Katie Kooiman

Integrative Project: Guided Thesis

Dr. Forrest Inslee

Integrative Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in

International Community Development

Table of Contents

Question One: Contextualization

Contextualization

Throughout the ICD program, it has become clear that problems within the world and the communities we live in are not easily solved. It is easy to see a problem through the lens of my own life, but it is not always conducive to long-term, sustainable solutions. Without acknowledging the context of the problem, there is a missing link. This is where contextualization provides the opportunity to see outside of yourself and your own culture to find solutions that best serve the intended population. Contextualization has taught me to consider relevance, audience and perspective when designing and implementing new projects. Through the fieldwork experiences and the application of the teachings of the MAICD program to my current role, I have seen how contextualization can provide strength to ideas within community development.

Contextualization refers to the intention of making the work and research accurate and reflective of the various cultures and people involved. Culture, location, resources, and relationships are all important elements of contextualization. Ali Shehadeh explains contextualization as "a way of approaching our research project, or linking it to the relevant research and to the setting of the study" (Shehadeh). When designing a program and developing solutions for existing problems, it is vital to remember the context in which the problem exists. In addition, it is important while practicing contextualization to respect and acknowledge that different cultures approach problems in different ways. Andrew Bartelt explains, "we are all both 'cultural' and 'cross-cultural' in virtually every dimension of socialization" (56). Through the processes involved in contextualization, community development practitioners can find deeper meanings and transfer meaning across cultures and socialization. Shaw et. al describe the

importance of contextualization, writing, "cross-cultural mission[s] must take the language and culture of each ministry context seriously in order to transfer meaning" (97). These ideas and definitions were echoed throughout the work I did on my thesis and the teachings of the professors of the MAICD program.

With contextualization in mind, I have worked to see how solutions and designs might best serve the interests of a group of people. Contextualization emphasizes for me, as community development practitioner, that I work to understand the same problem from the perspective gained through multiple contexts, especially those from which I have no lived experience. For example, the youth I hope to serve through the work of my thesis project live in a context that is different from my own. The dominant culture in the community in which I live is similar to stereotypical American cultures. Our community is majority white and middle income. The students I hope to serve are predominantly minority and low income. Tim Keller states, "we don't have to learn how the other cultures work to get along in life, but they have to learn about us" (Keller 00:06:24). It is important for me to intentionally flip this situation and work to learn about the cultures, situations, and groups of people I intend to serve. As I design and implement practical solutions, it is important to be aware of context and cultural differences.

Contextualization in Design and Implementation

In the work of community development, it is important to consider contextualization when designing and implementing programs because problems don't operate on an island, they operate within a context. Absetz et. al explain that, "contextualization implied that materials were made relevant and applicable to the local context and languages and that the best mode and platform for delivery of the intervention was sought" (27). When we are designing programs and

interventions, the goal is for the community to be developed to a point that they don't need the help of practitioners. We are looking for sustainable solutions that provide meaningful change.

Contextualization guides a community developer to keep a focus on those they wish to serve. When applying the research in order to find sustainable solutions, the context of the problem is as important as the problem itself. In the beginning of my experience with community development, the importance of listening to the voice of those entrenched in the problem became abundantly clear. William Easterly writes, "the needs of the poor don't get met because the poor have little money or political power with which to make their needs known" (17). Contextualization allows for the needs of the poor and underrepresented to have their needs to known because the problems people face and the needs they have become more specific. It is important that I don't name the needs of others without doing the work to understand the needs in their specific environment. Bryant Myers highlights the impact of this when he writes, "this convergence of stories means that the story of the community and the holistic practitioner will never fully be the same" (206). It is important throughout the design and implementation process that the practitioner is aware of the impact the environment plays on a problem or situation. While contextualization will not make the stories of the practitioner and community become the same, it gives the perspective necessary to evaluate situations effectively.

In addition to what it provides to the practitioner, it also gives people a place and a sense of belonging. When developing your sense of self, people "develop identities around their communities and social contexts" (Astuto 301). Contextualization allows those identities to be validated and made meaningful. I found in the work of community development that it is easy to get so laser-focused on the work and getting to a solution that you lose sight of the human element and the identities of those you serve. Contextualization doesn't allow you to skip that

reality. If we are to design and implement effective and sustainable programs, we must maintain relevance, respect of identity and reflection on problems in specific settings.

Contextualization on All Levels

Contextualization can, and should, happen on many different levels, and each of these levels leads to a new understanding. In a general sense, contextualization was present in the work of my thesis project and in designing a program for low-income youth on a larger scale. In my local community, my work was shaped by the multiple contexts of children. In the most micro-level example, I used my own local assets and capacities to develop a program specifically for the youth of my county. While these various levels all draw from the same larger theme, they each provide a different lens and application.

In my thesis project, I aim to develop a program targeted at low-income youth (see Appendix). In order to do so, I have to generalize context. Not every low-income youth experiences the same factors, but it is important to recognize overarching factors when working on a project of this magnitude. Bartelt explains that we need "the tools and categories to address the changing cultural landscape, itself a new context" (60). Because of this new cultural landscape in particular, it is important to pay close attention to the application of Hofstede's Power Distance Index (Hofstede). The Mind Tools website explains that, "this refers to the degree of inequality that exists – and is accepted – between people with and without power" (Hofstede). When dealing with low-income children, there is a large power imbalance that can have an effect on the participants. This power balance stems from an adult to child relationship and also through racial inequalities as a white practitioner working with majority minority children. This leads into a more specific lens of the community in which I aim to begin.

Through the research I have done and the design I have created, I have learned a lot about the importance of context to children. While contextualization is most often referred to in the idea of making work relevant and applicable to all cultures, it has also become evident in the work I hope to do. Children need to know how to function in each of the contexts that they are asked to function. In the work of Tarkington J. Newman, he stated that "even though youth initially learned life skills, they were not able to transfer the skills to other contexts and situations" (645). In my teaching career, it is obvious that children behave and interact differently across contexts. If my thesis project combines the school setting with sports and it includes children from the same economic background, it is important children know how to function with all of these contexts combined. Newman also explains that "life skills must have the ability to be learned and practiced in one context and then transferred and applied in another context, such as at home or in school" (644). Because of this, the program I aim to develop must teach participants how to transfer the application of what they learn to other contexts. When working with the youth and creating long-lasting character and life skills, it is important to not only lead with contextualization, but also teach the participants about the topic as well.

The most specific example of contextualization is my own use of assets and capacities to develop my project. In my fieldwork, I spent time at a local branch of the YMCA. The YMCA in my area has a direct connection to our schools because they run an afterschool program. The YMCA also has a direct connection to low-income families because they provide specific opportunities for these families. Combining the context of developing my program through the YMCA with the relationships within the school building allowed me to have a deeper, inside look at how this project could be developed. When viewing the same issue through multiple lenses, I am able to see more ways to solve a problem. Seeing the particular issue of low-income

youth lacking opportunities to develop life skills through sports through the context of a school lens gives an opportunity to gain information that would be missed if the sports lens was the only one considered. This issue is bigger than sport, and it can be applied across contexts, if those contexts are all recognized and respected. Seeing the same issue of low income youth lacking opportunities in sport through the lens of the YMCA provides a community context with a business focus that could be missed if the school lens was the only one considered. Using these assets in tandem allows my project to overcome logistical challenges that might not have been considered otherwise.

Same Problem in Creative and Innovative Ways

Contextualization requires creativity and innovation on the part of the community developers. The reason that creativity and innovation are so important is because this work will take us out of our own normative context. This work would be difficult even if it were straightforward. Instead, we combine multiple situations that do not always easily overlap. In order to address the problems in all of these different situations, "it might be helpful to place the events in… a larger narrative context" (Beck 77). When we broaden our perspective, we might also broaden our solutions.

