various sources of public assistance and welfare, including public health services (Addis & Withington, 2016).

Ethnicity

Involvement in extra-curricular activities is something that is not mandatory for students such as going to school every day. Most extra-curricular activities or sports are considered optional. In South Korea, extra-curricular activities are not highly recognized as a priority in elementary and secondary education because of the culture (Han, Lee & Park, 2017). Those who participate in extra-curricular activities, such as sports, in South Korea are of a lower socioeconomic status. In South Korea, most of the students spend their free time obtaining private lessons for higher education (Han, Lee & Park, 2017). Due to the importance of extra-curricular activities like sports in this country ECA tends to fall by the wayside. Education, however, is one of the most important things in South Korea (Han, Lee & Park, 2017). The college acceptance rate in South Korea was 70%

and that was amongst the subjects of English, science and mathematics (Han, Lee & Park, 2017).

To obtain the numbers for the study the authors used a longitude method to gather data from the Korean Youth Panel (Han, Lee, & Park, 2017). This specified panel gather information from over 2,000 students and parents (Han, Lee, & Park, 2017). Conducting one on one interviews with the students and then a follow up interview via phone with the parents helped obtain the information for analysis (Han, Lee, & Park, 2017). The dependent variable focused on delinquent behavior which were defined as, "smoking, drinking, unexcused absences, running away, severely beating other people, gang fighting, robbing, stealing, severe teasing, threatening, and collective bullying" (Han, Lee, & Park, 2017, p. 88). The independent variable consisted of participation in extra-curricular activities (Han, Lee & Park, 2017). The controlled variables consisted of low self-esteem, delinquent peer association, paternal supervisions, and family attachment (Han, Lee, & Park, 2017).

The limitations of this study were the access to the data regarding extra-curricular activities. Extra-curricular activities have many different variations and this caused this limitation amongst this study. When some people think about extra-curricular activities they think about the sports component, however, it also includes clubs such as the boy and girl scouts, music and other activities that are voluntary (Han, Lee, & Park, 2017). Another limitation during this study was that of bias in their methods (Han, Lee & Park, 2017). The study that was conducted was self-selection. The authors also used an

observational design that helped the authors reach a conclusion (Han, Lee, & Park, 2017).

In South Korea, it was mentioned that the parents saved a lot of their money for

educational lessons, such as math and English, and for private lessons for their children

entering into college (Han, Lee, & Park, 2017).

Gender

The African American individual has not been considered equal over the years.

African Americans have never had access to the same services and athletic things as their

male counter parts and White female peers have (Hawkins & Mulkey, 2015). The African

American female has to find other ways to access athletics or educational advancements.

Hawkins and Mulkey (2015) examined the impact of gender influences during their

participation in sports and educational advancements opportunities for male and female

students. In the study that was conducted it was found that student participation depended

upon the type of athletic activities available and the cost and benefits of the activity

(Hawkins & Mulkey, 2015). The gender association is always a factor due to

discrimination the female experiences that can be associated with sports (Hawkins &

Mulkey, 2015). School size, location and age showed that African American boys wanted

to attend high school and play college sports (Hawkins & Mulkey, 2015).

On the other hand, women have been at disadvantage when considering how

sports have evolved over time (Hawkins & Mulkey, 2015). The Jim Crow laws that were

in effect excluded African Americans from being a part of mainstream life and had an

impact on African American women participating in organized sports (Hawkins &

Mulkey, 2015). Racism and equal opportunities for African American women were drastically changed because they formed their own sports clubs that allowed African American women to participate (Abney, 1999). When the clubs for African American women were formed, they also included the African American male (Abney, 1999). Later Title IX was passed for women to participate in sports at the university level (Abney, 1999). Most of the women who were participating in sports were participating in the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) because the university did not have programs for all women (Hanson, 2012). Overall, all women African American women have fought for gender equality throughout their early lives. African American women have been at the forefront in the fight to have equal rights.

