Mechanisms and Outcomes Associated with Disadvantaged Youth Participation in a Summer Sport-Based Youth Development Program: Getting the Parent Perspective

Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree Master of Social Work in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By
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The Ohio State University
2010

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Abstract

There are numerous youth development programs, and strategies that reduce risk and enhance protective factors or assets at different systems levels (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002). These factors, in turn, are known to contribute to multiple positive and negative outcomes for youth (Anderson-Butcher, Stetler, & Midle, Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller 1992; Howard & Jenson, 1999; Jenson, 2004; Richman, Bowen, & Woolley, 2004; Tolan & Guerra, 1994). While research supports the positive impacts of youth development programs and strategies, such as afterschool programs, extracurricular activities and camps, on youth outcomes (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, & Lord, 2005), little is known about the contributions of sport-based summer camps (Hartmann, 2003; Watson, Newton, Kim, 2003). In addition, these opportunities may have special importance for youth from disadvantaged circumstances, as they may not typically have access to these opportunities. Little is known about the unique contributions for this special population. Finally, the mechanisms underlying the connection between involvement in these programs and outcomes are relatively unknown (Anderson-Butcher & Cash, 2010; Anderson-Butcher, Newsome, & Ferrari, 2003; Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Gould & Carson, 2008; Petitpas, Cornelious, Van Raalte, & Jones, 2005).
In order to explore these gaps in knowledge, parents of youth participating in a short-term sport-based summer positive youth development program (PYD) were interviewed. Study participants were from disadvantaged backgrounds and had a child who participated in the sport-based PYD program during the summer of 2009 and who was currently participating in the program during the time of the interview. Interview questions tapped parents’ perceptions of the program impacts on child, parent, family, and community level outcomes; the unique contribution of this program to outcomes for disadvantaged families; and the aspects of the program contributing to these identified impacts.

Interview data were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Raw data were then coded and organized into higher-order themes, sub-themes and lower-order themes. A peer review process was used to ensure the rigor of data collection and analysis procedures, and a member check afforded feedback on how the results represented the voice of the respondents.

Parents identified key outcomes at the individual, parent, family and community level that are known to contribute to healthy development. Findings provide preliminary evidence of the value of sport-based PYD summer programs for supporting the development of protective factors, or developmental assets and reducing risk. In addition, the results provide information about the mechanisms contributing to important individual, parent, family, and community outcomes.
Acknowledgements

Above all, I would like to offer thanks and praise to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ for giving me strength and grace throughout this process. Thank you for teaching me to rely on you for all things. I am continually humbled by your unconditional love and faithfulness.

I would like to express my gratitude to the parents and families who allowed me to enter into their homes and lives to complete this project. Their thoughts and words were truly inspiring. I can only hope that their lives will be positively impacted by the findings of this study.

I would also like to thank all of the faculty members, friends, and family who have supported me and given me guidance over the past couple years. First, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor, Dawn Anderson-Butcher. She helped me to learn and grown as a researcher and person. When I came to OSU two years ago, I could never have imagined the opportunities and experiences that lay ahead of me. I am forever thankful for the trust and faith she has put in me and my growing abilities. I would like to express my appreciation for Mo Yee Lee for her compassion and commitment to quality. I am thankful for the way she encouraged me and provided guidance as I learned qualitative research. I would like to thank Becky Wade-Mdivanian,
Anna Ball, and Aidyn Iachini for being amazing colleagues and friends. They were not only there to help me as I worked through the data collection and analysis process, but were also there to put life into perspective when I needed a break.

I am forever thankful for my parents and sister. They have encouraged me to follow my dreams since the day I was born. I could not ask for a better support system. I am so thankful to be surrounded by such caring and beautiful people. Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Jon Riley, for his unending love and support. He has encouraged me to pursue my passions and has selflessly traveled with me around the mid-west. I promise we will be back in Virginia soon!
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Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................... iv
Vita................................................................................................................................... vi
List of Tables ..................................................................................................................... x
Chapter 1: Introduction ...................................................................................................... 1
Chapter 2: Literature Review ............................................................................................. 9
  Theoretical Perspectives ...................................................................................... 13
    Risk and resilience framework ................................................................. 13
    Ecological perspective ............................................................................. 15
  Positive Youth Development ........................................................................ 17
  PYD Programs: Address Risk and Enhance Protective Factors .............. 18
  Youth Development Programs in Multiple Settings ................................ 19
    Afterschool programs ................................................................. 19
    Extracurricular activities ........................................................... 21
    Summer camps ............................................................................... 22
  Sport, Recreation, and Youth Development .............................................. 24
  Sport-Based Youth Development Programs .............................................. 26
  Summer Sport-Based Positive Youth Development Programs .................. 28
  Youth from Disadvantaged Circumstances and Youth Programs .......... 28
  Short-Term Sport-Based Summer Programming: Outcomes and Mechanisms .30
  Parent Perspective .................................................................................... 32
  Study Aims .................................................................................................. 33
Chapter 3: Methods .......................................................................................................... 35
  Context for the Study ................................................................................. 35
  Participants .................................................................................................. 37
  Interviews .................................................................................................. 40
Data Analysis ....................................................................................................... 42
Trustworthiness .................................................................................................... 45
Reflexivity ........................................................................................................ 47

Chapter 4: Results ............................................................................................................ 48

Study Aim One .................................................................................................... 48
  Impact on individual level risk and protective factors ....................... 48
    Biopsychosocial development ............................................................... 48
      Changes in peer interactions .............................................................. 51
      Physical development ......................................................................... 52
      Developed social skills ......................................................................... 52
      Developed personal skills ....................................................................... 53
    Provided opportunities to broaden horizon ........................................ 53
      Opportunity to broaden horizon in general ........................................ 53
      Exposure to college ................................................................................. 54
      Opportunity for peer relationships/interactions ................................ 54
      Opportunities for positive use of discretionary time ...................... 55
      Opportunity to interact with adults at program .................................. 55
      Provided an outlet to everyday life ...................................................... 55
    Enhanced affect, behaviors, and cognitions ........................................ 56
      Enhanced affect .................................................................................... 56
      Change in beliefs about self .................................................................. 57
      Increased positive behaviors ............................................................... 57
    Positive impact in general ................................................................. 57
      Prepared for real world/future .............................................................. 57
  Impact on parent level risk and protective factors ........................................ 58
    Peace of mind due to child involvement ................................................. 58
    Changes in affect due to child involvement ........................................... 59
    Parent commitment to the program ....................................................... 59
    Parent personal growth ............................................................................ 60
  Impact on family level risk and protective factors ..................................... 61
    Family communication/interactions ....................................................... 61
  Impact on community/neighborhood level risk and protective factors ...... 62
    Youth from community involved in prosocial activities ................. 62
    Community interactions/support ......................................................... 63
    Other .......................................................................................................... 63

Study Aim Two .................................................................................................... 65
  Impact on individual level risk and protective factors ....................... 65
    Provided opportunities to broaden horizon ........................................ 65
    Enhanced affect, behaviors, and cognitions ......................................... 67
  Impact on parent level risk and protective factors ................................... 68
  Impact on family level risk and protective factors ................................... 69
  Impact on community/neighborhood level risk and protective factors ...... 69
Study Aim Three .................................................................................................. 70
  Qualities and roles of counselors ........................................................................ 71
  Lessons for sport and life .................................................................................. 71
  Opportunities for peer/family interactions ....................................................... 79
  Structure of program ....................................................................................... 80
  Resources ......................................................................................................... 81
  Fun and challenging ....................................................................................... 82
  Positive use of discretionary time ..................................................................... 83
  Physically safe environment ........................................................................... 83
  Experiencing negative situations at the program ............................................. 83

Chapter 5: Discussion ................................................................................................. 85

  Individual, Parent, Family, and Community Level Outcomes ......................... 85
  Unique Contributions for Disadvantaged Youth .............................................. 92
  Mechanisms ..................................................................................................... 95
  Implications for Social Work Practice ............................................................... 97
    Linking youth and families to resources ......................................................... 98
    Social workers in youth development agencies ............................................. 99
    Macro practice ............................................................................................. 100
  Limitations and Future Research .................................................................... 101
  Conclusion ...................................................................................................... 103

References .......................................................................................................... 105

Appendix A: Interview Questions ......................................................................... 123
List of Tables

Table 1. Common Risk and Protective Factors at Multiple Systems Levels ................. 16
Table 2. Primary and Secondary Objectives of Sport-Based PYD Program ............... 36
Table 3. Sample Demographics ................................................................................. 39
Table 4. Additional Demographic Information ......................................................... 39
Table 5. Impact on Individual Level Risk and Protective Factors ............................... 49
Table 6. Impact on Parent and Family Level Risk and Protective Factors ................. 60
Table 7. Impact on Community Level Risk and Protective Factors ............................ 64
Table 8. Mechanisms and Direct/Indirect Impact of Sport-Based PYD Program ....... 72
Chapter 1: Introduction

It is the last day of school and Joe is not sure what he will be doing during his time off over the summer. Sometimes he goes to stay with his grandmother in Texas, but his mom, Renee, told him he will not be able to do that this year because his grandma has been sick. Renee works two jobs to provide for her family, so she is gone most of the day. While Renee tries to make sure Joe is supervised when she is at work, it is often hard for her to keep Joe busy and out of trouble. The family lives in a low income housing development in the inner city and is often faced with neighborhood stressors such as gangs and violence. Renee really wants to provide Joe with positive activities over the summer, especially since he has been getting in more trouble at school and home over the last few months. She knows that if he stays around the neighborhood, he is likely to fall in with the wrong crowd. In her search for activities for Joe, Renee’s friend tells her about a summer sport-based program at the local university. Renee signs him up, since Joe will get to do activities with other kids his age in a safe environment. As she turns in the program application, she wonders how the program will impact her and her family.

There are many programs such as the one described above that provide positive programming and resources for youth and families. In fact, Dryfoss (1998) estimated that there are around 4,000 national youth service organizations like the Boys and Girls Club of America and the YMCA run approximately 17,000 youth development programs in
the United States alone (Quinn, 1999). Youth development programs operated by these organizations have been shown to promote healthy development, while also addressing risk factors (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2006). Reviews and meta-analyses exploring the outcomes linked to participation in youth development programs have found that involvement is related to enhanced academic achievement, school attendance and school engagement; less substance use and delinquency; enhanced social competence; and increased mental health (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002; Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Lauer, Akiba, Wilkerson, Apthorp, Snow, & Martin-Glenn, 2006; Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster, 1998). Given the sheer number of programs and the potential for positive outcomes for youth, it is essential that these programs continue to be examined and better understood.

One way to frame the impact of youth development programs is in terms of risk, resilience and protection. Risk factors are characteristics that make negative outcomes more likely (Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992; Jenson & Fraser, 2006). While the probability of youth problems and negative outcomes may increase with the presence of risk factors, these negative outcomes are not guaranteed. For example, not all youth who are faced with poverty or other environmental, family or individual risk factors have negative outcomes. Some individuals who are considered “at-risk” have outcomes similar to individuals not identified as “at-risk” (Rutter, 1987). Thus, they are resilient in the face of high risk and stress.

Resilience, or one’s ability to overcome adversity, is the result of the interaction between risk factors and protective factors (Jenson, 2004). Therefore, the ability of
individuals to overcome risk can be attributed, in part, to the presence of certain competencies and protective factors. Protective factors, also labeled developmental assets, are characteristics that lead to less problem behaviors or reduce the harmful impacts of risk (Benard, 2004; Benson, 1997; Jenson & Fraser, 2006; Rutter, 1987). It is the hope that youth development initiatives can both address risk factors and contribute to the strengthening and development of protective factors, or assets.

From an ecological systems perspective, the list of common risk and protective factors is extensive. Factors exist on multiple system levels, as children are influenced by their environment, family, school and peer conditions, and individual characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Fraser, 2004). For example, common individual level risk and protective factors include the presence or absence of social and personal competencies and biological factors. Family risk factors include a lack of supervision and monitoring, whereas protective factors include positive family relationships (see Fraser, 2004). Some school risk factors include minimal school connectedness or lack of enjoyment, and a protective factor is involvement in activities (Anderson-Butcher, in press; Anderson-Butcher, Cash, Saltzburg, Midle, & Pace, 2004; Anthony, Alter, & Jenson, 2009; Cash & Anderson-Butcher, 2006). Finally, environmental risk factors include neighborhood stressors, while common environmental level protective factors involve positive relationships among youth and adults in the community (see Fraser, 2004).

Given that risk and protective factors exist at the individual, family and peer, and environmental level, youth development programs are often designed to address these factors across systems. Research shows that these programs lead to improvements in
social and personal skills, cognitive competencies, and academic achievement. They also are connected with the reduction of risk factors such as neighborhood violence or negative peer relationships (Benson, 1997; Catalano, et al, 2002). In addition, the most effective programs target multiple systems such as the family, community and school. Therefore, it is important that these programs not only address the factors impacting the individual child, but also the risk and protective factors at other systems levels.

One particularly relevant context for positive youth development is the sport setting, as participation in sport is linked with reduction of risk and enhancement of protective factors at multiple levels. For instance, youth sport involvement is connected to increases in social competence (Larson, Hansen, & Moneta, 2006). In addition, this important context has impacts at the family, peer, school and community level. Family involvement in sport provides opportunities for positive interactions among family members (Ginsburg, 2007). Youth sport participation is also linked to enhanced peer relationships, school connectedness, and has been utilized to address trauma in a community (Eccles et al., 2003; Martinek, Hardiman, & Anderson-Butcher, 2006; Smith, 1999). Unfortunately, sport participation does not necessarily always lead to positive outcomes (see Brustad, Babkes, & Smith, 2001). The best outcomes are often achieved when sport is structured to specifically address positive youth development outcomes (Anderson-Butcher, Riley, Iachini, Wade-Mdivanian, & Davis, in press).

Sport-based youth development programs seek to integrate sport and positive youth development principles (Gould & Carson, 2008; Hellison, 2003a; Hellison, 2003b). Several studies suggest that these programs make meaningful contributions to positive
youth outcomes such as life and social skills, moral development, goal-related skills, and personal values (Brunelle, Danish, & Forneris, 2007; Ceccini, Montero, Alonso, Izquierdo, & Contreras, 2007; Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish, & Theodorakis, 2005). Summer programs may also have special importance as youth often have an over-abundance of unstructured time, as noted by key authors and researchers (Martinek, McLaughlin, and Schilling, 1999; Martinek & Perez, 2005). Though more research is needed to fully examine the impact of these programs on multiple systems levels, this preliminary research is promising.

The need for positive out-of-school-time activities has special importance for youth from disadvantaged backgrounds (Lauer, et al., 2006). For example, parents who struggle to provide the necessary supervision and monitoring because of job requirements and a lack of resources to pay for other sources of childcare may find relief in these programs (Halpern, 2002). These programs also offer additional support during the summer to youth from low income families who are more likely to have inadequate social support from parents and the community (Parker, Greer, & Zuckerman, 1988). Similarly, communities have been concerned about the unstructured time of low-income youth for decades (Halpern, 2002). They fear that this unsupervised time spent in the streets leads to negative outcomes for youth and communities. Therefore, providing programming during this unstructured time may be especially impactful for youth from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In addition, youth from disadvantaged circumstances may have a greater need for out-of-school time and summer programming because of the societal forces acting
against them. Oppressive societal structures often prevent these youth from accessing opportunities at school and in other settings (Fraser, Kirby, & Smokowski, 2004). These societal issues are especially salient for minority youth who are faced with racial discrimination and are even more likely to be faced with poverty and a lack of opportunities (Kreiger, Rowley, Herman, Avery, & Phillips, 1993). Additionally, living in low income neighborhoods also has been linked with socioemotional functioning (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994). Therefore, the provision of these out-of-school time programs may help to provide opportunities that youth from disadvantaged circumstances are sorely lacking. Given the positive outcomes connected with participation in sport-based youth development programming and the need for positive activities during the summer months, providing sport-based programming for youth during this out-of-school-time may be especially impactful for youth from disadvantaged circumstances.

