A CASE STUDY: EXPLORING HIGH SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES'

SPONSORS' AND COACHES' EXPERIENCES WITH THE INCLUSION OF NINTH-

GRADE STUDENTS AS A MARGINALIZED POPULATION

by

Kimberly S. Swaney

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

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APPROVED BY:

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Abstract

The purpose of this case study was to explore the inclusion process for extracurricular activity sponsors and coaches at a rural high school in southwestern Pennsylvania. The theory guiding this study was Maslow's theory of human motivation as it provided a structural format that was useful for implementing an inclusive process into extracurricular activities. This was a qualitative, single case study with a purposeful sampling of 11 participants representative of extracurricular activity sponsors and coaches in a rural school district. The central research question was: How do high school extracurricular activities' sponsors and coaches describe their experiences with the inclusion of marginalized students, ninth-graders, at the rural Mountain Appalachian High School? Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, artifact collection, and journal writing. The data collection was analyzed using Microsoft Excel 365. A qualitative content analysis approach of categorical aggregation and data triangulation to establish themes was implemented to the point of response saturation or the point to which no new knowledge or themes were observed in the data. After analyzing the data collected in this study, eight themes were determined: willingness, relatedness, gratification, inclusivity, concerns, benefits, values, and recruitment.

Keywords: rural, teachers, inclusion, extracurricular activities, marginalized high school students, sense of belonging

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to all I serve, my best friend, and my loving heavenly Father. This bond represents the deepest bond known to believers, the most long-lasting bond, and it focuses on love. You planted in me a seed of passion for seeing through your eyes.

I dedicate this to all who hear the call to serve. To my parents, who are continually surprised by my commitment to the calling of education. Thank you for helping me to see the need for balance.

I am thankful to my husband, who gave me room to blossom. Mostly, I am thankful that you taught me to persevere, although neither one of us knew to what degree I would strive. This growth process began as a small voice that gently breathed inspirational messages that grew into a deepening need to respond, and I am ever grateful for embracing the opportunity to reach self-actualization.

An ongoing thanks to my daughter, who encompasses my thoughts and demonstrates the strongest, bravest, and most dynamic will to continue her journey. From your first breath, you inspired me with your genius and courage. It is with a hopeful heart that I look forward to sharing, encouraging, and dedicating moments of support for each other.

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I acknowledge the kindness, professional manner, and spiritual guidance that Dr. Constance Pearson conveyed to me from our first introduction. She provided a calmness that was the freshness I needed to continue this journey. In this, I have seen Christ's plan in action. He places some to be teachers. Dr. Pearson, thank you for teaching me to enjoy the process and partnership between teacher and student; and for obeying the calling to serve with a softness that is needed at this decisive step of the doctoral program.

Thank you to Dr. Heather Strafaccia, my research methodologist, for the editing feedback you provided and for the gentleness that you conveyed to me. I am impressed by your dedication to supporting me in my personal and professional educational journey.

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List of Abbreviations

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Extracurricular Activities (ECAs)

Internal Review Board (IRB)

Mountain Appalachian High School (MAHS)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE)

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Theory of Human Motivation (THM)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this single case study was to explore the extracurricular activities (ECAs) sponsors' and coaches' experiences with the inclusion of marginalized students, ninth-graders, at Mountain Appalachian High School (a pseudonym). The background information presented related literature on ECAs in the high school setting. A brief background of the relevant literature on how ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences with inclusion through the lenses of historical, social, and theoretical context follows. This research fills the empirical gap that ECAs' sponsors and coaches may not have adequate inclusive process support for recruiting ninth-grade students as participants. The problem is that marginalized students are underrepresented in ECAs. Therefore, the problem statement and purpose statement focused on exploring how and why high school sponsors' and coaches' experiences of involvement with ECAs frame their decision-making to provide cohesiveness of an inclusive process for marginalized students, ninth-graders, to belong. The significance of the study addressed the sponsors' and coaches' experiences of involvement with ECAs and how Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation (THM) guided the research for understanding the phenomenon of an inclusive process to include ninth-grade students as ECA's participants. Then, followed the significance of the study, the central research question, and three sub-questions. Lastly, are the definitions and a summary.

Background

The historical, social, and theoretical contexts guided the central focus of exploring ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences of involvement with an inclusive process for a rural high school's ninth-grade students as ECAs' participants. However, inclusive supportive systems may be useful in creating opportunities for educational equity and cultivating a sense of

belonging that leads to a smooth and stable ninth-grade high school transition (Benner et al., 2017; Duong et al., 2020). Interestingly, ECAs were overlooked as a place for implementing an inclusive process (Agran et al., 2017). ECAs are implemented as a school-wide approach that provides inclusive support in and out of the classroom (Leigers et al., 2017; Phillips et al., 2021; Siperstein et al., 2017; Yin et al., 2022). From a social perspective, connections of place, identity, and culture impact the relationship between educators and students (Allen et al., 2018; Starrett et al., 2021). Therefore, exploring how rural ECAs' sponsors and coaches implement an inclusive process in a rural school district matters in supporting ninth-grade students' sense of belonging. Maslow's (1943) THM was applied throughout the research to provide meaning through the sponsors' and coaches' experiences of involvement with ECAs. The research highlighted using Maslow's THM through a broad approach by applying an analytical framework for problem-solving (Dutil, 2022; Steenbakkers et al., 2018). Maslow's third level of love and belonging aligned with role expectations for ECAs' sponsors and coaches to facilitate feelings of belongingness among the diverse population (Milton, 2017). Accordingly, belongingness is contextual and conceptual, thus students may acquire stronger connections based on various domains of time, place, partnerships, and individual memberships (Allen et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2020). THM highlights physiological needs and shows how cultural capital should be viewed to understand the differences between groups of students based on access (Ansorger, 2021). There was a need to explore the scope of the inclusive process of ECAs' sponsors and coaches.

Historical Context

The problem is that marginalized students are underrepresented in ECAs. ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences of involvement with ECAs may need to address barriers to

inclusion for students at Mountain Appalachian High School (MAHS). Inclusion should be thought of as a process, continually being transformed to approach diversity with supportive newness (Ainscow, 2020; Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). The history of inclusion originated to provide physical and social support for students with special educational needs (SEN) learning with peers without SEN (Osgood, 2005; Yin et al., 2022). Mainstream society's definition of disabilities has been evolving since the 1900s (Osgood, 2005). Federal law prohibits schools from discriminating against students from ECAs' participation based on disability (Agran et al., 2017; American Civil Liberties Union, 2022). The Department of Education reports that President Obama signed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) on December 10, 2015, which includes a provision that seeks purposeful inclusion, equity, and belonging for marginalized students. As the definition of disabilities evolves, awareness of marginalization happens. Marginalization is a global concern (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2017).

Educational reform acknowledges the need for supportive approaches for students with SEN, first through integration, then through inclusion (Agran et al., 2017; Osgood, 2005). During the 2000s, ESSA (2015) replaced the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. This created a paradigm shift for educators as NCLB assessed learning based on standardized testing as ESSA continues to redirect learning through equity. ESSA (2015) recommended equitable improvement for disadvantaged students and innovative learning through local leaders. This research study aligns with ESSA recommendations.

In rural school districts, contemporary educational modernization and innovation percepts replaced place-conscious education of the past, while place value may not be preserved (Gruenewald, 2003; Starrett et al., 2021). In this context, exploring the uniqueness of ECAs'

programs for the rural high school population may be beneficial. The historical perspective of schooling in rural America exists on the fringe of suburban and urban areas (Bradley & Feldman, 2021; Clay, 2021). However, in time, educational representation for rural schools has become less authentic and defined more by urban ideas (Clay, 2021).

This research study began with the high school sponsors' and coaches' experiences of involvement with ECAs. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE, 2022) implicitly suggests creating inclusion, clarity of equity, and belonging for the learner through an inclusive process that may evolve from innovative features. Therefore, how do the high school ECAs' sponsors and coaches at rural MAHS establish an inclusive process? Maslow's (1943) THM emphasized a commonality between history and culture that has origins in the goal of maintenance and enhancement of individual and organizational autonomy. Research highlighted the historical and cultural linkage in creating meaningful and purposeful inclusive processes (McPhail, 2021; Yin et al., 2022). In this, the high school ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' involvement experiences show a value-laden pathway for rural school and community connections.

Social Content

The problem is that marginalized students are underrepresented in ECAs. Historically, changes in the societal issues of education began with educational problem-solving of segregation, then equity-mindedness of facilitating integration, until the 21st century when interventions for marginalized social issues arrived as an inclusive process (Osgood, 2005). This educational problem of not having adequate support for educators to identify and implement interventions of belonging for all students may contribute to marginalized blindness that carries over into the community. Therefore, this research study will fill the need to explore the

situational, rural educators' experiences of how the ecological systemic approach can positively impact the learner and the community (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Farmer et al., 2019). ECAs' participation is a significant social-ecological factor for school belonging (Allen et al., 2018; Grover et al., 2021). Students from socioeconomically disadvantaged high schools have fewer ECA opportunities than students from socioeconomically advantaged high schools (Heath et al., 2018; Phillips et al., 2021). A lower social class may lead to the underrepresentation of ECA participants (Hagler, 2018; Meier et al., 2018; Phillips et al., 2021). Interestingly, social class distinctions may reference nondominant groups as marginalized groups based on place (Phillips et al., 2021), socioeconomic status (Lecy, 2021), and educational opportunities (Hagler, 2018). Subsequently, socioeconomically advantaged students are more likely than their socioeconomically disadvantaged peers to choose community-based ECAs instead of school-based ECAs, widening the gap between social classes (Meier et al., 2018). In such a case, schools need to create a common ground for students to build peer-to-peer relationships (Agran et al., 2017; Carter et al., 2019; Cullinane, 2020; Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019; Leigers et al., 2017; Yin et al., 2022; Ziegler et al., 2022). Research identified peer-to-peer relationships as valuable for creating a stronger sense of belonging for youth (Cullinane, 2020; Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019; Leigers et al., 2017; Ziegler et al., 2020). Therefore, principals' recommendations for recruiting ECAs' sponsors and coaches who have expertise with academic or nonacademic ECAs become relevant (Juvonen et al., 2019; Phillips et al., 2021). Yet, there was no mention of ECAs' sponsors and coaches receiving professional development opportunities that focus on an inclusive process for recruiting marginalized students as ECAs' participants.

Moreover, advocating for inclusive support for marginalized students based on theory and practice suggests using ECAs as a plan to support a sense of belonging through school engagement (Fisher & Crawford, 2020; Gordon et al., 2019; Sue, et al., 2019). Contemporary education courses fail to prepare educators to enrich the uniqueness of rural educational reform that aligns with social theory (Azano & Biddle, 2019; Craggs & Kelly, 2018). Social bond theory suggested benefits for students and the community when members actively participate with their peers and community (Neely & Vaquera, 2017). ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' stratification of a sense of belonging as an essential inclusive process for the decreasing student population at MAHS is worthy of exploration.

Group interactions substantiate students' feelings of belonging to knowing that they are valued (Gray & Rubel, 2018; Grover et al., 2021). Without group interaction opportunities, students miss positive social relationship-building skills (Gray & Rubel, 2018; Grover et al., 2021). ECAs provide social support benefits through ECA participation. Implementing a team leadership model for a marginalized group supports the social domains for ninth-grade students (Flannery et al., 2020). THM merits attention as a supportive social framework for education leaders such as ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' inclusive process to elevate a sense of belonging for marginalized students. This research study aim provides learning institutions and their leaders with a better understanding of the need to provide support for an inclusive process in academic and nonacademic ECAs.

Theoretical Context

Researchers have used multiple theories with multiple rationales to address similar problems of understanding an inclusive process to support marginalized high school students. However, this research operates from the definition of collaboration, equity, and access for the

marginalized individual to attain learning (Pugach et al., 2020). Extant research utilized a sense of belonging for various subgroups based on socioeconomics, place, cognitive, emotional, physical, behavioral, social, gender identity, or other factors that contribute to marginalization (Allen et al., 2018; Cullinane, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020; Starrett et al., 2021). Moreover, the critical rural theory supported the significance of rural educators' contribution versus the influencing factors of urban educators (Clay, 2021). Curriculum theory tends to adhere to the complexities and comprehensive nature of all the elements needed to structure schooling (Pugach et al., 2020). A qualitative research study reported that through the lens of Maslow's (1943) THM at a rural elementary school, the principal's experience of implementing support in a hierarchal fashion changed the underachieving culture of the school into a high-achieving culture (Fisher & Crawford, 2020). Maslow's (1943) THM provides a rich foundation for arriving at a sense of belonging and moving beyond self-esteem to self-actualization. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs frames five levels of need with a sense of belonging as the intermediate level. Subsequently, Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs multi-purpose framework has the potential to support students, staff, and educational leaders (Allen et al., 2018; Craggs & Kelly, 2018; Fisher & Crawford, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020; Midgen et al., 2019). Conversely, research shows excluding a sense of belonging in high school programs may propagate marginalization (Flannery et al., 2020; Sperling, 2019). Maslow's (1943) research provided this study with a systematic pathway for establishing equity, inclusion, and belonging. This research's overarching reasoning was to allow educational leaders to explore the inclusive process as a multidimensional process that requires collaborative support.

Problem Statement

The problem is that marginalized students are underrepresented in extracurricular activities (ECAs). Students with special educational needs (SEN) do not receive the same opportunities as their peers without SEN to connect with their school as their peers (Cullinane, 2020). Furthermore, educators that are ECAs' sponsors and coaches are more likely to motivate support and participation in ECAs with a need supportive level of belonging based on Maslow's (1943) THM. School administrators and ECAs' leaders may be in the position to create programs that provide students with easier access to ECAs (Fisher & Crawford, 2020; Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019; Juvonen et al., 2019; Phillips et al., 2021). This study contributes to the body of knowledge on inclusive practices in implementing change in education as there is a gap in the literature regarding ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' support for recruiting marginalized students, ninth-graders, as participants. ECAs may not be structured with aims, objectives, and goals of support for ECAs' leaders and coaches to facilitate effective ECA programs. In addition, ECAs' sponsors and coaches diminished their role by viewing ECAs' participants' roles as independent, validating less than adequate supportive strategies for inclusion (Pence & Dymond, 2021). ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' collaboration with special education teachers lacked support to include a recommendation for ECAs in a student education plan (Agran et al., 2017). Therefore, the exploration of the inclusive process is the phenomenon.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the case study was to explore extracurricular activities' sponsors' and coaches' experiences of an inclusive process that supports marginalized students, ninth-graders, as ECAs' participants at a rural high school. The inclusive process for ECAs' participation is defined as shared equity, access, and a sense of belonging for marginalized students, ninth-grade

students. According to the PDE (2022), equity, inclusion, and belonging are used in tandem to provide meaning to the inclusive process. The theory guiding this study was based on Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation (THM), also referred to as the hierarchy of needs. Research highlighted how implementing the hierarchy of needs for teachers created a model for the teachers to collaborate and accomplish school-wide benefits (Allen et al., 2018; Fisher & Crawford, 2020).

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is to develop an exploration of how and why the ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences framed the inclusive process for marginalized students as ECAs' participants at a rural high school in southwestern Pennsylvania. This research study's theoretical, empirical, and practical significance seeks to explore how ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences support equity, inclusion, and belonging for rural, marginalized ninth-grade students. Maslow's (1943) THM guides this research study to substantiate the value of a sense of belonging. A lack of support for a sense of belonging may be evident as the learner matures, especially with transitions (Benner et al., 2017; Hesbol et al., 2020). The contribution of a sense of belonging for the marginalized ninth-grade students in the transition from middle school to high school showed to be pivotal for future learning pathways (Hesbol et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2020; Lecy, 2021). Therefore, the ninth-grade year can require added support to contribute to a sense of belonging. ECAs' participation can enhance a sense of belonging for rural ninth-grade students who are transitioning from middle school to high school (Hesbol et al. 2020). In addition, an analysis of contextual factors to understand how to best align an enhanced curriculum that embeds ECAs for rural students was recommended (Lynch et al., 2018; Shorter & Elledge, 2020). This qualitative case study is designed to explore how the ECAs' sponsors'

and coaches' experience involvement in the inclusive process may facilitate or limit the marginalization of ninth-grade students. This research study has the potential to provide an exploration of implementing equity, inclusion, and belonging as a school-wide approach through the support of an enhanced curriculum.

Theoretical Significance

The problem narrows to identifying ninth-grade students as a marginalized population who are underrepresented in extracurricular activities. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs validates framing the enhanced curriculum aimed to foster a sense of belonging for marginalized ninth-grade students by providing a specification of needs to support marginalized students (Gordon et al., 2019; Lynch et al., 2018). Without focusing on a sense of belonging, learning progression does not continue to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs' upper learning levels of self-esteem and self-actualization where students begin to envision their academic growth. When the curriculum provides the diverse population with equitable opportunities to ensure a sense of belonging, the results are positive for fostering academic and nonacademic skills (Agran et al., 2017; Benner et al., 2017; Craggs & Kelly, 2018; Porter et al., 2021). Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs identified the influences of time and place, values and culture, and goals and satisfaction as mechanisms for motivation. This rural high school has a richness that may be latent if the specifications of needs are neither embedded in an enhanced curriculum nor attempted to move beyond each of Maslow's levels of needs. Rural research needs not compete with urban research, since each research topic maintains the value of individual uniqueness (Clay, 2021). This research study has the potential to add to existing critical rural theory and show how Maslow's (1943) THM may be applied in academic and nonacademic programs of ECAs.

Empirical Significance

The empirical implications of this study add to the body of knowledge on the exploration of ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences of an inclusive process to recruit marginalized high school students to participate in ECAs. Research posited the empirical significance of inclusion as a hierarchical school-wide approach (Duong et al., 2020; Grover et al., 2021; Juvonen et al., 2019; Siperstein et al., 2019). Educational institutions assess and evaluate curricula to validate the needs of the learners and communities. Therefore, focusing on building diverse support into the curriculum for all subgroup populations becomes paramount and the definition of the term marginalized broadens as educational leaders look to empower groups with inclusivity and fidelity (Sue et al., 2019). When supportive school programs focus on the learners' sense of belonging, they contribute to cultural improvements in their schools (Fisher & Crawford, 2020; Siperstein et al., 2017). Furthermore, empirical research offerings advocate that the curriculum should have a wide range of courses (Villagran & Hawamdeh, 2020). More specifically, diverse offerings may contribute to a better fit for marginalized ninth-grade students to develop a sense of belonging (Farmer et al., 2019; Renwick et al., 2019). Consequently, if viewing diverse offerings as an ad hoc category without consideration of marginalized populations, an impeded curriculum may emerge due to a lack of equity-minded decision-making (Juvonen et al., 2019). The diverse course offerings may require a higher level of qualification for ECAs' sponsors and coaches (Phillips et al., 2021). There is a need for further rural education research (Clay, 2021) to determine if a relationship exists between specific ECAs and academic courses (Schwartz et al., 2015). This research study represents a rural high school and may contribute to the existing research on how educators and students should have representation in the equity of rural educational policy-making through the inclusive process to

support marginalized students through ECAs' curricular aims. Exploration within the research fields of qualitative inquiry in this empathic attempt to generate new knowledge for high school leaders to expand curriculum development by including students and community members. Subsequently, the school community operates by innovation when making informed decisions for an enhanced curriculum that includes ECAs for their rural ninth-grade students (Grover et al., 2021).