Gender is something that continues to provide division when athletics are involved (Hawkins & Mulkey, 2015). Athletics were considered something that men focus on but now that has changed. Even when it comes to gender equality within the world of athletics there is a consistent fight for women to prove themselves (McDowell & Francique, 2017). Women experiences in the workplace are completely different than males because the original workspace was designed for males and not females (McDowell & Francique, 2017). As history is considered, men went to work while the women cared for the children and home. The social dynamics were extremely different from then until now. The social dynamics are not just about gender but include it, however, there are stereotypes that comes along with the color of one's skin. Some of the stereotypes of African American women include having big butts, being overweight,

being confident, having hair weaves, being assertive, being promiscuous, not being feminine, being aggressive, and eating fried chicken (McDowell & Francique, 2017). Also, along with gender, African American women in general were looked at as being emotional, caring, soft, care about appearance, and feminine; however, none of these stereotypes were contributed to the Black woman. Women in general are not equal to other women and men but African American women are not considered equal even within the stereotypes (McDowell & Francique, 2017). So, when the conversation arises about the gender in a workspace being equal or gender and stereotypes, African American women are not considered equal (McDowell & Francique, 2017).

Summary

Overall, this chapter has explained why it is important to study the African American female population. The population of women has not been the focus of studies and even less studies has focused on the African American female. The gender biases, access to ECA, demographic locations, ethnicity, self-esteem or confidence, coping mechanisms, and unstructured time are important things to consider when we are researching topics relating to sports.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Chapter 3 includes the methodology for the present study. The topic of discussion includes the research design, the rational for the current study, the role as the researcher, the methods used to obtain information, and the instruments used in the current study. Chapter 3 also outlines the data analysis plan and ethical procedures. The goal of this study was to understand the perceptions of African American females who participated in sports during their youth and whether this was a preventative factor in reducing criminal behaviors.

Sample Population

The sample population was accessed through convenience sampling. Rudestam and Newton (2015) suggested, "Convenience sampling allows the researcher to choose the participants who they think can and will contribute to an evolving theory and whose relevance in the study is experiential" (p. 124). The convenience sample was best for this study because it added to the body of literature by an educated decision for who was best suited for the study.

This study provided additional insight to understand if there is an association between participation in sports and the declining involvement in the criminal justice system in African American females who live in an urban area. The phenomenological study focused on "lived experiences" of African American females in an urban city who participated in sports during their youth. Studying lived experiences is important because it focuses on how extracurricular activities may impact female African American youth

and serve as a possible protective factor. Phenomenology researchers view people as integral with the environment, with the understanding that there is no single reality for individuals; instead, everyone has their own reality (Simon, 2011). Phenomenological methodologies typically include fewer participants as compared to quantitative research (Creswell, 2018). Creswell (2018) mentioned that a phenomenological study sample size ranges from three to 10 participants. Charmaz (2006) suggested that the significance of sample size of any study is correlated with saturation, discontinuing data collection when categories or themes have become saturated. When research has become saturated, researchers run the risk of gathering information that is not useful for the current study (Creswell, 2018). On the other hand, sampling more than 10 participants may not trigger any new awareness or reveal any new information beneficial to the purpose of research. Saturation can lead to information that is not new. In conducting this study, I wanted new information that would add to the body of literature (see Creswell, 2018).

The primary research question for this study is, "What are the perceptions of adult female urban African Americans about the overall influence of participating in ECA sports in their youth as an alternative to involvement in criminal activities?" This study included answers from African American adult females who participated in organized sports during their youth. There were a total of 10 participants in this study because the number of interviews should be between three and 10 (Creswell, 2018). More than 10 participants may not lead to any new information, whereas less than three may not provide enough information (Creswell, 2018).

All participants included in the study identified as an African American female, aged 18 or older, who participated in ECA sports and who lived in an urban population. Researchers must also consider snowball effect when sampling (Creswell, 2018). The snowballing technique is used for gathering research participants through the identification of an initial person who can provide names of other participants (Creswell, 2018). Most qualitative studies use snowball sampling as a nonrandom approach to sampling that is used primarily as a response to overcome problems associated with understanding and sampling populations considered deviant and/or socially isolated (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Based on the nature of this research, 10 African American females, age 18 or older, who have participated in athletics as juveniles were located. Therefore, the snowballing technique increases the chances of finding participants who meet the inclusion criteria. In using this specific technique, there may be some unintentional bias because the women who are willing to participate in the study may have been more likely to have had a positive experience with participation in ECA. This study may not be generalizable to other populations.

Setting

For this study, interviews were conducted via Zoom. Each participant was provided with a list of available time slots and communication platforms for interviews.

An informed consent was provided and a signature required before an individual could participate in this research.

Data Sources and Procedure

The gathering of qualitative data was accomplished through semi structured interviews. During the semi structured interviews, the participant and I engaged in a formal interview process, which included a developed interview guide. The interview guide includes a list of questions and topics to be discussed during the conversation, in or out of order. The interview guide was a self-made guide provided to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for permission prior to the interviews. These structured interviews addressed the experiences of African American female's perceptions from an urban setting concerning sports.