Application in the Future

As I begin to work toward implementing my thesis project, I will need to make sure that contextualization is always at the forefront of what I do and what I design. I want to keep in mind that the context which I operate in is often part of the dominant culture. I want to focus on the Power Distance Index as described by Hofstede. It is also important to me that I teach children to operate in multiple contexts to bridge gaps and challenge the current status quo.

Being a part of the dominant culture gives me a perspective that can lead to unforeseen and unintended consequences. For example, my culture leads to me to be outspoken and question authority when I feel that it doesn't serve the intended goals. This can cause discomfort in cultures where this is not the norm. Contextualization in my future work will look to realize that each culture a student brings with them impacts how they approach the same problem I aim to address. I will be intentional about creating an inclusive culture within the organization and program that accommodates for all people involved. My work will strive to be relevant for all people in all situations with clearly communicated messaging.

The Power Distance Index from Hofstede is important because there is a current imbalance in our community. Contextualization accounts for this imbalance by looking from the perspective of the group that might be lacking in power. As we move forward with our work in social justice and racial reconciliation, I am determined to always account for the Power Distance Index.

Finally, I want to teach children how to operate in different contexts and apply the skills they have learned across situations. I want to be clear that contextualization does not call for children to learn to change to fit the situation and context they are placed in. I want children to know how to be authentically themselves. It is the application of themselves and the application of the skills they carry that will lead them out of situations that are not serving them. While we can teach them to be successful within our program, if they are not able to transfer that into other areas of their lives, then we have simply created students who are good at participating in our program. With the goal of long-term sustainability, contextualization for children is necessary in order to develop the full child in every arena they may ever step foot in.

Contextualization is important for my future work on many levels. Each goal I aim to achieve will be impacted by contextualization. If it is not made a priority, then the success of my solution will be called into question. No situation exists without context, and if we are going to create any real change, we must be aware of the realities of each context in which we work.

Works Cited

Absetz, Pilvikki, et al. "SMART2D—Development and Contextualization of Community

    Strategies to Support Self-Management in Prevention and Control of Type 2 Diabetes in

    Uganda, South Africa, and Sweden." *Translational Behavioral Medicine*, vol. 10, no. 1,

    2020, pp. 25–34., https://doi.org/10.1093/tbm/ibz188.

Astuto, Jennifer, and Martin Ruck. "Growing up in Poverty and Civic Engagement: The Role of

    Kindergarten Executive Function and Play Predicting Participation in 8th Grade

    Extracurricular Activities." *Applied Developmental Science*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2017, pp.

    301–318., https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2016.1257943.

Bartelt, Andrew H. "Keeping Our Balance in Our Own Context: Keeping the Cross in Cross-

    Cultural and Taking the Con Out of Contextualization." *Concordia Journal*, vol. 47, no.

    1, Wint 2021, pp. 49–62. *EBSCOhost*,

    search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=shib,sso&db=rfh&AN=ATLAi

    FZK210426000137&site=eds-live&scope=site.

*Beck, Richard. *Unclean: Meditations on Purity, Hospitality, and Mortality*. Eugene, OR: Wipf

    and Stock Publishers, 2011.

*Easterly, William. "Planners vs. Searchers." *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's efforts

    to aid the rest have done so much ill and so little good*, New York: Penguin, 2006, pp.3-

    30.

*"Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions: Understanding Different Countries." *Mind Tools: Essential

    skills for an excellent career*. www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_66.htm

Keller, Tim. "Tim Keller - Center Church: Gospel Contextualization Q&AT." *YouTube*,

   Redeemer City to City, 16 Sept. 2013,

   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9a1VGW99uI&ab_channel=RedeemerCitytoCity.

*Myers, Bryant. *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational*

   Development. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011.

Newman, Tarkington J. "Life Skill Development and Transfer: 'They're Not Just Meant for

   Playing Sports.'" *Research on Social Work Practice*, vol. 30, no. 6, 2020, pp. 643–657.,

   https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731520903427.

Shaw, R.Daniel, et al. "Contextualization, Conceptualization, and Communication: The

   Development of Contextualization at Fuller's Graduate School of World

   Mission/Intercultural Studies." *Missiology*, vol. 44, no. 1, Jan. 2016, pp. 95–111.

   EBSCOhost, doi:10.1177/0091829615620932.

Shehadeh, Ali. "Contextualizing Your Research Project." *Second Language Learning and*

   Teaching, Nov. 2020, pp. 327–335., https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-34762-8_27.

Question Two: Qualitative Research

Definition

Before beginning this degree program, I had never intentionally engaged in qualitative research. I didn't understand the value and power of it, especially because I had been programmed to default to quantitative methods whenever possible. I have since learned that qualitative research is particularly useful in community development because it allows for human connection, and it allows me to appreciate the lives people are living. As Krukowski explained, "qualitative methods examine the 'qualities' or characteristics of empirical evidence" (22). This thought resonated with me because in my experiences in the ICD program, I gained so much knowledge and got to understand the characteristics of the groups of people I hoped to serve when diving into qualitative methods. I was able to engage with people and create relationships in a way that I had never experienced when conducting quantitative research.

Through my own experience with qualitative research, the coursework for this program, and review of journal articles, the importance of qualitative research has become apparent. The values associated with the work match directly with the themes presented in the ICD program. It is a particularly useful technique for community development, and it was critical in the design of my own project. These ideas will be explored throughout this essay.

Values of Qualitative Research

When we are diving deep into community development, we must always remain focused on the end goal, which is about improving the quality of life for human-beings. Where quantitative research lends itself to thinking of people as numbers, qualitative research goes beyond the statistics and numbers to the emotion involved in the stories people are able to tell

about their lives and experiences. Pratt et. al explain qualitative research as "inductive or abductive scholarship that does not test theory and that 'produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification'" (2). Because of this, choosing the right type of research method is critical to the results you are able to obtain. According to Krukowski, it is important to "understand that the methodologies selected can alter the story being delivered through our value conclusions" (22). When practicing community development, the stories that people contribute to your research unlock problems and solutions that would otherwise not have been accounted for. Qualitative research requires certain values (leads to evidence, rooted in relationships, trust and confidentiality) that lead to a different understanding of the stories being delivered.

Qualitative research must still provide researchers with causation and evidence. In an article for *Qualitative Psychology*, Joseph Maxwell explains how in experiments "the actual cause of the result was 'revealed only by qualitative examination of the actual operation of groups'" (380). Qualitative research allows for this kind of exploration and learning that might not otherwise happen. It is important that, through the research, a cause for behaviors or results is established. Researchers engaging in these methods find themselves immersed in a culture rather than observing and measuring from the outside. This immersion still leads to evidence, but that evidence might not always be quantifiable. Pratt et. al explain that "qualitative research serves a powerful role in the creation of knowledge" (2). As researchers, we are seeking knowledge, in whichever method of research we engage in. This knowledge does not always come in the form of numbers, but it is no less important than the results that do. Qualitative methods demand knowledge about the subjects be discovered and the cause of problems to be understood.

In addition, qualitative research requires a foundation of relationships. In order to conduct effective research, I learned the importance of establishing an appropriate climate based on a relationship built on trust and honesty. Reflecting on the importance of relationships, Swaran Singh et. al explained that "it was necessary to make [the participants] feel relaxed and comfortable in divulging information to unfamiliar people" (1729). This is a key to any good qualitative study. Qualitative research relies on people being able to tell their honest and truthful stories. Without a level of comfort and trust, it is difficult to gain a deep understanding of the subjects. The relationships in qualitative study allow you to see more than the numbers alone would. Krukowski states, "further insights are gained from the numbers by uncovering details within the numbers" (22). Quantifiable data has a place and is extremely important, but the relationships that are built in qualitative research allows you to gain insight that would be missed otherwise.

These values of qualitative research are reflected within the coursework and teachings of the ICD program. In our work within ICD there is an emphasis on human connection. We are taught to hear stories, release judgment and gain knowledge necessary to affect change. Bryant Myers explained, "to progress, we have to abandon the habit of reducing the poor to cartoon characters and take the time to really understand their lives, in all their complexity and richness" (39). The complexity and richness of someone's life is reflected in the values of qualitative research when you move beyond the numbers and look for understanding. Without the intentionality that comes with qualitative research, we reduce people and their stories.