Practical Significance

The practical significance of this study addresses generating innovative solutions for the educational shift created by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the setting of this rural, socioeconomically disadvantaged school district's financial burden has led to programs and staff elimination, including the curriculum specialist. Therefore, the findings from this research will generate new knowledge of how and why an enhanced curriculum with an insertion of a specification of need for the learner and the community provides value. A practical viewpoint showed a broader spectrum of enhancement by content and context course aims to improve student wellness and a sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2018; Gaias et al., 2020). Providing students with opportunities to experience equity, inclusion, and belonging in and out of the classroom that aligns with an educational learning objective in every course and for every student makes sense (Wingspread Declaration on School Connections, 2004). In this way, ECAs, such as school clubs, become a pathway to support equity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging (Allen & Kern, 2017; Gorski, 2021; Grover et al., 2021; Juvonen et al., 2019).

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are based on the theoretical framework of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs has five levels that are outcome

dependent on the previous foundational level. Maslow's third level of a sense of belonging is central to the inclusive process. This case study is designed to explore how and why the ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences frame an inclusive process based on a sense of belonging for rural, marginalized ninth-grade students. Equitable education availability and nonacademic opportunities should be granted with access for all (Juvonen et al., 2019; Leigers et al., 2017; Pennsylvania Department of Education [PDE], 2022; Ziegler et al., 2020). Consequently, if ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' decision-making for the inclusive process happens with marginalized blindness, then informed decision-making for reconceptualizing curriculum and instruction ignores barriers and disrupts the ninth-grade students' transition into high school (Duong et al., 2020). This research study is framed around the following questions:

Central Research Question

How do high school extracurricular activities' sponsors and coaches describe their experiences with the inclusion of marginalized students, ninth-graders, at the rural Mountain Appalachian High School?

The sub-questions narrow the focus of this inquiry with an overarching aim of exploring how and why ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences contribute to their decision-making or educational policies to enrich awareness of any limitations within the ECAs.

Sub-Question One

How would ECAs' sponsors and coaches improve a sense of belonging for marginalized ninth-graders to join the ECA that they sponsor or coach?

Sub-Question Two

How would ECAs' sponsors and coaches address the benefits or barriers for marginalized ninth-graders to have academic and nonacademic equity to participate in ECAs?

Sub-Question Three

How would professional development support an inclusive process for ECAs' sponsors and coaches?

Definitions

1. *Belonging* – A innate drive to connect with others (Allen & Kern, 2017).

2. *Enhanced Curriculum* – When supplementing a given curriculum with content, opportunities, and experiences (Pugach et al., 2020).

3. *Inclusion* – The removal of obstacles that hinder participation; shared equity and access; and the unity of diversities (Milton, 2017; Pugach et al., 2020; Sellars, 2021).

4. *Inclusive Process* – The ongoing search to improve awareness, advocacy, and action as diversity is revealed (Ainscow, 2020).

5. *Marginal* – External and internal conditions that are not accepted by the dominant group (Sue et al., 2019).

6. *Marginalized Blindness* – Cultural inability to accept all members of a community as equally important and able to be contributing members on level ground (Hochhauser et al., 2018).

7. *School Belonging* – Students' perceptions of feeling included and accepted by their teachers and peers (Goodenow, 1993, as cited in Vargas-Madriz & Konishi, 2021).

Summary

The focus of this chapter aimed to provide a distinct understanding of the problem, purpose, background, research questions, and definitions of the problem that marginalized ninth-graders are underrepresented in ECAs. The purpose of this case study was to explore ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences of an inclusive process that supports marginalized students

as ECAs' participants at a rural high school in southwestern Pennsylvania. An examination of

the historical, social, and theoretical implications guided exploration of the problem,

marginalization awareness, professional support, curriculum enhancement, specification of

needs, and barriers and benefits of ECAs' participation for marginalized ninth-graders. The

research topic, a sense of belonging received theoretical support from Maslow's (1943) hierarchy

of needs. The significance of the study identified equity, inclusion, and belonging as driving

forces to advance the learner to develop esteem and self-actualization. There was one central

research question that was framed through the lens of the empowerment of ECAs' sponsors' and

coaches' experiences with the inclusion process. Three sub-questions were included. In

conclusion, curriculum reconceptualization, an enhanced curriculum, maybe the missing

component for establishing academic, social, and well-being support for marginalized ninth-

graders to find their place inside and outside of the classroom (Allen & Kern, 2017;

Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Farmer et al., 2019; Pugach et al., 2020).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter encompasses the literature review that focuses on the extracurricular activities (ECAs) sponsors' and coaches' experiences of an inclusive process to provide support for marginalized students, ninth-graders, attending the rural Mountain Appalachian High School (MAHS). This chapter contains a review of the current literature related to a sense of belonging derived from ECAs' participation. In the first section, the theory relevant to the phenomenon of the inclusive process is Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation (THM). Following the discussion of the theory is a synthesis of recent literature regarding the ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences of the inclusive process to support marginalized ninth-graders in rural schools. The ECAs' sponsors and coaches are educators teaching in a rural school district. The literature review explores the depth of equity, inclusion, and belonging through relationships; cultural responsiveness; practice through leadership; theory to practice; social and physical inclusion; barriers of ECAs; and social and physical exclusion. The literature surrounding the factors which lead to the sense of belonging for marginalized ninth-graders as ECA participants provide fragments that when coalesced illustrate a bigger picture of why and how reducing the barriers of marginalization of students in the ninth grade may impact their sense of belonging. The last section displays ECAs' role in school engagement. The empirical gap in the literature substantiates exploration of how ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences may need specialized professional development to support an inclusive process for rural, marginalized ninth-grade ECAs' participation.

Theoretical Framework

A model of the hierarchy of needs was structured from Maslow's (1943) THM. This five-

level pyramid-shaped model has a sequential arrangement and requires support at the previous level before progressing to the next level. Maslow credits educational philosophers William James and John Dewey with influencing THM (Maslow, 1943). The theoretical framework of Maslow's hierarchy of needs as it pertains to a sense of school belonging has a broader context than an individual's perception (Allen et al., 2022; Craggs & Kelly, 2018). For example, if a sense of belonging is not satisfied, then the thirst for building relationships continues (Craggs & Kelly, 2018; Maslow, 1943). Research exemplified Maslow's THM by restructuring the hierarchy of needs for teachers (Fisher & Crawford, 2020), extending the empirical and practical application of Maslow's theoretical framework to be conducive for multiple uses. Facilitation of the THM should demonstrate research as a transformational experience (Maslow, 1943). This research study uses Maslow's THM as structural support for exploring ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' inclusive process for marginalized students to participate in ECA: a sense of belonging.

The contribution of theory structures this case study design with a pure, sophisticated theoretical framework (Yin, 1994). Maslow's (1943) THM identifies a broader claim: that with a closer view, various places, people, and communities share a commonness. Rural richness does not have origins in oneness, but diversity exists in the originality of interpretation and usage of language to create meaning by the individual (Clay, 2021). Commonness does not mean sameness of educational opportunities (Maslow, 1943). Conversely, educational equity may be viewed within cultural limits of brokenness and indirectness that generate microaggressions (Clauss-Ehlers et al., 2019). This research is needed to understand the rural ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences of an inclusive process.

Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation/Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow (1943) defined THM as a hierarchy of needs. There are five levels, with each level subordinately positioned to provide motivational support for the next level. This theory may be implemented universally, by educators and learners (Fisher & Crawford, 2020). The first level is the physiological level where the most basic needs such as hunger need to be satisfied. The basic level, physiological, references the learner's need to thrive and respond based on a level of satisfaction (Maslow, 1943). The school support staff should have student records to provide the ECAs' sponsors and coaches with relevant information to access the student's needs at this first level. At MAHS, all students received free breakfast and lunch for the past three school years: 2019-2022. Also, there is a summer free lunch program available for the students at MAHS. If the family, community, and school provide the basic needs for the learner, then the learner can move to the next level, safety.

The second level, safety needs, relates to learners' interactions, based on their perception of safety (Maslow, 1943). ECAs' sponsors and coaches should maintain that all areas of safety are identified for the participants to feel comfortable and satisfied. If safety is not adequate, then barriers exist, resulting in the participant having a lower level of belonging (Cullinane, 2020; Maslow, 1943). Students from poor families may face barriers of cultural disconnect, class distinctions, and community disengagement (Hagler, 2018; Phillips et al., 2021). This research site ensures locked entrances, security cameras in all hallways, armed security throughout the building, and all students pass through metal detectors before entering the building.

The third level, love needs or sense of belonging, is based on learners' sense of gratification and pleasure (Maslow, 1943). At this level, learners are aware and influenced by connecting with others to establish relationships. A student's sense of belonging may be termed

as school connectedness. While this research does not seek to capture the nuances of terminology, added support may help the reader to have a broader understanding of the dimension of both the inclusive process and Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. School connectedness and academic success are correlated factors that comprehensively provide the students with stronger self-confidence (Hodges et al., 2018).

The fourth level, esteem, describes the learners' need to feel confident and motivated to live with purpose for themselves and others (Maslow, 1943). If the learners' self-esteem becomes threatened, they will lack confidence and motivation to achieve. Adversely, when nongraded ECAs have support to reach this level, participants have a sense of openness to explore and encounter challenges with less stress (Fulton, 2021). Research findings show that ECAs' participation supports stronger motivation and self-esteem (Phillips et al., 2021; Shaffer, 2019).

The fifth level, self-actualization, as conceptualized by Maslow, is the state of the individual striving to achieve a broader concept of self and accomplishment (Maslow, 1943). Further, research findings showed that foster children who participate in ECAs reached a level of self-actualization and made better choices to avoid substance abuse (Steenbakkers et al., 2018). Marginalized populations encompass a considerable proportion of school populations, but through ECAs may be structured to identify their specific needs (Ziegler et al., 2020). Interestingly, a curriculum model that has a planning phase for the "specification of needs of particular students" may be utilized to embed curricular support for marginalized students (Gordon et al., 2019, p. 102). Maslow's hierarchy of needs guides this research and supports the consideration of the inclusive process beyond ECAs. Substantial research findings support ECAs

as a school-wide approach (Duong et al., 2020; Fulton, 2021; Hesbol et al., 2020; Juvonen et al., 2019; Meier et al., 2018; Sellars, 2021; Siperstein et al., 2017; Yin et al., 2022).

Each level of Maslow's (1943) THM supports the next level, and the learners may experience problematic conflict if their needs are not met. However, when positive reinforcement provides adequate support at each level, the learners will thrive (Maslow, 1943). The learner's drive to know and understand is the central focus of Maslow's (1943) THM. The goal of this research is to explore the inclusive process of ECAs' sponsors and coaches at a rural high school. Then, as the learner moves to the participatory function of connecting with others through ECAs' participation, the sense of belonging becomes supported. Interestingly, strengthening at the physiological level and the safety level happens when relationships forge between the learner and the ECA's sponsor or coach, within the group or team (Craggs & Kelly, 2018; Pence & Dymond, 2021).

The theoretical framework illuminates the gap in exploration. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs addresses the need to provide a sense of belonging. Advocating for support for marginalized learners based on theory and practice suggests using ECAs as a plan to support a sense of belonging through school engagement (Fisher & Crawford, 2020; Gordon et al., 2019; Sue et al., 2019). Similarly, a qualitative meta-synthesis framed by Maslow's hierarchy of needs, level of belongingness, suggested further research was needed in this area (Craggs & Kelly, 2018). Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs demonstrates a deeper impact at each level that is conditional to the abundance or lack of support. When the learner's role and goals are accomplished, the learner's motivation broadens and is evident in the THM (Maslow, 1943). Conversely, without adequate support for the learner's desire to expand through experience, a threat exists (Maslow, 1943). In a rural community, the inclusive process may be threatened by

the lack of opportunity to develop healthy relationships, which becomes problematic to the learner's culture and community impacting social capital for an outlier Appalachian community (Denham, 2016; Holtkamp & Weaver, 2018). Identifying and applying Maslow's hierarchy of needs will inform and guide a stronger understanding of the inclusive process for equity, access, and a sense of belonging for marginalized ninth-grade ECAs' participation.

Related Literature

Educational leaders, educators, support staff, parents, students, and ECAs' sponsors and coaches should advocate for marginalized students by trying to understand the inclusive process and how it benefits all members. Preservice teachers receive preparation for adapting instructional design, delivery, and assessments as necessary to support an inclusive classroom (Stites et al., 2018). A contemporary advancement of inclusion becomes real when a school emerges as an inclusive school culture that encompasses ECAs (Fulton, 2021; Siperstein et al., 2019). This literature review aims to synthesize the research literature that focuses on ECAs as an inclusive process tailored to support marginalized ninth-graders as ECAs' participants.

ECAs may be contextually oriented as a sport or nonsport, academic or nonacademic, and school-based or community-based. Further distinctions may be made based on rural, suburban, and urban locations (Garner, 2017; Phillips et al., 2021). Maslow's (1943) THM supports the study proposition, of a sense of belonging, which is used interchangeably with other terms, such as school belonging, relatedness, connectedness, and others; however, it is always framed as relational (Craggs & Kelly, 2018; Farmer et al., 2019; Vargas-Madriz & Konishi, 2021). An inclusive process is relational with equity and a sense of belonging (Pennsylvania Department of Education [PDE], 2022). A sense of belonging was defined as social inclusion (Craggs & Kelly, 2018; PDE, 2022). Therefore, ECAs should be framed by social inclusion.

In developing social inclusion, a sense of belonging becomes a prerequisite that resists failure by the interweaving of students' perceptions of how they are viewed by their teachers, parents, and peers (Craggs & Kelly, 2018). Resultantly, the students' perceptions may be that a sense of belonging can eliminate microaggressions (Craggs & Kelly, 2018). Pushing a learner into predesigned support does not create a sense of belonging. The sense of belonging is created by the mechanisms that allow the student to adjust without constraints (Farmer et al., 2019). This reconceptualization moves beyond creating programs to meet the needs of the learner to creating a diversity of programs so that the learner can shift toward a pathway that matches his or her interests (Farmer et al., 2019; Ziegler et al., 2020). ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences of how and why an inclusive process supports a marginalized subgroup of ninth-graders will add to the research.

Therefore, I purport the social element, a sense of belonging, may be elaborated beyond Maslow's (1943) THM's original work to target marginalized blindness. Educational leaders should consider a broader scope for moving students from the margins of nonparticipants' status to participants' status (Juvonen et al., 2019; Siperstein et al., 2017). An example of forward-thinking in an inclusive process would be when coaches aim for students with SEN who participate with students without SEN to develop social skills that have long-lasting significance (McConkey et al., 2021). Specification of curricular aims may provide educators with an awareness of marginalized blindness.

Oliva's curriculum model that embeds a specification for students' needs (Gordon et al., 2019) exemplifies an inclusive process of shared equity through an enhanced curriculum for marginalized ninth-graders to participate in ECAs (Burns et al., 2021; Ziegler et al., 2020). Interestingly, the integration of academic-based ECAs in the curriculum's science, technology,

engineering, and mathematics and advanced placement courses for a higher level of academic enrichment as opportunities for an inclusive process to support access and equity began in the ninth-grade year (Lynch et al., 2018). Therefore, at the most advanced operational level of a school-wide approach to support inclusion positive outcomes are evident (Juvonen et al., 2019; Siperstein et al., 2017). Oliva's curriculum model aligns with Maslow's THM as support for marginalized students' needs.

Inclusion

Inclusion is defined as an equitable approach to having access to a shared space, position, and/or resources (Milton, 2017; Pugach et al., 2020; Sellars, 2021). An inclusion process is designed to support the marginalized (PDE, 2022). In other words, the inclusion process is the ongoing search to improve awareness, advocacy, and action as diversity is revealed (Ainscow, 2020). Contemporary research denotes inclusion as a global thought with a local intervention. An inclusive process may embed ECAs through a normative context as a school-wide approach (Siperstein et al., 2019; Yin et al., 2022; Ziegler et al., 2020). An introduction of multiple subgroup populations of marginalized ECAs' participants illuminates the need for ECAs' sponsors and coaches to receive adequate professional development for an inclusive process.

Inclusive Process for ECA Participants

The previous chapter alluded to equity, inclusion, and belonging as foundational to an inclusive process. Improving the students' sense of belonging does not happen in isolation (Farmer et al., 2019). Therefore, the inclusive process considers a sense of belonging that must originate from a place of community and expand to global citizenship (PDE, 2022). Also, to view support of a sense of belonging through a limited lens does not show appreciation for the diverse complexity of the phenomenon of the inclusive process. A broad approach to a sense of

belonging is evident in the vision of the school community to support ECAs' participation

(Grover et al., 2021). Regarding theory building, the newness of information to strengthen the

theoretical argument being made should be inserted throughout the dissertation (Yin, 2018).

Maslow's (1943) THM supports the utilization of a sense of belonging in various environments.

Dutil's (2022) research exemplified using Maslow's THM to support students' learning of

creating a sense of belonging in politics. The ecological environment supports inclusion as an

echelon formation (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Farmer et al., 2019; Gibbons et al., 2019) by assessing

and evaluating the school environment and the opportunities in place that impact the student.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1977) provides a holistic approach for the learner to

experience, at various levels, the significance of the learner's innate potential to thrive when

healthy relationships are within reach. Maslow's THM begins by consideration of a framework

that supports safe and healthy environments for the individual.

Educators are in the position to facilitate the vision by viewing the phenomenon in a

purposeful and meaningful way. Research findings showed how educators' actions may

contribute to students developing healthy or unhealthy relationships (Juvonen et al., 2019).

Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs references the educators through the cognitive domain as a

desire to understand and know. Therefore, this case study research is situated based on the

exploration of the ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences with an inclusive process through

their lived experiences to find meaning in their mentoring roles.