Methods of Analysis

The qualitative data was coded after it has been collected from each participant. "Coding is the process of organizing material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to a situation" (Creswell, 2018, p. 186). The data tool that was used is MAXQDA. Using a program such as this enhanced the ability to ask the interviewees open-ended questions and examine responses to those open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are hard to regulate because there is no yes or no answer to the question. Creswell and Creswell (2018) mentioned that hand coding is time-consuming. Using a data analysis tools such as MAXQDA is essential because of the time it takes to code information by hand. Gathering data by hand is essential; however, ensuring that the data

are collected and organized is necessary. All of the interviews were transcribed, and then

MAXQDA software was used to identify themes from the data. The themes that were

identified in this study are discussed below.

Instruments

A semi-structured one-on-one interview method using Zoom was employed to

examine the perceptions and attitudes regarding individual experiences of each

participant within the study as they were involved in sports. This approach offered

flexibility, as follow-up questions may be formulated as the interview progresses to elicit

more in-depth information about the experience of each African American female who

participated in this research. This semi-structured interview was conducted only once.

The interview took approximately 90 minutes and was recorded electronically for

subsequent transcription, coding, and analysis. The questions for the interview process

were formulated with Patton's (2002) six types of interview questions in mind, which

focuses on: behavior or experiences, opinion or beliefs, feelings, knowledge, sensory, and

background or demographic information (Winsome & Boyce, 2014). The interview guide

that was created represents the basic questions related to the research as well as possible

follow-up inquiries to encourage additional discussion.

I used seven open-ended questions that were developed to provide the basic

foundation for the interview. The interview questions served as a guide for the interview

in order to address each individual research question. These foundational questions were

considered appropriate for the current study and focused on the experiences that each

participant encountered as they participated in sports as a youth. The interview questions

are structured to address the range of concerns an African American female who

participated in sports as a youth in an urban area would experience. The guiding

questions included seven open-ended questions pertaining to the participant's

involvement in sports such as, how did your participation in sports reduce your

interaction with criminal activity? Do you perceive participation in sports as being a

protective factor (a lower likelihood of problem outcomes or that reduces the negative

impact of a risk factor on problem outcomes) in your developmental process that

decreased your involvement in criminal activities? Did your participation in sports serve

as a preventative factor in your decision to avoid delinquent activities and future criminal

behavior? Can you describe your experiences while participating in sports being an

African American female in an urban population? Describe what it was like for you to

participate in the specific sport that you participated in. How do you think your

experiences participating in sports are different than women who did not participate in

sports as a youth, and Do you think participation in organized sports during adolescence

decrease African-American women's involvement in criminal activity in an urban

population? How do you think women who did not participate in sports may have been

negatively impacted by their lack of participation?

The participants' responses provided data that will offer insight for further

exploration. The interview was recorded electronically via Zoom and I took notes for

analysis and the creation of an audit trail to be followed during the analyzing process.

The number of questions was limited to ensure that sufficient time was provided to discuss the topic in depth without being on a time restriction (Knight, 2013). Instruments developed by other researchers were not used during this study (Creswell, 2018). Participants' responses are subjective, and because of this, the validity is lessened (Williams, 2007). Content validity is reduced, as the interview questions will not address all of the aspects of this topic including issues such as the socioeconomic status or abuse. Content validity was addressed by my dissertation committee. The results of the current study are not necessarily transferable to populations such as all males or Caucasian females.

Recruitment

Participants were purposely recruited through snowball sampling (Creswell, 2018). The snowball sampling method was used through social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Once the social media post was made and the participants responded, the potential participants were emailed an invitation that contained my email address and telephone number. African American females willing to participate were asked to email me indicating their willingness to participate in the study. I emailed each participant a description of the study, an informed consent form, and an invitation to select a date and time for the interview that did not conflict with their schedule. If the potential participant did not email me, she was not contacted again. After the interview was conducted, the participant was asked if she has any friends or colleagues who met the inclusion criteria that might be interested in participating in the study. If so, the initial

participant was asked to provide the potential participant a copy of the printed invitation, and the recruiting process was repeated. This process continued until the 10 participants were recruited.

Participation

The inclusion criteria for participants includes African American female who has lived in an urban area, participated in organized sports in their youth, and is at least 18 years of age. Organized sports are physical activities that are directed by adults or youth leaders that involve rules, formal competitions, and organized practices. Participants who did meet the criteria were not included in the interview process.