Usefulness of Qualitative Research in Community Development

As someone who has only spent real time conducting qualitative research, I realized there is a power in qualitative research that is absent in quantitative research. Pratt et. al argue that

"qualitative studies still lag behind quantitative papers in terms of submission and publication

rates in top management journals" (2). These authors also wrote that although qualitative studies

lag behind "nearly half of the winners of the ASQ Award for Scholarly Contribution since 2004

are qualitative articles" (Pratt et. al 3). Qualitative methods are not as widely publicized to

mainstream audiences as research, but they are powerful all the same. When I began the work in

the ICD program, I succumbed to these same misconceptions. Before engaging in the work, I felt

like it was a waste of time because of the lack of quantifiable data. Hammond explains that many

people "regard the process as a waste of time, because they can't see what they are going to do

with the unorganized mass of information" (31). While the abundance of unorganized

information is at first daunting, it can lead to levels that would be unreached if using other

methods. Burkette states that "to do this kind of work the use of case studies is most appropriate,

as this is a method that allows for… contextualization" (119). Qualitative methods allow

researchers to identify problems that require a deeper understanding, and to remove and combat

internal and external biases.

   Through qualitative research, practitioners are able to identify the myriad of problems

that exist in today's society. Bryant Myers argues that "social problems are better solved as close

to the action as possible by innovators who try and fail and fail again" (36). Being immersed in

the culture and relationships of a group while conducting research allows the researcher to be

closer to the action than quantitative observations would. Qualitative methods "require the…

practitioner to consider unique characteristics and ask targeted questions" (Krukowski 27). This

is extremely important to community development because the practitioner cannot remove

themself from the problem. They are steeped in it. It creates within researchers a connection to

the group they aim to serve. In the work of community development, it is vital to not remove the

human element. Without this connection, there are many obstacles that get in the way. Hammond writes, "the statements are grounded in real experience and history [so] people know how to repeat their success" (6). Repeated success and sustainability are the ultimate measures of good community development, and the connection generated in qualitative research is critical in this regard. This connection also allows for confrontation of biases.

Every researcher is living with bias. It is a naturally occurring situation, regardless of who you are or where you come from. If practitioners are conducting research without acknowledging these biases, solutions can be off base. Verna Myers in her TEDTalk explains, "biases are the stories we make up about people before we know who they really are" (00:12:10). Throughout the work that I have done and the work I am beginning, I have learned it is critically important to listen to the stories people tell about themselves, and not the stories that I have made up. Bias can impact our research and the relationships being created. But it can also allow us to find connections within the cultures we are researching. Sunstein states, "subjectivity… allows us to uncover some features of culture that are not always apparent" (7). It is important within community development and qualitative research that we are aware of our biases and the impact they may have, both positively and negatively.

A Case Example

The usefulness of qualitative research was demonstrated in my project on many different levels. As a nonprofit combining community resources to provide access to sports for low-income youth, our goals are beyond participation. The first level of qualifying results would be in the work of the project application itself. Our proposed nonprofit will look for results that are based on character development, which can not always be portrayed in quantitative methods. It was also necessary in looking for solutions. Money is simply not enough. The stories that

families have to tell led me to a greater understanding of the need for these programs. For example, we are looking at developing determination and perseverance in children. It is hard, if even possible, to quantify these characteristics. Qualitative research methods allow us to measure these without providing a number.

In the hypothetical future evaluation of my project, there is also a clear use for qualitative methods. I will be looking for increases in self-confidence, determination, leadership abilities and overall mental and physical health. While the improvement of physical health can easily be reached through quantitative analyses, the rest of the outcome markers will need to be based on qualitative research practices. Based on pre and post experience surveys, we will be able to use qualitative measures to see growth in participants. Interviews with the participants will demonstrate growth in many areas, especially since relationships will be built over a period of time.

Community developers should use qualitative research practices in their evaluations because not all human-centered growth can be measured in numbers or placed on a scale. Especially in the case of my own proposed project, character building is not easily quantifiable. By using qualitative methods, researchers would be able to see positive development in their intended audience that might not translate in only quantitative methods.

Agent for Change

Community development practices are enhanced and understanding is deepened through qualitative methods. Without these research practices, the human element of what is occurring in these situations would be missed. People would be reduced to numbers and their stories, and the deeper meanings that lie within the stories, would be overlooked and not accounted for. The fieldwork would not have data that is as strong or reliable if the researchers relied specifically on

quantitative methods. Sunstein explains how qualitative research "strengthens fieldwork through triangulation – ways to validate, check, confirm, or disconfirm data" (313). The work done in community development, and more specifically qualitative research, allow for results just as strong as those of quantitative practices.

Qualitative measures, in combination with quantitative methods, will make me a better agent for social change in a variety of ways, but mostly because it will allow me to spend dedicated, thoughtful time with the people who deserve it. Life can get hectic and busy. It is easy to take the quickest, and often least impactful, way to a solution. Throughout this program, we have learned the importance of connecting, receiving and listening before acting. Qualitative research forces the researcher to spend time with a group of people. That time is incredibly valuable, and it is not always treated as such in quantitative practices.

By keeping the values of the ICD program and the practices of qualitative research at the forefront of what I am doing, I know that I will be serving my community to the best of my ability. I will be able to determine the needs and wants of a group of people based on their own determinations and not my biases or preconceptions. It will allow me to maintain integrity when creating results, which will lead to effective implementation of my future nonprofit. Through qualitative research I will be able to accomplish the mission I have set out to accomplish.

Works Cited

Burkette, Allison. "'About What Were We Talking?': The Intersection of Quantitative and

Qualitative Approaches." *Southern Journal of Linguistics*, vol. 38, no. 1, Spring 2014, pp.

117–35. *EBSCOhost*,

search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=shib,sso&db=ufh&AN=99823

193&site=eds-live&scope=site.

*Hammond, Sue. *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*. 3rd ed. Bend, OR: Thin Book

Publishing, 2013.

Krukowski, Kipp A., and Lawrence Justin White Jr. "A Call for Industry Specialization: An

Academic Perspective on the Importance of Qualitative Research." *Value Examiner*, May

2021, pp. 22–27. *EBSCOhost*,

search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=shib,sso&db=bth&AN=150956

034&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Maxwell, Joseph A. "The Importance of Qualitative Research for Investigating Causation."

Qualitative Psychology, vol. 8, no. 3, Oct. 2021, pp. 378–88. *EBSCOhost*,

doi.org/10.1037/qup0000219.

*Myers, Bryant L. *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational

Development*. Revised and Expanded ed., Orbis Books, 2014.

*Myers, Verna. *How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly toward them.*

https://www.ted.com/talks/verna_myers_how_to_overcome_our_biases_walk_boldly_to

ward_them/discussion?referrer=playlist-talks_to_help_you_understand_r#t-456253.

Pratt, Michael G., et al. "Editorial Essay: The Tumult over Transparency: Decoupling

      Transparency from Replication in Establishing Trustworthy Qualitative Research."

      Administrative Science Quarterly, vol. 65, no. 1, 2019, pp. 1–19.,

      https://doi.org/10.1177/0001839219887663.

*Sunstein, Bonnie S., and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater. *Fieldworking Reading and Writing

      Research*. 4th ed., Bedford/St. Martins, 2012.

      Swaran Singh, Charanjit Kaur, et al. "Fostering Effective Networking in Qualitative

      Research." *Journal of Language & Linguistics Studies*, vol. 17, no. 4, Oct. 2021, pp.

      1728–1742. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.52462/jlls.126.