While the outcomes of many types of youth development programs have been the focus of research, the contribution of sport-based summer programs is relatively unknown. There are a limited number of studies examining the outcomes of these well-intentioned programs, and the evidence for sport-based positive youth development programs operated during the summer is even sparser. The available preliminary research suggests that these programs have a positive impact on many individual level outcomes and that they have the potential to address risk and protective factors at multiple systems levels. This may be especially true for youth from disadvantaged circumstances, as these youth are more likely to be faced with a lack of opportunity,
unsupervised time, and a lack of support from family and the community during out-of-school time. Clearly these programs could play a positive role in the lives of disadvantaged youth and families, but the unique impacts have yet to be identified. In addition, it is not clear what mechanisms are underlying program outcomes (Eccles et al., 2003). Researchers often speak of the “black box” of program design (Harachi, Abbot, Catalano, Haggerty, & Fleming, 1999). In order for programs to be structured in the most effective manner, information must be gathered around the features of programs that lead to specific positive outcomes for youth, parents, families and communities.

As such, this study will utilize qualitative methods to gain a greater depth and breadth of understanding of parent perceptions of the impact of a sport-based summer camp on camp participants, families, and communities. This information will be gathered from parents because they have access to a unique body of information about their family. First, they have a different perspective of patterns of interactions within the family (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Secondly, unlike youth care workers or program staff, parents can see their children and families in a variety of different contexts. Another reason to collect information from parents is that parent and youth perceptions of outcomes may be slightly different (Henderson, Whitaker, Bialeschki, Scanlin, Thurber, 2007). Youth may not see a change in themselves as a result of their participation in programming, but parents may have a more objective view of this change. Therefore, it is important to gain information from multiple data sources. Finally, parents play an important role in shaping the lives of youth and also connecting them with resources outside of the home (Henderson et al., 2007). They typically have an expectation about
the types of experiences their children encounter and can provide valuable information about the mechanisms and outcomes associated with these experiences. Unfortunately, few camp evaluations have gained this important perspective.

Based on the above stated gaps in knowledge in this area, there are three specific aims of the current study:

1. To explore parent perceptions of the impact of youth participation in a summer sport-based youth development program on individual, family and community-level outcomes.

2. To explore unique contributions of participation in a sport-based summer programming for youth from disadvantaged backgrounds.

3. To identify the mechanisms underlying the connection between involvement and outcomes from a parent perspective.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Childhood and adolescence are critical developmental periods. During this time in life, individuals have experiences that shape who they are and what they will be in the future. They learn to navigate relationships with others and develop personal and social skills that will serve them as they try to find their place in the world. Unfortunately, many youth miss out on positive development opportunities that are known to contribute to healthy development (Brown & Evans, 2002; Larson, 2000).

Often times the normal challenges of childhood and adolescence are compounded by additional obstacles and barriers. Youth in the 21st Century are faced with a broad range of issues. For instance, it is estimated that in the United States, 18.0 percent (13.3 million) of youth under the age of 18 live in poverty, a number increasing from 17.4 percent (12.8 million) in 2006 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). These young people often lack the resources to have their basic needs met, as it is common for youth in poverty to be deprived of adequate food, shelter, and clothing (Bradley, Whiteside, Mundfrom, Casey, Kelleher, & Pope, 1994). Parker and colleagues (1988) found that impoverished youth are more likely to be faced with medical illnesses, family stress, and inadequate social support. Additionally, many of these youth reside in low-income neighborhoods with substandard housing; and are more likely to be underemployed or unemployed as adults, and have limited opportunities for education (Preto & Travis, 1985). This clearly
paints a grim picture of what many youth are challenged with on a daily basis. Unfortunately, minority youth living in poverty may have even more obstacles and barriers to overcome; as they have less opportunity for education and health care than other’s their age (Kreiger, et al., 1993). Additionally, they deal with the psychological and social effects of racial discrimination (Kreiger, et al., 1993). Together these compounding factors and influences place youth, especially those of color and/or living in poverty, at risk for other negative outcomes (Fraser et al., 2004).

The current condition of life for young people in the United States manifests in the prevalence of problems and disorders in childhood and adolescence (Fraser, 2004). For instance, statistics suggest that:

- Almost a quarter of students drop out of high school before graduating (Kaufman, Kwon, Klein, & Chapman, 2000).
- Close to 50% of seniors report some illicit drug use over the course of their lifetime (Johnston, O’Malley, & Bachman, 2003).
- Almost 50% of high school students report that they have had sexual intercourse between 9th and 12th grade (Gerberding, Popovic, Solomon, Bernhardt, & Daniel, 2008).
- 39% of sexually active youth indicate that they do not use proper protection from pregnancy and sexual transmitted diseases (Gerberding, et al., 2008).
• 20% to 38% of youth are in need of mental health intervention, with 9% to 13% of those youth experiencing major disturbances (Goodman, Lahey, Gielding, Dulcan, Narrow, & Reiger, 1997; Grunbaum, et al., 2004; Marsh, 2004).

• 28.5% of youth indicate that they have felt sad or hopeless in the last twelve months (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008).

• 14.5% report that they have considered suicide in the last year and 6.9 percent report that they have attempted suicide (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008).

Issues and barriers facing youth can lead to an extensive list of negative outcomes. Fortunately, the outlook for youth is not completely grim. There are many stories of youth who have overcome multiple barriers to lead successful and prosperous lives. For instance, Werner (1984) and a group of professionals followed 698 children born in Kauai, Hawaii from birth to age 32. Thirty percent of the children in this study were faced with chronic poverty and stressful family environments characterized by discord, divorce and parent psychopathology. While many of the children living in these conditions experienced serious learning problems and mental health issues, one third of them blossomed into competent and caring adults (Werner, 1995). This same resiliency was found in studies of youth living with mentally ill parents, boys living in high crime areas, and girls who were institutionalized as children (Anthony, 1987; Felsman & Vaillant; Rutter & Quinton, 1984).
The experience of one youth showcases the concept of resilience further. Michael Oher, a current player in the National Football League, has overcome great odds to reach his maximum potential. Oher was born into a family with twelve children and received little attention from his parents. His mother was addicted to cocaine and even used the drug during her pregnancy with Michael. Oher moved from foster home to foster home throughout his childhood and was homeless for several periods of time. He was held back in school on a couple of occasions and was enrolled at eleven different schools before he entered high school. His estranged father was in prison most of his life and was eventually murdered when Oher was in high school.

After entering high school, Oher was taken in by a family whose children attended the same school as Oher. They became Michael’s main support system and helped connect him to necessary resources at school and in his daily life. Oher was eventually able to raise his 0.6 GPA to a 2.52 and was recruited to play NCAA Division 1 college football. He received many honors for his college football career, graduated with a criminal justice degree and is currently a lineman for the Baltimore Ravens.

Oher was faced with a laundry list of barriers and obstacles during his formative years, yet he did not experience the same negative outcomes as many youth with similar issues. How is it that Oher and other young people like him are able to overcome the seemingly insurmountable odds, while some youth end up with terrible outcomes from their less than optimal situations? This is an important question that has implications for youth around the world. In order to ensure more positive outcomes for youth, it is important to first gain a greater understanding of the factors that contribute to positive
youth development. Fortunately, there is a theoretic perspective that provides a framework from which to view the antecedents of positive and negative youth outcomes. **Theoretical Perspectives**

**Risk and resilience framework.** Positive youth development often is framed within a risk and resilience framework (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2003; Anthony, Alter, & Jenson, 2009; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008; Jenson & Fraser, 2006). “Risk” or “risk factors” are defined as “any influences that increase the chances for harm or, more specifically, influences that increase the probability of onset, digression to a more serious state, or maintenance of a problem condition” (Fraser, 2004, p. 14). These influences are present within different systems (i.e. school, family, peer, community, and individual level) and may increase the probability of problem behaviors and other negative outcomes.

In addition, research suggests that risk factors predicting negative outcomes for youth, such as delinquency, violence, school failure, and substance abuse, are relatively consistent (Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller 1992; Howard & Jenson, 1999; Jenson, 2004; Richman, Bowen, & Woolley, 2004; Tolan & Guerra, 1994). For instance, young people may have risk factors in different systems such as attendance at an underperforming school, abusive parents, residence in a high neighborhood crime rate, and underdeveloped social competence skills. These risk factors predict multiple types of problem behaviors such as delinquency, violence, school failure, and alcohol and drug abuse (Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller 1992; Howard & Jenson, 1999; Jenson, 2004; Richman, Bowen, & Woolley, 2004; Tolan & Guerra, 1994). Given that the same risk factors lead to many
different outcomes, there is a possibility that the identification and reduction of these
common risk factors reduce the prevalence of many different negative outcomes.

Fortunately, the presence of one risk factor, such as poverty, may not guarantee a
negative outcome. Yet, it is the cumulative effect of multiple risk factors that increase the
probability for less than optimal youth experiences and outcomes (Sameroff, 2006). This
suggests that as youth begin to accumulate risk factors such as racial discrimination,
family violence and parent substance abuse, their chance of experiencing negative
outcomes tends to increase. This implies that strategies aimed at reducing risk do not
need to be effective in reducing every single risk factor in a young person’s life. Simply
reducing the number of risk factors may be sufficient to facilitate more positive
outcomes.

While the probability of youth problems and negative outcomes is likely to
increase with the presence of multiple risk factors, there is not always a direct causal link.
For example, not all youth who are faced with poverty or multiple risk factors have
negative outcomes (Anthony, 1987; Felsman & Vaillant; Rutter & Quinton, 1984;
Werner, 1984). Some individuals who are considered “at-risk,” such as Michael Oher
and the youth in the Kauai study, have an outcome similar to individuals not identified as
“at-risk” (Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1995). Thus, they are resilient in the face of high risk
and stress.

This phenomena of resilience helps explain why young people who experience
severe trauma or high levels of risk can adapt as successfully as young people who have
only endured mild to moderate risk (Frasier et al., 2004). Even though it would seem that
all odds are against these youth, they are able to lead successful and prosperous lives. While there are several models that seek to explain resilience, there is general consensus that resilience is the result of some sort of interaction between the risk factors and the positive or protective factors acting in a person’s life (Frasier et al., 2004).

Protective factors, also labeled developmental assets, are defined in many different ways (Benson, 1997; Fraser et al., 2004). Fraser et al. (2004) defines protective factors as “internal and external resources that modify risk” (p. 28). Much like risk factors, protective factors are critical predictors of youth outcomes, and can exist in multiple systems (i.e. school, family, peer, community and individual). Some protective factors include opportunities for growth and development, positive relationships and social support, self-esteem and personal and social competencies (Fraser et al., 2004; Martinek & Hellison, 1997; Smith & Carlson, 1997). When young people have protective factors, such as caring relationships with adults or positive community activity, they may be more likely to have positive outcomes and overcome risk factors. Essentially, these protective factors can mitigate the outcomes typically associated with certain risk factors and promotes healthy youth development (Fraser et al., 2004).

Ecological perspective. The list of common risk and protective factors is extensive and can exist on multiple system levels, as individuals are not isolated beings, yet they are nested within other social systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Fraser, 2004). Specifically, ecological systems theory proposes that individuals are influenced at four systems levels, which include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. The microsystem is comprised of families, peers, schools and other
Table 1.

*Common Risk and Protective Factors at Multiple Systems Levels* (Anderson-Butcher, in press; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2004; Anthony et al., 2009; Benson, 1997; Cash & Anderson-Butcher, 2006; Hawkins, Catalano & Miller, 1992; Fraser, 2004; Lawson & Anderson-Butcher, 2001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Risk Factors</th>
<th>Protective Factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Rebellious, impulsive, alienated</td>
<td>Social competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risk taking behaviors</td>
<td>Problem solving/decision-making skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sensation seeking behaviors</td>
<td>Positive attitude</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mental health needs</td>
<td>Easy temperament</td>
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<td>Poor impulse control</td>
<td>High intelligence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Attention deficits</td>
<td>Low childhood stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hyperactivity</td>
<td>Adaptability/flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sensation seeking orientation</td>
<td>High self-esteem, -confidence, -efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Lack of supervision/monitoring</td>
<td>Attachment to parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of family communication</td>
<td>Positive family relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High levels of conflict</td>
<td>Caring relationships with siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor parent-child bonding</td>
<td>Low parental conflict</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Family drug and alcohol use</td>
<td>Effective parenting styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>Rejection by peers</td>
<td>Involvement with positive peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Association with antisocial peers</td>
<td>Peer group has prosocial norms and attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Minimal school connection</td>
<td>Participation in meaningful activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of enjoyment at school</td>
<td>(i.e. sports, extracurricular activities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early academic failure</td>
<td>Positive school climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of consistent/clear rules</td>
<td>Recognition of positive behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Neighborhood stressors</td>
<td>Positive relationship with an adult in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poverty and economic deprivation</td>
<td>Opportunities for education, employment or other positive activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low economic opportunities</td>
<td>Attachment to the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neighborhood disorganization</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low neighborhood attachment</td>
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Community-based agencies, while the exosystem includes resources and services available in the community. The mesosystem is the potential link between the
microsystem and exosystem. Finally, the macrosystem consists of broad influences such as politics, economics and cultural norms (Durlak et al., 2007). When examining risk and protection from an ecological perspective, risk and protective factors are often examined at the individual, family, peer, school and community level (Fraser, 2004). Table 1 provides a list of common risk and protective factors at multiple systems levels.

Positive Youth Development

Given what is known about antecedents to youth outcomes, the field of positive youth development (PYD) focuses on the reduction of risk and enhancement of protective factors. Multiple programs and strategies have been utilized over the years to help meet this end. Initially, programs and strategies were implemented in response to existing crises including delinquency, poor academic performance and behavior disorders. Policies and services focused on reducing problems that had already manifested (Catalano et al., 2002). For example, there was a thought that “a get-tough crime bill [would] cure the evils of crime in America” (Martinek & Hellison, 1997, p. 35). Instead of trying to prevent crisis situations, the goal was to respond to them after they happened.

While these programs and strategies were often successful at “putting out fires,” they did not include any tactics for stopping the fires before they started. Therefore, prevention strategies were introduced to curb the extent of adolescent problems. Instead of focusing solely on reducing juvenile crime and drug use, programs and strategies were designed to prevent the development of problem behaviors. These programs usually responded to single problems. For example, programs targeting adolescent drug use would teach youth about different drugs and their harmful effect on the body. Programs
and strategies targeting teen pregnancy would provide youth information about the negative outcomes of early sexual activity. Obviously, given the nature of these types of programs, they were problem-focused and not concerned with the strengths of individuals. In addition, they did not target the broad array of risk and protective factors that underlie both positive and negative outcomes for youth.

**PYD Programs: Address Risk and Enhance Protective Factors**

Recently, there has been another shift in the focus of work with young people. Given the growing evidence that risk and protective factors are predictive of multiple youth outcomes, strategies that both address risk factors and enhance protective factors appear to lead to beneficial outcomes for vulnerable youth (Hawkins et al., 1992; Howard & Jenson, 1999; Jenson, 2004; Richman et al., 2004; Tolan & Guerra, 1994). Thus, many current youth programs and strategies provide opportunities for addressing risk factors and building protective factors (Anderson et al., 2006). For instance, programs focus on the development of protective factors or developmental assets such as social, cognitive and emotional competence; as well as the reduction of risk factors such as neighborhood violence or negative peer relationships (Benson, 1997; Catalano, et al, 2002). In the end, the primary goal of many of these programs and strategies is to promote healthy youth development by reducing harmful risk factors and enhancing protective factors.

There are approximately 4,000 organizations providing around 17,000 programs each year with the goal of healthy youth development (Dryfoos, 1998; Quinn, 1999). This is encouraging, as youth involvement in quality youth development programs is linked
with the development of key protective factors such as enhanced self-esteem, interpersonal skills, moral development, relationships with caring adults, and sense of belonging (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2004; Anderson-Butcher & Fink, 2006; Bredemeier, Weiss, Shields, & Shewchuck, 1986; Collingwood, Sunderlin, & Kohl, 1994; Gruber, 1986). In turn, youth who participate in these programs have greater academic achievement, increased school attendance and school engagement; decreased substance use and delinquency; enhanced social competence; and increased mental health (Catalano et al., 2002; Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Lauer et al., 2006; Roth et al., 1998). Thus, youth development programs are often successful in enhancing protective factors, reducing risk and contributing to positive outcomes for youth (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2006).