Data Collection

Phenomenological inquiry consists of one interview with 10 candidates that focused on the past experience of the interviewee (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Following the inquiry, the process of phenomenological reduction was undertaken. In the phenomenological reduction phase, I identified the essence of the phenomenon being examined and organizing data around the themes that detail the broad range of specifics details regarding the experiences of the interviewee (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The final phase of analyzing data was structural synthesis. Structural synthesis is where "all of the possible meanings and divergent perspectives are explored to identify a description of the phenomenon and its underpinnings" (Creswell, 2018). Data were collected via Zoom session with each of the 10 women who participated in the study. I created and maintained an audit trail to facilitate future research replication. I electronically recorded,

transcribed through MAXQDA, and analyzed the participants' responses to the interview questions. Each of the participants' transcriptions was assigned a number. A Facebook and Instagram page were developed and the link provided to the participants. The results of this study will be posted on this Facebook and Instagram page.

Data Analysis Plan

This qualitative study developed an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) that provided examinations of each individual participant's lived experience while participating in sports. The thematic analysis is undertaken with the acknowledgement that it is an interpretive approach as humans discover their own realities (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Interviews were electronically recorded through in person, Zoom, or Skype for transcription, coding, and analysis through MAXQDA.

Data analysis consisted of the identification of themes in the data obtained from each of the participants interviews. The coding of individualized and collective themes will promote interpretive analysis and generalization of how the phenomenon is experienced by each African American female participant. The results of this research was compared with existing literature to suggest other ways for African American females to be studied.

Issues of Trustworthiness

This phenomenological study examined a small defined group of 10 participants. Qualitative data are credible when the experiences of a person can be recognized by others (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). Credibility was established when the findings of a

study are viewed by the researchers and others who are reading the findings are believed to have meaning and apply the terms in their own experience (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999). Dependability is an important element of a study's trustworthiness because it establishes the consistency of a study's findings and whether they are repeatable for the next researcher (Creswell, 2018). In addition to checking and rechecking the data, confirmability can be assured through the process of reflectivity (Mortari, 2015) by which the researcher was aware of personal thoughts and feelings. The establishment of face validity was accomplished by presenting the seven foundational interview questions to the dissertation committee for review.

Ethical Procedures

The current study was conducted in accordance with the standards promulgated in the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (American Psychological Association [APA], 2002). The treatment of human participants and as discussed in the Belmont report (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 1979) and the Five Principles for Research Ethics (Smith, 2003). The current study involved 10 African American females who are purposely selected volunteers to be identified by the researcher. Conducting research that involves human participants must first be granted the approval of the Walden's University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). This authorization to use human participants were approved before the data collection process begins. The participants within this study were reassured of confidentiality as promulgated in Section 4 of the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct*

(APA, 2002). The participant's identities were coded for the purposes of confidentiality and the data analysis plan. The potential participants were given a description of the study and participation instructions and informed consent information was provided in alignment with Section 8 of the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (APA, 2002). For this study, interviews were conducted over the phone, in person, Zoom, Skype or another online platform that the participant is comfortable. The data that is collected will only be available to the researcher and the participants who were involved in the study (Creswell, 2018).

At the conclusion of the current study the information that is obtained is both accurately represented and made available to participants via Facebook or Instagram. Each participant was advised about their ability to decline to participate or discontinue their participation and potential risks and benefits of participation (Creswell, 2018), and the limits of confidentiality. This study did not include participants from specific vulnerable populations that are known by the researcher and no harm is expected to be experienced in any aspect of the research (APA, 2002). The potential benefits of the study include personal insights of how participation in organized sports may have influenced the participants' development and decision making. The other benefit of this study is it may clarify the perception of the participants regarding the potential protective quality of participating in organized sports and their perception about whether or not it influenced their decision making about delinquent behavior in adolescence. This richer understanding may ultimately lead to positive social change. If these participants view

their experiences in organized sports during their youth as aiding in the prevention of criminal involvement and activities, then additional funding may be used to increase both involvement and opportunities for African American female youth to participate in organized sports.

Protective measures include the assignment of a participant number for the collection, recording, storage, and analysis of biographical information. Participants were reassured that their data is kept in a secure, password protected computer file that is accessible only by the researcher and the researcher's dissertation chairperson (Federman, Hanna, & Rodriguez, 2002). The data that is collected during the research process is kept for 5 years and destroyed per APA guidelines.