Question Three: ICD Values

Values of ICD

When diving into the work of community development, it is critical for there to be reflection, honesty and a level of open-minded thinking. The work can be difficult, and it is important to know your values and stick to them. It is important to connect: with the people you serve, the people who help you to serve, and the person you are, complete with powers and ideas for change. Through the courses of the ICD program, these values and connections were strengthened and solidified. I have realized the importance of my own culture, knowing the culture of those I aim to help, and always working to give a voice to those who need it the most. Through qualitative research and intentional work, you are able to find sustainable, effective practices that can reach the goals of your work with few unintended negative consequences. The growth that happened along this journey has been important to my personal goals, and it will be what allows me to continue down the path of community development and towards a world I hope to see. By reflecting on my journey, my understanding of social justice, and the importance of copowerment, I am able to plan for my future work and the importance of keeping all of my learning at the forefront of the work I plan to do.

My Journey

My personal transformation during the process of working on this degree program has been a somewhat unexpected one. Before beginning this program I had the hopes and dreams of a community developer, without knowing community development was a profession or academic area of study. When I found out that you could get a degree in Community Development, I was astounded, and I knew it was the perfect fit for my goals and aspirations. But I wouldn't have known that I had so far to go. As a teacher, I had already committed to being an advocate for less

fortunate children. I would have been confident saying I knew what was needed, but now I know how to go about affecting change in a way that doesn't drive my own agenda, but the agenda of those who need the help.

This process has allowed me to take a step back, in an attempt to be able to go farther than I ever would have. To be able to achieve the goals and dreams I have for myself, I know it will be important to keep certain teachings in mind always. Verna Myers explains "you're not going to get comfortable before you get uncomfortable" (00:12:49). During these courses and the studies, I have had to get uncomfortable when it comes to facing the realities of what is happening in the world, in order to change it in sustainable and effective ways. I have also needed to be uncomfortable with knowing that I don't know everything. The perspective of the people I hope to help is invaluable, and I cannot drive change with only my own ideas in mind. Verna Myers also says, "stop trying to be good people, be real people" (00:04:02). Completing the research and diving into the courses within this program has taught me the importance of being real. I will not have all of the answers, and I won't have all of the solutions. There are also times when you see the impoverished struggling, and it is natural to help. But your determination to help, simply to help, can be detrimental. Palmer explains, "give only if you have something you must give" (468). It is okay to not be able to solve the world's problems immediately, and I have learned that it is important to be reflective of intentions before moving to action. The conversations and the intention can be just as important as the planned solution.

This journey has been transformative in both practice and knowledge. As I dive into the creation of a nonprofit to attend to the needs of low-income youth I am reminded that "childhood and adolescence are critical developmental periods" (Newman 1). The nonprofit is designed to combine community resources in order to provide low-income youth with opportunities in sport

(See Appendix). I have learned the importance of the help I have been wanting to give, but more importantly, I have learned to give help that will be well received and leave a positive impact. Realizing and remembering the importance of my spirit, and combining it with my new knowledge of giving with intentional plans, will drive my success in my work. My goals are the same, but my path to success has been strengthened to levels that will help me to advocate for those who deserve it most.

Social Justice

Within this growth, social justice has become an increasingly important topic. My intended solution of creating a nonprofit to help facilitate low-income youth participation in sports is grounded in social justice. Through my learning and education, I have developed an understanding of social justice that is important to my everyday life and my future endeavors.

Throughout this program I learned about how social justice applies to the work that I hope to do. Social justice is creating opportunities for all people, regardless of socioeconomic status, class, race, gender or any other identifying factor "through critical thought, scholarship, and community action" (Kochanek 229). This has allowed me to see that I have the power to create change, even if it is only done in small increments. Coakley writes, "development can be defined to include changes in critical awareness and social action" (316). For me, this is what social justice aims to do. The nonprofit I have worked to create aims to develop an awareness within the community of problems that can, and should be, solved. Through this awareness, the goal expands to create action for the good of the group.

The process has also enlightened me to the ways in which I interact with the world and those in it. I would have told you before that I was welcoming and aware of diverse voices, but I don't know if that rang true in all settings across all situations. The fieldwork allowed me to take

a role that I don't normally take: observer and listener. Usually, I will be the first to speak and take action. In the interviews that I conducted, I was able to learn the power of listening and observing. People will tell you a lot, if given the chance.

An important part of social justice is providing a voice to the voiceless, without making anyone feel like a victim. I would hope to serve as an influence for social justice in the future by turning my voice off and giving it to those who are the most informed on the topic: the people I hope to serve. While I will still work for a platform in order to be able to have a chance to give a voice to others, I have learned it is not my voice that needs to be heard. I will work to be able to walk into and talk in certain rooms and situations, but I will pass the microphone when I do. I don't need to speak on behalf of others. Petra Kuenkel explains, "naming injustice is absolutely critical, but being locked in a feeling of victimization takes our life force away" (111). Calling out these injustices helps to affect long-lasting change, but it can just as easily have negative effects. Similar to a case study on environmental racism involving the Goshute Indians of Utah, speaking on behalf of someone else (or a group of someone else's) is not always beneficial to them. Moe-Lobeda explains, "a crucial initial step in challenging social structural mechanisms… is realizing that they exist" (86). Social justice requires calling out social injustices without creating any feelings of victimization within the group we are trying to empower.

Copowerment

Copowerment is a pillar of the ICD program because, as mentioned in previous sections, speaking and acting on behalf of others is not always successful. Combining my passion, the opportunities I can help to provide and the knowledge I have gained is simply not enough. It is important through this work to also provide independence and strength to those I am serving, especially if the work is going to be sustainable. As Dr. Inslee explains copowerment is "a

dynamic of mutual exchange by which both sides of a social equation are made stronger and more effective by the other (Inslee). The idea of giving power to both myself and the people I serve is important to me.

Within this same context, it is important to remember that giving only to the group I aim to serve is also not sustainable or necessarily beneficial. Kuenkel states, "we tend to empower others and disempower ourselves" (110). To maintain the goals of the nonprofit, it is essential that the staff and decision makers feel as empowered as the children within the programs. Copowerment was defined in order to make sure both sides were gaining from the interaction, and it will be critical to remember that balance of power when the work begins.

By creating an organization to serve underprivileged youth, it becomes important to keep the idea of copowerment at the forefront of the work we aim to do, as youth are not always given the opportunity to find their own strength and wisdom. Petitpas explains, "youth development programs should assist participants in identifying their transferable skills… and provide them with the support and encouragement necessary to enable them to gain confidence in their ability" (71). Simply providing opportunities for youth to play sports is not enough to create sustainable change in their lives. With a goal of character development through sport, it is critical that this youth organization is intentional about making the children stronger and self-sufficient. This comes not through doing for them, but through doing with them. This is how copowerment is critical to furthering the aims of my future organization.

The Future

My philosophy of service will directly influence my future choices in the nonprofit organization I aim to create. In the classes that I have been involved in during this program, I have developed a philosophy of service that connects to both my faith and the ideas of social

justice. I know that when I am serving others I want to provide them with the skills and confidence to enact change in their own lives, while providing them with the restitution that is deserved. Aihiokhai commented, "forgiveness must necessarily include active restitution that evokes forgiveness from the victims of sin" (253). Through the nonprofit I am to create, I hope to provide for groups of people opportunities within sport that have not been provided to them before. Kochanek explains how "while public playground and school reforms sought to foster civic responsibility and social functioning among… youth, organized sport programs excluded youth of color" (230). I am called to serve the youth who have been excluded from spaces in which they have always belonged.

Combining the ideas of copowerment and social justice, the work I do in my future will push me to make decisions with others at the forefront of my mind. It will be important for me to balance forces. The design of the program allows for development of the youth involved, but the choices that I make throughout the process will be driven with the idea of copowerment in mind. It is also important for me to tackle the inequities within sport and health for low-income youth. As stated by Gerdin et. al, "societal inequities correlate strongly with a wide range of social problems… and negative health outcomes" (1). The ultimate hope and goal in my philosophy of service is to create a society in which the health of children is not negatively impacted by societal factors and the services I have designed are no longer needed. To be able to give power and control to the group of people I originally sought to help allows me to provide my own forms of restitution. Keeping these children in mind when making all decisions will allow me to always follow my philosophy.