Extracurricular Activities

Multiple research studies showcase that the scope of ECAs may be categorized as

academic versus nonacademic, sport versus nonsport, inside-of-school versus outside-of-school

activities, or school ECAs versus community ECAs. This study will consider all school-based

ECAs. A variety of positive outcomes are linked with ECAs, yet marginalized populations are underrepresented (Cullinane, 2020; Heath et al., 2018; Phillips et al., 2021). School administrators and ECAs' leaders may be in the position to create programs that provide students with easier access to ECAs (Fisher & Crawford, 2020; Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019; Juvonen et al., 2019; Phillips et al., 2021). In addition, when special education teachers design an individualized education program, inserting ECAs as a need has advantages. Yet, an inclusive process is not fully applied to ECAs (Agran et al., 2017) nor do special education teachers or ECAs' sponsors and coaches receive adequate professional development for an inclusive process that supports ECA membership as part of a student's education program (Duong et al., 2020).

Understanding the complex nature of ECAs' alignment to facilitate ECAs' participants' interests and social needs requires deliberate thought. When school leaders implement a full and diverse range of ECAs, awareness begins (Gorski, 2021; Phillips et al., 2021). As awareness of the need for antibullying clubs or students against drunk drivers; first-step approaches have been made (Grover et al., 2021), and students with intellectual and developmental disabilities are included to participate in ECAs (Agran et al., 2017; Ziegler et al., 2022). Yet, as contemporary awareness of students' needs becomes known, the diversity of ECAs, such as yoga or outdoor clubs may show relevance (Burns et al., 2021).

Cultural Responsiveness/Inclusive School Environment

Cultural responsiveness is defined as the value placed on differences in place, language, ethnicity, and more (Fallon et al., 2021; Gay, 2018). Transitioning into high school can present obstacles that may contribute to a feeling of isolation for ninth-grade students (Benner et al., 2017; Juvonen et al., 2019). When the school policy does not have a contingency plan to make the transition easier for the ninth-grade students, barriers exist that propagate the widening of the

social gap (Duong et al., 2020). Marginalized blindness extends by placing descriptive language of power or privileged and nonpower or nonprivileged to identify membership boundaries of the social gap. Subsequently, when educators do not identify the brokenness within their school culture and community, unhealthy relationships reside (Gaias et al., 2020). A proactive stance happens when teachers recognize their own cultural biases (Duong et al., 2020). Embedding a support system for ninth-grade students enhances cultural responsiveness and student-teacher relationships (Benner et al., 2017; Dari et al., 2021; Gaias et al., 2020; Hesbol et al., 2020; Vargas-Madriz & Konishi, 2021). Further investigation reveals a deeper understanding of the complexity of transitioning to high school through subgroup categories (Benner et al., 2017; Dari et al., 2021, Hagler, 2018; Siperstein, et al., 2017). Professional development that focuses on an inclusive process that supports marginalized students may be needed for ECAs' sponsors and coaches.

A principal credits special education experience for making strides with inclusion communication (Sellars, 2021). The disconnect between how and why continues as educational leadership courses emphasize equity and cultural responsiveness, but do not provide support for the ecological-systems approach (DeMatthews et al., 2020; Duong et al., 2020; Siperstein et al., 2019). There may be extremes and exceptions, as seen when unified schools created Special Olympics programs that reverse the traditional inclusive process concept by students with SEN inviting students without SEN to participate in Special Olympics (Yin et al., 2022). Special Olympics is designed as an ECA for students with disabilities with an attempt to include multiple levels of involvement to align with an inclusive process (Siperstein et al., 2019; Yin et al., 2022). Any school may submit a state application for approval of a Special Olympics program (Siperstein et al., 2019; Yin et al., 2022). The results of a cultural assessment can help

administrators to choose professional development that aligns with their needs (Fallon et al., 2021). Organizational aspects of supporting an inclusive process of equity and a sense of belonging for all students may be a productive element for inclusive leadership practices for ECAs' sponsors and coaches.

An inclusive program for students with SEN did not exist until adapting an inclusive model that challenged students to create an inclusive school-wide event (Siperstein et al., 2019; Yin et al., 2022). This adjustment follows the Oliva curriculum model that embeds specifications for the need of the individual (Gordon et al., 2019). Administrators and ECAs' sponsors and coaches may consider diversity-related ECAs (Parry et al., 2020). Therefore, attentiveness and awareness of the ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences of their need to the interweaving of cultural influences and power struggles when reconceptualizing an enhanced curriculum that integrates a sense of belonging through ninth-grade ECAs' participation may reveal the unknown.

A school culture that recognizes a need for social change focuses on equity, inclusion, and belonging; then begins with collaboration (Walls et al., 2021). ECAs' inclusion process should begin with the individual education plan (Agran et al., 2017; Lynch et al., 2018). Conversely, teachers perceived ECAs' participation as valuable, yet the special education teachers did not see a need to include ECAs in the individualized education program (Agran et al., 2017). This point of view is representative of a microlevel local concern that has the potential to have macro-level global influences (Ainscow, 2020). The macrolevel of ECAs' benefits is reflected beyond the high school years (Allen et al., 2018; Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019; Shaffer, 2019). This is demonstrated when equity and cultural responsiveness in high school ECAs may

crossover into a community culture of inclusivity where members have accentuated experiences of a sense of belonging.

Professional development that focuses on relationship-building brings a broader understanding of the inclusion process (Duong et al., 2020). A community effect or inclusive process places collaboration as a priority for administrators, teachers, and support staff (Pugach et al., 2020). Collaboration functions at the lowest level when diversity is minimal. Maslow's hierarchy of needs may support professional development (Fisher & Crawford, 2020). Maslow's hierarchy of needs, sense of belonging is established through the networking of vested members.

Cultural competence, knowledge, and value are essential to building a common ground for inclusive support for marginalized students (Hagler, 2018). Marginalized youth may be apathetic to academic achievement when there may be a lack of career opportunities in their communities (Dari et al., 2021). Educational disparities may be improved by mentors having stronger cultural competency (Hagler, 2018). In this, the ECAs' sponsors and coaches need to have professional development that addresses cultural competency. Then, contemporary and traditional ECAs that align with the culture bring shared equity to the foreground of an inclusive process. Value is extended further when ECAs' opportunities for teamwork, group work, and shared networking contribute to positive academic outcomes (Agran et al., 2017; Schwartz et al., 2015). ECAs supported educational attainment and higher educational expectations (Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019; Lecy, 2021). Patterns and trends may appear (Yin, 2018). Therefore, educational leaders should consider diverse ways to conceptualize ECAs' involvement to support marginalized ninth-grade students.

Social Capital: Added Value from ECAs' Participation

Social capital may be defined as the values and willingness to network for an agreeable approach for efficiency and improvement that has a reciprocal effect (Holtkamp & Weaver, 2018). High school students, who participate in sports-related ECAs, develop relational bonds that crossover as value-related future academic choices and develop perseverance to apply more time to their studies (Fulton, 2021; Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019; Lecy, 2021). The added value of ECAs' participation in developing a sense of belonging that helps with secondary educational acceptance and success was supported by relational bonding (Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019; Lecy, 2021). Social capital may be difficult to achieve for rural students based on the low-income status of rural areas (Holtkamp & Weaver, 2018). Rural areas need to plan for the inclusion of ECAs for marginalized high school students. Conversely, ninth-graders may be excluded from high school ECAs' involvement research (Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019). Excluding ninth-graders from the sample may suggest the marginalization of ninth-graders.

Moreover, other subgroups who experience marginalization will thrive with supportive interventions (Grover et al., 2021; Hagler, 2018; Milton, 2017; Siperstein et al., 2017). When intellectually disabled high school students participated in ECAs, social interactions were apparent (Milton, 2017; Siperstein et al., 2017; Yin et al., 2022). Yet, when viewing ECAs as a social intervention equal participation is rare (Hagler, 2018; Leigers et al., 2017; Yin et al., 2022). Pushing beyond marginalized awareness enhances social justice (Gorski & Dalton, 2020). The creation of social awareness through ECAs is another reason for professional development for ECAs' sponsors and coaches. Research highlighted the alignment of professional development for educators with inclusive science, technology, engineering, and mathematics environments that targeted marginalized students (Lynch et al. 2018). Therefore, if ECAs are

viewed as supportive interventions, then ECAs' sponsors and coaches should receive training to support marginalized ECAs' participants.

Group work provides a dynamic for social benefits and cultural competence (Dari et al., 2021; Fulton, 2021; Gorski & Dalton, 2020). Beyond the creation of a safe school environment, all students need to have the opportunity to model and demonstrate their interests and concerns to empower them to strive for higher goals, self-esteem and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Inadequate support for minority groups results in marginalized students feeling unwelcome to participate in ECAs (Craggs & Kelly, 2018; Gaias et al., 2020; Hagler, 2018; Siperstein et al., 2017). Resultantly, if there is insufficient support for Maslow's hierarchy of needs at the safety level, then marginalized students cannot move to the sense of belonging level. Conversely, providing an enhanced curriculum with a specification of extracurricular opportunities for marginalized ninth-grade students diminishes isolation, improves cognition, and challenges students' reflections on prejudices providing positive changes in the behavioral and emotional domains (Siperstein et al., 2019; Villagran & Hawamdeh, 2020) because they can make level advancement on the hierarchy of needs. Now, a more holistic view of the benefits of ECAs' participation for marginalized and nonmarginalized students that expands beyond the ECA into the landscape of the culture of the school emerges (Grover et al., 2021; Siperstein et al., 2017; Yin et al., 2022). This transformation is supported by the ecological systems approach and generates a traditional environment (Siperstein et al., 2017). Therefore, by viewing social inclusion through a school-supported equity lens, Maslow's sense of belonging may evolve.

Building Relationships Through ECAs

Building relationship skill sets through ECAs promotes a sense of belonging viewed as a gateway to academic success (Benner et al., 2017; Fisher & Crawford, 2020; Gaias et al., 2020;

Hagler, 2018; Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019). Yet, research suggests that ECA's participation

may have an added nonacademic benefit of soft skills development that may not be identified in

classroom instruction (Agran et al., 2017; Milton, 2017; Phillips et al., 2021). Relationships may

be fostered by school counselors being instrumental in supporting ECAs specific to career

aspirations through small group membership that partners with community members (Dari et al.,

2021). Relationship-building through group participation improved the sense of belonging of

rural students (Gray & Rubel, 2018). Conversely, when structural and leadership support at the

secondary school does not address relationship-building as a need, barriers remain (Duong et al.,

2020).

Social inclusion becomes a meaningful element in creating a sense of belonging (Benner

et al., 2017; Grover et al., 2021; Juvonen et al., 2019; Pugach et al., 2020; Siperstein et al.,

2017), while physical inclusion alone does not equate to a sense of belonging (Agran et al., 2017;

Dari, et al., 2021; Siperstein et al., 2019; Woolner et al., 2018). Attempts were encouraged to

show diversity among ECAs with community connections (Grover et al., 2021; Ziegler et al.,

2022). Intramural activities may be an option for building community connections (Burns et al.,

2021). Now, the scope of belonging broadens to advance the student's identity, resulting in new

dynamics of self-actualization as a cultural legacy (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Maslow, 1943).

Teacher-Student

Teachers demonstrating a positive mindset was the strongest indicator for students to

acquire a sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2018). As educators spent more time with the students,

relationships became stronger and extended beyond the school year (Grover et al., 2021).

Conversely, problems exist if the teachers do not see relationship-building as indicative of their

professional status (Duong et al., 2020). Teacher-student relationships may be innately

problematic because of professional blind-sidedness both in the classroom and as sponsors for

extracurricular clubs (Duong et al., 2020; Pence & Dymond, 2021). Teachers recognized that not

all teachers favor equity in teacher-student relationships (Duong et al., 2020). Maslow's (1943)

hierarchy of need's sense of belonging may be the needed support for both teacher and student.

ECAs' sponsors and coaches may be the supplemental role models to convey a sense of

belonging to ECAs' participants. Without placing relationship-building as a condition for

developing a sense of belonging, the inclusive process remains fixed and progress beyond a

sense of belonging may not happen.

Peer-to-Peer

ECAs' participation supports positive peer relations and has a carryover effect to

influence positive academic outcomes (Agran et al., 2017; Allen et al., 2017; Cullinane, 2020;

Gorski, 2021; Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019; Ziegler et al., 2022). Acceptance by peers was a

significant determinant for fostering a sense of belonging (Craggs & Kelly, 2018; Cullinane,

2020; 2018; Leigers et al., 2017; Milton, 2017; Walls et al., 2021). Noticeably, the students'

group sharing context that was spearheaded by school counselors created strong connectivity and

a sense of belonging (Gray & Rubel, 2018). Categories of a mixed grouping of peers added

dimension to peer-to-peer group relationships (Carter et al., 2019; Juvonen et al., 2019; Ziegler et

al., 2022). Mixed grouping creates an opportunity to nurture social equity by reducing social

tensions between marginalized populations (Juvonen et al., 2019). Conversely, rural students

who were excluded from participating in group activities with their peers conveyed a feeling of

not belonging (Gray & Rubel, 2018). Marginalization may interrupt building a sense of

belonging for students living in rural communities. In addition, peer support may mitigate

disruptions for ninth-grade students transitioning from middle school to high school (Benner et al., 2017).

     High school students with autism spectrum disorders who were partnered with students without autism spectrum disorders build strong relationships, through ECAs, that had value in the social and academic domains (Carter et al., 2019; Ziegler et al., 2020, 2022). It is suggested that coaches and educators receive support to enhance the students' peer-to-peer relationships inside and outside of the classroom (Carter et al., 2019). For example, the most optimal peer-to-peer support for students with special educational needs (SEN) participating in their school's Special Olympics programs was the partnership of one student with SEN with two students without SEN (Yin et al., 2022). This pairing strategy creates a paradigm of inclusive support by placing the students without SEN with the student with SEN.

     ECA's sponsors and coaches may not have adequate professional development to manage groups of students with and without disabilities who may show signs of resistance when inclusion is newly enacted (Leigers et al., 2017). This example of social interaction through peer-to-peer bonding inside and outside of the classroom aligns with Milton's (2017) definition of an inclusive process. It was noted that from the tenth-grade year to the twelfth-grade year, students credited group activities and ECAs' participation as relationship building that fostered an increased value for their education (Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019). The debate team, ECA was credited for creating strong peer-to-peer relationships while building a sense of belonging (Gorski, 2021). An added incentive for educators to receive professional development for an inclusive process is understanding how positive peer relations strengthen a sense of belonging that leads to students' interest in learning (Leigers et al., 2017) and Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs esteem level.

Practice Through Leadership

Educational leaders recognized the need to address cultural responsiveness in their underachieving rural schools (Fisher & Crawford, 2020; Hesbol et al., 2020; Renwick et al., 2019). Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs was modeled to support teachers and created a leadership framework and supported a sense of belonging for marginalized students (Fisher & Crawford, 2020; Hesbol et al., 2020). Interestingly, there was an established community connection and students' sense of belonging through a foundational base of ECAs through sports and cheerleading (Fisher & Crawford, 2020). ECA participation was a significant social-ecological factor for school belonging (Allen et al., 2018). The scope of a sense of belonging was advanced by a model for support of ninth-grade leadership positions (Flannery et al., 2020). These examples provide a theoretical pathway, Maslow THM, to illustrate the robust, yet creative vision that educational leaders may create to elevate a sense of belonging for marginalized students. Sponsors' and coaches' inclusive training could transfer over to students with and without disabilities to adopt positive roles through communication strategies for disabilities awareness (Leigers et al., 2017).

Theory to Practice

Inclusion is defined as a youth learning from youth (Renwick et al., 2019). The inclusive process expands that definition to be an active participant that finds shared value with others while receiving support to have access to the learning environment (Pugach et al., 2020; Sellars, 2021). The social bond theory exemplified participation and interest among the ECAs' participants as a contributing factor to social capital (Neely & Vaquera, 2017). Furthermore, Maslow (1943) posited the hierarchy of needs has five relational levels, therefore if the curriculum aim is to advance the learner to the highest level, self-actualization, each foundational

support of the hierarchy must be enhanced to provide adequate movement for the learners. Allen's et al. (2018) research implemented Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1977) without the foundational support of Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs. Yet, it is understandable that each level on the hierarchy of needs is viewed as the dynamics of providing substantial support for marginalized learners. Research findings showed, that "the weakest correlates, though still moderate in size, were self-esteem and social self-efficacy" (Allen et al., 2018, p. 24). It appears that Maslow's hierarchy of needs of physiological, safety, and belonging were not attained.

Leadership that recognizes the value of Maslow's hierarchy of needs has the potential to make decisions that create fundamental advantages for the entire student body. For example, an elementary principal in a poverty-stricken rural school implemented Maslow's hierarchy of needs as fundamental support as a whole-school approach rather than selected subgroups, resulting in school performance improvement (Fisher & Crawford, 2020). When theory to practice is established in a rural high school, an enhanced curriculum is best established as a whole-school approach and begins with ninth-grade orientation. Moreover, from a global perspective, educational leaders strive to create schools that are accepting of marginalized students, such as refugees and asylum-seeking individuals by use of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Sellars, 2021). Maslow's hierarchy of needs is indicative of advocacy awareness.

Relational developmental systems meta-theory was used to frame a research study that identifies critical reflection as a support for educators to develop advocacy awareness (Gorski & Dalton, 2020). It became known that matching students' strengths with resources supported the students' sense of connectedness (Gorski & Dalton, 2020). Building students' strengths are fundamental in academic and nonacademic ECAs (Agran et al., 2017). Students with SEN

received less structural support as ECAs' participants than they did in the classroom (Siperstein

et al., 2019). The theoretical framework may be the needed day-to-day support for the crossover

from the classroom to the ECAs to substantiate an inclusive process. Inclusion left to the

classroom limits accessibility to a physical space and does not provide equitability to a variety of

opportunities, whereas inclusion works best for all students with a whole-school approach, then

the classroom wall barriers are removed (Juvonen et al., 2019; Yin et al., 2022). Curriculum

theory supports professional development with diversity training to reveal inclusive barriers

(Pugach et al., 2020). Maslow's (1943) THM places self-actualization at the peak of the

hierarchy of needs that suggests ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' inclusive-minded knowledge may

be propagated through the richness of professional development.