Summary

The current study used qualitative research method to explore the lived experience of African American females who participated in sports during their youth. The study was conducted with the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (American Psychological Association [APA], 2002) after being granted authorization to conduct this research by the Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The researcher used a semi-structured, phenomenological interview approach, the data relevant to the research questions.

This chapter outlined the selection process of the research design and the reason why this specific selection process was conducted. This chapter further discussed the methodology involved in the selection and recruitment of each of the 10 participants,

sample interview questions, data collection and analysis process, and ethical concerns. The role of the researcher in the current study was also addressed. The findings of this study may be used to drive social change, especially through additional funding and opportunities. If African American women who grew up in urban settings and participated in organized sports believe that their participation served as a protective factor, then additional funding sources and opportunities for participation in organized sports should be developed.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to increase information about the perceptions of

urban African American women who played team sports during adolescence.

Specifically, this study focused on whether adult African American urban women

believed playing team sports was a protective factor in their choices during their

adolescence as an alternative to participating in criminal activities. This study focused on

the lived experiences of each participant. This richer understanding may ultimately lead

to positive social change. If these participants view their experiences in organized sports

during their youth as aiding in the prevention of criminal involvement and activities, this

information may be important for future research and even the development of programs

for urban African American female youth; an increase in funding opportunities may be

used to increase both involvement and opportunities for African American female youth

to participate in organized sports. The MAXQDA software was used to help analyze

themes for each participant and was used to summarize the information that was gathered

from the interviews. The software system found key words, useful information that

helped develop themes amongst the participants' interviews. The results of the analysis of

key findings resulted in specific themes that emerged from the interviews. Themes are

used in qualitative writing to help analyze text (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Themes are

identified through a number of different ways such word repetition, indigenous

categories, key words, compare and contrast, social science queries, searching for

missing information metaphors and analogies, transitions, connectors, pawing, cutting and sorting and unmarked text (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

There were specific themes that emerged from the interviews in this study. The overarching themes or connecting themes that arose during the interviews were that participants did use sports to protect and prevent themselves from being drawn into delinquent behavior. The women who participated in this study also stated that there was no extra time to become involved in any other activities that were not productive for them. So, for the participants in this study, participating in sports was a protective factor because it kept them away from encounters with criminal activities and a preventative factor because they did not have time to be involved in criminal activities. The questions that were presented to each participant focused on how sports may have impacted each participant's decision making process. Each participant answered each question fully and provided valuable insight.

Setting

Each interview was conducted via Zoom. Each participant was provided with an informed consent and letter to participate within the study. Prior to completing the interview, each participant was briefed on the general overview of the topic and was informed that they were able to discontinue their participation in the process at any time.

Demographics of Participants

The sample included 10 African American females aged 18 and above who participated in sports during their adolescent years and lived in an urban area at the time they were participating in sports.

Findings

Each participant was asked seven questions. There were several different themes that emerged during these interviews. Each participant answered each question, and the themes from each participant are summarized under each question along with some direct input from each participant. Each participant was assigned a number (1-10) for the sake of anonymity. Out of each interview, each participant discussed relevant themes that were important to this study. Each question brought about themes that showed up collectively for each participant but in different circumstances. The one main theme that was discovered was the participants did use sports as a preventative factor to keep themselves from being drawn into delinquent behavior. The women who participated in this study also stated that there was no extra time to become involved in any other activities that were not productive for them. So, for the participants in this study, participating in sports was a protective factor because it kept them away from encounters with criminal activities and a preventative factor because they did not have time to be involved in criminal activities.

Question 1: Describe how your participation in sports reduce your interaction with criminal activity?

Each participant indicated that their interaction with criminal activity was decreased substantially by participating in sports during their adolescence. Participant 1 expressed that participating in sports kept her from participating in gang activity. Participant 1 described herself as tall; as such, she could intimidate others to participate in the gangs. Another participant expressed that participating in sports kept her busy and taught her responsibility, which kept her from participating in criminal activity. Participants also spoke about the peer pressure that would take place, primarily from others who weren't involved in sports. Participation in sports provided a healthy positive environment for the participants. Participant 8 said, "Because of basketball, I did not have time for anything else, even if I wanted to participate in gangs or criminal activity, I did not have the time." The overall theme of Question 1 was, the participants in this study participated in sports which prevented them from becoming involved in criminal activity because they did not have any extra time. Essentially, all participants indicated that their participation in sports kept them out trouble during their adolescence.