Works Cited

Aihiokhai, SimonMary Asese. "Social Justice and Rituals of Forgiveness and Reconciliation:

Perspectives from African Religion and Roman Catholic Christianity." *Journal of*

Ecumenical Studies, vol. 55, no. 2, Spr 2020, pp. 229–257. EBSCOhost,

search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=shib,sso&db=rfh&AN=ATLAi

E8N200831000901&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Coakley, Jay. "Youth Sports." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2011, pp. 306–

324., https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723511417311.

Gerdin, Göran, et al. "Teaching for Student and Societal Wellbeing in HPE: Nine Pedagogies for

Social Justice." *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*, vol. 3, 2021,

https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2021.702922.

Inslee, Forrest. "From the Editor: Better Together-Cultural Diversity and 'Copowerment.'"

Christ & Cascadia, 7 Dec. 2020, https://christandcascadia.com/2020/09/24/better-

together-cultural-diversity-copowerment/.

Kochanek, Jill, and Karl Erickson. "Interrogating Positive Youth Development through Sport

Using Critical Race Theory." *Quest*, vol. 72, no. 2, 2019, pp. 224–240.,

doi:10.1080/00336297.2019.1641728.

*Kuenkel, Petra. *The Art of Leading Collectively: Co-Creating a Sustainable, Socially Just

Future*. Chelsea Green Publishing, 2016.

*Moe-Lobeda, Cynthia. *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as an Ecological-Economic Vocation*.

Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013.

*Myers, Verna. *How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly toward them.*

    https://www.ted.com/talks/verna_myers_how_to_overcome_our_biases_walk_boldly_to

    ward_them/discussion?referrer=playlist-talks_to_help_you_understand_r#t-456253.

*Palmer, Parker. *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*. San Francisco, CA:

    Jossey-Bass, 1999.

Petitpas, Albert J., et al. "A Framework for Planning Youth Sport Programs That Foster

    Psychosocial Development." *The Sport Psychologist*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2005, pp. 63–80.,

    https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.19.1.63.

Appendix: Project

Access to Sports: Why Low Income Youth Deserve More

"If left to choose, children instinctively seek the joy of movement." - Pete Egoscue

Katie Kooiman

Project Proposal

Appendix 1 - Table of Contents

A Safe and Healthy World Through Organized Activity

We have heard time and again that children are our future. We are becoming aware of the inequities within our education systems. More people are familiar with the opportunity gaps, and schools across the nation are working to address these problems. But these opportunity gaps and inequities don't exist solely in education. In order to take care of children, especially during a worldwide pandemic, it is imperative we look beyond just the work of the schools.

Children are being left behind once the school day ends. The inequities and opportunity issues are thriving in the world beyond the walls of our school buildings. We can find them in the planning of communities, media advertisements, in the environments in which low-income youth spend time, and in youth sports and afterschool programs. As referenced in the research around ethnodevelopment, it is important to make sure that when developing our communities, we are accounting for all races and ethnicities. "The term 'ethnodevelopment' has been used… to describe development which takes into account the need to maintain ethnic diversity as development takes place" (Willis 134). We know that low-income youth and minorities are facing inequitable barriers in school, but there are other inequities that are affecting the health of our children. "Compared with more affluent communities, minority and low-income communities have fewer than average supermarkets and convenience stores that stock fresh, good-quality, affordable foods" (Kumanyika 193). This contributes to the poor health of this group of today's youth. In addition to this, there is targeted advertising on TV, which has been documented to be watched more by minority children. "Content analyses of television advertising have found that shows featuring African Americans have more food commercials than do general prime-time shows" (Kumanyika 192). Children who are sitting in front of the TV for longer periods of time and being inundated with food commercials are likely to crave what

they see, again affecting their diet and overall health. The inequities don't end there, with environmental inequality also coming into play. Robert Halpern explains, "there is a lack of public policy and law designed to protect children and adolescents from the damaging effects of severely polluted outdoor and indoor environments in low-income neighborhoods" (Halpern 56). If the goal is to fix the mental, social, emotional and physical health of our children, then we need to address the food sources they are getting, the places they are spending time, and the activities they are involved in.

Combined with the lack of safe spaces to play, targeted advertising, the rise in overly restrictive sports leagues, the cost of extracurricular activities and extra time being spent at school when the day ends, there has been "an epidemic of inactivity among low- and moderate-income children and youth" (Halpern 41). Our youth are not spending time engaged in physical activity, and it is having an effect on their overall health. Donette Lowe discussed the impacts of trying to keep her two children in sports. She said at times it was difficult to keep them enrolled in their activities because of "the cost of time and secondly the actual cost of money" (Lowe). Leslie Mytrysak discussed these same constraints. She said, "parents have to work extra to pay the costs for all these sports teams, and it seems like even the 'free' sports these days are having rising costs. We had to buy baseball cleats the other day, and the cheapest pair was seventy dollars!" (Mytrysak). The barriers to success are growing for all children, but especially those from low-income families. The mental, social and physical health of our children is at stake, and it is becoming more imperative that these issues are addressed.

Without space and opportunity, children are spending more time inactive than physically active. The adolescence of today's children is far more institutionalized than ever before, leaving children in daycare facilities for hours on end. A study found that "25 percent of low- and

moderate-income children now spend three to five afternoons a week in after-school programs"
(Halpern 46). Being in daycare is not a negative in itself, until the structure of daycare
organizations is analyzed. Halpern states, "the majority of after-school programs are not
consciously and deliberately attentive to children's need to be physically active after a day at
school" (Halpern 60). It is in the best interest of all children to have a place that allows them free
play and movement.

Children, especially those living in low-income neighborhoods, are not afforded the
luxury of playing outside once the school day is over, even if they are not in institutionalized
daycare settings. According to an article by Shiriki Kumanyika and Sonya Grier, "for safety
reasons, parents may restrict their children's outdoor activities by using a combination of TV and
easy access to snack foods to get children to go straight home from school and stay there"
(Kumanyika 195). This is not a new issue. There has been a concern about the "inhospitality" of
outdoor play spaces since 1880 (Halpern 50). There has been cyclical government interest in
creating and maintaining these spaces for children. If we are not concerned with creating and
maintaining safe spaces, children will continue to be physically inactive. Halpern explains,
"close to three quarters of African American children in the United States grow up in 'racially
segregated, densely settled, and geographically restricted' neighborhood environments, with little
or no safe, usable outdoor play space" (Halpern 43). To combat these issues of inactivity and
unhealthy habits, organized sports and after-school activities can, and should, be utilized.

Physical inactivity and a lack of sports participation has some tremendous effects.
According to the Aspen Institute, "twenty-two percent of children and teens have been classified
as obese during the pandemic, an 'alarming' increase from 19%" (Aspen Institute 1). It is
important that we are taking care of our youngest generation by providing them with the lessons

and resources to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Sports are the vehicle for this change because "it operates through a universal language that can… bring children with diverse backgrounds together" (Halpern 45). While the educational gaps still require work, there is a dire need to address the amounts of children who are unable to be exposed to youth sports and after school programs based in play.

Until schools and community organizations come together, the health and academic success of our children will continue to decline. It is important to combine existing resources and programs to provide for all learners, regardless of socioeconomic status.

The Solution

1. **Proposed Intervention**

Schools and community organizations need to combine resources in order to provide opportunities for students from low-income families to participate in extracurricular activities to further academic success and develop healthy habits in all children. "Policy-makers must assure the accessibility of youth sport programs to all youth, regardless of socio-economic status, race, culture, ethnicity, or gender" (Fraser-Thomas 32). Today's youth, regardless of socioeconomic status, deserve a space that allows them to grow socially, emotionally, psychologically and physically. Sports provide this avenue, when planned and implemented effectively. "Hellison and colleagues'... work in underserved communities highlights the critical role of after school programs in promoting the positive development of all youth, particularly youth exposed to a wide range of negative influences" (Fraser-Thomas 32). It is imperative that today's youth receive the benefits of ethnodevelopment practices that allow space for each and every one of them.