Enhanced Curriculum Development to Support ECAs

A contemporary meaning for innovative curriculum changes is known by "the term

enhance as an umbrella to encompass other similar terminology (i.e., infuse, embed, enrich,

accommodate) used in describing modifications to existing general and special education pre-

service curricula" (Pugach et al., 2020, p. 90). Consequently, educational leaders, curriculum

experts, and equity-minded teachers need to question if the inclusive practices present equal

access for marginalized ninth-graders (Juvonen et al., 2019). ECA opportunities for marginalized

ninth-graders should appear within the curriculum. If ECAs are embedded into the curriculum

and framed by the interest of the student then the school functions at an operational level and is

not merely identified as a program change (Grover et al., 2021). The conception is that an

inclusive curriculum is more than a traditional curriculum (Pugach et al., 2020). Principals and

ECAs' sponsors and coaches were surveyed to explore the curriculum alignment with ECAs

(Parry et al., 2020). As previously mentioned, a curriculum planning phase to include individual

components targeted to the need of the individual may be the direction for supporting marginalized students (Gordon et al., 2019). Curriculum enhancement is not a new trend. Curriculum enhancement has been done as the integration of content or courses as reform trends become apparent leading to new educational aims (Pugach et al., 2020; Villagran & Hawamdeh, 2020). Inclusive-minded special education teachers realize that an inclusive process is more than accommodations and modifications for the learner, it is the need for an inclusive curriculum (McLeskey et al., 2017; Pugach et al., 2020).

Inclusive research is evolving to bring a broader understanding of a sense of belonging to specific populations (Agran et al., 2017; Renwick et al., 2019). ECAs' participation may be viewed as a pathway for an inclusion process when the student's individualized education program includes ECAs' participation (Agran et al., 2017; Lynch et al., 2018). Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities perceived group participation through community and peer relationships, a factor of social inclusion to develop a sense of belonging (Renwick et al., 2019). Dari et al.'s (2021) research added curriculum development as an element of including peer networking to connect to career aspirations noting the importance of impacting cultural responsiveness, yet the type of activity was not determined. Interestingly, the quality and/or quantity of ECAs' participation was a focus of research that supported a sense of belonging for marginalized groups at the high school level (Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019; Neely & Vaquera, 2017). ECAs' participation decreased as the socioeconomic status of the school district decreased (Phillips et al., 2021). Subsequently, determining the value of social inclusion for a specific population should not be neoliberalism perspective-based (Renwick et al., 2019; Sellars, 2021; Siperstein et al., 2019). A school district should not equate economical oppression to opportunity oppression.

Social inclusion predicates a sense of belonging however, the pathways to a sense of belonging are yet to be revealed (Renwick et al., 2019). Moreover, sports' participants had differential views for educational value based on grade level, however, ninth-graders who participated in sports felt more positively about academics than participants from other grades (Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019). I purport further exploration into the ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences to understand how ECAs' participation for ninth-graders as a worthy research investigation aim may be advantageous to deepen a sense of belonging.

Implementing a school-wide approach becomes essential to focus ECAs' participation as a social element to support a sense of belonging to the school (Grover et al., 2021; Hesbol et al., 2020; Siperstein et al., 2017). ECAs' programs may be represented through a wide range of content and context. Intramural sports included high school students partnering with community members for yoga and running events (Burns et al., 2021). An opposition may occur as power groups resist dominance from marginalized populations (Biddle, 2019; Kotok, 2017; Parry et al., 2020). ECAs' sponsors, coaches, and participants tend not to encounter oppositional relationships within their groups (Biddle, 2019). This validates a need to enhance the curriculum to support social and physical inclusion to generate a deeper sense of belonging.

Social and Physical Inclusivity

Interestingly, Renwick et al. (2019) noted that "several methodological and theoretical gaps limit current understanding of inclusion, engagement in community life and friendship, and their effect on the quality of life for youths" (p. 947). Nevertheless, extant research shows how subgroups were selected to determine the impact on youth ECAs' participation (Agran et al., 2017; Durbin, 2020; Flannery et al., 2020; Siperstein et al., 2017). The value of ECAs' participation in subgroups was addressed by "the U. S. Department's Office for Civil Rights as

mandated under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act that school districts must offer equal access to extracurricular activities to students with disabilities and provide, as necessary, appropriate accommodations and modifications," yet, most special education teachers did not value embedding ECAs' participation as a necessary component for inclusion (Agran et al., 2017, p. 4). More can be done, knowing that Renwick et al.'s (2019) research provided a simplistic explanation as two trends were revealed, both demonstrating the value of personal acceptance through communication. ECAs substantiate a sense of belonging through communication within and between marginalized and nonmarginalized participants (Siperstein et al., 2017). Again, this validates a need to enhance the curriculum to support social and physical inclusion to generate a deeper sense of belonging. Another curriculum assessment identified the need to embed intramural activities (Burns et al., 2021).

Barriers to ECA Inclusion

Teachers may not perceive relationship building with the students within their professional role, creating a relational barrier (Duong et al., 2020). The research found that teachers had limited perceptions of the value of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities as ECAs' participants and suggested that students without disabilities did not encourage ECAs' participation for students with disabilities, and equal access was not demonstrated (Agran et al., 2017; Juvonen et al., 2019). Struggles may exist for students with disabilities, in that they are not provided with adequate support and sufficient structure (Juvonen et al., 2019; Leigers, et al., 2017). Moreover, caution is advised as the propagation of social isolation occurred in addition, a sense of belonging was not nurtured for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (Pence & Dymond, 2021; Ziegler et al., 2020).

There is a depth and breadth that may not be understood about ECAs' participation in marginalized students (Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019; Neely & Vaquera, 2017). Research shows a vast array of students' attributes may lead to marginalization and social exclusion (Juvonen et al., 2019). Yet, schools with highly diverse populations have a broader acceptance of their standard of norms than schools with less diverse populations (Juvonen et al., 2019). Noticeably, there are many predictor variables to consider as to how ECAs' participation impacts students' sense of belonging. So, caution is advised for target population generalizations (Gall et al., 2007). ECAs' sponsors and coaches may experience obstacles to the inclusive process if the school administrators do not prioritize opportunities for marginalized students (Ainscow, 2020; Kryst et al., 2018). In addition, the ECA's sponsors and coaches may not have adequate support to identify the students who slip under the radar of inclusive needs (Ainscow, 2020). Challenges continue for rural Appalachian high schools as marginalized populations may experience a disadvantage with inadequate resources to support inclusive learning of diverse offerings to prepare for postsecondary education and careers (Brooks, 2018; Rosecrance et al., 2019).

Other barriers for marginalized students to participate in ECAs are a lack of interest and transportation (Agran et al., 2017). Also, rural schools' budgetary cuts garner ECAs' membership fees (Neely & Vaquera, 2017). ECAs' participation becomes conditional to socioeconomics and widens the gap between marginalized and nonmarginalized students (Neely & Vaquera, 2017; Phillips et al., 2021). If participants must pay to play, then unequal opportunities to participate in ECAs place marginalized populations at a disadvantage (Meier et al., 2018; Phillips et al., 2021; Shaffer, 2019). Marginalized students are concerned about the added financial burden of ECAs' participation and the lack of funding that may impact their opportunities (Agger et al., 2018). An inclusive process may be the molding material that binds

peer-to-peer relationships without the context of marginalized blindness. Awareness of barriers

for marginalized students to participate in ECAs may be generated when ECAs' sponsors and

coaches have specialized professional development to support an inclusive process of

recruitment for ECAs' participants (Yin et al., 2022).

Time may become a barrier to ECAs' participation. A time barrier was noted by students'

schedules that usually extend beyond the school day for ECAs (Leigers et al., 2017). The issue of

time becomes relevant when implementing professional development for staff (Ziegler et al.,

2020). ECAs' sponsors and coaches may view time as a barrier when innovative programs are

being created (Yin et al., 2022). Conversely, science, technology, engineering, and math

programs provide more time for students to engage in out-of-school programs of internships

(Lynch et al., 2018).

Social and Physical Exclusivity

Benner et al. (2017) provided statistical analysis for a factor of a sense of belonging for

ninth-graders as they transition into high school reporting a drop in a sense of belonging, while

social rejection and segregation widen the gap between ingroup and outgroup peer associations

(Juvonen et al., 2019). Regardless of having a wide range of diversity, individuals may

experience prejudice when positive peer-to-peer relationships are not nurtured (Juvonen et al.,

2019). Understandably, the isolation and exclusion of students from peer group activities may

widen the gap between the welcomed and unwelcomed to participate in ECAs (Juvonen et al.,

2019). Poverty may be a factor of exclusion. Low socioeconomically disadvantaged students and

families may not have access to programs (Hagler, 2018). Lack of inclusion with peer groups

may be a result of a low sense of belonging (Craggs & Kelly, 2018). Yet, when researching high

school students' supportive relationship-building, ECAs' participation was not factored in the analysis nor considered a relevant factor (Benner et al., 2017).

ECAs' participation may be viewed as a buffer for status, equity, and belonging (Craggs & Kelly, 2018). Therefore, it seems advisable to determine the relationship between ninth-graders ECAs' participation and their sense of belonging that support academic growth (Agran et al., 2017; Benner et al., 2017; Craggs & Kelly, 2018; Porter et al., 2021). Subsequently, Bronfenbrenner's (1977) model exemplifies how the lack of interaction between various factions is not beneficial. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs shows how goal setting may be pivotal to motivation. Mentoring relationships as a goal may support the underrepresented student population to achieve persistence for success (Hagler, 2018). The goal of this study is to synthesize findings from the participants' responses to shed light on how an inclusive process functions as supportive measures for underrepresented students to participate in ECAs.

Benefits for Participation in ECAs.

The equivocal nature of education alludes to an expectation of equipping students for prosperous citizenship. Whereas, fundamentals are conditional upon a strong supportive skill set, and they establish a sense of belonging within and beyond the school setting (Agran et al., 2017; Leigers et al., 2017). A sense of belonging is related to a sense of purpose that can be established when youth connect their interests with community relationships (Lynch et al., 2018; Renwick et al., 2019). ECAs' participation has the potential to establish the student's identity that expands into other areas with comfort and ease as bridges between the school and the community is established (Dari et al., 2021; Grover et al., 2021; Hesbol et al., 2020). When marginalized youths' lived experiences are supported then youths envision their future as being more positively linked to their communities (Dari et al., 2021). Keeping the community as a principal

component for informed problem solving for social inclusivity of marginalized youth creates a stronger student-community network transforming a newness into a sense of belonging (Hesbol et al., 2020; Lynch et al., 2018).

The benefits of ECAs may work in a continuum beyond the classroom and school building and into the community (Agran et al., 2017; Grover et al., 2021; Ziegler et al., 2022). ECAs may ease the transition into postsecondary schools (Abernathy & Forestal, 2020; Knight & Duncheon, 2020; Kryst et al., 2018). University leaders recognize the inclusion process by intent to include ECAs in their programs by suggesting accessibility and assessment of the ECAs (Abernathy & Forestal, 2020). ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' inclusive process by intent operates from Maslow's highest level of self-actualization and maybe the trajectory needed for rural high school students to model a likewise move to self-actualization. ECAs may influence recreation activity interest into adulthood (Hagler, 2018). Schools may be a resource for students who may not have access to sports equipment. Intramural sports programs are associated with lasting interest and participation into adulthood (Burns et al., 2021). The inclusive process of a shared value of administrators, educators, educational leaders, and ECAs' sponsors and coaches may attenuate or enhance a sense of belonging for marginalized students. To this end, when educators have a mindset of community collaboration with the inclusive process, then empowerment and modeling of leadership build a stronger sense of community connections within and beyond the school (Grover et al., 2021; Ziegler et al., 2022).

Role of ECAs in Domains of School Engagement

The effects of ECAs were noted by the roles of school engagement in three domains: behavior, cognitive, and emotional (Flannery et al., 2020; Gorski, 2021; Lynch et al., 2018). A positive learning outcome improved the cognitive domain by ECAs' participation in the math

club (Durbin, 2020), science, technology, engineering, and math program (Lynch et al., 2018), and a ninth-grade team leadership program (Flannery et al., 2020). Elaboration of belonging may be seen as conditional to school engagement (Craggs & Kelly, 2018). Further research may be needed to explore contextual relationships between social, cognitive, and behavioral domains of school engagement (Gorski, 2021). Moreover, marginalized students' dropout rate was reduced by sports-related ECAs' participation (Neely & Vaquera, 2017). Pennsylvania's rural schools reflect a difference in ECAs' participants as relational to academic status by noting students engaged in sports and other ECAs with high academic success (Neely & Vaquera, 2017; Kryst et al., 2018). The benefits are that all students find their place in and beyond the school, to be leaders in their community (Agran et al., 2017; Grover et al., 2021; Ziegler et al., 2022).

Cognitive Engagement

ECAs' participation increases students' sense of belonging which shows a positive impact on cognitive engagement. With cognitive engagement, it seems necessary to consider the student's disposition of belonging and the school's organizational attributes to arrive at an inclusive process that generates the need for support (Walls et al., 2021). Research showcased reciprocal findings between grades, school engagement, and a sense of belonging for high school students (Benner et al., 2017), most notably, in ECAs for ninth-graders who were given leadership responsibilities in their high school (Flannery et al., 2020). Therefore, I posit the need for exploring how ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences of involvement with an inclusive process may provide a broader foundation that may contribute to the recruitment of marginalized ninth-graders.

Behavior Engagement

A summer intervention program embedded a social belonging intervention for marginalized ninth-graders to bring awareness to the students' challenges as they transition from

middle school to high school (Williams et al., 2020). This ECA intervention for the ninth-grade marginalized students resulted in the marginalized participants having fewer behavioral referrals than their control condition peers (Williams et al., 2020). Likewise, social and cognitive well-being was positively impacted by the debate team members' participation (Gorski, 2021). Contextual influence of students' predisposition and adult interaction may be factors for marginalized students' behavior (Hagler, 2018; Walls et al., 2021). ECAs' sponsors and coaches may provide the mentoring opportunities that are missing in the classroom.

Emotional Engagement

When marginalized students participate in ECAs, a positive outlook on school culture and improving the participants' emotional well-being can be expected (Benner et al., 2017; Craggs & Kelly, 2018; Flannery et al., 2020; Gorski, 2021). Conversely, research findings showcased that without supportive relationships during the transition from middle school to high school, ninth-graders academic and emotional engagement was negatively affected, resulting in the ninth-graders feeling lonely and depressed (Benner et al., 2017). Therefore, drawing meaning from the nuances of curriculum possibilities may be recognized as an inclusive process that accentuates students' wellness. Rural educators and community members should consider a vital element of the inclusive process of embedding ECAs into the curriculum. Thus, educational leaders should view curriculum changes to serve as a sophisticated support system to create equity, inclusion, and belonging for the marginalized ninth-grade students' transition from middle school to high school to their community (DeMatthews et al., 2020; Knight & Duncheon, 2020).

Summary

Adaption of inclusion in education is based on constructing a least restrictive learning environment. Often in rural areas, the inclusive process operates at Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs' lowest level without nurturing and fostering a sense of belonging for marginalized students. As ECAs' sponsors and coaches support marginalized students to participate in ECA, Maslow's THM provides a valuable theoretical framework for this study. The research gap being explored is that ECAs' sponsors and coaches may not have adequate inclusive process support for recruiting marginalized students as participants. A substantial effort is made to ground the literature with a broader understanding of an inclusive process. The literature review provided a conglomeration of fragments that lead to a disservice if not viewed in its entirety. An inclusive process and the ever-changing dynamics of marginalization are complex and require continual updating with training to create supportive learning environments and communities. The argument justifies identifying the need to support ECAs' sponsors and coaches with professional development for inclusion to create supportive programs, such as diversity of ECAs for marginalized students to participate. Therefore, this study adds to the body of knowledge about the expansion of areas of professional development to support ECAs' sponsors and coaches. An overview of the qualitative approach, using a single case study to understand the phenomenon of an inclusive process by development of an enhanced curriculum that integrates ECAs for marginalized ninth-graders is provided in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore extracurricular activities' (ECAs') sponsors' and coaches' experiences of an inclusive process that supports marginalized ninth-grade students as ECAs' participants at the rural, Mountain Appalachian High School (MAHS), in southwestern Pennsylvania. The problem is that marginalized students are underrepresented in ECAs. This chapter describes the research design and the discussion of the justification for this choice. After that, is a listing of the research questions, followed by a rich description of the setting and participants. After this, is the role of the researcher, the potential for research bias, and the plan for avoiding these biases. Then, is a description of the procedures involved in the process of this research. The theory that provides a framework for this study is Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation (THM), as the phenomenon of this research is an inclusive process. This case study incorporates data collection from semi-structured interviews, journal writing, and physical artifacts to arrive at a conclusion of exploring ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences with the inclusion of marginalized ninth-grade students at the rural MAHS in southwestern Pennsylvania. This chapter concludes with trustworthiness and the chapter summary.

Research Design

This qualitative case study is appropriate for exploring ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences with an inclusive process. The qualitative case study derives meaning from the participants' lived experiences to explain the how or why of contemporary circumstances (Yin, 2018). A logical representation is structured from cultural origins (Clay, 2021). This qualitative study is an embedded, single-case design using multiple units of analysis to look beyond

resistance to arrive at an understanding of the research process (Yin, 2018). The rationale for using a case study is that the distance between the linkage of the phenomenon and context is unknown (Yin, 2018). This case study focuses on generating synergistic knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and the process and product that may reveal knowledge of the research's concerns (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The purpose for this qualitative case study design is to explore how ECAs' sponsors and coaches at a rural high school facilitate an inclusive process to include marginalized ninth-grade students in ECAs. This rural high school setting is experiencing a transition, as another administrator's responsibilities were expanded when the curriculum specialist resigned. Educators serve as ECAs' sponsors. A broader exploration of how ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences of an inclusive process that may support the needs of rural, marginalized high school students may have meaning as a specification for curricular development.

It is advisable to use theory to discover meaning rather than testing variables (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The qualitative research design, instead of the quantitative research design, explores a variety of lenses to bring a broader understanding of this research phenomenon of an inclusive process. A qualitative approach is the best fit to examine the lived experiences of ECAs' sponsors and coaches addressing an inclusive process. I was raised in this school district and have worked here for 18 years. Subsequently, my historical origins support a qualitative case study design choice of exploring meaning from within and among participants (Dewey, 1938/1997). This research aims to explore the phenomenon of an inclusive process and the product, rather than focus solely on understanding inclusive strategies, accommodations, and or modifications.

Research Questions

Equitable education availability of academic and nonacademic opportunities, such as ECAs, should be equally accessible to all students. If leadership support functions with marginalized blindness the inclusive process is disrupted, creating barriers and disruption for the ninth-grade students' transition into high school (Duong et al., 2020). Indicatively, qualitative researchers have a desire to explore unknown places and positions that capture personal and professional interest (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The construction of the research questions seeks to discover the participants' roles and experiences to support marginalized ninth-graders with ECAs. Maslow's THM is used from the mentor's point of view to arrive at the highest level of self-actualization by understanding one's purpose as assisting others to achieve self-actualization (Dutil, 2022). This application of Maslow's hierarchy of needs to the highest level exemplifies the role of ECAs' sponsors and coaches in demonstrating support for equal access.