Question 2: Do you perceive participation in sports as being a protective factor in your developmental process that decreased your involvement in criminal activities?

The participants in this study believed that their participation in sports was a protective factor. The participants also noted that being around like-minded individuals with one goal helped their developmental process, which in turn decreased their

involvement in criminal activity. Another theme that surfaced during this study was participants noted that participating in sports during their adolescence limited their exposure to criminal activities. Participant 2 said that her involvement in sports taught her some significant life-long lessons which she continues to use to this day. Participant 10 said, "Yes, I do, because I would have wanted to be in streets. I would have wanted to be out and about. There were a lot of things that I wanted to do however, being involved sports and staying in the area that I stayed, I did not have the access to those things." Participant 10 along with the other participants agreed that being involved in sports was a protective factor.

Question 3: Did your participation in sports serve as a preventative factor in your decision to avoid delinquent activities and future criminal behavior?

Participants agreed that sports served as a preventative factor to avoid delinquent activities and future criminal behaviors. All of the participants believed that participation in sports kept them on track. Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, and 10 all collectively agreed it was a preventative factor because coaches were involved in helping them make a better future for themselves. Participants 4, 6, 7, and 8 said it was a choice to avoid criminal activity because they didn't believe in being involved in delinquent behavior. Participant 8 said, "I can't say it did or it didn't. I'm one of those people that I look at other people around me and I see the negative things that happen to them according to their actions, and I correct myself accordingly."

Question 4: Can you describe your experiences while participating in sports being an African American female in an urban population?

The participants stated that their experiences were different because they lived in California, but traveling to other states was a different experience for them. The participants all played travel sports and traveled to other states. Each participant had a positive experience participating in sports. Participant 9 shared that the female athletes were treated differently than the males: "As a female athlete, you were able to tell how the female athletes were treated differently than the male athletes. Everything from uniforms, supports, ticket sales, you were able to see how as females, we were treated very different." Although this disparity was acknowledged, the participants had bigger goals around why they participated in sports. During their participation in sports, they were able to meet a lot of different people, learn about different cultures, and stay busy.

Question 5: Describe what it was like for you to participate in the specific sport that you participated in?

Four out of the 10 participants in this study participated in more than one sport that they enjoyed being a part of. Four out of 10 participants participated in more than one sport including basketball, softball, volleyball, cheerleading, and track and field. The other six participants participated in basketball only because that is what they loved most. Participant 4 said, "Being an adult and looking back, it was fun then, but you don't appreciate it in the moment. But being an adult now, looking back, that was a great time in life, like some of the best times, best memories." Some of the ladies became involved

in other sports because the high schools that they attended did not have enough players to complete the teams. In that case, coaches would recruit players from other sports to participate. Each participant enjoyed their time participating in sports. Some of the participants said that they should have enjoyed the moment more. They said that often they were moving so fast that they forget to enjoy the moment.

Question 6: How do you think your experiences as an adolescent who participated in sports were different than women who did not participate in sports as a youth?

The ladies all agreed that they are able to tell who participated in sports and who didn't. Participant 1 stated, "If I'm being honest, you could tell who played sports and who didn't play sports because I'm all about teamwork, everything across the board, teamwork, I'm willing to work with anything so we can all get it together and get the job done. You could tell who was never a team player or played a team sport so that they showed me a lot just as an adult." The participants felt that it was obvious who had the drive to work as a team and get the job done versus those who didn't. The participants also agreed that it was a lot more structured for them, so they learned routines, deadlines, and discipline. Participating in sports helped them to build foundations that helped them to create their identities.

Question 7: How do you think participation in sports as an adolescent influences other African American female youth? How do you think not participating in sports as an adolescent impacted African American female youth?

The participants said that participating in sports as an adolescent did impact other African American female youths because it encouraged them to become involved. The ladies felt like they did not know the impact their participation was having on other youth until they became adults. Participant 1 said, "Participating in sports encouraged a lot of her other friends to become involved in sports because the goal was to graduate and now that they are adults, the friends regret not participating as they are struggling to get their GED." All of the participants also came up with, "I can do it too mentality" because they participated in sports. They also brought up the fact that they were around others that looked like them, which goes back to the "I can do it too" mentality.