To accomplish this, it is necessary for a nonprofit organization to be created that will provide opportunities for safe, structured play for low-income youth by developing easily accessible leagues and offering scholarships to pay for extracurricular activities and necessary equipment. This model will be important because "participation in sport provides young people with a wonderful forum in which to test and develop their skills, to learn how to overcome setbacks and roadblocks to goal attainment, and to gain immediate feedback concerning their progress toward achieving identified outcomes" (Petitpas 68). These initiatives will be supported through relationships with the schools and existing community organizations, who can provide safe spaces, give necessary training and potentially offer discounted rates, as well as transportation provided through school funds.

The culture of sports as a means to provide character development is not a new idea. According to Petitpas et. al, "the belief that sports provides training for life can be traced to early Greek and Mayan cultures and also formed the primary argument in proposals to include athletics and physical education… in the early 1900s" (Petitpas 64). The nonprofit organization will embrace this idea and culture, and it will allow children to participate. Simple participation in sports is not enough to create sustainable change in the health and well-being of our youth. There needs to be a targeted emphasis on context, external and internal assets, and evaluation (Petitpas 66-67). These factors will be crucial to the goal of character development and lifelong healthy habits. Through sport, the created nonprofit organization will provide these elements to children to develop their character beyond a field or court.

2. Impact of Sports

Sports have the potential to impact children in a variety of ways. It is important for children to be involved in sports to increase healthy behaviors while also building character and character traits that will last a lifetime.

Health

A commonly accepted belief is that sports can help children to be physically active and fit. "Physical activity is … basically whatever stimulates movement" (Halpern 42). Parents should be looking to put their children in sports for the benefit of their overall physical health, seeing as children innately seek movement. A common theme in my interviews with parents was getting their children outside and moving through sports play. In an interview with Donette Lowe, she explained, "as parents, we believed that sports was a good way to keep the kids positively distracted and physically fit" (Lowe). Research supports the need for children to get out and be physically fit. Halpern states, "medical literature is reporting an increase in a variety of pediatric health problems that appear to be caused by a combination of physical inactivity and increased calorie consumption" (Halpern 45). It is imperative for physical health that children are active.

The data supports the idea that children benefit from regular exercise in regards to not only their physical health, but their mental and emotional health as well. "Exercise is known to reduce anxiety and stress symptoms… , psychological difficulties…, as well as withdrawal, anxiety, and depression symptoms related to substance abuse" (Laurier 3). Along with this, it has been noted that "movement can offer a variety of benefits to children and youth who have few other reasons to feel competent and who… may have experienced years of assaults on their sense of self" (Halpern 61). A pervasive theme in the research is that children are able to find an

identity for themselves in sports and being on a team. In a recent study about the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on youth, it was found that "physical activation… during confinement seems to act as a protective factor against the development of depressive symptoms" (Laurier 8). With or without a pandemic, our children will experience positive mental and physical health benefits through sport.

Social and Emotional Character Building

When we are imagining what is wanted for our youth, there are ideas of leadership, success, and friendship. These themes can all be achieved through sport, with an overwhelming understanding of developing a child's sense of self. The research mentions that within the setting of sport, "individuals are required to begin the process of establishing a clear and positive sense of personal identity and an allegiance to a valued social or cultural subgroup" (Petitpas 70). In addition, physical activity "fosters social inclusion and strengthens children's sense of self as not just physically but socially competent" (Halpern 44). Identifying one's sense of self can lead to increased confidence and better decision making.

Sports and physical activity also have a long-lasting impact on children. "Youth sport and physical activity participation has been positively correlated with adult career achievement and negatively correlated with school dropout and delinquent behavior" (Fraser-Thomas 24). These results lead our communities to be stronger in the long run. Sports are the place to develop the skills we want the people of our communities to have because "sport provides an arena for the development of social skills such as cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control" (Fraser-Thomas 24). The character of our children can be positively influenced for a lifetime through engagement and participation in sports.

Resources Available

1. **Existing Local Structures and Programs**

To best serve low-income youth, it is important to look at already existing structures and programs that a new nonprofit organization could partner with. The following programs and structures are at work in Stafford County, Virginia, and they could work as a means to access low-income youth directly. Securing funds and support will be a major challenge for this project, as well as any other community development project. We need to combine resources for the same cause in ways that we have not done before. Bornstein and Davis claim, "changing the way we finance social change could produce greater clarity and more predictable successes" (Bornstein 50). Utilizing the resources already at work and available in the community will be vital to the success of this project.

YMCA

The Massad Branch of the YMCA has been serving the Fredericksburg and Stafford communities for years. The Director of Philanthropy for the YMCA says, ""there are companies who have money to give, and we have to make sure they know why we need it and what we are doing with" (Maida-Church). The YMCA, and their expertise in local fundraising for underprivileged youth, would help to secure the funds necessary to create and maintain youth sports programs for all.

Another particular area for partnership would be the School-Aged Child Care (SACC Program. This is a program operating at elementary schools in the county that is a form of institutionalized daycare. With the costs of daycares rising, the SACC program is an option for low-income families as the YMCA offers an Open Doors Program that reduces costs for

families in need. Revamping the daycare setting might be possible through this established

organization that is already serving youth and housed in school buildings.

School Clubs

Many schools had organized before and/or after school clubs before the pandemic. These

clubs were free of charge and provided to all students. Some clubs that have functioned in

elementary schools in Stafford County in the past are: Chess Club, School Play, Destination

Imagination, Chorus, and Instrumental Ensembles. Middle and High Schools offer many more

options, including sports. While there is no fee to participate, there are costs associated with

participation (sports equipment, team gear, time, etc.). Since all students are guaranteed a free

education through public schools, this can provide an already established route to reach children

who might not access other organizations and programs.

Parks and Recreation

Stafford County Parks and Recreation (Parks and Rec) organizes and runs many sports

leagues throughout the county. These leagues are competitive, but they are not high-level.

Research has shown that children need to belong in their activities, and many high level,

selection-based teams are having negative outcomes. Petitpas et. al explains that, "the difference

between whether sports build character or character disorders has less to do with the playing of

the sport and more to do with the philosophy of the sport organization, quality of coaching,

nature of parental involvement, and participants' individual experiences and resources"

(Petitpas 63). The Parks and Rec organization has some of these in place and could provide a

foundational experience for the implementation of this solution.

2. **Model Organizations**

The following organizations are actively working with and involved in sports programming for low-income youth. By using parts of their models and their evaluations, the nonprofit organization proposed in this project will be able to model its success of the success of the organizations below.

Harlem RBI

The mission of Harlem RBI is "to use baseball and softball and the power of teams to provide inner-city youth with opportunities to play, learn, and grow, inspiring them to recognize their potential and realize their dreams" (Berlin 85-86). Harlem RBI's model can be beneficial because it looks at creating long-lasting relationships with youth, and their program directly impacts low-income families. In addition, the program looks to highlight both academic and social successes. According to their evaluation, "eight-six percent of REAL Kids improved or maintained their reading scores" and "nearly 100 percent of REAL Kids reported that the program helped them to challenge themselves to do better" (Berlin 90). With the support of schools, the academic and social successes achieved by Harlem RBI could be replicated through this nonprofit organization.

Tenacity

Tenacity, located in Boston, Massachusetts uses tennis to "enable inner-city youth to achieve excellence in the classroom while imparting life skills and promoting character development" (Berlin 91). Tenacity, like Harlem RBI, looks at programs that commit to students for a long period of time. In the nonprofit organization that we look to create, the results of Tenacity's work and program could be replicated, in that there is a strong emphasis on

academics as well as sport. Based on the results of the evaluation, Tenacity reported that "students have achieved significant gains in four areas important to learning and academic performance" (Berlin 96). The case study of Tenacity further lends credibility to the impact of sports on the well-being of youth.