**Youth Development Programs in Multiple Settings**

Youth development programs may be based in art, music, drama, sport and recreation or service to the community (Catalano et al., 2006). They come in many shapes and sizes, including after-school programs, extra curricular activities and summer camps.

**Afterschool programs.** Youth participation in afterschool programs, such as those provided by 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) leads to positive outcomes for youth as well. 21st CCLC seek to help youth meet academic standards, and also decrease truancy, suspensions and other discipline referrals (Little, Traub, & Horsch, 2002). The goals of 21st CCLC and other afterschool programs like it are accomplished through a variety of programs and strategies including education
activities, art and music education, tutoring, character education, and social and recreational activities (Anderson-Butcher, 2004). In general, it seems as though strategies used within afterschool programs contribute to positive outcomes for youth.

For example, a review of afterschool program evaluations suggested that when compared to non-participants, participants in afterschool programs had fewer school absences, higher school achievement, and enhanced social behaviors and relationships (Mahoney et al., 2005). In addition, parents of participants indicated that these programs had added benefit because they could remain at work during their scheduled hours and not worry about the safety of their children. Posner and Vandell (1994) also identified the importance of formal afterschool programs for youth from low-income families. They found that attending a formal afterschool program was linked with increased academic achievement and enhanced social adjustment. Thus, it appears as though these programs are often successful in enhancing protective factors (i.e. more positive social behaviors) and reducing risk (i.e. keeping youth from being in potentially unsafe settings without the supervision of an adult).

The Bridge Project is one example of an afterschool program that seeks to address risk and enhance protective factors (Anthony et al., 2009). This intervention was designed to target specific risk factors identified by an assessment team. For instance, the majority of families involved with the Bridge Project lived in poverty. In addition, there was a high level of gang activity among the older youth in the community and there were a limited number of safe OST opportunities.
Given these known risks, an intervention was developed to reduce risk and enhance protective factors at the individual, interpersonal, and community levels. The targeted protective factors included bonding through mentoring and tutoring, enhancement of academic and technical skills via reading and technical training, increased prosocial values by way of leadership training, expanded personal horizons through enrichment opportunities, and continuity through full summer programming. The expected intermediate outcomes included enhanced academic competence, confidence, character, and connection with school and the neighborhood. Long-term outcomes consist of college eligibility, graduating, economic and personal sufficiency and prosocial behaviors. While many of these outcomes were not realized in the study, positive trends were seen in terms of decreasing risk factors and enhancing protective factors (Anthony et al., 2009). Thus, this study suggests that youth development programs lead to positive youth outcomes at multiple levels, highlighting the utility of a risk and protection framework within youth development programming.

**Extracurricular activities.** Extracurricular activities also provide opportunities for the development of assets and reduction in risk factors (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). This is essential because many youth participate in extracurricular activities such as school sports, church and volunteer activities, performing arts, and academic clubs. Participation in extracurricular activities is associated with higher than expected grades, school values, self-esteem, resiliency, and prosocial peers (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). In addition, young people involved in these organized activities identify lower levels of risky behaviors such as stealing and
damaging public property (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). Research also suggests that not all extracurricular activities are created equal, as outcomes vary across types of activities (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Specifically, participation in prosocial activities, such as church or volunteering, is related to positive educational trajectories and fewer risk behaviors. Involvement in team sports, on the other hand, is associated with positive educational trajectories and a higher frequency of risky behaviors (Eccles & Barber, 1999).

**Summer camps.** The benefits of afterschool programs and extracurricular activities point to the importance of constructive out-of-school-time opportunities such as summer camps. During the school year, youth spend their days in the classroom. This is often followed by participation in extended learning opportunities in afterschool programs or involvement in sports, art or other extracurricular activities. When school lets out for summer break, youth have approximately three months of unstructured time in front of them. There are many ways that youth can spend their leisure time during the summer, not all of which are positive. Therefore, summer camps play a very important role in providing youth quality summer activities.

There is some evidence that summer camps lead to positive youth outcomes. For instance, one study linked participation in camps with increases in self-esteem, autonomy, leadership, interpersonal skills, social comfort, adventure and exploration, environmental awareness, value-development, decision-making, and spirituality (American Camp Association, 2005). The findings of this study also connected participation in camps with significant growth in the areas of positive identity, social skills, physical and thinking skills (ACA, 2005). Research also suggests that camps also
provide opportunities for fostering positive behavioral outcomes (Catalano et al., 2002; Thurber, Scanlin, Scheuler, Henderson, 2007). In addition, values-based, pro-social, and/or social-competency programming within the camp setting is connected to positive academic outcomes (Martinek et al., 1999; Martinek & Perez, 2005). One additional study suggested that enhancements of positive assets that occur during camps are maintained even six months after the end of camp. While there is minimal research in this area, preliminary studies suggest that participation in camps could lead to some long-term positive changes (Thurber et al., 2007). Thus, camps provide opportunities for addressing risk, while also facilitating the development of protective factors in youth.

Quality summer programming is especially essential for youth from disadvantaged backgrounds. Historically, out-of-school time opportunities such as afterschool and summer programs were provided to address concerns for the safety and care of youth in unsafe neighborhoods. In addition, these programs provided extra support and childcare for mothers entering the workforce (Halpern, 2002). Given that 31 percent of youth live in single parent families, the challenge for parents to provide constant supervision and monitoring continues to be an issue. This is especially true during out of school time while parents are working. Thus, out-of-school-time opportunities, especially those provided during the summer, continue to be important in meeting the needs of low-income youth (Lauer et al., 2006).

Ultimately, out-of-school time programs, including afterschool, extracurricular, and summer programs, offer multiple benefits to participating youth. Some include an academic component, while other use music or art as the vehicle for youth development.
programming. The majority of these programs include some sport and recreation component (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2004). This critical medium is discussed further in relation to PYD.

**Sport, Recreation and Youth Development**

Sport and recreation are contexts that provide a particularly relevant medium for both addressing risk factors and enhancing protective factors. Many community-based programs such as settlement houses have incorporated some form of activity-based youth development into services since the beginning days of social work. For example, sport and recreation activities were an integral part of programming offered at ‘boys’ clubs” beginning in the 1880s. Individuals in need of services gathered together around sport, recreation, and many other extracurricular activities. Thus, sport has been a catalyst for the provision of services for many years.

There continue to be positive outcomes associated with participation in sport and recreation, as youth involvement in the sport context has been linked to reductions in risk factors and enhancements of protective factors at multiple systems levels. For instance, there has been a long-held belief that sport builds character and other individual level protective factors (Anderson-Butcher, Riley, Iachini, Wade-Mdivanian, & Davis, in press). Research has supported this assumption on many occasions. For example, youth sport participation is associated with a sense of belonging, moral development and social competence (Bredemeier et al., 1986; Donaldson & Ronan, 2006; Fletcher, Nickerson, & Wright, 2003; Larson, Hansen, & Moneta, 2006; McHale, Crouter, & Tucker, 2005; Miller, Bredemeier, & Shields, 1997). Sport-based PYD also provides a context for the
enhancement of interpersonal skills, as well as leadership and responsibility skills (Collingwood et al., 1994; DeBusk & Hellison, 1989; Hattie, Marsh, Neil, & Richards, 1997; Weiss, 1991, 1995; Wiggins 1996).

Sport also has implications for family and peer systems. Recreation and play provide opportunities for families to fully engage with one another (Ginsburg, 2007). Sport also provides a context for positive communication between parents and children (Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2009). In one study, increased parent-child communication was linked to increases in the quality of the parent-child relationships (Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2009). In addition, sport provides youth with opportunities to interact with peers and develop supportive peer networks (Eccles et al., 2003; Weiss & Stuntz, 2004).

Involvement in sport has implications for community level risk and protective factors. Sport and recreation provide a means for bringing communities together and connecting those in need with necessary resources. For example, the neighborhood program in West Town Chicago serves urban youth from low-income families (Halpern, Barker, & Mollard, 2000). While the program offers homework assistance and enrichment activities, sports and other physical activities often draw the youth to the programs. Sport also helps address the trend towards isolation and separateness in communities (Lawson & Anderson-Butcher, 2000). While youth and families may not want to participate in a program that does not interest them, there is something inherently interesting about sports. Communities come together around this common interest providing opportunities for community interaction and support.
Recently, sport also was recognized as a mechanism for addressing risk and protective factors at the international level (Beutler, 2008). In 2001, the United Nations acknowledged that sport could be used to address public health issues, poverty, disease prevention, as well as build peace and help resolve global conflicts. Therefore, in addition to the individual, family, peer and community level factors outlined above, sport can also contribute to positive impacts at the global level.

Unfortunately, not all sport involvement leads to positive outcomes. Sport participation is connected with increases in anxiety and negative affect (see Brustad et al., 2001). Involvement also is linked with risky behaviors, including substance abuse and aggression in sport (Aaron, Dearwater, Anderson, Olsen, Kriska, & Laport, 1995; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Eccles et al., 2003).

In order to ensure the most positive outcomes, it is important to structure sport in a way that facilitates positive development (Anderson-Butcher, et al., in press; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Fraser-Thomas, Cote, & Deakin, 2005; Gould & Carson, 2008). Several key design principles include structured and intentional activities, development of both life and sport skills, and of a mastery climate (see Anderson-Butcher, et al., in press for a more comprehensive list). Programs that incorporate these principles provide more effective sport settings for youth development.

**Sport-Based Youth Development Programs**

A few different strategies have been developed, which integrate sport and recreation with principles of positive youth development. For example, in Hellison’s Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility in Sport (TPSR) model (Hellison, 2003a;
Hellison, 2003b), the sport context is designed strategically to create specific youth development outcomes (self-control, effort, etc), as opposed to a sole focus on sport-related skill instruction. There is preliminary evidence to suggest the effectiveness of TPSR (Hellison & Walsh, 2002), but more systematic research and extensive design strategies are again needed to further examine the potential of these settings.

Another program designed to teach life skills within the sport context is the Sport United to Promote Education and Recreation Program (SUPER). Papacharisis, et al., 2005) found that participation in the SUPER program was linked to enhancements of individual level protective factors. Specifically, results indicated that youth who participated in the program showed significant increases in knowledge of how to set goals, solve problems, and think positively, and self-beliefs for the ability of goal setting, problem solving, and positive thinking. Goudas, Dermitzaki, Leondari, and Danish (2006) extended the work of Papacharisis et al. (2005) to the physical education setting. Trained research assistance administered an abbreviated form of the SUPER program during P.E. classes focusing on strength and flexibility activities. Findings indicated a significant increase in knowledge of skills and self-belief in ability to set goals.

These 2 programs provide some evidence that sport-based youth development programs can contribute to the development of important social and life skills. This suggests that when mom sends her child out to play soccer with the SUPER program assuming that she will “build character” through sport, the child may actually walk away with more social and personal skills than she had when she walked on the field. While the study of the positive impacts of sport-based youth development programs are limited to
individual level outcomes, there is clearly potential for addressing risk and enhancing protective factors at multiple systems levels.

**Summer Sport-Based Positive Youth Development Programs**

There is even less evidence for outcomes associated with youth participation in sport-based positive youth development programs during the summer months. One study of sport-based camps did provide preliminary evidence of the impacts of sport-based summer programs. For example, participation in the National Youth Sports Program was found to improve sports skills, increase healthy risk-taking, increase personal effort, increase self-perception, and lower social anxiety in participants (Stake, DeStefano, Harnisch, Sloane, & Davis, 1997). In addition, participants indicated that their camp was a “caring community” with an emphasis on personal relationships (Watson et al., 2003). Finally, participants indicated that the camp emphasized personal skill development and responsibility, encouraged hard work and effort, created a safe environment, and taught them body control and self-discipline (Anderson-Butcher, Iachini, Boester, Wade-Mdivanian, & Davis, 2009; Stake et al, 1997). While this highlights the potential positive impact of integrating sport into positive youth development initiatives during the summer months, there is a general lack of research in this area. In addition, though these programs were provided during the summer months, the broader implications for these types of opportunities during out-of-school time have yet to be examined.

**Youth from Disadvantaged Circumstances and Youth Programs**

Given that youth development programs provide opportunities to address risk and enhance protection at multiple systems levels, one would hope that these programs would
be available to those facing the most barriers and obstacles. Unfortunately, participation in camps and other structured activities and programs is significantly higher for children of higher SES (Larson, 2000). Terzian, Moore, and Hamilton (2009) found that children and youth “who would stand to benefit the most from summer learning programs (i.e., children and youth who are economically disadvantaged, have low school engagement, and/or exhibit problem behavior) are the least likely to participate” (Terzian et al., 2009, p.2).

In addition, youth living in low income neighborhoods often have limited opportunity to participate in sport activities. These areas have high rates of crime, limited options for facility space and minimal lighting (Ainsworth, Wilcox, Thompson, Richter, & Henderson, 2003; Fleury & Lee, 2006). Communities with high poverty rates typically lack the funding to provide sport programming in schools and community centers (Pedersen & Seidman, 2005). Even if a young person lives in a neighborhood where sport-based programs are provided, their families often do not have the financial means to engage in these opportunities and transportation can also be an issue. Research clearly shows that youth from lower income families participate in sports and other youth development programs less frequently than youth from more financially stable families (Casey, Ripke, & Huston, 2005; Frederick & Eccles, 2006). This is unfortunate, as these programs could greatly benefit youth from these backgrounds.

Participation in sport-based summer programming may have special implications for youth from low income families. For example, a review of research suggests that for youth from low-income families, time in self-care is linked with poorer achievement,
antisocial behavior, and fear and anxiety (Posner & Vandell, 1994). Given that youth do not spend time in school during the summer, some low income youth lack the resources to engage in activity that limits “self-care” time. Sport-based summer programming reduces the amount of time that youth have to care for themselves. While the general research on youth development programming identifies positive outcomes at the individual, family and peer, and community level, there may be unique outcomes for individuals from low income families given their limited resources during the summer.

**Short-Term Sport-Based Summer Programming: Outcomes and Mechanisms**

Given the existing research, it is clear that both sport-based programs and PYD programs provide opportunities to decrease risk and enhance protective factors (Anderson-Butcher et al., in press; Catalano et al., 2002). There also is some preliminary evidence that the integration of sport and positive youth development principles in sport-based youth development programs may lead to positive outcomes for youth, though the research in this area is limited. For instance, a few studies have employed qualitative methodologies to gain descriptive information around youth experiences in sport-based PYD programs (DeBusk & Hellison, 1989; Hellison & Cutforth, 1997; Martinek, Schilling, & Johnson, 2001). Others have used post-test measures of social and personal responsibility (Hellison & Wright, 2002; Newton, Watson, Kim, & Beacham, 2006). While these studies suggest that participation in sport-based programs leads to the enhancement of some individual level protective factors such as personal effort, self-perceptions and personal skills, research fails to identify the reduction of risk and enhancement of protective factors at multiple systems levels. Given the potential
opportunity for sport-based summer programming to impact risk and protective factors at
the individual, family and peer, and community level, it is important to explore this
important context.

In addition, the added value of providing these opportunities during the
summertime is not well understood. A few studies have examined summer sport-based
youth development programs, but the outcomes were limited to primarily individual
competence-related outcomes (i.e. Newton et al., 2006). It is important to examine the
broader impacts of these summer programs because the provision of the program during
the summertime may increase the impact on risk and protective factors at multiple levels.
For instance, youth may lack a connection with caring adults during the summer months
while they are out of school if they do not have the opportunity to participate in any
structured programming. This highlights the added value of providing these programs
during out-of-school time for youth from disadvantaged circumstances (Lauer et al.,
2006). These youth are more likely to lack basic resources, face family stress and
inadequate social support, and have limited opportunities (Bradley et al., 1994; Parker et
al, 1988; Preto & Travis, 1985). Many of these youth have single-parents or working
parents, with limited resources to pay for childcare (Halpern, 2000). Therefore, the excess
of unstructured and unsupervised time may be particularly risky for these youth. While it
would seem that summer sport-based youth development programming would be of value
for youth from disadvantaged circumstances, there is limited research supporting this
claim.
In addition to the gap in knowledge around sport-based summer camps and their unique role in the lives of disadvantaged youth, little is known about the mechanisms underlying the link between youth development programming and positive outcomes (Eccles, et al., 2003). Participation leads to enhancement of protective factors and reduction or risk factors, but there is little evidence in the literature that identifies the specific mechanisms that underlie the positive outcomes resulting from participation in these types of programs (Anderson-Butcher & Cash, 2010; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2003; Gould & Carson, 2008; Petitpas et al., 2005). Overall, it is unclear for whom the programs work and under what conditions (Eccles, et al., 2003).