The participants in the study expressed that their participation in sports was a major component in their development as an individual and helped them to avoid criminal activity. Criminal activity was extremely prevalent in their neighborhoods. The ladies that participated in this study said they used sports as an outlet as well as a protective and preventative factor. Overall, all of the ladies that participated in this study shared how their participation in sports positively impacted their overall decision to not participate in criminal activity and facilitated their prosocial decision making and overall growth.

The participants found that their participation in sports was both a preventative and protective factor. Participant 1 stated, "It kept me on track because I am at school at all day, and if it is a game day, you as an athlete had to attend all of the classes. Also, in order for you to participate in sports, you had to have passing grades." She continued to say, "I didn't have time to be in the halls ways or off campus with everyone else." The participants in this study also addressed the ability to make their own decisions based on their own mindset rather than other people negatively influencing their choices. Participant 8 was unsure of how her participation in sports as an adolescent influenced her. She said, "I can't say it did or it didn't. I'm one of those people that I look at other people around me and I see the negative things that happen to them according to their actions, and I correct myself accordingly." The participants collectively agreed that they did influence others to participate in sports. Participant 1 said, "I still have friends that tell me, I should have played sports because I would have graduated from high school." All in all, the ladies in this study felt as participation in sports kept them out of trouble. Despite all of the environmental factors that were negative, they were able to put their focus on positive things due to their participation in organized sports.

The main theme that was identified earlier was that sports were a protective factor for the participants in this study. However, there were subthemes that emerged during the interviews that overall themes included empowerment, dedication, discipline, prosocial decision making, and responsibility. These sub themes arose in a way that the participants were able to use these themes in their day to day lives. In one way or another, these

themes were prevalent throughout the interviews, which allowed me to identify additional subthemes. All of the participants felt that participation in sports had a positive impact on their lives. Participants shared that participation in sports served as a protective factor by reducing opportunities and time to engage in delinquent behavior, which increased prosocial decision making. The participants mentioned how participation in sports increased their sense of responsibility and discipline, which has carried through to their current lives. The participants also felt that their participation is organized sports helped them believe in themselves and their ability to be successful.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Themes, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to increase information about the perceptions of urban African American women who played team sports during adolescents. Specifically, this study focused on whether adult African American urban women believed that playing team sports was a protective factor in their choices during their adolescence, and a protective factor preventing them from participating in criminal activities.

The first question that was asked in this study was, "What are the perceptions of adult female urban African Americans about the overall influence of participating in organized sports in their youth as an alternative to involvement in criminal activities?" African American adult females who participated in this study concluded that the participation in organized sports in their youth was an alternative to being involved in criminal activities. The participants stated that because of their participation in sports, they did not have the extra time to become involved in any criminal activity although it was around them. Sports served as an alternate to participation in criminal activity. The participants spoke about having a commitment to their teams and not wanting to jeopardize anything that had to do with their playing in organized sports. The participants spoke about the commitment academically, on and off the court, knowing that if they did not have the grades, they would not be able to participate in something that they loved to do. The participants understood that sports taught them responsibility. The participants spoke about how this responsibility was important and included the maintenance of good

grades and being on time for practice. Some were captains on their team. They were considered leaders of their team and had a responsibility to be good leaders. The second question of this study asked, "Do adult female urban African Americans who participated in organized sports in their youth perceive their participation as being a protective factor in their development and less involvement in criminal activities?" All of the participants in this study, except for one participant, agreed that their participation in sports was a protective factor in their development as youth. The majority also agreed that their participation reduced their likelihood of being involved in criminal activities. Participants 1 and 2 both spoke about the gangs that were prominent in their schools. They both said that because they were involved with sports, the gang leaders would not pressure them to join the gang. Participant 1 spoke about how she grew up with some of the girls who participated in the gang activities. One participant spoke about her parents not allowing her to use public transportation, which included dropping her off at school for the day and picking her up from practice. She also mentioned that her father took other girls home who would typically have had to use public transportation to get home. Collectively, the ladies all drew the conclusion that their participation in sports contributed significantly to their decision-making process about involvement in criminal activity.

This study addressed the gap in literature about African American woman who grew up in an urban environment and participated in organized sports in their youth. Specifically, this study focused on whether adult African American urban women believed playing team sports was a protective factor in their choices during their

adolescence, and their participation in sports served as an alternative to participating in criminal activities. According to Kurtz (2015), participating in ECAs increase youths' likelihood of academic achievement, developing high self-esteem, and avoiding delinquent activities. There is a paucity of information in the research literature on urban African American women, especially in athletics (The Women's Sports Foundation, 2016). This study contributed to the body of literature by increasing the understanding of the perceptions of African American females who participated in sports during their adolescence. The women in this study also agreed that everyone should participate in some type of ECA. Participant 5 covered the appearance mechanism that young women are expected to always look like a lady and not an athlete. Participant 5 said that she was looked at differently because she was an athlete and preferred to wear basketball shorts and a cut off shirt or sweats and hoodie to school opposed to wearing tight jeans. Participant 5 discussed how women must look a certain way not to be judged. The participants also addressed the "I can do it too" mentality. The participants also discussed being role models for other African American females when they were adolescents.