Central Research Question

How do high school ECA' sponsors and coaches describe their experiences with the inclusion of marginalized students, ninth-graders, at the rural MAHS?

The sub-questions narrow the focus of this inquiry with an overarching aim of exploring how and why ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences contribute to their decision-making or educational policies to provide awareness of any limitations within the ECAs.

Sub-Question One

How would ECAs' sponsors and coaches improve a sense of belonging for marginalized ninth-graders to join the ECA that they sponsor or coach?

Sub-Question Two

How would ECAs' sponsors and coaches address the benefits or barriers for marginalized

ninth-graders to have academic and nonacademic equity to participate in ECAs?

Sub-Question Three

How would professional development support an inclusive process for ECAs' sponsors and coaches?

Setting and Participants

The setting is a rural school district in southwestern Pennsylvania. The participants are high school ECAs' sponsors and coaches selected through purposeful sampling. Pseudonyms are used for the site and participants. The site pseudonym is Mountain Appalachian High School. The participants' pseudonyms originate as proper nouns indicative of Appalachian landscapes: Pike, Knob, Peak, Cliffs, Run Road, Mount, Highlands, Ridge, Gap, Trail, and Hilltop.

Since the curriculum specialist resigned more than five years ago, various positions have been absorbed or realigned, while the division of tasks has been delegated to administrators and staff. This restructuring is a result of the district's financial crunch and has placed a level of uncertainty for curriculum direction. Therefore, ECAs' sponsors and coaches may need to provide their expertise in an inclusive process for marginalized students to receive support through a specification of individual needs in the curriculum. This substantiates the criterion for the selection of participants.

Site

The site for participants' selection for this case study is MAHS, the only high school in this public school district. It is in southwestern Pennsylvania's Appalachian Mountain Range. This site is steeped in history, traditions, and cultural aspects that may be stigmatized based on the geographic location. As the researcher, I have strong ties to this school district, building, and

community. My rationale for choosing this site is rooted in personal and professional factors that are strengthened through reconceptualizing, understanding, integrating, and organizing knowledge and action to support the marginalized population in this school and community. MAHS favors research opportunities. In 2020, two principals, and in 2022, another principal completed their doctorate research at MAHS.

In 2019, the county population had declined by 20% for ages 18 and under (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2019). There has been a declining student population at MAHS over the past 17 years. MAHS students' population was reported as decreasing beginning in the 2004-2005 school year with 1243 high school students until the 2021-2022 school year with 999 high school students (Pennsylvania School Performance Profile, 2021).

MAHS operates from a point of socioeconomic need, Maslow's (1943) lower levels of the hierarchy of needs of the physiological and safety. These economic challenges are formidable obstacles for students to develop a sense of belonging and require a supportive social structure (Grover et al., 2021). The rural Appalachian culture's problems are deeply rooted in poverty with academic grit undernourished and unemployment spiraling (Gibbons et al., 2020). Yet, there is a richness in a culture that embraces nature and its beauty for the simple life that it provides, physiological and safety needs. Anything more may be considered out of reach for marginalized students unless research from this site generates data to support a plan for Maslow's THM at levels beyond a sense of belonging.

School districts and communities with an Appalachian cultural heritage have a history of suppression and culture illiteracy (Holtkamp & Weaver, 2018). Research showcases the misrepresentation of Appalachian people as uneducated, stereotypically backwoods natives that have a historical reputation that contributes to continual out-grouping stigmatization (Denham,

2016). A divergent thought that reappears and reveals to me an emergent theme within me, marginalization of the Appalachian culture constricts the richness of a sense of belonging. Awareness of such spontaneity of reflection leads to a broader understanding through a worldly view (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I am interested in exploring this research data to determine the emergent themes that are derived from this research experience (Patton, 2002).

This school district's organizational structure operates from a top-down approach. With the approval of the union members' 2018-2022 contract, the department head positions at the high school were absorbed, giving less opportunity for a bottom-up approach. In addition, there seems to be a weak commitment to parental involvement in the educational support or the decision-making process. This site consists of one high school serving grades ninth through twelfth, two middle schools, and five elementary schools. Also, this school district provides a virtual school program open to all grades, yet functions from a limited enrollment capacity. MAHS has a historical record of basic and below basic academic annual state scores (Pennsylvania School Performance Profile, 2021). According to the Pennsylvania School Performance Profile (2021), the high school data for English language arts and math show this high school fails to meet established learning goals. The aim of conducting this research seeks to bring understanding to how an inclusive process that targets support for marginalized populations may result in academic improvements (Villagran & Hawamdeh, 2020). In addition, students who experience ECAs' participation show improvements in nonacademic skills (Agran et al., 2017; Phillips et al., 2021; Porter et al., 2021).

Participants

Eleven participants, academic and nonacademic ECAs' sponsors and coaches, were selected by a purposeful sampling method for this case study. All participants are educators with

more than two years of teaching experience. All participants serve as models for creating a sense of belongingness within and among the school, community, and supportive programs in a capacity of support for students. Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a conceptual understanding of the relevance of structuring an inclusive process to support marginalized high school students. Chapter Four provides specific demographics of each participant, such as age, degree status, years of service, and connection to the community.

Researcher Positionality

One important aspect for this researcher is to partner with the participants to discover their ECAs' involvement inclusive process approach. The role of this researcher is to shed light on determining how the uniqueness of our culture can be embedded through ECAs that are supported in the curriculum to provide a shared platform of equity, inclusion, and belonging for educational leaders, staff, students, and community. Theoretical beliefs function as the mechanism that grounds this research. Empirical and practical knowledge are shared to add to the breadth of discovery for the complexity of reconceptualizing ECAs as a curricular aim to meet the academic and nonacademic needs of support for marginalized and nonmarginalized students. My thoughts and actions embrace advocacy for social change in the educational community and the larger community being served. Education is my calling and I want to serve through Maslow's (1943) THM supportive theoretical framework. It cannot be denied that I have positioned myself within my rural culture, an Appalachian Mountain heritage, yet this research is conducted from a worldview perspective of a place. This is the place I know as home, goodness, and richness despite biases that have created marginalization based on nonprivileged and low socioeconomic status. This supports a richness of interpretive framework for this qualitative research as I transform from the mindset of a scholar to the mindset of a researcher who observes

and collects data that reflect the context of the inclusive process to support marginalized ninth-graders to participate in ECAs. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) referenced this researcher's positionality as a social change agent that arrives at outcomes to situate and privilege the marginalized. Therefore, I use a pragmatic approach research paradigm with this case study to arrive, through a worldview, at meaning from relevant outcomes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Reflexivity is used to soften my approach to entering the participants' realm of professional status as educational leaders. I am mindful of barriers that may exist between the participants and myself and practice respect for each participant. The participants are providing the data for discovery, and I consider them valuable. I repetitiously and genuinely convey this attitude to the participants and myself. I purposefully articulate to the reader the ontological, epistemological, and axiological philosophical assumptions.

Interpretive Framework

The interpretive framework adheres to a pragmatic approach to aid with developing awareness of the educational leaders' experiences of an inclusive process that supports equity, inclusion, and belonging for marginalized ninth-graders at a rural high school. The axiological assumption for this research practice is evident by the researcher's value (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, as I conducted the qualitative research from the focus of the central question, other questions were revealed that specifically leads to a generation of more data collection and analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This was used to reveal themes generated by using multiple data collection strategies: journal writing, open-ended interviews, and physical artifacts to the point of data saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This happened through the method of triangulation of multiple data methods that focused on the research problem (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Philosophical Assumptions

The philosophical assumptions provided a backdrop for the researcher's worldview and how subjectivity affects the beliefs of the researcher. However, the researcher needed to practice discernment to avoid generalizing (Stake, 2010). Caution was enforced to avoid stereotypical adherents that are seen in all cultures and the overgeneralizations that lead to systematic error (Denham, 2016). Intent was exercised to conduct the research through the theoretical lens of Maslow's (1943) THM. The practice of intention supported the researcher's efforts to maintain the position of advocacy for social justice and educational equity within an inclusive process.

Ontological Assumption

The ontological assumption for this research considers the Appalachian heritage and emerging cultural shift, regardless of intrinsic or extrinsic influences. Data collected from observations and interviews forming multiple outcomes may reveal paradigms or paradigm shifts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The ontological issue is action-oriented and impacts emotions through the interconnectivity of purposeful passions, the mechanism accounting for an inherent need for knowledge. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs levels one and two must be established before progressing to level three, the sense of belonging, and then level four, the desire for knowledge. Maslow's THM, level three, a sense of belonging is the proposition for grounding as a research topic.

Epistemological Assumption

The epistemological assumption challenges this researcher to identify the driving factor that influences this research, inclusive support for marginalized students to have equity, access, and a sense of belonging. The curriculum has multiple layers, both horizontally and vertically that may be considered for ECAs' support. Yet, when considering the mindfulness of how and

why of curriculum, the advantages or disadvantages should be viewed pragmatically as time-dependent (Gordon et al., 2019). Therefore, enhancing the curriculum to provide pathways of support for a marginalized group, the accessible population may be rightly or wrongly impacted by cultural influences (Gordon et al., 2019).

Axiological Assumption

The axiological assumption is indicated by this researcher's affirmation of the prestige to transform from a practitioner to a doctorate status by having an opportunity to bring a theoretical perspective to an informed inclusive process for reconceptualizing the curriculum. Yet, this opportunity is not viewed from a subjective stance. The researcher's motivation is embedded in exploring how educational leaders' experiences of an inclusive process may contribute to equal educational access through a range of opportunities for marginalized youth to participate on equal status with nonmarginalized youth in ECAs. All students should have a sense of belongingness nurtured by the enhanced curriculum (Hesbol et al., 2020). When a young student experiences belongingness it has the potential to carry into adulthood (Allen & Kern, 2017). This maturation has the potential to be known as globalization of inclusion for marginalized populations.

Researcher's Role

One important aim of this research is to determine equity for ECAs' access by identifying curriculum needs for marginalized students to develop a sense of belonging in an academic and nonacademic context (Agran et al., 2017; Porter et al., 2021). One hope is to generate knowledge that encompasses many aspects (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This advocates, as Grover et al.'s (2021) research shows a sense of school community and belonging which can be attenuated or accentuated. Research highlights a case study of a high school principal who chose to do

advocacy work as an alum to improve the professional development that focused on cultural responsivity (Hesbol et al., 2020). I aspire to do the same.

The data was viewed through a pragmatic approach to recognize the truth as it appeared. I had the shared voice of an insider. Marginalization may appear among and between group members when any member may show dominance, power (Sue et al., 2019). All participants and I are educators who share the setting and understand the culture. I did not have any role of authority over the research participants. The paradigm was to understand the ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences of involvement with an inclusive process. I conveyed general questions as an opening dialogue to build the comfort level for all to understand the educators' values and efforts to contribute to a broader understanding of the inclusive process. Moreover, my role as the researcher was to design open-ended questions and data collection through observations, discussions, journal writing, unstructured interview responses, and ECA rosters and aims. I engaged in active listening, comprehensive language, and conative concepts that propagate open dialogue to arrive at a place of understanding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). However, my scholarly experience and researcher's role and responsibility prepared me to have a mindset of generating equality among and between the participants and myself. It was the researcher's responsibility to exercise diligence in an attempt to refute bias by an inherent need tendency to reveal the researcher's intent (Tight, 2017). In this case, this researcher was cognizant to identify any preconceived notions as those not to act upon, yet to determine if preconceived notions for the participants were relevant to the study. Unveiling these truths exposed the socio-ecological influences that may positively or negatively impact a sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2018).

Procedures

Appendix A provided the semi-structured interview questions. I requested written site

permission from the MAHS School Board and superintendent, see Appendix B. Appendix C contains the central research and sub-questions. After successfully completing the proposal defense, the Internal Review Board (IRB) was contacted, and waited for IRB approval before attempting to engage participants in the research. Once the IRB approved, then 10-12 participants were selected by purposeful sampling and contacted via email, Appendix D. Follow-up letters were sent, Appendix E, to the participants to accept or reject participation in the research. A personal invitation was implemented as needed. Appendix F was the site approval letter. Appendix G was the audit trail. Appendix H was the journal writing questions. Appendix I contained the physical artifacts. Appendix J was the researcher's notetaking. Appendix K was the IRB approval letter. Appendix L was the participant's consent form. Confidentiality was conducted throughout the research and site and participants' pseudonyms were used.

Permissions

Appendix L contained the participant's consent form. I followed Liberty University's directive for seeking permission from the site and participants. I requested permission from the Mountain Appalachian School District's (pseudonym) superintendent through a written letter, then I submitted the permission letter to the IRB, Appendix B. This site has been used in the past for educational research purposes.

Recruitment Plan

The study was conducted at MAHS, a public school in southwestern Pennsylvania. The sample pool was 11 participants from MAHS, all were Caucasian. The participants were selected by purposeful sampling based on academic and nonacademic ECA leadership. All participants were educators representing diverse educational experiences in academic and nonacademic ECAs. The ECAs' sponsors and coaches were sent an email inviting them to participate in the

study. The same ECAs' sponsors and coaches participated in all three aspects of the data collection: interviews, physical artifacts, and journal writing. The participants were invited to accept or reject the opportunity to be a participant in the study. If no reply after a week, I provided a personal invitation. The participants represented a broad ecological unit, which was a valuable component in generating data from multiple points of view.

Data Collection Plan

A qualitative research design seeks understanding through interpretation while being mindful of new interpretations with empirical data collection (Stake, 2010). Once the participants consented to be included in the research, I scheduled the face-to-face semi-structured interviews to take place at a distraction-free location (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants engaged in an audio-recorded semi-structured interview, lasting approximately one hour (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). I used my cellphone and laptop to audio-record the interviews. As the interview was being conducted, I composed descriptive and reflective notetaking using an observational checklist with aggregated data collection columns (Stake, 2010). The interview process was conducted first because I have gained experience with listening skills from a former course interview assignment. After the interview, I collected physical artifacts of the ECAs' aims, objectives, strategies, ECAs' rosters with members grade level. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE, 2022) artifacts that address equity, inclusion, and belonging were used as a common ground. The purpose of placing the physical artifacts collection as a second step provided an opportunity to refine and readjust the interpretive data (Stake, 2010). Finally, emails were sent to each participant with five journal writing questions. As a last step with the data collection plan, the use of email for journal writing provided favorable options and allowed time for participants to reflect on their ideas and experiences. The participants were given one week to

complete the journal writing. Analysis of these artifacts were used to determine patterns and/or trends. Using email was safe, convenient, and timely (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I was able to copy and paste the participants' responses to the journal writing questions into a Microsoft word document and then transferred the data into Microsoft Excel 365 to use the pivot table to separate the data into themes. Throughout the data collection plan, the researcher conducted observations as a participant through observational notetaking (Stake, 2010). The data collection continued until the point of data saturation. Special attention was given to remain close to the embedded design focus of an inclusive process for the target of the study (Yin, 2018).

Individual Interviews Data Collection Approach

Interviews were conducted in person in a quiet location away from anyone overhearing. I ensured that all participants had equal access to the interview sites. The interviews were audio-recorded for added observational gain (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the phenomenon of the inclusive process of ECAs' involvement, generally defined as the participants' awareness of equity, inclusion, and belonging of marginalized students. The unstructured interview process is superior to other types of qualitative data collection approaches (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As an observer, I applied notetaking.

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please describe your educational background and career through your current position. SQ3

2. Please describe your educational background and career through your current position, elaborating on your experiences of involvement with ECAs. SQ3

3. Please describe your experiences with ECAs' participants' development of a sense of belonging. CRQ

4. How does your social connection to our rural high school support an inclusive process of equity, access, and a sense of belonging for marginalized students? CRQ

5. How do you mentor the ECAs' participants with their pathway of belonging among academic, general, and vocational tracking at the high school level? CRQ and SQ2

6. How could the inclusion process be enhanced for the ECAs that you sponsor or coach to provide opportunities for ECAs' membership for marginalized ninth-graders? SQ1

7. What challenges, if any, have you experienced or anticipated when considering the inclusive process to include marginalized ninth-graders in your ECA? SQ1 and SQ2

8. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with implementing ECAs to create a sense of belonging for marginalized ninth-graders or other high school students? CRQ

9. Describe any challenges that you may or may not have experienced when working with marginalized ninth-graders as they transition to high school. SQ2

10. Describe practices you use to ensure equal access for academic, vocational, general, and distance learning students. SQ1

11. What professional development experiences with inclusion have you had that prepared you to support marginalized students? SQ3

12. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with marginalized students? SQ1

13. Describe your experience in making curriculum development decisions that support equal access for marginalized students to participation in ECAs. SQ1

14. Describe successful practices you use when working with marginalized ninth-graders to support their transition from middle school to high school. SQ2

15. How are supportive interventions, such as ECAs for marginalized ninth-graders, considered for fostering a sense of belonging? CRQ

16. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences of creating support for ninth-graders to develop a sense of belonging by participating in ECAs? CRQ

17. Describe your perception of how the curriculum could be enhanced by embedding ECAs for marginalized ninth-graders to propagate success with cognitive and social skills. SQ2

18. Describe the barriers for students to become ECA participants. SQ2

19. Describe the benefits for students to become ECA participants. SQ2

20. How are budgetary concerns being addressed to create more opportunities for marginalized students to become ECA participants? SQ2

Interview questions were framed by Maslow's (1943) THM and align with the literature review. Questions 1 and 2 had the purpose of establishing the common ground between the researcher and the participant to soften the interview process. The central research question: How do high school ECAs' sponsors and coaches describe their experiences with the inclusion of marginalized students at the rural MAHS? The central research question was foundational for interview questions: 3, 4, 5, 8, 15, and 16 which were supported by Allen et al. (2018), Gaias et al. (2020), and Porter et al. (2021) literature research findings. The interview questions that were based on the central research question addressed equity and belonging were supported by the physical artifact from the PDE (2022). Sub-question 1: How do ECAs' sponsors and coaches provide marginalized ninth-graders access to join the ECA that they sponsor or coach? This question generated interview questions 6, 7, 10, 12, and 13. These interview questions focused

on access as supported through literature by Burns et al. (2021), Gorski (2021), Hagler, (2018), Meier et al. (2018), and Ziegler et al. (2020). Sub-question 2: How do ECAs' sponsors and coaches address the benefits or the barriers for marginalized ninth-graders to have academic and nonacademic equity to participate in ECAs? This question generated interview questions 5, 7, 9, 11, 14, 17-20. These interview questions focused on equity as supported through literature by Agran et al. (2017), Benner et al. (2017), Craggs and Kelly (2018), and Porter et al. (2021). Sub-question 3: How would professional development support an inclusive process for ECAs' sponsors and coaches? This question focused on professional development and generated interview questions 1, 2, and 11 that were supported by the research literature of Dari et al. (2021), DeMatthews et al. (2020), Duong et al. (2020), Fisher and Crawford (2020), Leigers et al. (2017), Pugach et al. (2020), and Ziegler et al. (2020).