**Parent Perspective**

While it is important to gain a young person’s perspective of their own experience in youth development programs, parents have a unique view of the outcomes associated with this type of programming (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Parents more fully understand their families’ financial situation, and also the special importance of the programming for their children, family, and community. Parents also are able to see their child in multiple contexts, unlike program staff that may only see them during programming. Therefore, it is necessary to gain parent perspective, as a narrow scope limits the understanding of the impact of these programs. Additionally, it is important to measure program impacts from multiple stakeholders because information from parents may be slightly different than that collected from youth (Henderson et al., 2007). Finally, parents are responsible for connecting youth with resources outside of the home and have a unique perspective of youth experiences (Henderson et al., 2007). While the majority of studies of program
impact have focused on the perspective of youth participants, it is critical also to gain the parent perspective. Therefore, this study tapped into the unique knowledge and perspective of parents to examine program mechanisms and impacts.

**Study Aims**

While the outcomes of many types of youth development programs have been the focus of research, the contribution of sport-based summer programs is relatively unknown. Given that risk and protective factors exist at the individual, family and peer, and environmental level, sport-based youth development programs have the opportunity to address risk and protective factors at multiple levels. This may be especially true for youth from disadvantaged backgrounds because of the additional risk factors acting in their lives. Finally, it is not clear what mechanisms are underlying program outcomes.

While involvement in these programs is lacking for low income youth, it is important to understand the unique benefits that disadvantaged youth reap from their participation. Therefore, the current study utilized qualitative methods to gain a greater depth and breadth of understanding of the impact of sport-based youth development programs on individuals, caregivers, families, and communities. Information was gathered from parents, as they have a unique perspective of the broader benefits of summer sport-based youth development programs. Given this, there were three specific aims of the current study:

1. To explore parent perceptions of the impact of youth participation in a summer sport-based youth development program on individual, parent, family and community-level outcomes.
2. To explore unique contributions of participation in a sport-based summer programming for youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, as perceived by parents.

3. To identify the mechanisms underlying the connection between involvement and outcomes from a parent perspective.
Chapter 3: Methods

In order to answer these research questions, a qualitative study was conducted to explore parents’ perceptions of the individual, parent, family, and community level outcomes associated with their children’s participation in a sport-based PYD summer program. In addition, information was gathered from parents to determine their perceptions of the role of summer programming given their disadvantaged circumstances. Finally, parents’ perceptions of the mechanisms underlying these outcomes also were explored. The following describes in more detail the intervention, sample, procedure, data analysis, and strategies to ensure trustworthiness. All procedures were approved by the Ohio State University Office of Responsible Research Practices.

Context for the Study

A sport-based PYD program offered on the campus of a prominent university was utilized to address the aims of this study. This particular sport-based PYD is grounded in best practices for sport-based programming (Anderson-Butcher et al., in press). Potential participants for this study were parents of youth, ages 9 – 16 participating in the program. The majority of program participants are African American youth from low income families. The program runs from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. daily for nineteen days during the summer months, and is free for participants. Youth are provided bus transportation to and from the program from locations throughout the city; and receive breakfast and a hot
lunch. During the program, participants have the opportunity to engage with their group counselors, as well as recreation and education leaders. The sport-based PYD program staff are comprised of teachers and other individuals from the community, as well as university students and student-athletes. The specific objectives of the program are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2

*Primary and Secondary Objectives of Sport-Based PYD Program (Anderson-Butcher et al., in press)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Objectives</th>
<th>Secondary Objectives</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Increase social competence among youth participants</td>
<td>• Increase participants’ perceptions of athletic competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increase self-control, personal motivation/commitment, teamwork, and social responsibility</td>
<td>• Increase participants’ exposure to university/college life and interest in pursuing a higher education</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Youth will demonstrate a sense of belonging and connection to the program and its staff</td>
<td>• Refer participants to other youth organizations and opportunities in Columbus</td>
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</table>

Given these objectives, the sport-based PYD program is comprised of multiple components. Youth participate in four sport activities and one education activity, which are focused on developing a specific aspect of social competence. Each day youth participate in play-based education targeting one of four social skills known to contribute to social competence: self-control, self-motivation, teamwork and social responsibility. In addition to these skills being the focus of the education component of the program,
they are also infused into the rest of the program by counselors and recreation leaders (Anderson-Butcher et al., in press). For more information about the program, please visit www.osulifesports.org.

Participants

Parents with a child involved in the sport-based PYD program in both the summer of 2009 and 2010 were recruited for the study. Interviews were conducted during the 2010 program. Therefore, it was important that the parents had at least a years worth of experience prior to the 2010 program so they could provide rich data. Purposeful sampling was used to identify participants who had the ability to provide information about the content area (Padgett, 2008). Several inclusion criteria were used to select the sample for the study, including number of years in the program, income level, and the age of the child participant. Specifically, parents were asked to participate if 2009 was their child’s first year participating. This was used as inclusion criteria so that past experience in the program would not confound the parent’s view of their child’s present experience. In addition, individuals were recruited if their child(ren) received free or reduced lunch at school. This was used to identify individuals from low income families. Finally, if one of the children was ten to twelve years-of-age during the 2009 sport-based PYD program, the parent was asked to participate. This was used as one of the criteria because the program serves a different purpose for a ten year old than it does for a 16 year old. Both male and female parents were recruited for this study, but only one parent was interviewed per family. The parents interviewed were the primary caregiver for their child.
There were 57 parents who met the inclusion criteria. Upon identifying the pool of possible participants, the researcher randomly selected participants to contact about the study. In order to randomly select participants, a random number generator was used to create a list of random numbers. Each parent was given a number and if there number was part of the list of random numbers they were contacted about the study. The researcher continued contacting potential participants until 10 parents agreed to participate in the study. A total of 20 parents were contacted before the researcher found 10 who were willing to participate in the study. Parents who expressed interest in participating were asked to identify a convenient time and location to meet for the interview. Once the researcher met the parent at the designated meeting place, she asked the participant to provide verbal consent that they were willing to participate in the interview. Parents were given a twenty dollar gift card if they agreed to participate.

Ten parents of program participants were interviewed (Table 3). One parent was male. Nine parents were African American and one was Caucasian. Six of the parents were single parents and six of the parents were employed at the time of the study. Ages of participants ranged from 31 to 58. Demographic information also was gathered in relation to the interview participants’ children, specifically those participating in the sport-based PYD program. This information is provided in detail in Table 4.
Table 3

Sample demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Name</th>
<th>Parent Gender</th>
<th>Parent Race</th>
<th>Parent Age</th>
<th>Single Parent</th>
<th>Employed ?</th>
<th>Full time?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherise</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tish</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebony</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4

Additional demographic information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Name</th>
<th># of children</th>
<th># of children in program</th>
<th>Relation to program participant</th>
<th>Age of target child</th>
<th>Gender of target child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latonya</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherise</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tish</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebony</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviews

Data were collected through individual face-to-face interviews with parents. This method of data collection was used for several reasons. First, many of the parents had substantial time constraints (i.e. multiple jobs, etc.) and issues with transportation. Therefore, it would have been challenging to find a convenient time and location for multiple parents to gather for a focus group. In order to ensure that potential participants were not excluded because of these barriers, individual interviews were more appropriate. The parent participants were juggling jobs and raising families, so the convenience of the interview was important (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Second, the interviews allowed the researcher to gain insight into phenomena that could not be easily observed (Darlington & Scott, 2002).

A semi-structured interview guide (Appendix A) was used during the interviews. The use of a semi-structured interview allowed the researcher flexibility to reformulate questions and even ask the questions out of order to help with the flow of the interview (Gibson & Brown, 2009). In addition, probes were used to help interviewees provide information at greater depths. The interview guide was developed based on theory and research in the field of youth development. In addition, the interview schedule focused on key theme areas of the sport-based PYD program, such as enhancement of positive social interactions. The interview guide was peer-reviewed for content and clarity of questions. In addition, 3 pilot interviews were conducted to test the interview questions and also highlight potential responses (Krueger, 1998). The pilot interviews were not included in the analyses.
Ten interviews were conducted for this study. At the beginning of each interview, parents were provided a basic context for the study and information about confidentiality. Parents were asked to provide verbal consent to participate in the study. In addition, they were asked if the interview could be recorded and used for the purposes of this study. In order to protect the confidentiality of the parents, interviews were de-identified after they were transcribed. In addition, audio recordings of the interviews will be erased within three months of the interviews.

After parents gave their consent, the researcher began the interview with basic demographic questions. Parents were asked to identify how many children they had participating in the program and also the ages of these children. Based on that information, parents were asked to identify the child that was in the specified age-range for the study (11-13 years-old at the time of the study). Parents were asked to think about that child’s experience when responding to questions about program impact on the individual child. Upon responding to the demographic questions, parents were asked questions that explored the impact of sport-based PYD program on the youth participant (e.g. “In what ways, if any, has your child’s participation in [the program] impacted him/her”), parent (e.g. “What changes, if any, have you noticed in yourself or your life as a result of your child’s participation in [the program]?”, family (e.g. “What changes, if any, have you noticed in your family as a result of your child participating in [the program]? Please describe these changes?”) and neighborhood/community (e.g. “In what ways, if any, do you feel your neighborhood or community is impacted by this program?”). Parents were also asked to identify the contributions that have been unique
because of their disadvantaged circumstances (e.g. How does [the program] help you in your unique situation, if it does?”). Prompts also were used to gain understanding about the parents’ perceptions of the mechanisms underlying program impacts (e.g. “What is it about [the program] that led to these outcomes?”).

After the interview guide questions were exhausted, parents were asked if they had anything else to add about the impact of the sport-based PYD program. Once the interviewees indicated they provided all relevant information, the researcher collected additional demographic information. The interviewees were then thanked for their participation and the interview was concluded. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes.

**Data Analysis**

The interviews were recorded with audio-recording technology and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Names were changed during data entry to protect the identity of the parents. Atlas-ti qualitative software was utilized for data management and facilitation of data analysis (Muhr, 1996).

The data analysis process began with the researcher reading through the interview transcript in its entirety. This helped the researcher become familiar with the data. After the first transcript was thoroughly reviewed, the researcher began the process of open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The researcher analyzed the data collectively for the three aims of the study. Therefore, the researcher was looking for the impacts of the program, unique contributions, and also mechanisms while reading through the transcript. During this open coding process, the researcher pulled raw pieces of data representing the
three aims from the transcript and labeled the pieces of data with codes. Chunks of raw
data that represented similar concepts were given the same code name. Pieces of raw
data that represented unique contributions of the program given the parents
disadvantaged circumstances were labeled as unique outcomes. When parents identified
certain aspects of the program as mechanisms underlying program impact, the researcher
coded the raw data as a mechanism. Data were coded as a mechanism if the quote was in
response to the interview question, “what is it about the program that contributed to XX
outcome?” Data were also coded as a mechanism if parents said because of X, Y outcome
occurred. For example, if a parent said “because the program is free, I was able to be
worry-free”, the quote “because the program is free” was coded as a mechanism. While
the researcher coded the data, she also kept memos to provide a written record of the
analysis. The memos were used to identify dimensions and properties of codes and to
connect mechanisms with specific program impacts. A mechanism was connected with a
specific impact if a parent responded with that mechanism when asked “what is it about
the program that contributed to XX impact?” A mechanism was also connected to a
specific outcome if a parent said “because of x, y impact occurred.” As in the example
used above, if a parent said “because the program is free, I was able to be worry-free” the
mechanism “free program” was connected to parents feeling “worry-free.” Memos were
also used to keep a record of ideas and hunches as the researcher worked with the data. In
addition, the researcher used memos to keep track of any methodological concerns or
questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).
Focused coding and axial coding were also used to analyze the data in this study. The researcher analyzed each of the aims separately during this part of the process. First, focused coding was used to narrow down open codes representing program impacts by combining codes with similar properties and dimensions. Some codes were also identified as higher-order concepts. Axial coding was used to begin to develop a hierarchy of codes and concepts. During this process, the codes identified during open coding were organized into different higher-order themes, sub-themes and lower-order themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Padgett, 2008). Once a hierarchy of themes was established, the researcher identified which of the higher-order themes/sub-themes/lower-order themes had emerged as unique contributions given the disadvantaged circumstances of the parent. The processes of focused coding and axial coding were then completed for the open codes representing the mechanisms contributing to program impacts. Codes were narrowed down and organized into themes. The memos that were kept during the open coding process were also used at this point to connect mechanisms with specific program impacts. There were some mechanisms that parents identified as antecedents to a few different program impacts. If a mechanism was linked with more than one outcome, both outcomes were recorded. Also, if a mechanism was connected with an outcome more than one time, the number of times the mechanism was connected with that outcome was noted. In addition, both direct and indirect impacts were connected to mechanisms, as parents occasionally said that a mechanism led to one outcome (direct impact), which then led to another outcome (indirect impact). For example, a parent could say that the program taught her child sports skills, which led to her child learning...
sports skills (direct impact), which in turn led to her child being more active in that sport outside of the program (indirect impact).

Different sensitizing concepts were used during the coding process, as theory can provide an organizational structure in the beginning phases of data analysis (Sandelowski, 1993). In this particular study, ecological systems theory and research around risk and protective factors were utilized to provide a beginning framework for data analysis. These sensitizing concepts suggest that risk and protective factors exist at the individual, parent, family, and environmental levels. Therefore, axial coding began with clustering codes into categories of impact at the individual, parent, family, and community/neighborhood levels. Higher-order themes began to emerge as codes were grouped into each of the broader categories. Given that a guiding framework was used to organize the emerging themes, the data analysis process employed both deductive and inductive methods. While qualitative research typically espouses more inductive strategies, many qualitative studies are grounded in past theory and research (Bruce, 2007). Constant comparison was also used to compare new data with data that has already been analyzed to expand and refine categories and codes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Padgett, 2008). Several strategies were used to enhance the rigor of the data analyses.

**Trustworthiness**

Several strategies were utilized to ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of this study. First, negative case analysis was used to guard against researcher bias. As the researcher analyzed the data, she tested emerging theories against new data. This search
for disconfirming evidence helped the researcher explore personal biases. In addition, the researcher kept an audit trail. Data collection and analysis procedures and methods were outlined so that they could be replicated by another researcher. The researcher used codes and memos to justify and document decisions that were made during analysis. Specifically, the researcher took analytic and methodological notes as she read through each of the interviews for the first time. Then the interviews were uploaded into Atlas-ti for open coding. As the researcher read through each interview, codes and memos were kept with the data management software. In addition, the software was used to organize the codes into themes. The researcher kept additional memos throughout the process when codes were merged or eliminated.

Peer debriefing and support also were used to decrease the possibility of researcher bias clouding the analysis. The researcher discussed analysis and emerging codes and themes with a colleague in another discipline. The colleague was pursuing her doctorate in a sport and youth development-related specialization and had some experience with qualitative research. Thus, interdisciplinary triangulation was used to reduce researcher bias. The colleague provided feedback and guidance in relation to the analysis process. In addition to this peer debriefing process, a reliability check was performed by a peer reviewer. This peer-reviewer had a knowledge and background in research around risk and protective factors in the sport-based youth development context. The peer-reviewer was provided with ten percent of the coded raw data quotes and the comprehensive list of higher-order themes, sub-themes and lower-order themes. The peer-reviewer was then asked to match the codes with the categories and subcategories
that the first researcher pulled from the data. Finally, the researcher and peer reviewer met to discuss the analysis and reach a consensus. This process ensured the rigor of data collection and analysis procedures. Finally, a member check was used to verify the credibility of the research. The researcher took the results of the analysis back to a parent participant to get their feedback on how the results represent the voice of the respondents (Barker & Pistrang, 2005). The parent confirmed the results of the analysis.