<div align="center">**Themes**</div>

The MAXQDA software help analyze themes for each participant and gave the ability to summarize the information that was gathered from the interviews of each participant. The software system found key words, useful information that helped develop themes amongst the participants. MAXQDA software help form analysis of key findings.

The main theme was that sports were a protective factor, but subthemes that were present in this study included responsibility, empowerment, dedication, discipline, leadership, teamwork, and prosocial decision making. The subthemes of empowerment, dedication, responsibilities, and teamwork are directly related to the overall theme of protective factors. These themes helped the participants maneuver through situations that arose during their participation in sports. The other subthemes are categorized under preventative factors as discipline, leadership, and prosocial decision making, which can all influence the decision making process. Both the protective and preventative themes were beneficial to the participants as they participated in sports. The participants also indicated that they did not have time to be involved in criminal activity because they were involved in sports. The ladies collectively embraced the subcategory of "responsibilities" that came along with participation in sports. In order to participate in a team sport in high school, they had to be on time for practice, attend classes regularly, and maintain a 2.0 (GPA). The development of leadership skills was also a key theme that was identified in this study. The participants felt they took on leadership responsibilities in order to be a part of the team. The ladies also agreed that their interaction with delinquent behaviors decrease substantially because their mind set was different from their peers, sports empowered them to make more prosocial decisions. The next theme that most of the participants identified was the value of team-work through participating in sports. So not only did sports keep the ladies from participation in criminal activity, it helped them grow personally.

Limitations

The women who volunteered for this study may be more likely to have been successfully involved in sports than women who did not volunteer to participate in this study. The results of this study may not be generalizable to other populations. Another limitation to this study is that only 10 African American females were interviewed, and therefore may not represent the view of all African- American females who participated in sports during their adolescent years.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are multiple topics that should be addressed in future research. Future researchers may want to focus on the home life of African American female adolescents who both did and did not participate in sports. Researchers may also want to focus on if ECAs are accessible to African American female juveniles living in an urban community. Future research can also include a comparison between African American female criminal activity and African American men and criminal activity during their adolescence. Specifically, such studies might focus on how participations in sports may or may not have impacted their decision making.

Implications for Social Change

This study clarified the perception of the participants regarding the potential protective quality of participating in organized sports and their perception about whether it influenced their decision making about delinquent behavior in adolescence. Youth who participate in ECAs are more likely to have lower incidences of delinquency (Kurtz,

2015). This qualitative study brought about an understanding as to why participants viewed their experiences in organized sports during their youth as aiding in the prevention of criminal involvement and activities. Their consensus was that they hoped this study may be used to justify additional funding to increase both the involvement and opportunities for African American female youth to participate in organized sports thereby producing a significant positive social change.

Conclusion

This study may result in helping people have a better understanding about the perceptions of African American women who participated in sports during their adolescent years and how it was a protective and preventative factor in their decision-making process. Unanimously, participants in this study recommended that girls become involved in some type of ECA. Most of the participants in this study had participated in sports from the time they were young girls until they reached adulthood. They also recommended ECAs for youth including but not limited to basketball, track, softball, music, or a reading club.

In conclusion, all participants in this study provided valuable information to the questions that were asked. The participants of this study shared information that included their journey of participating in sports during their youth. The women who participated in this study perceived their participation in sports influenced their decision making because they did not want to jeopardize anything that would keep them from participating in sports. The main theme was that sports were a protective factor, but subthemes that were

present in this study included responsibility, empowerment, dedication, discipline, leadership, teamwork, and prosocial decision making. The subthemes of empowerment, dedication, responsibilities, and teamwork are directly related to the overall theme of protective factors. These themes helped the participants maneuver through situations that arose during their participation in sports. The other subthemes are categorized under preventative factors as discipline, leadership, and prosocial decision making, which can all influence the decision making process. Participants all shared that their participation in sports taught them responsibility and gave them the mentality of, "I can do it too."

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