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

Interview procedures provided interpretations that reshape descriptive experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, through direct observations, the researcher could develop a close relationship with the participants (Yin, 2018). The first technique for data analysis was categorical aggregation from the semi-structured interviews to demonstrate a holistic approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As data were generated by the "reflective-interpretative process includes not only a description of the experience as it appears in consciousness but also an analysis and astute interpretation of the underlying conditions, historically and aesthetically, that account for the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 8).

The interview questions provided data that was transcribed into technique two, Microsoft Word then transferred into Microsoft Excel 365 for aggregation into themes. This was done to demonstrate the participants' voices as portrayed in narrative form demonstrating the relevance

of lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Technique two was direct interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 2010), mindfully looking for evolving personality and empowerment or oppressive inferences. This was important to identify the development of a deeper understanding of belonging and identifying the barriers to equal access for ECAs. The aggregation of data into Microsoft Excel 365 generated an analysis of themes. Data was analyzed to identify ethnographic issues, patterns, and themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, self-identification and cultural portrait was determined to provide authenticity for the participants' perception, and bias of limitations. This was important to use a diverse set of methods to provide meaning through the participants' willingness to enhance the collaborative experience. Another technique of reflection provided the reader with an opportunity to reflect on the details and descriptions in this case study to determine what learning can be transferred to other settings (Stake, 2010). In addition, generated data were collected and viewed through a stratum of depth and meaning through the observations of the researcher and the interactions of the researcher and the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Triangulation was used by synthesizing the data from the semi-structured interviews, physical artifacts, and journal writing into emerging themes (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Physical Artifacts Data Collection Approach

Physical artifacts that were used related to ECAs' aims, objectives, strategies, number of student-members, and their grade level. The PDE (2022) artifacts that addressed the need for equity, inclusion, and belonging were used. Access to the physical artifacts yet concern about equity of records was real. This data collection approach was beneficial to provide insight into participants' cultural views and perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Physical Artifacts Data Analysis Plan

Physical artifacts that were explored were the ECAs' aims, objectives, strategies, number of student-members, and their grade level. The PDE (2022) artifacts addressed the need for equity, inclusion, and belonging to determine value and contribution or devalue and loss of equal access to support a sense of belonging for marginalized ninth-grade students. Artifact analysis has a practical significance and allows for the interpretation of common identity (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This was time-consuming, yet essential for the interpretation of social and cultural understanding.

Individual's Journal Writing Data Collection Approach

Five journal questions were submitted to each participant by email. The participants were given one week to respond. The importance of this form of data collection provided the participants time for deeper reflection and flexibility for robust engagement (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The questions were designed to examine the participants' experiences of involvement with an inclusive process with ECAs' participation through the context of a sense of belonging and educational equity for ninth-graders opportunities for ECA membership. The data collection used Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel 365 to record the data.

Journal Writing Guide

1. Please, explain how data from extracurricular activities' participation has been generated and utilized for the ninth-graders' transition from middle school to high school?

2. What do you view as academic advantages and/or disadvantages for extracurricular activity participants?

3. Please, explain how ninth-graders are introduced to extracurricular activities?

4. What support or encouragement is provided for ninth-graders to join an ECA or club?

5. Please, describe how respect and acceptance are shown to students based on

    extracurricular membership.

Journal Prompts Data Analysis Plan

      The data collection for a case study used multiple sources and may utilize the method of

narrative writing (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Five questions were presented and sent to each

participant by email to allow more time for the thoughtful articulation of responses. Each

participant's responses were documented and followed up with a confirmation of his or her

responses through email to confirm transferability. Then, the data was reviewed by the

researcher, transcribed into a Microsoft Word document, and transferred into a Microsoft Excel

365 program to identify trends or patterns among the participants' journal writing data.

Data Synthesis

      The semi-structured interviews, physical artifacts, and journal writing data was

synthesized into a matrix using pivot tables on Microsoft Excel 365. Each data collection source

was transcribed and inductively coded. A hermeneutics approach helped the interpretation of the

data into categories, looking for meaning (Gall et al., 2007). I reviewed the data looking for

evidence of similarities and differences, as well as anticipation of nuances that may have led to

emergent themes and/or patterns (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I remained close to the research topic,

viewed the evidence in its entirety, and heeded the cautionary advice to avoid diverting from the

intended research path (Yin, 2018).

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Trustworthiness

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      The first technique to ensure trustworthiness was the researcher's continual self-

reflexivity. I was cognizant to consider cultural diversity, gender biases, and the professional

and/or generational gap between the researcher and the participants. This was important because

the meaning will be derived from the participants' use of narrative, and I planned to allow time for prolonged engagement. In all, I remained committed to the research plan, procedures, and methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

The second technique to ensure trustworthiness was the audit trail. The researcher's role was to log all processes. Furthermore, documentation of the process could be analyzed to determine how information was revealed or viewed as hidden. This practice provided the researcher with a chain of evidence representative of the researcher's thinking during the data collection that became beneficial for the researcher's reflective process after the data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The third technique to ensure trustworthiness was the assignment of coding units to show similarities and differences in the data. Microsoft Excel 365 was used to analyze various interpretations of the data. Trustworthiness was improved by data retrieval and coding that aligns with the theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Local morals, values, and ethics may impact how knowledge is generated (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, a reflection of the qualitative case study design framework component of the researcher's conceptualization of validation was to strive toward the transformation of data into new interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Stake, 2010). Transforming of knowledge was foundational to structuring a sense of belonging for the participants and the work that they contributed to understanding the depth and breadth of the inclusive process.

Credibility

I conducted semi-structured interviews with participants, analyzed the physical artifacts from the school and the PDE, and gathered journal writing artifacts from participants to triangulate findings and ensure trustworthiness. Journal writings provided the participants an

opportunity to convey their voices with fidelity. Techniques for establishing credibility provided

opportunities for the researcher to practice transparency and fidelity by an amalgamation of

multiple perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018), for example, notetaking of observations,

triangulation, and member-checking.

Transferability

Transferability was validated by an alternate audit that places the reader as the interpreter

of meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Secondly, when the researcher places imagery and

descriptive details for a broader interpretation of understanding the site and participants,

"generating a rich, thick description" transferability is confirmed by the reader (Creswell & Poth,

2018, p. 263). Finally, the researcher requested peer-checking to assure adequate alignment of

understanding is conveyed to the reader (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Within the past two years,

there have been a principal and an administrator at this site who have authored dissertations.

They served as peer-checking monitors.

Dependability

Dependability is showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated (Lincoln

& Guba, 1985). Descriptions of my procedures, particularly the adaptation of the study once I

discovered the significance of the success influencer, were comprehensive enough that this study

could be replicated. Specifically, descriptions of the method I developed to undertake this study

were straightforward and supported by the literature, in addition to being simple enough to repeat

for student veterans, but this study could be replicated for any population. I strived to have the

committee review these procedures and deemed them sufficient to demonstrate proficiency in the

method as I designed it.

Triangulation

Multiple sources of evidence provided data sources that result in similar convergence (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Yin, 2018). I reviewed the data and synchronized the evidence to a point of convergence. Then, I provided a statement to justify the determination of theme choice.

Member-Checking

I had the participants review my interview, physical artifacts, and journal writing notes to convey the accuracy of the qualitative finding. This was done to refine the interpretation of the theme choices, and the cultural characteristics, and to ensure the credibility of the participants' inferences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Confirmability

Techniques for establishing confirmability included: (a) confirmability audits; (b) audit trails; (c) triangulation; and (d) reflexivity. This researcher requested the participants' feedback to verify the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This practice was conducted throughout the research to increase relatedness for the participants and to create unity and a shared vision for the nature of this qualitative research study. I used Microsoft Excel 365 to assist with analyzing the data.

Ethical Considerations

Before conducting the research, site approval was sought, as well as participants' invitation to participate. Participant and site pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality. Participants were provided with written informed consent letters that ensured their knowledge of the details of their rights as a volunteer and the opportunity to assent if a need arises. The participants were informed of electronic data stored on the researcher's computer and cellphone

that is password-protected and the physical data was stored in the high school safe. Data was stored on the researcher's password-coded locked computer for three years after the collection of the data with the Liberty University IRB approval. After three years if the data are not needed for further research, the data will be destroyed. Any risks that developed were approached using honesty, compassion, and integrity. For example, consideration was given to avoid a breach of confidentiality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Any potential issues unique to the study that arose were approached with fidelity and caring for the participants' concerns. Finally, the researcher did not have a supervisory or authoritative relationship with any of the participants.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to research how high school ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences of an inclusive process that supports marginalized students as ECAs' participants at a rural high school. The problem was that marginalized students were underrepresented in ECAs. This chapter delivers the central research question and sub-questions that framed the study to reveal how sponsors' and coaches' experiences of ECAs' involvement may attenuate or enhance an inclusive process. Citations supported justifications for the methodological decisions made by the researcher. Details of the site and participants were provided for other educators on the relevance of this study for their own situation. The procedures of the study were outlined, and details of the methods of interviews, journal writing, and physical artifacts were given. Procedures should be able to be followed by another researcher if replication of this study is desired. Trustworthiness procedures of credibility, transferability, confirmability, and ethics were established, considered, and discussed to inform readers of the validity and reliability of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of the case study was to explore extracurricular activities' (ECAs) sponsors' and coaches' experiences of an inclusive process that supports marginalized students, ninth-graders, as ECAs' participants at a rural high school. The objective of this chapter was to present the data collection and analysis results. Data were obtained by three data collection methods: participants' interviews, physical artifacts, and participants' journal writing responses to answer the central question and three sub-questions. This chapter includes a rich description of the case participants, followed by results and discussion of the themes, codes, outlier data, participants' quotes, coinciding evidence, then the research question with a participant's quote as supporting evidence. Participant quotes are written verbatim and included without alteration except for the font and identification of the club as an ECA to ensure the participants' confidentiality. Lastly, the chapter summary is provided.

Participants

Participants in this case study were Mountain Appalachian High School (MAHS) extracurricular activities' (ECAs) sponsors and coaches with at least two years of teaching experience. Purposive sampling was used to choose participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). The professional education of the 11 participants ranged from bachelor's to master's degrees, with teaching experience ranging from two to 34 years. Interestingly, five participants each has a bachelor's degree and six participants each has a master's degree. Eight participants were female, and three were male. Furthermore, five participants identified as being from suburban areas, while six participants identified as being from rural areas. Participant demographics, including name (pseudonyms), position, sponsors' and coaches' years of

experience are included in Table 1. References to the ECAs are indicated by academic or

nonacademic to ensure participants' confidentiality.

Table 1

Extracurricular Activity Sponsor or Coach Participant Demographics

Participants' Years Teaching	Years as an ECA Sponsor	Academic or Nonacademic ECA
Pike	20	Academic
Knob	14	Nonacademic
Peak	34	Nonacademic
Cliff	14	Nonacademic and Academic
Run Road	11	Academic
Mount	3	Nonacademic
Highlands	21	Academic
Ridge	30	Academic
Gap	16	Nonacademic
Trail	19	Nonacademic
Hilltop	2	Nonacademic

        All ECAs' sponsors and coaches participated in the individual interviews. The interviews

were conducted face-to-face. Physical artifacts were collected by email and in person from ten of

the 11 participants. Journal writing prompts were sent by email to 11 participants with all

participants responding. The three qualitative data collections were triangulated using

methodological triangulation (Yin, 1994).

Pike

Pike has a total of 20 years of teaching, with a master's degree in teaching English as a second language. Pike was interested in sponsoring a club that had been disbanded by a previous sponsor. Pike proposed a need for the club and was approved without monetary compensation; even though, the club was not identified by the union or school district as being sanctioned. Subsequently, Pike volunteered her services and started the club. After the contract expired and a new contract was accepted, the club sponsor was awarded an annual monetary compensation. Interestingly, Pike's sentiment paralleled another ECA sponsor's action to recruit members by contacting the school district's middle schools to generate interest among the eighth-grade students as they prepare for ninth-grade transition to MAHS. Also, Pike requested permission from the middle and high school principals to permit eighth-grade students to join the club. Pike shared that club members feel like they belong and build stronger bonds with teachers and each other when they can interact outside of the classroom, building stronger ties to the school and its community. Pike mentioned that as ninth-grade students join clubs and make friends with higher-grade level schoolmates they feel more connected and supported by the school community, since higher-grade level students serve as role models and mentors to the ninth-grade students. Pike stated that many of the ninth-grade students feel nervous and anxious since their middle school was a smaller setting than at MAHS.

Knob

Knob has a total of 14 years of teaching experience. Knob sponsors a nonacademic club and has seen an increase in numbers of participants during the last four years. Knob expressed her commitment to offering more after-school meetings to accommodate the interest of the ECA's members, as well as, nurturing the effort of the ECA's members to support opportunities

to provide a sense of belonging to students schoolwide by sponsoring a snowball sale for all students to enjoy. Knob credits the completion of a master's program, as it "helped me reach students on a deeper cognitive level; emotional needs, behavioral needs, and physical needs. It has helped me tremendously on that level as an educator."

Peak

Peak has a master's degree and has taught at elementary, middle school, and high school levels for 34 years. Peak has participated in urban and rural educational opportunities. Peak sponsors a nonacademic ECA. Peak confirmed that membership is open to any student who has the desire to participate. Peak explained that the curriculum provides for students to schedule this ECA during school time. However, scheduling limitations do not hinder membership in the club because afterschool opportunities are expected for ECAs. Practices are held once a week after school and students become excited to be part of a program at MAHS.

Cliff

Cliff has a bachelor's degree in elementary education and 22 years of military experience. Cliff lives outside this rural district in a suburban area, yet his military and personal experiences have taught him not to discriminate. Cliff has been leading this academic and nonacademic ECA for 15 years. MAHS's course selections provide students the opportunity to participate in this ECA during school time. In addition, this club meets after school and provides its members with opportunities for an air rifle marksmanship program, an archery program, a drill team, a color guard, a raiders team, and a saber team. Cliff noted that if somebody cannot do something in the program, then he tries to look at their abilities versus disabilities, so he looks at what they have to offer and he ties that into an ECA; moreover, the outcome creates a sense of belonging for the student. Cliff elaborated that membership is conditional for the cadets to follow the connect

creed, otherwise, there are no discriminatory factors to exclude any student interested in joining this ECA. Cliff expounded on the need to collaborate with teachers and administration to ensure that the pathway for each student is correct to ensure diversity is recognized and supported.

Run Road

Run Road has a master's degree and has been teaching for 11 years. Run Road shared that he sponsors an academic club in which club members are motivated to join, based on their interest in any of five science-related disciplines. Once a member chooses a discipline of interest, he or she becomes responsible to mentor other members to master a discipline of interest. Subsequently, that gives them a sense of belonging that they are not only mastering that material, but they are also teaching that material to the other members. Membership is evenly dispersed with a limitation of two representatives per grade level.

Interestingly, Run Road did not have prior experience with a rural culture but became fascinated with MAHS students' rural cultural interests. Run Road had the desire to learn more about this rural culture by attending, nightly, with his family the annual county fair. Run Road's experience generated a level of understanding to relate more deeply with the club members and MAHS's school culture.

Mount

Mount has a master's degree and has been teaching for four years. Mount had no prior experience as a club sponsor; however, during the past three years of club sponsorship, she has learned to operate the club as a business. Each student has responsibilities and deadlines to meet. Interestingly, there are no ninth-grade members but a goal for the club is to include all MAHS students in at least three pictures in the MAHS yearbook. Mount expressed the benefit of having ninth-grade students as members because the upper-grade level members do not always know the

ninth-grade students. Mount explained that a lack of scheduling opportunities and the

misunderstanding by the course title as Applied Communication instead of the ECA club as a

limitation for ninth-grade students to join the club.

Highlands

Highlands has been teaching at MAHS for 24 years and has a bachelor's degree in

business education. Highlands has sponsored an ECA for 21 years. Highlands expressed that her

passion and intrinsic value for the club were rooted in her high school experience as a member

and president of a similar club; and, she continues to nurture the club's values in the present

members. Highlands credits her connection to the club members as a shared rural heritage.

Moreover, membership has dropped from 60 to 20 members; two factors that may have an

impact on membership are the COVID-19 crisis and the lack of MAHS's live morning

announcements. Highlands shared that despite the decreased membership, two members, a

freshman and a junior won the regional and state-level competitions last year.

Ridge

Ridge graduated from MAHS where she was a member of the ECA that she sponsors,

giving her a sense of connectedness to the school and club members. Ridge had attended a local

university and after earning a bachelor's degree became a MAHS teacher. She has taught ninth-

grade students for 30 years. Ridge began to assist with an ECA as a sponsor's volunteer;

however, after a few years when Ridge was asked to sponsor the ECA the time was not right, and

another teacher assumed the position. Then, after many years, the position was offered to her

again; and Ridge accepted. Ridge addressed the limitation for fostering a sense of belonging with

the members because of the nature of school during the past two years. When school reopened

after the COVID-19 shutdown, many of the club members chose to remain in the remote learning

environment. So, it became problematic to develop a relationship with most of them. However, this year more students are returning to school and Ridge is hopeful to create a sense of belonging for members. Presently, Ridge is working to create a mindset of a service society for the members. The ECA is based on character. However, Ridge expressed, the members have limited mindsets and think that it is a glorified honor roll; whereas she desires to "shift the members' mindsets to be as yes, we are smart. Now, what way can we use our skills service-wide?"

Ridge noted a concern about the adjustment for ninth-grade students as they begin their journey at MAHS. Ridge conveyed concern for the ninth-graders as they merge from two middle schools into one high school; subsequently, the ECA's eligibility requirement to maintain a certain grade point average for club membership may not be conducive to ease of belonging. So, that, if they are forward-thinking and want to be club members, they must adjust quickly to ensure that they can acquire and maintain an acceptable grade point average. The ninth-grade students are not aware of the need for qualification for the club. However, as the club sponsor, Ridge has not placed a priority for ninth-grade students to have an awareness of the eligibility for the club; yet, she mentioned that the awareness is significant.