**Reflexivity.** The researcher is often an instrument of research when qualitative methods are employed. Therefore, it is critical for the researcher to provide a candid explanation of her role in the research process. This includes the researcher’s relationship to the studied material. In this case, the researcher has a passion for working with youth in the sport context. She also believes youth development programs can be a positive place for youth to grow and learn. In addition, the researcher has worked closely with the sport-based PYD program utilized in this study. She has helped with both the design and implementation of the program over the past year. While the researcher has been involved in the program, she has had limited contact with the parents. Until this project, she has had a narrow vision of the success of youth development programs (i.e. individual outcomes for youth). Therefore, she did not come into this project with preconceived notions of the broader impact of youth development programs. Given the relationship of the researcher to the studied material, she took strides to protect against researcher bias (as outlined in the section above).
Chapter 4: Results

Study Aim One

Upon analysis, 446 raw data quotes representing the impact of child participation in the sport-based PYD program emerged from the data. These quotes were organized into 13 higher-order themes, 42 sub-themes, and 54 lower order themes. The following provides an outline of higher-order themes, sub-themes and lower-order themes. Direct quotes are provided in the text to help illustrate the individual concepts.

Impact on individual level risk and protective factors. The 287 quotes representing individual level impacts were grouped into five higher-order themes, 16 sub-themes, and 54 lower-order themes (Table 5). Parents identified many ways in which their child was impacted by participation in the sport-based PYD program. Three primary themes emerged from the data, including biopsychosocial development, provision of opportunities, and enhanced affect, behaviors, and cognitions. Parents in the study also highlighted that the program prepared them for the real world and had a positive impact in general.

Biopsychosocial development. All ten parents discussed the role that the sport-based PYD program played in their child’s biopsychosocial development. Specifically, they spoke about changes in peer interactions, social skill development, personal skill development, and physical development.
Table 5.

**Impact on individual level risk and protective factors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDIVIDUAL IMPACTS</th>
<th>Number of Respondents (n=10)</th>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>Identified as a Unique Outcome*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biopsychosocial Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <em>Changes in Peer Interactions</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Made more friends</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o More social</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Brought child out of shell/more outgoing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Increased time spent with peers outside of program</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o More assertive “when it comes to being around other kids and making friends”</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o More vocal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Carried friendships into school, easing school transition</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o More open with meeting peers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <em>Developed Social Skills</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Increased ability to deal with/adapt to different people</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Increased ability to handle conflict</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Increased communication skills</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Learned teamwork</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Social skills were reinforced</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Increased ability to relate to others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Learned to be respectful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Enhanced general social skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Increased effort</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Learned to be a leader</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <em>Developed Personal Skills</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o “Taking more responsibility for self and own actions”</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Increased level of maturity</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Increased initiative</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Learned discipline</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Gained skills for life</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Learned to take direction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Learned values</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <em>Physical Development</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Learned sport skills</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Lost weight</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Increased physical endurance/strength</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Helped regulate health issues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Parents identified this as a unique outcome given their families’ disadvantaged circumstances.*
Table 5: Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provided Opportunities to Broaden Horizon</th>
<th>Number of Respondents (n=10)</th>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>Identified as a Unique Outcome*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity to Broaden Horizon in General</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Opportunity to participate and experience all different kinds of sports and activities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Opportunity to learn/try things didn’t think you could do/would not have attempted</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Opportunity to see and experience new things</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Opened young person up to different things</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Helped young person see there is life outside of what they see in the neighborhoods</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exposure to College</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Opportunity to be exposed to college and college life</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Provided something to work towards</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunities for Peer Relationships/Interactions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Opportunity to meet and interact with people you don’t know</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Opportunity to be around friends and other peers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Exposure to negative influences of friends</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity for positive use of discretionary time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Young person not sitting around “idle”</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Keeps young person out of trouble</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Something for young person to do</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity to be active</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity to interact with adults at program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provided an outlet to everyday life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Parents identified this as a unique outcome given their families’ disadvantaged circumstances.
Table 5: Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enhanced Affect, Behaviors, Cognitions</th>
<th>Number of Respondents (n=10)</th>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>Identified as a Unique Outcome*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enhanced Affect</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enhanced Affect</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Provided fun/enjoyment</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Excited to attend program</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Increased excitement about college/desire to go to college</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Increased love for/interest in sports</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Provided something to look forward to</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Change in Beliefs about Self</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Increased confidence</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Started thinking about college</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Increased perceptions of athletic competence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Increased self-esteem</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Began to see college as a reality/within grasp</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased Positive Behaviors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Increased activity level during program</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Increased activity level after program</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive impact in general</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Positive impact all the way around</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Positively influenced in general</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared for real world/future</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Parents identified this as a unique outcome given their families’ disadvantaged circumstances.

Changes in peer interactions. Nine parents talked about changes in their child’s peer interactions from the beginning to the end of the program. Many parents indicated that one large impact of the program was the fact that their child was able to make friends. For instance, Cassy said, “Yeah, I think he has made a lot of friends over there.” In addition, several parents described their child as being “more social” through their participation in the program. Sherise described it this way:

Before, he just kind of played video games, watched television, didn’t really want to go outside and play, you know, he was like I don’t want to, and you know, and
then after [the program], there was a couple little friends that he knew that were around the neighborhood so then after that he was kind of playing around with them and, ya know, kinda more social than what he was.

As illustrated in the quote, this idea of children being more social was often paired with the child trading in more sedentary indoor activities for a more active lifestyle with friends.

*Physical development.* Nine parents indicated that their children’s involvement in the sport-based PYD program had an impact on their physical development. Specifically, they mentioned that their children learned and development in sport skills such as swimming:

He hasn’t always like the water, but last week, he had swimming and loved it because one of the counselors actually showed him, and he was like mom, I really know how to swim now and I was excited for him because whenever we would go to the pool, he never really wanted to get in, he would be sitting on the side with his feet in the water but last week he was really excited because he learned how to swim.

In addition, parents reported that youth participation in the program helped their child lose weight. Cassy reported “When she lost weight …it wasn’t like lost weight skinny, it was like, Maddie’s already shapely, I call her my little J. Lo, but it was like everything just went in the right places …that’s from [the program].”

*Developed social skills.* Another sub-theme that emerged from the parent interviews was the impact of the program on child social skills. Overall, seven parents
mentioned this impact within the context of 31 quotes. These quotes were organized into ten lower-order themes representing the development of social skills. Among other things, parents spoke of their children learning teamwork skills and how to more effectively handle conflict; they also identified the development of communication skills. Alicia put it this way, “They teach you communication skills, how to work as a team…it seems the kids are learning that.” Another important concept that parents discussed was the idea of children having an increased ability to deal with and adapt to different people.

Developed personal skills. Six parents also discussed that their children developed personal skills over the course of the program. These personal skills were organized into one of seven lower order themes. The lower-order theme that parents mentioned the most was the idea that their child learned how to take more responsibility for themselves and their own actions. To highlight, Alicia said, “they teach you…how to be responsible, how to come into being a little adult and having to be responsible for your actions while you’re away from your parents. It seems the kids are learning that.”

Provided opportunities to broaden horizon. The second higher-order theme that emerged was the idea that the program provided additional opportunities for youth participants. All ten parents indicated that their child was impacted by their participation in the program because they were provided opportunities. The 97 quotes in this higher-order theme were organized into seven sub-themes.

Opportunity to broaden horizon in general. Ten parents indicated that their child had an opportunity to broaden his/her horizon during the program. This sub-theme was categorized into five different lower-order themes. Parents said their children had the
opportunity to participate and experience all different kinds of sports and activities at the program. In addition to that, some parents stated the youth participants had the opportunity to learn things or try things that they did not think they could do or would not have attempted. In the words of Danielle, “I mean definitely the opportunity to try all of the different sports. I don’t know that he would have ever attempted, but once he did, he learned that he liked it.” The interviewees also mentioned that their children had the opportunity to broaden their horizon when they experienced new things and that their experiences at the sport-based PYD program opened them up to different things. One parent described the crime in his community. He said that the program helped his child see that there is life outside of what they see in the neighborhoods.

Exposure to college. Given that the program took place on a college campus, ten parents talked about youth being exposed to the university through their participation in the program. Danielle expressed the opportunity to be exposed to college and college life and also the idea that the program provided something for her child to work towards in this way: “Well I think it’s helpful to introduce him to the college campus and it kind of puts that in his mind and gets him excited about going himself, gives him something to work towards.”

Opportunity for peer relationships/interactions. Nine parents highlighted the fact that their child had some sort of opportunity for peer relationships and interactions during the program. Parents indicated that their children had the opportunity to meet and interact with people that they did not know before the program. Robin described how her child was impacted in this way: “The interacting and meeting different people that he wouldn’t
necessarily meet, like somebody from this side of town that he wouldn’t normally come into contact with.” Parents also indicated that their children had the opportunity to be around friends and other peers. While most of the parents spoke of this increased interaction with peers in a positive way, 2 parents said that their child started to spend time with peers who were having a negative influence. One parent indicated that her child had made friends during the program, but he was getting into trouble and doing things that he would not normally have done as a result of those new friendships.

Opportunities for positive use of discretionary time. Six parents described how their child was impacted because they had the opportunity to use their discretionary time in a constructive and positive manner. Parents talked about their children having something to do. They often contrasted this with other things that their child could be doing with his/her time such as sitting around the house idle or getting into trouble. For example, Sherise stated “it gives him something to do instead of just sitting on the couch loafing.”

Opportunity to interact with adults at program. Three parents expressed that their children were able to have interactions with adults at the sport-based PYD program. For example, Cassy said her child began to feel a connection with the adults at the program; “Whoever he was with yesterday, I don’t know the person, he connected with them …he was also a helper too…I think he enjoyed being one on one with whoever that person was.”

Provided an outlet to everyday life. Two parents said the program provided their child an outlet to everyday life. One parent talked about how his home had just been
broken into before the program started. James described his unique circumstances: “we live in…it’s not the best neighborhood. It’s a lot of crime out there. Right before we started the program our house was burglarized so that sort of impacted the whole family. I mean some of the kids stuff got took …and the kids were scared to even stay here.”

Given this situation, he said the program gave his child a chance to stop thinking about the things that were stolen or her family’s safety in their own home. He put it this way: “What I think as far what camp is, this was like a week before camp started, so camp, going to camp, us getting up and going to camp has helped them clear their minds of some of that stuff.”

**Enhanced affect, behaviors, and cognitions.** The third higher-order theme that emerged from the data related to enhanced affect, behaviors, and cognitions among youth as a result of their participation in the program. Overall, 73 quotes representing enhanced affect, behaviors, and cognitions were categorized into three subthemes and twelve lower-order themes.

**Enhanced affect.** Ten parents reported that their child’s participation led to enhanced affect. The quotes that emerged from the data representing enhanced affect were organized into five different lower-order themes. Of those lower-order themes, the idea that youth were provided fun and enjoyment was mentioned by nine different parents. While the parents indicated that their children were learning and staying out of trouble, it was also very important that their children were having fun. One parent spoke about the fact that it would be a struggle to get her son to attend the program if he was not
having fun. James describes how his daughter’s enjoyment has an indirect impact on him:

“I think the kids enjoy it and I get enjoyment out of watching them.”

Change in beliefs about self. During the interviews, nine parents indicated that their children had enhanced thoughts about themselves and what they could do as a result of participating in the program. Parents indicated that their children had increased confidence, perceptions of athletic competence and self-esteem. This is evidenced through Latonya’s thoughts: “So she knows that now she can go almost into anything that she’s not familiar with and accomplish it.” In addition, parents indicated that their children began to not only start thinking about college, but also see college as something that was a reality for them.

Increased positive behaviors. In terms of the increased positive behaviors that resulted from youth participation in the sport-based PYD program, five parents described a change in their child’s level of activity during and outside of the program. For example, Robin reported: “he’s way more active.” This idea of children being more active inside and outside of the program was often contrasted with a more sedentary lifestyle.

Positive impact in general. Three parents described the impact of their child’s participation in general terms. Two parents said the program had a positive impact all the way around. As Victoria stated, “it’s just a positive impact for her all the way around.” One parent also mentioned that the program had a positive influence in general.

Prepared for real world/future. One parent described how the sport-based PYD program prepared his children for the “real world”:
Everyday when you get in the real world like we are as adults, every day is not a smooth day, you do not get to be a kid so you know I think it is helpful for them to see that too, if you do this you will have certain consequences you know what I’m saying even as an adult not just as a child so I think the program is helping them see that too.

**Impact on parent level risk and protective factors.** The impacts of child participation in the sport-based PYD program on parents were represented in 86 quotes, which were organized into four higher-order themes and ten sub-themes (Table 6).

*Peace of mind due to child involvement.* All ten parents described how they had a peace of mind as a result of their child’s involvement in the program. Parents described how they did not have to worry and could be stress-free while there child was participating in the program. As example, Danielle said:

“Right and just the fact that I can send him and I don’t have to worry about what he’s doing because the first week after school ended and before [the program] began, he was at home all week and I was kind of nervous about him being home, not knowing what he’s doing, trying to call him all the time and then the next week when it started I was just at ease, it puts your mind at ease.”

Parents mentioned many different aspects of the program that led to this sense of being “worry-free”. These mechanisms will be described in detail in the next section of the results. Parents also indicated that the fact that the Sport-based PYD program was free for their children provided them financial relief. James put it this way: “That’s money we get to keep in and go towards bills instead of having to take money out to pay for them to
go to camp.” Other impacts included the relief of parent responsibility and confidence in the program. One parent also said that she could be more relaxed as a result of her child’s involvement

Changes in affect due to child involvement. Seven parents described a change in their own affect which was due to their child’s participation in the program. Parents described how their child’s involvement in the program made them feel. This can be highlighted by Tish’s thoughts, “I’m really happy with the program. I’m happy with how the kids feel about it, the things they come home and say.” Parents also expressed a sense of appreciation because of the opportunities provided to their children through the program. A couple parents also identified increased levels of concern because of negative situations that occurred during the program.

Parent commitment to the program. Three parents talked about their commitment to the sport-based PYD program. Several parents spoke about the lengths they would go to in order to insure that their child could remain involved in the program. Latonya talked about different ways that she would be willing to support the program: I guess I’m trying to say whatever can keep [the program] going, I would be for it, even if I didn’t have kids there because I know it’s a good program.” Parents showed a dedication to keeping their families involved.
Table 6.

Impact on parent and family level risk and protective factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>category</th>
<th>number of respondents (n=10)</th>
<th>frequency of responses</th>
<th>identified as a unique outcome*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PARENT IMPACTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace of Mind Due To Child Involvement</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parent can be worry-free</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relief of parent responsibilities</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Financial relief</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parent confidence in program</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More relaxed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in Affect Due To Child Involvement</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parent happiness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parent appreciation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parent concern</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Commitment to the Program</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Personal Growth</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parent more health conscious</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parent opened up to new things</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAMILY IMPACTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Communication/Interactions</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased communication/interactions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>among family members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Child more open to communicate with</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enhanced communication/interactions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>among family members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased parent/child communication</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parent/child communication about issues at camp</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Parents identified this as a unique outcome given their families’ disadvantaged circumstances.

**Parent personal growth.** Two parents indicated that they had experienced personal growth as a result of their child participating in the program. During the interview one parent discussed her own attempts to be more health conscious. In addition, Sherise expressed how she was opened up to new things as her child experienced new
and different things: “So I’m learning how to do that, I want you to learn and see
different things, but I have to open myself up to take you and show you.”

**Impact on family level risk and protective factors.** Parents also described how
their child’s participation had an impact on their family. Overall, 32 quotes representing
family impact were organized into one higher-order theme and five sub-themes (Table 6).

**Family communication/interactions.** Eight parents indicated the impact that the
sport-based PYD program had on their family’s communication and interactions. The
quotes were organized into five sub-themes. Parents discussed how their children’s
participation led to an increase in family interactions and communication. In addition to
that, parents talked said the sport-based PYD enhanced family communication and
interaction. For instance, Tish said:

> I think it helps out with communication between them and you know, sometimes,
there’s that negative communication, so this is positive, cause they have more to
talk about or you know they’ll discuss what they’re doing for the week and who
did what in whatever sports they were doing, when they go to education, what
they have for lunch, so it opens up the lines of communication with them.

Parents also expressed that their children were more open to communicate with them
during the program. Cassy stated:

> Before he would just not really say much. I could say How was your day? And
it’ll be pretty much a grunt and it’s alright. Now, he’ll go on for like 10 minutes
and I’m like okay. So like the whole ride home, he’s telling me about everything
that took place.
Impact on community/neighborhood level risk and protective factors. The 36 quotes that emerged around community/neighborhood impacts were categorized into three higher-order themes and ten sub-themes (Table 7).