Hoops & Leaders Basketball Camp

The mission of this summer camp is "to improve the lives of at-risk urban youth by leveraging the game of basketball to provide them with caring mentors, leadership skills, and exposure to different educational and career paths" (Berlin 102). Hoops and Leaders allows for understanding to be reached about fledgling organizations. The evaluations and results for Hoops and Leaders are not as strong, due to lack of funds, and the organization focuses on relationships built through a summer program. With the nonprofit organization we look to create, we will focus more on school day participation, but the importance of building strong relationships is enough to continue to mimic the actions of Hoops & Leaders.

Every Kid Sports

This non-profit organization "provide(s) funding to children of low income families to pay sports registration fees" (Gibbons). This work is crucial to the success of the work that is being attempted by the creation of our nonprofit organization. As referenced above, the cost of sports is a major barrier to low- and moderate-income families. By taking information and best practices from Every Kid Sports in their implementation of scholarships/financial aid to families, our organization will be able to tackle one of the largest barriers to sport participation.

Implementation

The nonprofit organization would need the collaboration of multiple entities, and there would be certain aspects that would have to be involved in order to find success. To begin, "a major challenge facing youth development professionals is to create an environment or context where young people can develop a sense of initiative" (Petitpas 67). This can best be achieved by using the existing structure of school, where many students have learned about goals and working for success. Schools and organizations such as the YMCA and Parks and Rec should combine resources to create school teams that can practice and compete after school hours. These sports teams should be modeled off of existing programs at the middle and high school levels. The amount of time spent in these team environments is important. Petitpas wrote, "80% of programs that were deemed as effective maintained involvement with youth for a period of at least nine months and none of the effective programs had less than 10 activity sessions" (Petitpas 69). The nonprofit should coordinate all of these entities in order to allow the students and school to start by picking one sport per season, and the students will participate with the team in and out of their season.

Before the seasons are put into practice and students are given opportunities, it is critical that appropriate goals are set and intensive training is conducted. "Programs that rely on 'canned' content without considering who is facilitating the program or how the materials will be delivered are not likely to have success, particularly in inner city locations" (Petitpas 69). In a climate that is hurting for teachers and caregivers, it is difficult to have time to train those responsible for the programs we are giving our children. Bornstein and Davis point out that, "social entrepreneurs have to recruit talent without being able to offer compensation on par with business" (Bornstein 57). Petitpas explains, "individuals selected to provide services should be

screened carefully, indoctrinated with the program philosophy, and trained in both content of the

program and strategies to deliver it" (Petitpas 73). It is not efficient, nor effective, to simply have

a volunteer or paid employee be in charge of an activity and group of students. This will affect

the quality of candidates that can be recruited, and it will impact the amount of training the

candidates will be willing to have before they work. But it is essential that this step is not missed.

Before coaches are left in charge, a training session, based on organizational goals, should be

completed. This is critical, seeing as "teachers and coaches are the two groups of people who are

most frequently identified by youth as having the strongest non parental influence on their

actions and beliefs" (Petitpas 69). In addition, coaches have the power to make or break the

experience for the youth involved. "Coaches who were trained… were better liked, creating an

atmosphere that athletes perceived as more fun, and created more team unity than untrained

coaches" (Fraser-Thomas 29). Taking the time and consideration to align all people who can

impact children with the goals of the organization and to establish the appropriate

implementation practices will be critical to the success of this program.

     In my research, I found that this was an area that other programs were lacking in. Dottie

Rhodes explained, "our higher ups don't understand what it is like to be here [working at the

camp], and so they are constantly making decisions that don't fit what we can do" (Rhodes). The

training in content and how to deliver such content should be given to all stakeholders, especially

those who are impacting the day-to-day decisions of the implementation. Without the

congruence of all staff, there is going to be a lack in the implementation. As Petitpas et. al

mention, "success in implementing the program is likely to be enhanced by gaining support from

everyone who is in a position to influence the operations of the program, from site administrative

personnel to the security guards and custodians who have the keys to the locked activity rooms"

(Petitpas 73). Until a program is developed with consistency and expectations for all members, it will not see sustainable effectiveness.

Once trained members are found, it is important to have participants engaged in skills beyond sport, intentionally. Character development doesn't happen through sport by accident. Coaches and players need to take intentional time to recognize the skills being built and practice these skills in additional settings. "Youth development programs should assist participants in identifying their transferable skills, create opportunities for them to use these skills in different contexts, and provide them with the support and encouragement necessary to enable them to gain confidence in their ability to use their skills effectively in various situations" (Petitpas 71). For example, older students should develop their leadership skills by teaching their sport to younger players. Another transfer opportunity is by creating an "environment that encourages activities in which athletes can give back to their own neighborhoods" (Petitpas 70). These activities and opportunities to transfer skills are critical to the sustainability of the character development that happens within sports.

Finally, it is important to evaluate the solutions addressed above. While involved in the program, children should be surveyed about their experience. Coaches and parents should be looking for children to describe positive mental and physical health experiences. In addition, sports should be positive for children because "they are strongly social; they are activities in which children are simultaneously working and playing…; and they can work equally as well as an organized physical activity and an informal one" (Halpern 62). To be sustainable, this program needs to have measured impact in all of the above areas, with a strong emphasis on the overall health and well-being of today's youth.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Children are our future, but more specifically, children who are healthy in all ways are our future. We must invest in the well-being and character of all children, regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status or any other defining feature. To get children the best opportunity, all children deserve to participate in organized sports. The proposed nonprofit organization will be critical to continue to allow children to develop in ways that will be sustainable and applicable to all areas of life. With the increasing amount of children reaching levels of obesity, it is important to promote an active and fit lifestyle. Sports participation will allow for this as well as character development and mental and social well-being. If our community is going to develop, then we must put our best concerted efforts into improving the lives and opportunities provided to our children. Using the implementation plan above, it is critical for our community to combine its resources and focus to develop a nonprofit organization that will change the lives of the youth.

Works Cited

Berlin, Richard A., et al. "Examples of Sports-Based Youth Development Programs." *New*

    Directions for Youth Development, vol. 2007, no. 115, Fall 2007, pp. 85–106.

    EBSCOhost, doi:10.1002/yd.225.

Bornstein, David, and Susan Davis. *Social Entrepreneurship: What Everyone Needs to Know*.

    Oxford University Press, 2010.

"Call for Leadership: A Platform for Action." *The Aspen Institute Project Play*, The Aspen

    Institute, 2021, http://www.aspenprojectplay.org/state-of-play-2021/call-for-leadership.

Fraser-Thomas, Jessica L., et al. "Youth Sport Programs: An Avenue to Foster Positive Youth

    Development." *Physical Education & Sport Pedagogy*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2005, pp. 19–40.,

    https://doi.org/10.1080/1740898042000334890.

Gibbons, Tim. Personal interview. 17 February 2021.

Halpern, Robert. "Physical (In)Activity Among Low-Income Children and Youth: Problem,

    Prospect, Challenge." *Monographs of the Herr Research Center for Children and Social*

    Policy, Erikson Institute, 2006, https://www.erikson.edu/wp-

    content/uploads/2017/10/halpern_inactive.pdf. Accessed 2021.

Laurier, Catherine, et al. "Uncovering the Personal and Environmental Factors Associated with

    Youth Mental Health during the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Pursuit of Sports and

    Physical Activity as a Protective Factor." *Traumatology*, Aug. 2021. EBSCOhost,

    doi:10.1037/trm0000342.

Lowe, Donnette. Personal interview. 20 July 2021.

Maida-Church, Susan. Personal interview. 22 July 2021.

Mytrysak, Leslie. Personal interview. 7 August 2021.

Petitpas, Albert J., et al. "A Framework for Planning Youth Sport Programs That Foster
    Psychosocial Development." *The Sport Psychologist*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2005, pp. 63–80.,
    https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.19.1.63.

Rhodes, Dottie. Personal interview. 13 July 2021.

