Life Skill Development Through Community-Campus Partnership Sport Program for Socially Vulnerable Youth

Junyoung Cho, University of Connecticut
Kolin Ebron, University of Connecticut
Jennifer McGarry (Advisor), University of Connecticut

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Life skills can be beneficial to adolescents as they attempt to navigate their life maps in positive directions. However, these skills are often difficult to develop for the socially vulnerable youth who face particular challenges as structural supports are often lacking, as well as individual mentors (Vettenburg, 1998). Sport Based Youth Development (SBYD) programs can provide an avenue for social support for adolescents as they travel their life pathways (Gould & Carson, 2008). However, little academic attention has been paid to SBYD.

To investigate the ways in which SBYD programs can provide social support in order to facilitate life skills development for socially vulnerable youth, we will engage young adults who have been involved with the Sport Hartford Program (SHP), a community-campus partnership program that utilizes the power of sport to support positive youth development. Participants will be those regarded as socially vulnerable youth who have progressed in their life pathways. We will use a criterion-sampling strategy to recruit at least 5 participants for our study. Criteria considered being involved with SHP for 5 years or more, be considered a Hartford citizen, as Hartford is reported to be consistently below the poverty line according to U.S. Census (2015); and be currently enrolled in college, have completed a college degree, or currently employed in the in the work force. We plan to engage a diverse group of participants, inclusive of gender, race and ethnicity, and life path.

To collect data, we will utilize a Facilitated AutoEthnographic (FAE) method that allow us to understand the experiences of the participants from their storytelling. To facilitate FAE, we follow the CORE process (Grenier, 2016) that involves (1) creating a routine for eliciting and capturing the lead’s (participant) experiences and learning, (2) obtaining and documenting the stories in accordance with the established process; (3) reflecting on the stories to reveal underlying assumptions, beliefs, or realizations; (4) establishing the findings of analysis within a meaningful cultural framework. We will also use an additional method in life-mapping, an effective tool in qualitative work assessing the lived experiences of participants by diagramming components related to "fateful moments".

The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) will provide a framework for data analysis. EI is emotional and behavioral abilities to navigate social situations, which has been significantly correlated with life skills such as problem-solving and coping skills (Veneta et al, 2005). Also, EI and social supports have been highlighted in life design and career construction that facilitate resilience, perseverance, and self-efficacy (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Therefore, we assume that elements of EI will conceptualize certain life skills participants developed through SHP and other experiences they had as adolescents to make decisions in fateful moments.

We believe that our study has both values and limitations. First, our study has a significance for its use of newer qualitative approaches that allows ethnographic researchers to obtain deeper and more structured accounts of lived experiences. However, since FAE is an emerging approach, its utilization is still in its infancy in terms of contribution to qualitative methodological development.