Youth from community involved in prosocial activities. Seven parents talked about community impacts in terms of youth from the community being involved in prosocial activities. This higher-order theme was organized into five sub-themes. Specifically parents indicated that the program provided something positive for youth to do with their time. This was often contrasted with some of the less productive things youth would be spending their time doing if they were not engaged in the program. Given that youth were involved in these positive experiences, these parents noted that there was less idle time for youth to spend in the neighborhoods. Parents indicated that this had a positive impact on their neighborhood and community. In addition, parents conveyed that youth participation in the program kept them off the streets. For example, Sherise said:

   It keeps kids his age and older off the streets, when they could be getting in trouble or something it gives them something to do… you could, pants on down up under your butt, and you just causing trouble, and you know, loitering at the corner store, and picking on little kids at the park, and you know, just so many things that you could be doing like learning about different sports.

One parent also said that her community was quieter during the program. Finally, parents highlighted the importance of these resources for youth during the summer months.
Community interactions/support. The sport-based PYD program also appeared to have an impact on interactions and support in the community. Three parents expressed how their involvement in the program stimulated interactions and communication among community members. Latonya’s comments illustrate this idea:

Um ya, because sometimes if the neighbors see you, they are out in the yard or whatever and they see you getting ready to leave in the morning and taking the kids, they might later ask you, you know, where were you taking the kids that early or something, so you share it with them and they think it’s a great idea.

One parent also spoke about the community support of youth involvement in the sport-based PYD program.

Other. Three other sub-themes emerged from the data representing the impact of the program on the community. Two parents mentioned that the program provided an opportunity for youth to meet different people. Victoria expressed how the social skills that the community youth learned at the program were transferred to the community:

It has to be a positive of the impact of what they’ve learned what the kids learn and what is being reinforced there so that when they get back to the rec. centers, when they get back to their own neighborhood they know how to play with other kids, they know how to maybe let things go, conflict resolution, besides confrontation.
Table 7.

Impact on community level risk and protective factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Respondents (N=10)</th>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>Identified as a Unique Outcome*</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNITY IMPACTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth from Community Involved in Prosocial Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community youth have something constructive to do</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Kids are off the streets</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less opportunity for youth to be “causing trouble”</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reduction in number of idle youth</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Resource for youth during summer months</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quieter in community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Interactions/Support</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community support of youth involvement</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased interaction/communication among individuals in community</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity for youth to meet different people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transfer of social skills to community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Parents identified this as a unique outcome given their families’ disadvantaged circumstances.

Overall, parents identified the impacts of their child’s participation in the sport-based PYD program on multiple systems levels. Not only did they indicate individual level outcomes such as biopsychosocial development and the provision of opportunities, but they also identified parent, family, and community level outcomes such as peace of mind, family interactions and communication and the involvement of community youth in prosocial activities. The above results represent the impact of the sport-based PYD program on families regardless of their life circumstances. The results presented below in study aim two will highlight the outcomes that parents thought to be unique based on their disadvantaged circumstances.
Study Aim Two

Thirty of the quotes representing the impact of the program also emerged as unique contributions of participation in the program for youth and families from disadvantaged circumstances. These unique outcomes are presented with the findings from aim one in tables 5, 6, and 7. The right column of the tables provides the number of times parents identified the outcome as a unique outcome.

Impact on individual level risk and protective factors. Of the 287 quotes representing individual level impacts, 19 emerged as unique contributions of the program for disadvantaged families (Table 5). These 19 quotes all emerged as higher-order themes representing either the provision of opportunities or enhanced affect, behaviors, and cognitions.

Provided opportunities to broaden horizon. Of the 97 quotes in the higher-order theme that emerged around the idea that the program provided additional opportunities for youth participants, 12 of the quotes emerged as unique contributions of participation in the program for youth from disadvantaged backgrounds. Three of the lower-order themes categorized into the sub-theme, opportunity to broaden horizons in general, were identified as unique outcomes given the income status of the participants. Parents indicated that given their unique situation there child had the opportunity to participate and experience all different kinds of sports and activities, as well as the opportunity to see and experience new things. As Sherise said:

He’s like ya you know this soccer slash lacrosse field, slash something else he said, and I’m like ‘what do you know about lacrosse?’ And I said ‘that is so
good,’ lacrosse, what little black kid you know that knows about lacrosse? I’m serious, they’re exposed to different things and I appreciate that, cause I feel like that is extremely important. There are so many kids, urban, African American, or even low, middle-class, low income families that the kids never get to go anywhere.

In addition, concepts within the exposure to college sub-theme also were seen as unique outcomes. Several parents expressed that many youth would not typically be exposed to a college campus or college life given their unique situation. This can be highlighted by Victoria’s words:

I think…especially for African American boys, being on a college campus… we see a lot of Columbus City kids, especially African American boys who don’t even go to college, don’t even go to a college campus.

Parents also identified opportunities for positive use of discretionary time as unique outcomes based on their disadvantaged circumstances. For instance Tish said “Like I said, giving the kids something to do, instead of just at home.” In this parent’s situation, her children may have hung around the house for the summer if the program did not provide them something to do.

Finally, Alicia, a single mother, shared that she had been diagnosed with cancer over the past year. She lost her job and her children had to help her out a lot more than usual as a result of their situation. Alicia vividly described how the program provided her children an outlet:
It just kind of takes away a lot of stuff that they’ve been having to deal with. Parents, we have to deal with it but as children they shouldn’t have to deal with all it. So this is an outlet for them. They get to be ok even in the midst of stuff that’s not going right, they still can have some fun.

Alicia’s words highlight the unique contributions that participation in the program made to these families given their circumstances. As Alicia said “We have some family issues, we have health issues, we have no money issues, but that shouldn’t be a reason for the children to not be able to have fun.”

**Enhanced affect, behaviors, and cognitions.** Overall, 73 quotes represented enhanced affect, behaviors, and cognitions and 7 of these quotes were identified as a unique outcome. These quotes emerged in either the enhanced affect sub-theme or change in beliefs about the self sub-theme. Parents identified the increase in youth excitement about college and desire to go to college as a unique outcome. Robin expressed:

> They get to go into the arena and they get to, you know, the swimming complexes…they’re like oh maybe I might want to go here…this seems like some place I might want to go, I mean he’s even mentioned, like “its cool up there, I think that I’d like to go there”, you know, and a lot of kids don’t even see it as an option, even though its right here in the middle of our city, it seems so far away.

Change in beliefs about self, specifically regarding the view of college as a reality or even thinking about college, was also seen as a unique contribution given the lack of opportunities provided to many of the youth in the program. Victoria stated:
So for them to be on a college campus and see those things and they can be close enough there, you know to actually oh I could go to college. So that’s important. Even something small like being on a college campus, kids maybe who have never thought about college may be like, well I want to go here some day.

**Impact on parent level risk and protective factors.** Of the 86 quotes representing impact on the parent, 9 quotes were identified as unique contributions based on the family’s disadvantaged circumstances (Table 6). All of these quotes emerged in the higher-order themes peace of mind due to child involvement. Both parent financial relief and the sense of being worry-free were identified as unique outcomes given the disadvantaged circumstances of the participants. Sherice made two insightful remarks:

Because of my unique situation, I’m comfortable and I’m not having to worry about having to pay for camp, someone else in another situation may not want to take them or send them to NYSP maybe wants or can pay four or five hundred dollars for the summer, you know, cause maybe in summer, depending on the camp, may not even do as much as Samual does, you know, so I love it, we need it, it impacts our family because we’re broke, We’re Broke!

In addition, she described how her family would be impacted if she had to pay for camp: “We could never go out to dinner, we could never go to the movies, they would never have new shoes, so ya, I could totally take them, but they would have nothing else, it’s just more feasible this way.”
**Impact on family level risk and protective factors.** None of the quotes representing family impact were identified as unique contributions of the program given the families’ financial situation.

**Impact on community/neighborhood level risk and protective factors.** Two of the 36 quotes that emerged around community/neighborhood impacts were identified as unique contributions given the families disadvantaged circumstances (Table 7). One of these emerged in the “youth from community involved in procosial activities” theme, while the other represented youth in the community being provided resources. The provision of resources during the summer months was identified as a unique outcome. As Latonya express: “There’s some kids that would never ever see or have those resources in the summer. Now during the school year they are pretty much covered because they are in school.” One parent also discussed how the community was impacted because it provided youth from around the community with important resources such as supervision and food. This was also identified as a unique outcome because it describes how youth without resources are being supported. As James puts it:

> It’s impacting the community to me in that way. So some…kid might not get a meal, come into this program being able to interact with other people, other adults that show them that they care and there is somebody who care about you and care about what you do and get a meal on top of that.

In general, only a small percentage of the quotes that emerged from the interviews also were identified as unique outcomes. While parents expressed impacts on child, parent, family and community level outcomes, the vast majority of the time they
did not indicate that these outcomes were unique given their disadvantaged circumstances. Though parents were not able to identify many unique outcomes, they were able to shed light on the mechanisms that contribute to the child, parent, family and community level outcomes they mentioned during the interviews. During the interview, when a parent identified a child, parent, family or community impact, they were asked explain what they thought it was about the program that contributed to that outcome. The details of this analysis are provided below.

**Study Aim Three**

Several factors emerged as mechanisms leading to individual, parent, family and neighborhood/community level outcomes. These mechanisms represented what parents thought it was about the summer sport-based PYD program that contributed to the outcomes that they identified throughout the interview. During the analysis process, the researcher also kept memos which connected the mechanisms with specific individual, parent, family and community level outcomes. Therefore, table 8 shows not only the higher-order themes and sub-themes, but also the outcomes connected with each of the sub-themes. If a mechanism was linked with more than one outcome, both outcomes were listed in the table. Also, if a mechanism was connected with an outcome more than one time, the number of times the mechanism was connected with the outcome is noted in parentheses. In addition, both direct and indirect impacts are outlined in the table, as parents occasionally said that a mechanism led to one outcome (direct impact), which then led to another outcome (indirect impact). Examples of the connections between mechanisms and direct/indirect are illustrated in the text and outlined in table 8.
The mechanisms that emerged from the analysis were organized into nine different higher-order themes (Table 8). These mechanisms were linked with impacts at the individual, parent, family and community level.

**Qualities and roles of counselors.** During the interviews, parents mentioned certain qualities about and roles of counselors that led to the positive impacts they described. A few parents mentioned that their child had a counselor that was encouraging. They indicated that this encouragement helped increase both their child’s confidence and self-esteem. Parents also mentioned that they could be worry-free because their child was with counselors who care about youth, are personable and outgoing and who provide supervision. For example, Robin said that her child participating in the program led to her being worry-free. When asked what it was about the program that contributed to this outcome she said:

> Oh, it’s the people, when I met the counselors or, you know, they’re all really personable people and you know outgoing people and you can tell they have a general care for what the kids are doing, and they’re not just there to get paid, but they’re actually there to help the kids.

**Lessons for sport and life.** Parents also talked about their children being taught skills and lessons for both sport and life. Several parents mentioned the “education piece” of the sport-based PYD program. They indicated that this aspect of the program contributed to kids being off the streets and out of trouble. One parent also mentioned the education piece increased when asked what it was about the program that led to her son’s
Table 8.

Mechanisms and direct/indirect impact of sport-based PYD program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MECHANISMS: Qualities and Roles of Counselors</th>
<th>DIRECT IMPACT:</th>
<th>INDIRECT IMPACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counselor is encouraging</td>
<td>o Increased confidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Increased self-esteem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Positive impact all the way around</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality counselors</td>
<td>o Increased love for/interest in sport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Confidence in program (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Parent can be worry-free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults to interact with</td>
<td>o Kids are off the street</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Less opportunity for youth to be “causing trouble”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care about youth</td>
<td>o Parent can be worry-free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive role models</td>
<td>o Kids are off the street</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personable and outgoing</td>
<td>o Parent can be worry-free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act as parent figure</td>
<td>o Youth in community provided resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement with campers</td>
<td>o Increased love for/interest in sport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids like counselor</td>
<td>o Increased love for/interest in sport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student status at OSU</td>
<td>o Began to see college as a reality/within grasp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide supervision</td>
<td>o Parent can be worry-free (2)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Continued
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MECHANISMS: Lessons for Sport and Life</th>
<th>DIRECT IMPACT:</th>
<th>INDIRECT IMPACT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Teaches life skills/“education piece” | Kids are off streets  
  Community youth have something constructive to do  
  Less opportunity for youth to be “causing trouble”  
  Increased ability to handle conflict  
  Parent appreciation | |
| Learning in general                  | Parent appreciation  
  Parent can be worry-free | |
| Teaches sports                       | Learned sports skills (2) | Increased perceptions of athletic competence  
  Increased confidence  
  Transfer of social skills to community  
  Parent appreciation |
| Teaches positive ways to have fun    | Kids are off the streets  
  Less opportunity for youth to be “causing trouble” | |
| Reinforcing lessons parents trying to instill | Increased confidence  
  Transfer of social skills to community  
  Parent appreciation | |
| Given more responsibility            | “Taking more responsibility for self and own actions” (3) | |
| Career Day                           | Taking initiative | |
| Encouraged to be a leader            | Learned to be a leader | |
| Teaches social skills                | Transfer of social skills to community | |
| Peer models of physical activity     | Increased confidence | |

Continued
Table 8: Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MECHANISMS: Opportunities for Peer/Family Interactions</th>
<th>DIRECT IMPACT:</th>
<th>INDIRECT IMPACT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In groups with peers</td>
<td>o Increased ability to deal with/adapt to different people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Increased ability to relate to others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Social skills reinforced (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Made more friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Opportunity to meet and interact with people you don’t know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to “kids from all over”/experiences with different youth</td>
<td>o Increased ability to deal with/adapt to different people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Opportunity to meet and interact with people you don’t know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Enhanced general social skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Opportunity to be around friends and other peers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Made more friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Increased ability to relate to others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to interact with peers</td>
<td>o Made more friends (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Increased communication skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Increased social skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o More vocal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Excited to attend program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Easier social transition at school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being around youth with same interests</td>
<td>o Made more friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for interaction among family members</td>
<td>o Enhanced interactions among family members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8: Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MECHANISMS: Structure of Program</th>
<th>DIRECT IMPACT:</th>
<th>INDIRECT IMPACT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“You don’t get to pick” activities</td>
<td>Opportunity to learn/try things didn’t think you could do/would not have attempted (2)</td>
<td>Increased perceptions of athletic competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity to participate and experience all different kinds of sports and activities</td>
<td>Increased self esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to a variety of experiences</td>
<td>Learned sport skills (3)</td>
<td>Increased confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased confidence</td>
<td>Increased confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity to learn/try things didn’t think could do/would not have attempted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of Program</td>
<td>Confidence in program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program keeps youth active</td>
<td>Lost weight (3)</td>
<td>Increased confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved child behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased activity level (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kids are off the streets (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community youth have something constructive to do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less opportunity for youth to be “causing trouble” (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased physical endurance/strength</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased activity level outside of program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent can be worry-free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outlet to everyday life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helped regulate health issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excited to attend program</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>MECHANISMS:</th>
<th>DIRECT IMPACT:</th>
<th>INDIRECT IMPACT:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure of Program Continued</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Program takes place at OSU/is affiliated with OSU | o Started thinking about college (3)  
o Increased excitement about college/desire to go to college (3)  
o Kids are off the streets  
o Community youth have something constructive to do  
o Less opportunity for youth to be “causing trouble”  
o Increased excitement about/desire to go to college  
o Exposure to college (2)  
o Began to see college as a reality/within grasp (2)  
o Opportunity to be exposed to college and college life  
o Provided something to work towards  
o Community support of youth involvement  
o Parent can be worry-free (2)  
o Excited to go  
o Fun/Enjoyment | |
| Structured programming | o Learned sport skills  
o Parent can be worry-free | |
| **Resources** | | |
| Free camp | o Financial relief (4)  
o Parent can be worry-free | |
| Meals provided | o Relief of Parent Responsibilities (4)  
o Parent can be worry-free | |
| Transportation | o Relief of Parent Responsibilities (3)  
o Parent can be worry-free | |

Continued
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MECHANISMS:</th>
<th>DIRECT IMPACT:</th>
<th>INDIRECT IMPACT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fun and Challenging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Fun/Enjoyment | o Commitment to Program (2)  
 o “Taking more responsibility for self and own actions”  
 o Excited to go (3)  
 o Parent is Happy (3)  
 o Parent can be worry-free (3)  
 o Kids are off streets  
 o Less opportunity for youth to be “causing trouble” | |
| Challenging Experience | o Learned sport skills (3)  
 o Increased perceptions of athletic competence  
 o Opportunity to learn/try things didn’t think could do/would not have attempted (2)  
 o Prepared for real world/future | o Increased perceptions of athletic competence  
 o Increased self-esteem  
 o Increased confidence |
| Gives them more to talk about | o Child more open to communicate with parent (2)  
 o Increased parent-child communication  
 o Enhanced communication/interactions among family members (4)  
 o Increased communications/interactions among family members (3) | |
| Opportunity to experience new things | o Opened young person up to different things | o Parent opened up to new things |

Continued
### Table 8: Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MECHANISMS:</th>
<th>DIRECT IMPACT:</th>
<th>INDIRECT IMPACT:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Use of Discretionary Time</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth are doing something productive</td>
<td>o Parent can be worry-free (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Less opportunity for youth to be “causing trouble”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Commitment to program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Kids are off the streets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Community youth have something constructive to do with time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something to do during summer months</td>
<td>o Parent can be worry-free (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Financial relief</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth are not sitting around idle</td>
<td>o Parent can be worry-free (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program to go to</td>
<td>o Parent can be worry-free (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Keeps young person out of trouble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Kids are off the streets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents know where kids are</td>
<td>o Parent can be worry-free (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physically Safe Environment</strong></td>
<td>o Kids are off the streets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Community youth have something constructive to do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Less opportunity for youth to be “causing trouble”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Parent can be worry-free (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experiencing Negative Situations at Sport-Based PYD Program</strong></td>
<td>o Parent-child communication about issues at program (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
increased ability to handle conflict: “Well probably mostly the education piece. I really like what you guys do there. It’s helpful for them I think that had a lot to do with it.” In addition to teaching life skills, parents also talked about the program teaching sport skills. This was linked to the youth participants learning sports skills, which led to increased perceptions of athletic competence and confidence. One parent even mentioned that this new confidence led to increased activity outside of the program.