Willis, Katie. *Theories and Practices of Development*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2011.

Comprehensive Works Cited

Absetz, Pilvikki, et al. "SMART2D—Development and Contextualization of Community

    Strategies to Support Self-Management in Prevention and Control of Type 2 Diabetes in

    Uganda, South Africa, and Sweden." *Translational Behavioral Medicine*, vol. 10, no. 1,

    2020, pp. 25–34., https://doi.org/10.1093/tbm/ibz188.

Aihiokhai, SimonMary Asese. "Social Justice and Rituals of Forgiveness and Reconciliation:

    Perspectives from African Religion and Roman Catholic Christianity." *Journal of

    Ecumenical Studies*, vol. 55, no. 2, Spr 2020, pp. 229–257. EBSCOhost,

    search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=shib,sso&db=rfh&AN=ATLAi

    E8N200831000901&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Astuto, Jennifer, and Martin Ruck. "Growing up in Poverty and Civic Engagement: The Role of

    Kindergarten Executive Function and Play Predicting Participation in 8th Grade

    Extracurricular Activities." *Applied Developmental Science*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2017, pp.

    301–318., https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2016.1257943.

Bartelt, Andrew H. "Keeping Our Balance in Our Own Context: Keeping the Cross in Cross-

    Cultural and Taking the Con Out of Contextualization." *Concordia Journal*, vol. 47, no.

    1, Wint 2021, pp. 49–62. *EBSCOhost*,

    search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=shib,sso&db=rfh&AN=ATLAi

    FZK210426000137&site=eds-live&scope=site.

*Beck, Richard. *Unclean: Meditations on Purity, Hospitality, and Mortality*. Eugene, OR: Wipf

    and Stock Publishers, 2011.

Berlin, Richard A., et al. "Examples of Sports-Based Youth Development Programs." *New Directions for Youth Development*, vol. 2007, no. 115, Fall 2007, pp. 85–106. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1002/yd.225.

*Bornstein, David, and Susan Davis. *Social Entrepreneurship: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

Burkette, Allison. "'About What Were We Talking?': The Intersection of Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches." *Southern Journal of Linguistics*, vol. 38, no. 1, Spring 2014, pp. 117–35. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=shib,sso&db=ufh&AN=99823 193&site=eds-live&scope=site.

"Call for Leadership: A Platform for Action." *The Aspen Institute Project Play*, The Aspen Institute, 2021, http://www.aspenprojectplay.org/state-of-play-2021/call-for-leadership.

Coakley, Jay. "Youth Sports." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2011, pp. 306–324., https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723511417311.

*Easterly, William. "Planners vs. Searchers." *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's efforts to aid the rest have done so much ill and so little good*, New York: Penguin, 2006, pp.3-30.

Fraser-Thomas, Jessica L., et al. "Youth Sport Programs: An Avenue to Foster Positive Youth Development." *Physical Education & Sport Pedagogy*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2005, pp. 19–40., https://doi.org/10.1080/1740898042000334890.

Gerdin, Göran, et al. "Teaching for Student and Societal Wellbeing in HPE: Nine Pedagogies for

    Social Justice." *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*, vol. 3, 2021,

    https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2021.702922.

Gibbons, Tim. Personal interview. 17 February 2021.

Halpern, Robert. "Physical (In)Activity Among Low-Income Children and Youth: Problem,

    Prospect, Challenge." *Monographs of the Herr Research Center for Children and Social*

    Policy, Erikson Institute, 2006, https://www.erikson.edu/wp-

    content/uploads/2017/10/halpern_inactive.pdf. Accessed 2021.

*Hammond, Sue. *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*. 3rd ed. Bend, OR: Thin Book

    Publishing, 2013.

*"Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions: Understanding Different Countries." *Mind Tools: Essential*

    skills for an excellent career. www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_66.htm

Inslee, Forrest. "From the Editor: Better Together-Cultural Diversity and 'Copowerment.'"

    Christ & Cascadia, 7 Dec. 2020, https://christandcascadia.com/2020/09/24/better-

    together-cultural-diversity-copowerment/.

Keller, Tim. "Tim Keller - Center Church: Gospel Contextualization Q&AT." *YouTube*,

    Redeemer City to City, 16 Sept. 2013,

    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9a1VGW99uI&ab_channel=RedeemerCitytoCity.

Kochanek, Jill, and Karl Erickson. "Interrogating Positive Youth Development through Sport

    Using Critical Race Theory." *Quest*, vol. 72, no. 2, 2019, pp. 224–240.,

    doi:10.1080/00336297.2019.1641728.

Krukowski, Kipp A., and Lawrence Justin White Jr. "A Call for Industry Specialization: An

    Academic Perspective on the Importance of Qualitative Research." *Value Examiner*, May

    2021, pp. 22–27. *EBSCOhost*,

    search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=shib,sso&db=bth&AN=150956

    034&site=eds-live&scope=site.

*Kuenkel, Petra. *The Art of Leading Collectively: Co-Creating a Sustainable, Socially Just

    Future*. Chelsea Green Publishing, 2016.

Laurier, Catherine, et al. "Uncovering the Personal and Environmental Factors Associated with

    Youth Mental Health during the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Pursuit of Sports and

    Physical Activity as a Protective Factor." *Traumatology*, Aug. 2021. EBSCOhost,

    doi:10.1037/trm0000342.

Lowe, Donnette. Personal interview. 20 July 2021.

Maida-Church, Susan. Personal interview. 22 July 2021.

Maxwell, Joseph A. "The Importance of Qualitative Research for Investigating Causation."

    Qualitative Psychology, vol. 8, no. 3, Oct. 2021, pp. 378–88. *EBSCOhost*,

    doi.org/10.1037/qup0000219.

*Moe-Lobeda, Cynthia. *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as an Ecological-Economic Vocation*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013.

*Myers, Bryant L. *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*. Revised and Expanded ed., Orbis Books, 2014.

*Myers, Verna. *How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly toward them.* https://www.ted.com/talks/verna_myers_how_to_overcome_our_biases_walk_boldly_toward_them/discussion?referrer=playlist-talks_to_help_you_understand_r#t-456253

Mytrysak, Leslie. Personal interview. 7 August 2021.

Newman, Tarkington J. "Life Skill Development and Transfer: 'They're Not Just Meant for Playing Sports.'" *Research on Social Work Practice*, vol. 30, no. 6, 2020, pp. 643–657., https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731520903427.

*Palmer, Parker. *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1999.

Petitpas, Albert J., et al. "A Framework for Planning Youth Sport Programs That Foster Psychosocial Development." *The Sport Psychologist*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2005, pp. 63–80., https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.19.1.63.

Pratt, Michael G., et al. "Editorial Essay: The Tumult over Transparency: Decoupling Transparency from Replication in Establishing Trustworthy Qualitative Research." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 65, no. 1, 2019, pp. 1–19., https://doi.org/10.1177/0001839219887663.

Rhodes, Dottie. Personal interview. 13 July 2021.

Shaw, R.Daniel, et al. "Contextualization, Conceptualization, and Communication: The
Development of Contextualization at Fuller's Graduate School of World
Mission/Intercultural Studies." *Missiology*, vol. 44, no. 1, Jan. 2016, pp. 95–111.
EBSCOhost, doi:10.1177/0091829615620932.

Shehadeh, Ali. "Contextualizing Your Research Project." *Second Language Learning and
Teaching*, Nov. 2020, pp. 327–335., https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-34762-8_27.

*Sunstein, Bonnie S., and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater. *Fieldworking Reading and Writing
Research*. 4th ed., Bedford/St. Martins, 2012.

Swaran Singh, Charanjit Kaur, et al. "Fostering Effective Networking in Qualitative Research."
Journal of Language & Linguistics Studies, vol. 17, no. 4, Oct. 2021, pp. 1728–1742.
EBSCOhost, doi:10.52462/jlls.126.

*Willis, Katie. *Theories and Practices of Development*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2011.