Gap

Gap graduated from MAHS, then earned a bachelor's degree in business administration, and has served MAHS as a long-term substitute and an in-school suspension monitor. Gap now serves in a supportive position. While employed at MAHS, Gap sponsored and coached many ECAs during the past 16 years. During the school year 2021-2022 Gap sponsored a nonacademic ECA which established a county-wide tournament project that raised $3000.00 for homeless veterans. All MAHS students were eligible to participate. Gap's goal for membership was targeted at at-risk students and other students that have free time on Sundays. The purpose was to

keep students out of trouble by getting the students engaged in an organized event that was less physically demanding. The outcome was that the team provided unity for the participants, especially the ninth-grade students by helping them with their transition into high school by becoming more acclimated with upper-grade level students as a mentor-partnership experience. Gap and another teacher started the program with approximately 20 students. The team event soon expanded by inviting other schools in the county to participate in a county-wide event.

A sense of belonging was mentored by the team members when on Sundays' team meetings, the members began talking about their grades. While they were participating in the activity conversation was generated about the students' academics, resulting in a connectedness being nurtured and Gap was able to get a little closer to fostering a trusting supportive relationship with the members. The members began to share their concerns with the team's coach. Gap stated, "It is as though the ECA's members view the coach as their guidance counselor."

Trail

Trail has a bachelor's degree and has been teaching at MAHS for 19 years. She has been sponsoring the student council for 19 years. She stated her love for process and that sponsoring a club that gives voice and representation to the study body seemed like a perfect fit. Recruitment happens through the election of officers by their classmates. There are four officers for each class. Therefore, four freshmen are selected by popular vote and provided an opportunity to represent their classmates and work with the upper-classes' officers. Hilltop stated that the officers are very welcoming and serious about maintaining unity with a representation of all ideas when considering matters. The sponsor challenges the club officers to think from an open mindset instead of a fixed mindset. A sense of belonging is fostered as the officers do their best

to try and bring awareness to the need to include all students in the decision-making. For example, when the club planned a MAHS spirit week, they were considerate of theme choices that were easy and without financial obligations. For example, the officers didn't want students to feel as though they were left out illustrating that the club members have an awareness of the disadvantages at MAHS. There is a continual effort to be aware and tolerant of the limitations in this rural school.

Hilltop

Hilltop has a master's degree in education, experience as a worldwide traveler, and 25 years of experience in a prior career as an entertainer. Hilltop has a history of involvement with the Rotary International Club and credits that prior experience with nurturing a passion for sponsoring an ECA at MAHS. This is Hilltop's second year as an ECA sponsor and the first year to partner with Ridge, another ECA sponsor.

Hilltop expressed that the ECA is open to all students. Hilltop stated that ninth-grade club recruitment becomes problematic since she does not teach ninth-grade students. Hilltop stated, "Because I am not in the classroom with them [ninth-grade students]; I feel that that is a disadvantage, where I am placed, and maybe an argument for having a sponsor on board that would be more of an underclassman role model." She envisions developing a plan that will target freshmen recruitment into the club.

The previous school year, Hilltop taught the students in tenth-grade which provided an opportunity for students to recognize her openness to support diversity, equity, and inclusion. Hilltop stated, "They feel very safe to be included as club members." Hilltop viewed her advocacy as a strength that was reinforced by her theater background. Thereby, the club is a

product that is reflective of her philosophy. This exemplifies the factor of relatedness between the ECA's sponsor with the club members.

Hilltop grew up in a neighboring city, which she considers has its essence of ruralness. She views MAHS as having a disadvantage and a lack of culture. Interestingly, Hilltop views the club as a citizenship club that does not emphasize academics; even though, the club is managed as a business with board meetings, event planning, mentorship practices with underclassmen, and generation of community correspondences. Hilltop stated, "A goal is to prepare the members to be business-minded and to have the abilities to go into their first board meeting as 30-year-olds without anyone knowing it is their first board meeting."

As the interview continued, it was revealed to Hilltop that a supportive intervention for recruiting ninth-grade students would be to present the eighth-grade students with an introduction about the club before they come to MAHS. This is Hilltop's first year collaborating with Ridge to create a dual ECA opportunity. Hilltop and Ridge can recruit and support more club members by collaboration of their ECAs. Ridge has repeatedly recruited members by having his club members conduct a club introduction at the middle schools for eighth-grade students to be more aware of the opportunities for ECAs' membership at MAHS.

Results

The results from the data collected were used to develop themes and answer the research questions. Before identifying any themes in the data, observation transcripts, interview transcripts, physical artifacts, and journal prompt written responses were read and studied. Audio recordings were reviewed to ensure the accuracy of transcripts and observational data. Member-checking was used to ensure credibility for the participants' interview responses (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Also, the physical artifacts, the journal prompt written responses, and annotated

notes helped to ensure that the researcher biases were separated from the data. To conduct a bias-free system of data analysis, Microsoft Excel 365, a computer software program designed for qualitative data analysis was utilized to generate categorical aggregate themes and sub-themes into pivot tables, as well as human-based analysis of coding to provide broader data analysis. Codes were also reviewed to determine alignment with the research questions. Once the coding was finalized, each code was categorized. The codes created are presented in Table 2. Once the data were coded and grouped, eight major themes emerged from participants' interviews, physical artifacts, and journal writing data collection. This chapter will present the results as converged evidence from the interviews, physical artifacts, and journal writing data collection.

Theme Development

Themes were developed from the codes that emerged from the data collection. The eight themes determined from the data were willingness, relatedness, gratification, inclusivity, concerns, benefits, values, and recruitment. Table 2 lists the themes, sub-themes, codes, frequency of responses, and salient quotes. The themes and sub-themes were determined from the codes being grouped into similar categories through a word search then frequency was calculated using the total number of theme responses divided by the total of participants' responses equal to the proportion percentage as reported in Table 2.

Table 2

Themes, Sub-Themes, Codes, Frequency, and Quotes from the Interviews and Journal Prompt Written Responses Data Collection

Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes	Frequency, n(%)	Salient Quotes
Willingness	Networking Efforts	Volunteer Asked	15(3.1)	"I volunteered."

		Cochair Cosponsor		"I am the one that actually brought it to this school, they did not have this ECA."
Relatedness	Professional Experience	Prior experience When I taught	8(1.7)	"I was a member when I was in high school."
	Cultural Experience	Culture/Cultural Strong bonds	8(1.7)	"…the economic disadvantage and the lack of culture and I see that here."
	Personal Experience	Marginalize Not in the in-group Member of this ECA Life learning Lived experience	9(2)	"I was that student."
Gratification		Joy Happy Fun Excited Nice Passion I like to do it	14(2.9)	"The students get excited, I get excited, the administration gets excited." "…just good old plain fun for kids."
Inclusivity		Inclusive Ninth-grade transition 9th grade IEPs Included Unity/connected Involved Fellow classmates All students	121(25.2)	"They [student officers] have talked with other classmen about ideas and…I think that definitely they want to represent everybody."
Concerns	Intimidation	Scared Afraid Intimidating Nervous	16(3.3)	"A lot of the freshmen are scared." "For ninth-graders joining a new ECA… which can be intimidating… they don't know what to expect."
	Scheduling	Schedule Time	16(3.3)	"I have not had any experience with ninth-graders as participants because they do not have any room in their

				schedules, no nineth-graders in the club."
	Funding	Funding No data	12(2.5)	"I receive no data." "I do not have any data."
	Professional Development	Professional Development	14(2.9)	"The ECA receives passive support from the administration."
Benefits		Opportunities Academic Advantage Socialization Field trips Critical thinking Collaboration Accountable Creating more Leadership Responsibility	119(24.8)	"…providing an academic setting that promotes an artistic environment and calming setting after school hours to enhance students creative process while fostering socialization among club members." "We always do field trips."
Values		I believe It is important I feel I think I love I try I encourage	33(6.9)	"I would love for ninth-graders to be able to join my course."
Recruitment	Membership	Recruitment Promotion Welcoming Announcements Recommendations Words getting out Flyers Middle School Team member Sharing Together	83(17.3)	"It has doubled this year…it seems like the words getting out."
	Collaborative Recruitment	Curriculum/Goals/Real world	12(2.5)	"…necessary to go into the real world."

Willingness

The first uncovered theme from the participants' interviews was willingness with the word volunteer to aid in the categorization of coding of participant data. Willingness is a characteristic of rural culture (Hartman, 2017). For example, Pike stated, "I volunteered to help other ECAs." Nine of 11 participants responded to the interview questions data collection methods by communicating that they volunteered to be sponsors or coaches for an ECA. In addition, Pike mentioned a defuncted ECA, "I asked [administration] if it would be alright for me to begin the club again and was given permission to do so." The findings indicated that a subtheme of networking efforts to mentor and collaborate with administrators, teachers, and other ECAs' coaches and sponsors was foundational for ECA sponsors' and coaches' willingness to create and sustain ECAs.

Networking Efforts

A subtheme for willingness was networking efforts. Networking can be thought of as connections of support (Hagler, 2018). The participants shared how they unite with other support personnel to gather ideas for improvement for their clubs and club members. Cliff mentioned, "We collaborate with each of the teachers…parents…administrators, to ensure that the pathway for the students is correct and each one is different." Gap proposed to the administration the need for an ECA that would meet on Saturday mornings to provide a sports-related program for at-risk students. Gap's nonacademic ECA sponsored a county-wide event that raised funds for Wounded Warriors. Gap's networking efforts show a willingness to create inclusivity that accommodates the students' needs by networking with ECAs' sponsors and coaches at neighboring high schools to broaden students' experiences. Educational leaders in rural school

districts collaborate to expand opportunities to support marginalized students and recognize their networking efforts as culturally responsive (Hesbol et al., 2020).

Relatedness

The second theme that emerged from this study was relatedness. ECAs' sponsors and coaches at MAHS have a strong commitment to understanding the community's rural culture. ECAs' sponsors and coaches provide an opportunity for students to generate deeper cultural understanding through ECAs' participants' peer-to-peer interactions (Agran et al., 2017; Carter et al., 2019; Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019; Leigers et al., 2017; Yin et al., 2022). Pike stated, "Students will talk to me more so than they will talk to each other. If I notice the students have similar interests, then I will steer them towards each other." This demonstrates the potential and mindset of the ECAs' sponsors and coaches to practice proactive inclusive steps to ensure that students gain more than membership status. The ECAs' members gain a sense of belonging (Cullinane, 2020; Gorski, 2021).

Professional Experience

The first sub-theme for relatedness was professional experience. Seven of 11 participants shared that their professional experience related to opportunities locally and globally that rooted their passion to support inclusive practices for their ECA members. For example, Highlands, Hilltop, Mount, and Trail stated that they conduct their ECA meetings from a business perspective. Hilltop added, "Based on my entertainment background I was able to tour the world, every continent except Australia." MAHS's ECAs' sponsors and coaches have professional experiences that are broad and support ECA events that enhance the cultural experiences of ECA members.

Mount remarked about professional and personal experience to co-sponsor an ECA, "So, as far as prior experiences, done with the club at all." However, sponsoring the ECA was an expectation for job placement. Current literature reports that administrators will recruit teachers to sponsor or coach ECAs (Juvonen et al., 2019; Phillips et al., 2021). After one year the ECA cosponsor resigned, leaving Mount to continue as the sole sponsor. Mount shared that during the summer she attended professional development trainings at a nearby university to gain more knowledge about the ECA that she sponsors.

Cultural Experience

The second sub-theme for relatedness was cultural experience. Two of 11 participants responded to the interview questions with a story about a pig. Peak stated, "I had an ECA member who said, "I am sorry I did not go to practice last night. I am really tired because I had to chase pigs. Well, I understand chasing pigs because my kids were in 4H and I have a story about chasing pigs." Road Run shared a similar experience when he and his family attended the county fair nightly to become more acquainted with the rural culture. Road Run spoke with his ECA members about being at the county fair and an ECA member asked if he would come to see his pigs before they go to market. Run Road stated, "It is nice to not only relate to students in the classroom but outside [the classroom] as well." Recent literature refers to shared teacher-student experiences as culturally responsive (Hagler, 2018; Hesbol et al., 2020).

Personal Experience

The third sub-theme for relatedness was personal experience. Six of 11 participants provided evidence that confirmed their personal experiences fostered their passion for the ECAs that they sponsor or coach. Highlands stated that the ECA that she sponsors was something that she enjoyed as an ECA member when she was a high school student. Furthermore, two

participants shared that they identified as being marginalized students during their high school years, Highlands said, "I grew up that way, so I connect with them." In addition, Peak stated, "I am going to tell you that I was that student, growing up."

Gratification

Participants shared their enthusiasm for sponsoring and coaching an ECA. Run Road, Highlands, and Gap stated their gratitude for having ECA members compete at the county and state levels. Pike spoke of creating a safe space for all ECA members and elaborated about an alumnus who continues to participate in a reunion-like experience. The impact of ECAs' participation extends beyond the classroom walls and the graduation stage (Shaffer, 2019). Peak explained her experience of being an ECAs' sponsor as "joy." Interestingly, Cullinane (2020) used the same word to express ECAs' participants' views about ECAs' participation.

Inclusivity

Envisioning schools that place inclusion as an operational need to expand opportunities for students with and without educational needs may create an atmosphere that bonds all students during the school day (Ziegler et al., 2020). Cliff shared this sentiment:

> Regardless of whether you are in a wheelchair, and we have kids in a wheelchair, regardless of whether you have a speech impediment, regardless of whether you come from an economically advantaged or economically disadvantaged background it is all-inclusive and part of it is how we work together. We must work together. We cannot leave one of those [students] out; some of those are going to be our neighbors, our coworkers, and all of that. We look at what they have to offer and we tie that into the ECA.

Another inclusive process was demonstrated when Mount stated, " One of the goals of my ECA is to include [three photos in the yearbook of] every single student in the high school."

Concerns

As ECAs' sponsors and coaches began sharing through the interviews, concerns were shared about intimidation, scheduling, funding, transportation, and professional development. ECAs' sponsors and coaches discussed their concerns about creating a safe environment for the ninth-grade students and their attempts to alleviate ninth-graders' fears of attending the high school and being an ECA's member. For example, Highlands stated, "For ninth-graders joining a new ECA, they are surrounded by a lot of upperclassmen that they may not know very well, which can be intimidating. They don't know what to expect at social events." Interestingly, all participants spoke of ideas that may or may not have developed to fruition for problem-solving their concerns. ECAs' leaders have the potential to provide easier access to club membership (Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019; Juvonen et al., 2019; Phillips et al., 2021).

Intimidation

The most common area of concern was identified as ninth-grade students' intimidation. ECAs' sponsors and coaches expressed their views about ninth-grade students feeling insecure about transitioning from middle school to high school. Run Road stated, "Ninth-graders do not know how to study." Highlands stated, "They are always afraid." Research findings suggested that positive outcomes can be expected if high school leaders implement supportive interventions to create peer-to-peer and student-to-teacher relationships or sustain relationships from middle school to high school (Benner et al., 2017). ECA participation acts as a supportive intervention that can cultivate ECAs participants' relationships as they transition from middle school to high school.

Scheduling

Another concern was the ninth-grade limitation of scheduling opportunities as Mount and Peak's ECAs are scheduled in-school classes. Mount shared her concern of a ninth-grade scheduling limitation that does not provide access to the course aligned with the ECA she sponsors. In addition, the course title for her ECA does not provide clarity for ninth-grade students to understand that it is an ECA course. Mount remarked about a scheduling concern, "I had quite a few students from last year who really wanted to return but they are seniors, and they get work release. Because the yearbook class is only offered once in the day the scheduling is limiting. Same as any afternoon students who have vo-tech they cannot join." Highlands elaborated that creating a course that embeds her ECA would be beneficial to support more enrollment. Furthermore, scheduling does not need to be a limiting factor for ECA membership. For example, creating an activity schedule to provide time and access for students to become members of an ECA as a schoolwide function supports students' sense of belonging (Siperstein et al., 2019).

Funding

Participants' responses provided a broad array of ideas for funding. All participants stated there are no required fees to be an ECAs' member. ECAs' sponsors and coaches elaborated on generating funds through fundraisers and students' assembly opportunities, such as dances and snow cones sales for the entire student body to participate. In all cases, there was a determination to provide adequate resources and opportunities for the ECAs' members to feel well supported so funding was not conditional for creating a sense of belonging. Hilltop stated, "So it feels as though we are in a situation where we need more hands involvement which means more funds allocated." Gap stated, "If you are not investing in your schools now it is going to hurt you, so

community involvement is huge." Moreover, participants shared their appreciation for the funding that the administration provided, albeit limiting. Financial support for ECAs is associated with academic benefits that transfer as a financial payoff (Shaffer, 2019).

Transportation

Participants' interview and journal writing responses provided evidence of transportation concerns for the ninth-grade students to attend after-school meetings since ninth-grade students do not drive and there is no activity bus. Pike stated, "Ninth-graders have a harder time getting transportation…I don't know why. You would think tenth-graders also can't drive. Why is it easier for them to participate?" ECAs' sponsors and coaches are providing an opportunity to participate using a Google Meet platform for members who do not have transportation for after school events. While other participants reported that there was an activity bus in the past, but that privilege was removed because of budgeting concerns.

Professional Development

The findings suggested concern about professional development opportunities to support ECAs' sponsors and coaches. Three participants stated attending local and state professional development conferences, two participants mentioned district professional development to support the inclusive process, two participants identified district professional development to support social and emotional learners, two participants identified district professional development but failed to provide specifics, and two participants said they have not received professional development to support the ECAs' sponsors and coaches. Cliff stated, "To say I have had any formal training of how to deal with the kids, no."

The participants' responses to the professional development question appear to lack alignment of support for ECAs' sponsors and coaches to gain knowledge of the inclusive

process. Ridge stated, "We have had inclusion training for years and years but I cannot think of one." Subsequently, Hilltop suggested, "A need for a professional development area to workshop strategies for ECAs' sponsors and coaches to unite in their efforts to support ninth-grade students' sense of belonging as they transition to the high school." Rural educational leaders should consider professional development targets for supporting marginalized students (Hesbol et al., 2020; Parry et al., 2020).

Benefits

The advantages of ECAs' participation were highlighted by the interview responses of all 11 participants. Regardless, of the classification of nonacademic or academic the ECAs' sponsors and coaches mentioned providing support for academics by increasing opportunities for accountability, responsibilities, socialization, and critical thinking. Eleven participants communicated the positive impact of cultural enrichment through peer-to-peer, teacher-to-students' interactions during field trips, club meetings, and club-sponsored events. These findings align with the theoretical framework of a sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2018; Grover et al., 2021; Hagler, 2018) and the empirical significance of a sense of belonging for marginalized students (Cullinane, 2020). Knob mentioned, "Students feel like they belong. Students build stronger bonds with teachers when they can interact with them outside of the classroom." Moreover, Gap added, "I have seen many shy and introverted students become the most popular kids in their class due to engagement in ECAs. It's a game changer."