**Opportunities for peer/family interactions.** When parents were asked to connect mechanisms with impacts, they often discussed the opportunities that the program provided for peer and family interactions. For instance, parents said that they indicated that their child being placed in a group with peers led to an increased ability to deal with/adapt to different people and also an increased ability to relate to others. They also said the sport-based PYD program exposed their children to “kids from all over.” Among other things, this was connected to making more friends and an opportunity to meet and interact with people the youth did not know before the program. For instance, Latonya said:

> The thing about it is that there are kids from all over Columbus, and they are bound to go there and meet somebody that they know, but then they are going to meet some that they don’t know, so that helps”

One parent also talked about how the opportunity to meet new friends led to making friends, and in turn indirectly impacting the ease of her daughter’s school transition.
Specifically, Ebony stated:

They meet people and before you know it, it’s at the end and they met all these friends, and that was the other thing because some of the people that Yalinka knew last year ended up going to school with her in 6th grade so it’s nice so they make these friends in the summer and then they end up going to school with them in the next year.

**Structure of program.** The structure of the program also was significant, as parents expressed several mechanisms within this higher-order theme. Parents often mentioned how the program keeps youth active. They linked this with the youth losing weight, increasing their activity levels, an improvement in child behavior and keeping kids off the streets. One parent also mentioned how the active nature of the program led to her child being better behaved at home. This in turn was connected with enhanced communication and interactions among family members. Robin described it this way:

I guess it does affect the family because he’s calmer when he does get home, and calms down, and not as fidgety because he’s constantly busy, because when you’re busy and you’re doing things and your active, you don’t have as much time to get into trouble or, you know, he runs by a motor, so if somebody’s constantly running him, he’s not running as hard when he gets home in the evening.

She went on to describe how he does not harass his sister in the evening. Thus the program indirectly impacted the quality of family interactions.
Parents also discussed the program taking place at the Ohio State University (OSU) and being affiliated with OSU. They indicated that this was a mechanism for getting youth to think about college, keeping kids off the street, and increasing youth excitement about going to college. For instance, Cassy said “I think [exposure to college] has done that for Jordan…it has made think about college, he’s never done that before.” Another mechanism that emerged was exposure to a variety of experiences. This mechanism was directly linked to a few program impacts such as learning sport skills. In turn, learning sport skills was linked changes in beliefs about the self such as increased perceptions of athletic competence and self esteem. Alicia’s words highlight the direct and indirect impacts of exposure to a variety of experiences: I think that the camp gives them a variety of stuff to do … all the stuff, volleyball, basketball, baseball, swimming. So this is all the stuff they get to do…now they’re learning how to do that and they feel good about themselves.”

Resources. The resources provided to youth and families through the program also were highlighted as mechanisms for several individual, parent, family and community level outcomes. Parents said they indicated financial relief because the program was free. They also talked about relief from some of parent responsibilities because their children were provided meals and transportation. Robin stated: “the whole transportation being provided and the fact that they get to eat lunch…the fact that that’s there and I don’t have to do that is wonderful, it’s like a stress off of me, it’s something else I don’t have to worry about.”
Fun and challenging. Parents expressed that the program was both a fun and challenging experience for their children. They indicated that the fun and enjoyment that their children experienced allowed them to be worry-free and also happy. The fact that the program was fun for youth was also connected to youth being excited to go to the program. In addition, parents mentioned the challenging nature of the program as a mechanism for increased perceptions of athletic competence and opportunities to learn and try things they did not think they could do or would not have attempted. Alicia expressed:

I think that the camp gives them a variety of stuff to do and challenge themselves…so this is all the stuff they get to do, and it just challenges them if they haven’t done it before, now they’re learning how to do that and they feel good about themselves, “oh I can play that”

Many parents also talked about the program giving youth more to talk about. This was connected to enhanced and increased communication and interactions among family members. Sherise also discussed how her child experiencing new things indirectly impacted her:

So because of the different things, like even with sports, ok, lacrosse…I just think that that kind of opened up his mind to different things, like, and then your family life has to kind of be open. So I’m learning how to do that, I want you to learn and see different things, but I have to open myself up to take you and show you

This mother’s child had the opportunity to experience new things, which opened the child up to new things, and in turn opened the parent up to new things.
Positive use of discretionary time. Many parents discussed the positive use of discretionary time as a mechanism for program impacts. One program impact that was often connected with mechanisms falling in this higher-order theme was parents being able to be worry-free. Parents indicated a sense of relief because program gave youth a program to go to and gave them something productive to do. For instance, James said “it was reassuring to me in my mind that they weren’t just sitting around home doing nothing.” A few parents also specified that the timing of the program was important, as it gave them peace of mind knowing that their children had something to do during the summer months.

Physically safe environment. Several parents talked about the physically safe environment at the sport-based PYD program as an antecedent of kids being off the streets and parents being worry-free. Victoria put it this way: “So you know, I go to work, I don’t have to worry about it and that’s huge, that’s huge for a working mom not to be concerned and know that their child is somewhere safe.”

Experiencing negative situations at the program. While most of the parents discussed the positive impacts of the program, several parents talked about negative situations that occurred at the program. When parents talked about negative situations at the program, they also discussed how those negative experiences led to increased communication with their child about the negative situation. For example, Cassy explained her experience this way “he did have a fight the other day and I had to talk to him and explain to him that’s not why I have him there.” Most of the time parents talked
about the resolution that was reached around the particular issue occurring at the program.

Even though parents did not see the specific structure and layout of the sports-based PYD program on a daily basis, they were able to trace program impacts back to many different mechanisms. They were even able to connect mechanisms to both direct and indirect impacts at the individual, parent, family and community level. The implications of these findings and the results of study aims one and two will be delved into further in the discussion.
Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain a greater depth and breadth of understanding of the impact of youth participation in summer sport-based youth development programs on individuals, parents, families, and communities. In addition to gaining general knowledge about the impacts on these different systems, information was also gathered around the unique contribution of sport-based PYD programs for families from disadvantaged circumstances. Finally, the researcher sought to uncover the mechanisms that contribute to specific program outcomes as identified by parents. The results of the three study aims are discussed in detail below.

Individual, Parent, Family, and Community Level Outcomes

Many insights emerged from the parent interviews. Consistent with a risk and resilience framework and an ecological systems perspective, parents indicated that the sport-based PYD program impacted risk and protective factors at the individual, family and environmental levels (Brofenbrenner, 1986; Fraser, 2004). While the interview script guided parents to respond to questions about individual, parent, family and community impacts, parents confirmed impact at each of these levels. Thus parents said that the program not only had an impact on their children’s individual risk and protective factors, but it also influenced such factors as family interactions and communication, and community youth involvement in prosocial activities. In addition, they identified
outcomes at multiple systems levels as unique contributions given their disadvantaged circumstances.

The impacts of the sport-based PYD program on individual level factors appeared to be the most salient in parents’ minds. While they mentioned parent, family, and community level impacts, they spoke of individual level impacts more often than all of the other outcomes combined. This makes sense because youth experience the most direct impact given their daily involvement with the program. Also not surprising is the fact that parents mentioned biopsychosocial development as the primary individual level impact. First, this particular sport-based PYD program was structured to utilize sport as a vehicle for the development of social competence. Thus, parents confirmed that the program had the intended impact on individual development. Also, the few studies that have examined the impacts of sport-based PYD programs suggest that youth gain social and personal skills as a result of participation (Hellison, 2003a; Hellison, 2003b Papacharisis et al., 2005).

While parents talked about the development of social and personal skills, as well as physical development, parents most often discussed biopsychosocial development in terms of changes in peer interactions. Though this outcome was not specifically targeted by the design of the sport-based PYD program in this study, the finding is promising given the salience of peer acceptance and friendship in childhood and adolescence (Sullivan, 1953). Peer interactions also were mentioned in terms of youth have the opportunity to not only be around familiar peers and friends, but also meet and interact with peers they did not know before the program. Unfortunately, not all peer interactions
and relationships were positive. Two parents mentioned that their child had been exposed to the negative influences of friends. Therefore, the qualities of both the other peers and the peer relationship may play a role in the potential impact of these interactions. In general, however, parents expressed that both the positive quality and quantity of peer interactions experienced by their children as a result of participating in the sport-based PYD program were important individual level impacts.

Parents also indicated that the provision of opportunities was an important individual level impact. They explained how their children were not only opened up to new and different things via their involvement in the program, but they also were put in situations where they had to get out of their comfort zone. Though the distinction between these two impacts may seem minimal, it is worth highlighting. On one hand, parents indicated that youth were exposed to opportunities that they had never been exposed to before. On the other hand, parents talked about youth having the opportunity to participate in activities they normally would not have tried or did not think they could do. This impact was often tied back to the fact that youth did not get to pick their activities at the sport-based PYD program. Thus, it seems as though this particular outcome may be unique to more structured youth development settings.

An additional opportunity mentioned by parents included exposure to college and college life. This is an outcome that is most likely unique to programs operated on a college campus. Therefore, this finding cannot be generalized to all sport-based PYD programs. Though this particular program did not provide opportunity for academic education, this new awareness of opportunities could potentially help them gain access in
the future. Overall, the outcomes that emerged around provision of opportunities are critical given that opportunities for growth and development, as well as opportunities for education are important protective factors for youth (Fraser, 2004; Halpern, 2005).

Another noteworthy outcome was the focus on fun and enjoyment. While the sport-based PYD was a free resource for parents, they still spoke about their child having fun at the program. Though there child’s participation in the program provided them financial relief and overall peace of mind, these parents still wanted their children to have a good time and learn something while they were away from home. Overall, parents discussed many important individual level risk and protective factors during the interview. The outcomes that emerged both confirmed past research around sport-based youth development programming and also suggested areas for further development in relation to these types of programs.

Information gathered from parents about the impacts of the program on them personally also shed light on the role of summer sports-based youth development programs. When parents were asked about the impacts of the program on them personally as a parent, their first response was often that they were not impacted as a parent. This was then followed by a list of ways that they were impacted as a parent. In fact, every parent mentioned at least 1 way that their life had been directly or indirectly impacted by the program. These parents struggled to identify ways they were impacted at first, possibly because many of them were impacted indirectly through their child’s participation. For example, the impact of the program that was expressed by every parent was the peace of mind that they could have because of their child’s participation in the
program. Within that, parents conveyed that they could be worry-free and have some financial relief as a result of their children’s participation in the sport-based PYD program. While parents identified different mechanisms that provided them this peace of mind, every parent described a sense of relief. They knew that their child was in a safe place, being supervised and doing something constructive so they did not have to worry about their child.

The program also had an impact on several family level risk and protective factors. One surprising finding was the relatively small number of quotes that emerged as family level impacts. According to the frequency with which parents identified family level outcomes, it appears as though the program had the least amount of impact on family level factors. There are several possible reasons for this finding. First, one primary higher-order theme emerged in relation to family level impacts: family communication and interaction. While this may have been very important to some parents, they did not dwell on it and mention the same outcome multiple times. Another explanation is that many parents who did not mention family level impacts said that there was not a lot of room for improvement. They indicated that the relationships within their family were already strong and “close knit.” Thus, some of the common family risk factors facing youth such as child maltreatment and family conflict may not be relevant for all participants within this particular sample. It is also important to note that the sports-based PYD program is primarily designed to impact individual level outcomes. While there are a few opportunities for parent involvement, it does not have many strategies in place to
impact parents or families. If the program were designed specifically with parents in
families in mind, the outcome may be different.

Finally, the impact of the program on several community/neighborhood level risk
and protective factors emerged from the parent interviews. The most salient community
level outcome was the idea that youth from the community were involved in prosocial
activities. While 3 parents mentioned the role of the program in bringing the community
together and increasing interactions, this did not seem to be as important as the role of the
program in the lives of kids in the community. When asked about the impact of the
program on a parent’s neighborhood and community, many immediately responded that
the program keeps kids off the streets. With kids off the streets they may not be exposed
to as many neighborhood stressors. This is critical as one common environmental risk
factor includes exposure to neighborhood stressors (see Fraser, 2004 for a review). The
themes that emerged almost seemed to fall along a continuum of what youth in the
community could be doing with discretionary time. For example, parents mentioned that
there was less opportunity for youth to be “causing trouble.” If youth were not going as
far as causing trouble, they could just be sitting around being idle. Parents pointed out
that this idle time often leads to trouble. One parent even mentioned that idle minds are
the devils workshop. Finally, instead of sitting around doing nothing, parents said that
community youth could be doing something productive. They indicated that the sport-
based PYD program helped the community by giving them something constructive to do.

While some outcomes were mentioned by every parent and were salient across all
of the interviews, there were also many outcomes that were only mentioned by 1 or 2
people. While only 1 or 2 people mentioned the outcomes, they mentioned them several times throughout the interview. This highlights how the program had different impacts depending on the environment, family and even the child. In other words, each youth participant and family has a different day to day experience; therefore the program may play a different role depending on the individual needs of the family. For example, some parents focused on the activities and physical nature of the program. One mother talked about the importance of the program because of her daughter’s health issues. In contrast, another mother said she did not see any physical changes in her family because they were already active and athletic. This mother did not see change, but she also did not see any need for change.

Similarly, when parents talked about ways the program impacted them personally, their responses often depended on what they were intending to do with their child if they did not have the program. Some parents said they would definitely send the child somewhere regardless of the cost, so the financial relief was important to them. Without the program they would struggle to pay bills and cover other costs. While financial relief was important for the parents who would not have been able to send their child anywhere without the program, many of them stressed the positive use of discretionary time. They felt relief knowing that their children were not sitting at home doing nothing or getting in trouble.

The impact of programs like the sport-based PYD program in this study may also differ depending on the current macro conditions and other available opportunities. This particular program was situated in a struggling economic climate. Many recreation
centers were closed in the city where the program was provided and many schools cut physical education programs. Therefore, the need for a free sport-based youth development program was particularly salient in this macro context.

Overall, these findings showcase the impact of child participation in a summer sport-based youth development program on individual, parent, family and community level risk and protective factors. Participation in the program leads to many outcomes that are important to all families and also outcomes that meet the specific needs of each individual family and child.

**Unique Contributions for Disadvantaged Youth**

In addition to examining the general impacts of the sport-based PYD program on individual, parent, family, and community level risk and protective factors, parents were also asked to identify unique contributions of the program given their disadvantaged circumstances. Only a small percentage of the outcomes were also identified as unique outcomes. Additionally, parents indicated unique individual, parent, and community level outcomes.

The provision of opportunities was the program impact most often identified as a unique outcome given the disadvantaged circumstances of the youth participants and families. Many of the opportunities youth were provided such as exposure to college and the opportunity to experience a variety of sports and activities come at a high cost (Fraser, 2004). Parents expressed that their children are often limited to resources in the immediate surroundings, so this helped them see life outside of their neighborhood.
Impacts on affect and beliefs about the self also were identified as unique contributions given the families’ disadvantaged circumstances. Every concept identified as a unique outcome within this category was tied in some way to thoughts and feelings about college. For instance, parents talked about their child having increased excitement about college and more of a desire to go to college. They also talked about their child seeing college as a reality and something within his/her grasp. While the sport-based PYD program only targeted career and college access during one day of the program, just being on a college campus had many positive impacts on youth from disadvantaged circumstances.

Several parent level impacts also were identified as unique outcomes given the families’ disadvantaged circumstances. Parents felt that the financial relief that they experienced impacted them in a unique way because of their economic situation. While other families may not have trouble coming up with the money to send their child to a summer program, this free resource was critical to the parents in this study. As one mother mentioned, she would not have had money to spend on anything else if she would have had to pay for her son to go to a summer program.

Parents did not discuss any ways that their child’s participation in the program uniquely impacted their family because of their disadvantaged circumstances. Many of the family level risk factors faced by youth from low-income families include a lack of support from family, lack of supervision, and other situations that often fall back on the parent not being around or involved. Clearly, the parents interviewed for this study are very involved in their children’s lives. Their children may not be faced with all of the
same family level risk factors as other children whose parents are less involved in their
day to day lives. Therefore, it is not completely surprising that the parents in this study
indicated that their children would have positive experiences with their family regardless
of their economic situations. Perhaps families with less involved parents and more
conflict due to their disadvantaged circumstances would highlight the unique impact of
the program on family level impacts.

While no unique impacts were identified at the family level, 2 community level
outcomes were identified as unique outcomes. It is worth noting that the provision of
resources during the summer months was mentioned as a community level outcome by 3
parents and as a unique outcome on 1 occasion. Parents mentioned the importance of this
summertime programming in relation to their own peace of mind. While this will be
discussed further as a mechanism for program outcomes, it is important to highlight the
importance that parents placed on summertime programming.

Overall, parents discussed several ways that they were uniquely impacted because
of their families’ disadvantaged circumstances. It is possible that parents were not
always able to verbalize how they were uniquely impacted because they did not have
another family’s circumstances to model theirs against. While there were only a small
portion of outcomes that were also identified as unique outcomes, this is still important
information to gather because of the positive impact that these types of programs can
have on youth, parents, families and communities.
Mechanisms

In addition to gathering information about outcomes at different systems levels, this study also sought to better understand the “black box” of programming (Harachi et al., 1999). In other words, researchers gathered information from parents around the mechanisms that they believe lead to specific outcomes. Several mechanisms emerged that are known to be key design principles for programs (Anderson-Butcher et al., in press). First, parents indicated that the sport-based PYD program provided lessons for sport and life. In other words, the program taught both sport and life skills. The provision of these lessons was linked to many individual level changes such as increases in social, personal, and physical skills. This finding is consistent with other sport-based PYD research (Gould & Carson, 2008).

Another mechanism that parents identified is opportunity for peer and family interactions. This is closely linked to the key design principle related to creating opportunities for connectedness and belonging. These opportunities to connect with other youth in the program were typically linked to individual level changes around social skill development and interactions with peers. More specifically, opportunities for interactions were identified as mechanisms for increased social skills, positive peer relationships and friendship development. Parents also identified the qualities and roles of counselors as an important mechanism. This was not often talked about in terms of connectedness to the counselor, yet this mechanism was often linked to parents’ peace of mind. While this did not appear to be a major mechanism for youth outcomes, the high youth to counselor
ratio in this particular program may have influence that outcome. In other words, youth may not have had as many opportunities for positive interactions with staff.

Another mechanism consistent with known key program strategies was the fun and challenging nature of the program. Parents suggested that youth gained a broader view of who they are and what they can become because they were asked to challenge themselves. This was also often tied to the opportunity to experience new things. Not only was this mechanism connected to individual outcomes, but also family level impacts. These challenging and fun experiences served as points of conversation between parents and children. In addition, when youth had these new experiences, it increased their perceptions of athletic competence and confidence. This seemed important because parents did not just describe this confidence just in relation to things the children were doing at the sport-based PYD program. Yet, they discussed it in a more global sense.

Several factors related to the structure of the program also were seen as mechanisms for program impacts. The setting and context of the program were both linked to many program outcomes. In other words, parents noted that the program took place at a local college and was affiliated with that college had huge implications for program outcomes. The active nature of the program was also connected to a list of program impacts. Some of these were related to the physical development of youth, but others were related to the provision of prosocial activities for community youth. The idea that the program was active was a draw for youth from the community and parents indicated that it helped keep them out of trouble and involved in something constructive.
The salience of this mechanism highlights the importance of sport and recreation-based programs for youth outcomes.

It is interesting to note that 2 mechanisms that were primarily linked to community and parent level outcomes were positive use of discretionary time and physical safety. The idea that programs provide an environment that is “busy, happy, good” aligns with the positive use of discretionary time (Placek, 1983). Parents indicated that youth were doing something productive and were out of trouble. This allowed them to be worry-free and also kept community kids engaged in prosocial activities. While this mechanism impacted parent and community level outcomes, parents did not see it as a mechanism for any individual level outcomes. This is consistent with much of the research supporting structured sport-based youth development programming. Giving youth something to do may help parents and keep kids off the streets; it is not necessarily going to lead to the individual development of youth.

Overall, parents’ perceptions of the mechanisms at play in this sport-based youth development program were consistent with the key design principles that have been highlighted in past research (Anderson-Butcher et al., in press). In additions, many of the mechanisms were attached to outcomes across multiple systems. Together these findings have important implications for the social work field.

**Implications for Social Work Practice**

This study documented the importance of summer sport-based youth development programming for addressing risk and enhancing protective factors at multiple systems levels. Prior to this study, the positive outcomes associated with participation in either
youth development programs and sport was well documented. There also was some research documenting the effectiveness of sport-based youth development programs, but this research was often limited to individual competence outcomes. The findings of the current study suggest that youth participation in summer sports-based PYD programs may have broader implications for addressing individual, parent, family, and community level risk and protective factors. This may be particularly true in disadvantaged communities as parents in this study identified several impacts that they believed were unique to them because of their disadvantaged circumstances.

**Linking youth and families to resources.** These findings have special implications for the field of social work. First, social workers in community-based organizations and schools alike can link youth and families to these types of out-of-school time programs. For example, there is an organization in the community that provides case management and in-home therapy for youth at-risk of being removed from the home. Many of the youth that this organization serves lack positive peer relationships and adult support systems. They may have underdeveloped social skills and a host of issues at home. Often parents are working multiple jobs, so they cannot provide supervision and monitoring during out of school time. Finally, these families often have a lack of opportunities and resources necessary for a child to thrive. Given the potential for sport-based PYD program to address many of these issues, it is critical that social workers link families to these types of resources. As the findings of this study suggest, if case managers and clinicians are able to get children involved in these types of programs, the children may further develop their social skills and enhance their support systems. In

98
addition, parents will have the relief of knowing that their children are safe and learning something positive. They will also be able to redirect the funds that they would have spent on childcare towards other important resources. Therefore, linking youth and families to these types of programs is critical since they address a multitude of individual, parent, family and community level risk factors faced by many youth in the community.

**Social workers in youth development agencies.** In addition to referring youth to out-of-school time programs, social workers can develop, implement and evaluate these types of programs. Many social workers serve youth in organizations such as the Boys & Girls Club. These organizations provide programming for youth who are lacking resources and opportunity. As social workers within these organizations are designing programs for youth it is important that they implement strategies informed by best practices. The results of this study clearly outline some of the mechanisms that social workers should integrate into programming.

Specifically, social workers should focus on the qualities and roles of the program staff. It is important that these staff be positive role models and care about the youth. Programs also should be designed to provide opportunities for peer and family interactions. While the sport aspect of sport-based programs is important, these programs should include lessons for sport and life. Thus, program curriculum should be designed with physical, social, and personal competence in mind.

Program designers should also focus on the structure of the program. Given the results of this study, programs may be most impactful if they are hosted on a college campus. Parents connected the fact that the program took place at a large university with
many positive outcomes such as thoughts about college, excitement to go to college, and parent peace of mind. Clearly, the affiliation of this sport-based program with the university led to additional positive outcomes. This has implications for both community agencies providing this type of programming and for social workers in the university setting. Specifically, it is important that partnerships between community organizations and universities both develop and strengthen. It is the role of social workers in both settings to help facilitate this process. In terms of the structure of the program, the active nature of sport-based programs is a mechanism for many positive outcomes for youth, parents, families and communities. Therefore, integrating youth development principles with sport may lead to the most positive outcomes for youth.

When developing programming, social workers should provide resources valuable to youth and families. It is also critical that the program be fun and challenging. A boring program that lacks challenge will not have the same impacts as a program that is exciting and makes youth step out of their comfort zone. Programs should provide something positive for youth to do during discretionary time, such as after school or during the summer months and be in a physically safe environment. Finally, it is important that programs set up strategies to ensure that any negative situations that occur during the program can be used as tools for learning and growth. If program leaders utilize these strategies, the findings of this study suggest that outcomes will emerge at the individual, parent, family and community level.

**Macro practice.** One of the key aspects of the summer sport-based program was the fact that it was free for families. Operating a program for youth and families free of
cost is an expensive endeavor. Therefore, it is important for social workers to advocate for the funding of these types of programs. Research shows the critical impact that participation in these programs can have on youth, parents, families and communities. Therefore, it is the role of all social workers to ensure that the vulnerable population they serve continues to have these types of invaluable resources.

**Limitations and Future Research**

Although these findings extend research in youth development, there are several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, only ten individuals were interviewed for this study. While saturation was almost met, a few more interviews would be necessary to reach saturation. Also, the findings only represent the voice of a select few parents. The parents that were interviewed all took the initiative to respond to the researcher’s request for interviews and appeared to be involved in their children’s lives on a normal basis. In addition, the parents who participated in the study were generally pleased with the outcomes of the program. Most parents would not leave their children in a program if they saw it as a waste of time (Henderson et al., 2007). Therefore, they may not be representative of typical parents. Also, this study only provided the voice of parents. While parents provide a unique perspective, they did not experience the day-to-day structure of the sport-based PYD program. They were also often limited by what their child told them about their experience with the program.

The use of qualitative methods may be seen as both a limitation and strength of this study. While the methodology limited the number of voices that could be heard in this study, the researchers were able to gain a depth of knowledge that could not be
achieved through quantitative measure. Thus, this study documented the potential for summer sport-based programming, but the findings cannot be generalized to all sport-based PYD summer programs.

Both the findings of this study and limitations highlight the need for future research in this area. This study lays the groundwork for the development of a theory around the mechanisms and impacts of sport-based youth development programs. Next steps include researchers expanding this line of inquiry to multiple programs to confirm the results of this study. In the future, the findings of this study could be used to inform the development of quantitative measures, which will ultimately allow researchers to examine impacts across a broad range of programs.

Future work should also include triangulation of respondents by including program participants and youth care workers. This would provide several viewpoints and a more comprehensive view of the impact of sport-based youth development programs. Staff members and youth are more engaged in the day to day experiences surrounding the program and therefore may have a different view of the mechanisms and impacts of the program.

The unique impacts of this program on youth and families from disadvantaged circumstances may be more clearly understood if the experiences of these youth and families are compared to the experiences of youth and families from different life situations. Given that parents living in disadvantaged circumstances may not be able to compare their situation to the situation of someone without financial struggles, future
research should allow for this direct comparison by listening to the voices of individuals from both circumstances.

Finally, future research should address the long-term impact of sport-based youth development programs. It is clear that these programs have the opportunity to address risk and enhance protective factors over the course of the program, but these impacts need to be examined over time. This will help researchers and practitioners better understand the role of these programs in the long-term development of youth and families.

**Conclusion**

Overall, the breadth of themes that emerged through the analysis extends the understanding of the impact of sport-based youth development programs. This new knowledge can be used to enhance summer sports-based youth development programs, particularly those serving youth from disadvantaged circumstances. It can also be used as a stepping stone to the development of a model of change for sport-based youth development programs. In conclusion, this study provides us with preliminary information which can be used to provide a more complete response to the mother we were introduced to at the beginning of the paper. Renee was in desperate need of summer resources for her son, Joe. She stumbled upon a summer sports-based youth development program and decided to sign her son up. She wondered how the program would impact her and her family. Instead of only telling her about the potential for the program to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors such as social and personal competence, we can tell her that if the program is designed with certain mechanisms in
mind it could impact her relationship with her son, her own peace of mind and maybe even have a positive impact on her community.
References


Appendix A: Recruitment Script

Interview Questions

Basic Demographic Information

• How many children do you have?
• How old are they?
• What schools do they go to?
• How many of your kids participated in LiFE Sports in 2009?
• How many of your kids are participating in LiFE Sports right now?
• How many years have your children participated in the program?

Now I am going to ask some questions about LiFE Sports. When I ask about your child’s experience, I am specifically interested in the experience of the child you identified as being 10 to 12 years old. What is his/her name? So, when I ask questions about your child’s experience, please think about <child’s name>.

Impact on Participant

• In what ways, if any, has your child’s participation in LiFE Sports impacted him/her?
• What changes, if any, did you observe in your child as a result of his/her participation in LiFE Sports?
• Have you observed any physical/emotional/social changes in your child?
• What is it about LiFE Sports that contributed to these changes?
• In what ways, if any, has your child related to peers and family members differently since participating in camp? Elaborate.
• What is it about LiFE Sports that led to these changes?

Impact on Parent

• In what ways, if any, has your child’s participation in LiFE Sports impacted you?
• What changes, if any, have you noticed in yourself or your life as a result of your child’s participation in LiFE Sports?
• What is it about LiFE Sports that contributed to these changes?
Impact on Family

- In what ways, if any, has your child’s participation in LiFE Sports impacted your family?
- What changes, if any, have you noticed in your family as a result of your child participating in LiFE Sports? Please describe these changes.
- What changes, if any, have you noticed in the way your family interacts with each other?
- What is it about LiFE Sports that led to these outcomes?
- In what ways, if any, has LiFE Sports provided resources or supports that were helpful to your family? If yes, please describe these resources. If not, what types of resources or supports could they have given you? Can you give examples?

Impact on Neighborhood or Community

- In what ways, if any, do you feel your neighborhood or community is impacted by this program?
- What is it about LiFE Sports that led to these outcomes?
- What is it, if anything, about the added value of being tied to OSU that makes a difference?

Unique Contributions

- One of the priorities within LIFE sports is to reach out and serve the kids that need it the most, whether that be because kids are living in poverty, or don’t have a lot of opportunities, or aren’t doing so well in school, etc.
- Are any of these relevant to you? If so, what, how does this help you in your unique situation, if it does?

Other Questions

- Do you tell other parents about the program? If so, what do you say?
- If other parents asked you about this program, what would you tell them?
- Can you tell me other ways LiFE Sports can serve your child, family or neighborhood?
- What ways can it improve? Be strengthened? Be more impactful?

Demographics

To finish, I would like to ask some general questions about you and your family. Some of these may be sensitive questions. You do not have to provide answers if you do not feel comfortable, but any information you can provide will be helpful.
• What community do you live in?
• What is your ethnicity?
• What is your age?
• What is your gender?
• Are you employed? Full time or part time?
• Who do you live with?
• Are you a single parent?
• Is there anything else you have not said that you would like to share?
• Thank you so much for your time.