Ten participants mentioned the opportunities for ECAs' members to enrich their character development of accountability, competency, confidence, independence, leadership, service, citizenship, and patriotism. Viewed together, this creates an imperative to support ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' professional development. Character development may not be part of the

academic curriculum but is an essential factor for promoting a positive framework for learners to feel safe like Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation (THM), participants described the necessity for a safe learning environment in promoting a sense of belonging.

Four ECAs' sponsors and coaches focused on community and global service by mentioning their efforts to enhance their ECAs' members' international understandings. While a sense of understanding and awareness was generated from this research data collection, it is meaningful to consider the quality of the service (Ainscow, 2020). Trail spoke of ECA members organizing an in-school volleyball tournament that raised money to support the Ukraine relief. Interestingly, Trail sponsors a nonsport ECA.

Six of the eight participants that provided data for their ECA aims, objectives, and strategies identified the academic relevance for their ECAs members. The academic-focused ECAs created opportunities for members to engage with academic-enrichment inclusion outside of the classroom. Run Road and Highlands both have academic-focused ECAs. Run Road's physical artifact and Highlands' interview response explained that their ECAs' members prepare to compete at regional and state levels.

Four of 11 participants shared that service was an important component of their ECA. Hilltop's physical data and Cliff's interview response emphasized their ECAs commitment to supporting community projects. During the interview, Hilltop elaborated on a project called Stuff-a-Bus. Hilltop's and Cliff's ECAs' members coordinated the Stuff-a-Bus as an in-school initiative of toy collection for needy families in the community. During the interview, Knob added that students "also make new friends, and that builds stronger ties to the school and its community. I think when ninth-graders in join clubs and make friends with older students they feel more connected to and supported by the school community."

Values

The sixth theme uncovered was values. The participants' values were coded as "I believe, I feel, I think, I love, I try, I encourage, I respect, I understand, it is important." For example, Pike stated in the interview response, "I think through all of the ECAs that I have sponsored, [ECAs' membership] give the students a strong sense of belonging." For example, Pike stated in the interview and journal writing response, "I wish that we offered more here…and find more sponsors. I wish there were more opportunities for the students. I wish that there would be more people that would volunteer, who would be willing to volunteer their time." This idea was expounded as Gap stated, "We need to grow our teachers."

Recruitment

The eighth theme that emerged from this study was recruitment. Relationships between ECAs' sponsors and coaches have the potential to create an environment of belonging. When students see teachers display the shared values of the culture students are positively impacted (Allen et al., 2018; Cullinane, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020; Starrett et al., 2021). Therefore, recruitment for welcoming students to become members of ECAs was recognized as a point of reflection by the participants. The revealed sub-themes were ECAs membership recruitment and collaborative recruitment of ECAs' sponsors and coaches and their ECAs' members. The data in Table 3 lists that five of ten ECAs' membership support that ninth-grade students are underrepresented in ECAs at MAHS.

Table 3

Physical Artifacts Data Aims, Objectives, Strategies, and Number of Members

ECA Sponsor/Coach	1. Aim 2. Objectives 3. Strategies	Number of ECA members
Pike	1) To broaden students' literary horizons and interests.	Ninth grade: 9 Tenth grade: 9 Eleventh grade: 9 Twelfth grade: 1
Knob	1) To broaden the spectrum and appreciation of Fine Arts for any student at MAHS. 2) Students will meet up to two times a month after school to participate in fine arts projects for school functions and displays. 3) Creating independence and individuality.	Ninth grade: 2 Tenth grade: 6 Eleventh grade: 0 Twelfth grade: 5
Peak	Not reported.	Ninth grade: 9 Tenth grade: 2 Eleventh grade: 11 Twelfth grade: 10
Cliff	Not reported.	Ninth grade: 34 Tenth grade: 29 Eleventh grade: 9 Twelfth grade: 22
Run Road	1)To get students involved with earning about different areas of the environment including wildlife, forestry, aquatics, soils and land use, and a current issue that involves converting waste to resources. 2) Students will: a) compete in a county and possibly state-wide competition. b) use their knowledge from the various station training and show their level of understanding in a hands-on competition where they must relate what they learned to different organisms and environmental situations. c) see how humans impact the natural world.	Ninth grade: 2 Tenth grade: 2 Eleventh grade: 3 Twelfth grade: 3

	d) understand ecosystems and our environment.	
Mount	1) Students learn the journalistic and technical skills needed to craft and publish a book, using industry- standard software and hardware. 2) Students will: a) improve and display their photojournalistic skills, including knowledge of photo and layout composition, writing skills, and design skills. b) engage in activities to build leadership and teamwork skills, implement time management and organization strategies, and hold themselves accountable as individuals on a team. 3) Discussion about staff structure and annual theme planning through a variety of projects, in-class activities, out-of-class activities, and collaborative tasks. Secondly, the ECA members use Sprint cycles and Gantt charts to create accountability to bring their team's spread to completion by the deadline.	Ninth grade: 0 Tenth grade: 0 Eleventh grade: 9 Twelfth grade: 2
Highlands	1) Inspires and prepares members to become community-minded business leaders in a global society through relevant career preparation and leadership experiences. 2) Students will: a) Develop competent, aggressive business leadership. b) Strengthen the confidence of members and their work. c) Develop character, prepare for useful citizenship, and foster patriotism. 3) Assist members in the establishment of occupational goals and facilitate the transition from school to work.	Ninth grade: 0 Tenth grade: 2 Eleventh grade: 8 Twelfth grade: 8
Ridge	1) Commitment to the values of scholarship, service, leadership, and character.	Ninth grade: 0 Tenth grade: 0 Eleventh grade: 0 Twelfth grade: 49

	2) Students will have increased engagement with the community in the form of service projects. 3) Provide students with options for project selection that leads to becoming stakeholders with leadership skills.	
Gap	Not reported	Not reported
Trail	1) Student Council members are encouraged to speak with their classmates and get a pulse of what the students are thinking. 2) We will utilize Canvas and have discussion threads posted for members to post their ideas and thoughts on topics.	Ninth grade: 2 Tenth grade: 2 Eleventh grade: 2 Twelfth grade: 2
Hilltop	1) To take action in the school and the community to make a difference. 2) Organize at least 2 projects for the year: one that serves the community and/or the school and one that encourages international understanding.	Ninth grade: 5 Tenth grade: 16 Eleventh grade: 39 Twelfth grade: 36
Grand Total of ECAs' members per grade level.		Ninth grade: 63 Tenth grade: 68 Eleventh grade: 90 Twelfth grade: 138

Membership Recruitment

ECAs' membership is not aligned consistently across grade levels. Table 3 lists the number of ECAs' members per grade level with the least number of students in the lower level grades at MAHS. The total number of ECAs' members is 63 in ninth-grade, 68 in tenth-grade, 90 in eleventh-grade, and 138 in twelfth-grade. This data aligns with this research's theoretical, empirical, and practical significance to explore how ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences support equity, inclusion, and belonging for rural, marginalized ninth-grade students. Cliff recruits ninth-grade ECA members by having his ECA members go to the middle schools and present an introduction of the objectives, aims, and strategies of the ECA. Introducing middle school students to the high school ECAs' programs is a useful strategy for guiding students'

pathway for ECA membership based on the students' interests (Grant et al., 2021). In addition,

this year Cliff recruited eight students from the MAHS Life Skills class, a class designed for

students with exceptional needs. Cliff stated:

> Those are students that normally would stay in that room the whole day so for them to get
>
> out and come in here with the rest of the ECA members and learn from somebody else, a
>
> different teacher, about how they are going to be a functional part of society…that is
>
> where the traditional kids accept them and it is kind of neat…because they are either
>
> going to be productive or not productive but you are still going to have to relate to them.

Collaborative Recruitment

Eight of 11 participants spoke of their collaborative experiences with sponsoring an ECA.

Cliff and Hilltop jointly organized their responsibilities by merging their ECAs. This approach

may be beneficial for ninth-grade students who do not have ninth-grade teachers as ECA

sponsors or coaches. Hilltop expressed concern about having a smaller number of ninth-grade

ECA members compared to the larger number of upper-grade level ECA members in the ECA

she sponsors. Hilltop related this outcome to not having "buy-in with the sponsor…and maybe

an argument for having a sponsor on board that would be more of an underclassman role model."

Hilltop and Cliff are trying to create more buy-in, as Hilltop does not teach ninth-grade students

but Cliff does teach ninth-grade students.

Run Road shared a similar sentiment as he assigns areas of scientific interest to individual

ECA members. When these members acquire proficiency in their area of science interest then

they mentor other students to reach mastery. Run Road stated, "So that way the students are

communicating with one another, and that gives them a sense of belonging." Furthermore, peer-

to-peer modeling was implemented by all research study participants. Current literature aligns

with the peer-to-peer approach to support a sense of belonging (Benner et al., 2017; Cullinane, 2020; Gorski, 2021; Ziegler et al., 2020).

Outlier Data and Findings

An unexpected finding that did not align with specific research questions is the sub-theme of collaborative recruitment. Collaborative recruitment was propagated among the ECAs' sponsors and coaches, thereby, showing partnering as a positive outcome for relationship-building. The demonstration of ECAs' sponsors and coaches to partner signifies a deeper understanding of the positive attributes that aligns with creating a sense of belonging among the ECAs' sponsors and coaches.

Outlier Finding Collaborative Recruitment

Eight of 11 participants offered evidence to support their desire to collaborate with other ECAs' sponsors and coaches to promote ECAs' membership. The ECAs' sponsors and coaches shared their effort, time, and responsibility to generate students' interest in ECAs, resultantly fostering a sense of belonging. Trail stated, "I have been a co-sponsor since the 2019 school year. I co-sponsored with two other teachers. I had sponsored the junior class for several years prior, so I had some experience in dealing with extracurriculars." Interestingly, recruiting a co-sponsor or uniting with another ECAs sponsor or coach may be more advantageous than being a lone ECAs' sponsor or coach. Run Road does not collaborate with other ECAs sponsors or coaches and stated difficulties he faces with getting administrations' approval for in-school assemblies. Run Road stated, "I get pushback…But at the same time, [I] try to make administration happy without overstepping my boundaries, by making them try to bring something into the school that they are uncomfortable with." Road Run has been unsuccessful in trying to get approval for an open aviary presentation.

Research Question Responses

The central research question and sub-questions were addressed by the data collection in the study. The data collection provided evidence to support research sub-question one and sub-question two by showing how the ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences align with Maslow's (1943) THM's level two, safety, and level three, a sense of belonging. Furthermore, research sub-question three provided evidence of the participants' concerns about inadequate professional development to support an inclusive process for ECAs' members.

Central Research Question

How do high school ECAs' sponsors and coaches describe their experiences with the inclusion of marginalized students, ninth-graders, at the rural MAHS? Each of the eight themes provided support to answering the central research question. ECAs' sponsors and coaches shared their intrinsic motivation to support their club members with a safe and welcoming environment to celebrate and foster their members' sense of belonging through shared interests and experiences. Peak stated:

> I was that kid…I can get some students in my afterschool who are not athletes and do not have a place in other parts of extracurricular, but they find a place here. I have some students who stay afterward and are not talented but it doesn't matter, they can fit in, I teach them how to be better. They have opportunities that they may not have had.

Sub-Question One

How would ECAs' sponsors and coaches improve a sense of belonging for marginalized ninth-graders to join the ECA that they sponsor or coach? Ten of 11 participants remarked about creating more opportunities for the ninth-graders to become ECAs' members. Pike stated:

Clubs like Cliff's, mine, and others where the ninth-graders get to interact with

the older kids help them feel more secure and allow the older kids to mentor them

a little more and serve as role models for them and make them feel more secure

here at the high school.

Therefore, Pike and other ECAs' sponsors and coaches shared that peer-to-peer interactions and

mentoring opportunities for ECAs' membership should be provided to the ninth-graders.

Sub-Question Two

How would ECAs' sponsors and coaches address the benefits or barriers for marginalized

ninth-graders to have academic and nonacademic equity to participate in ECAs? All participants

provided that peer mentoring and team development were encouraged to show support for

marginalized students to have a sense of belonging. Ridge provided a statement of intimacy:

I have become the mom of the ninth-grade [students]. I try to make my classroom

safe. So, they know coming in here they are safe I will take care of them if there is

an issue, I will help them resolve it. I don't have much in terms of behavior issues

I don't have much of kids not getting along. So, I try to treat them in a family

setting. It doesn't matter if you are a ninth, tenth, or eleventh grade it doesn't

matter if you are a 1.0 [grade point average] or a 4.0 [grade point average]

student.

Sub-Question Three

How would professional development support an inclusive process for ECAs' sponsors

and coaches? Hilltop stated, "The professional development that has been conducted from the

district is as a general teacher." Pike added,

Sometimes it is hard to see the world from outside your own perceptive. So, I

think when we have those sorts of training that make you realize how [it is that] something that I may take for granted is not seen that way and it makes me more and more aware and able to address an issue. Because if you don't know that there is an issue you are not going to do anything about it. So, the sort of training that I can be made aware of [the inclusive process]. Students don't always tell you what they need so the more knowledge that you have makes it easier to help me help them access the resources we have here.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative single case research study was to explore the ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences of an inclusive process that supports marginalized students as ECAs' participants at a rural high school. This research study was conducted using semi-structured interviews, physical artifacts, and journal writings from the ECAs' sponsors and coaches. The collected data were examined and interpreted to uncover the themes from the participants' interview responses, physical artifacts, and journal writing responses. Eight themes emerged from the collected and analyzed data by grouping coded phrases into categories. The themes of the study that aided in answering the research questions were willingness, relatedness, gratification, inclusion, concerns, benefits, values, and recruitment. The data collection revealed a nuance of a sense of ECAs' sponsors and coaches' appreciation to generate opportunities for marginalized students to have a sense of belonging in their high school, rural community, county, state, and global levels. Furthermore, an unexpected finding that did not align with this study's research questions was the theme of willingness with a sub-theme of networking efforts and the theme of recruitment with two sub-themes, one being membership recruitment and the other being collaborative recruitment.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of the case study was to explore extracurricular activities' sponsors' and coaches' (ECAs) experiences of an inclusive process that supports marginalized students, ninth-graders, as ECAs' participants at a rural high school. First, this chapter presents a discussion of this research study findings and interpretation of findings. The discussion continues with thematic findings' interpretation and summary. Next, the discussion provides the implications for policy and practice, along with the theoretical and empirical implications, followed by limitations and delimitations, and concludes with recommendations for future research.

Discussion

This section will provide a summary of the research findings of this study providing the reader with new knowledge and its significance through interpretations, limitations, denotations, and recommendations for future research based on strong evidence revealed by the thematic framework. A summary of thematic findings supports this research's theoretical framework. Moreover, new knowledge is revealed and expounded based on the data collection findings.

Interpretation of Findings

The purpose of this section is to discuss the findings of this study resulting from the data analysis and interpretation of the qualitative interviews, physical artifacts, and journal writings of 11 participants. As discussed in Chapter 4, eight themes were identified through transcription, coding, and data analysis. The eight themes are willingness, relatedness, gratification, inclusivity, concerns, benefits, values, and recruitment. The interpretations, I deemed as significant, will follow the interpretation of findings.

Summary of Thematic Findings

This section will provide a summary of this study's thematic findings. The data supporting the eight themes will be foundational for arriving at the interpretation of the findings. The thematic findings are categorized into three sub-headings: Scope of cogency, Scope of interdependence, and Extensions of ECAs' participation benefits. The thematic interpretation of findings is supported by the theoretical significance of Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation (THM) which this research study's findings reveal as multi-dimensional. Furthermore, recent literature attributes THM as support for teachers (Fisher & Crawford, 2020), providing relevance since all participants were teachers. The significance of new knowledge will be noted.

Scope of Cogency. Cogency represents a state of the quality of being clearly stated. The scope of cogency reveals how all themes are connected to address the inclusive process to support marginalized ninth-grade students at the Mountain Appalachian High School (MAHS). An assumption of a rural cultural characteristic, cogency is derived based on the simplistic nature of the participants' responses. The most impactful participants' statements were presented with ease and brevity that revealed a genuine quality. For example, when asked about experiences of helping marginalized students to have a sense of belonging, Peak stated, "I was that kid." Resultantly, the themes relatedness 5.4% frequency and inclusivity 25.2% frequency become relevant.

A second example illustrates the theme of recruitment 19.8% frequency. Gap stated, "We need to grow our teachers." The ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' views coincided with their commitment to supporting marginalized students as ECAs' members. The ECAs' sponsors and coaches want other teachers to know the sense of purpose that ECAs' sponsorship and coaching

provides. Evidence was provided from the ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' responses to confirm the themes of gratification 2.9% frequency and concerns 12% frequency as being important factors for their commitment to serve as ECAs' sponsors and coaches. In this, the ECAs' sponsors and coaches conveyed a sense of unity for experiencing joy and a desire for a shared experience for their colleagues, as Pike stated, "I wish that there would be more people that would volunteer, who would be willing to volunteer their time to sponsor." Interestingly, Gap and Hilltop provided the same sentiment as Pike. Moreover, the themes of willingness and recruitment were derived from the participants' responses. There was a naturalistic generalization among all participants' responses as they responded with promptness and sincerity. Subsequently, the stylistic nature of the participants' repetitive responses was sufficient to establish meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

The ECAs' sponsors and coaches continued to be effective as evidenced by their value statements. Cliff convincingly stated, "I try to pull as many kids into the program as possible." The participants' beliefs and attitudes were remarkedly supportive of providing a safe environment for all students and providing the opportunity for the ECAs' participants to have opportunities to assume leadership roles that embraced inclusion. For example, Trail stated, "We do our best to try and bring awareness so that everyone's needs are included, like when we did our spirit week." Trail spoke of ECAs' participants' sharing of ideas and how their discussions generated awareness of support for students based on a low social-economic status. Trail's ECAs' participants made decisions that were considerate of promoting MAHS's spirit week without any student being financially burdened. The participants' value statements were represented as 6.9% frequency. Subsequently, ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' value-laden views

are considered a positive outcome based on Maslow's (1943) THM's centering concept of function.

Maslow's (1943) THM's sense of belonging framed support for this research study's participants' rural characteristic of willingness. Triangulation of the data provided a 3.1% frequency for willingness; subsequently, supporting this research study's phenomenon of an inclusive process to include marginalized ninth-grade students as ECA's participants. Interestingly, the theme of willingness was conceptualized from simplistic statements that characterize the participants' common identity, represented indirectly and naively, by their rural richness. The participants' common responses can be explained by Maslow's (1943) THM, identifying the behavior as a channeling of basic needs. Once the participants' basic needs were satiated through their volunteerism, the participants' responses expressed their desire for creating a safe environment, Maslow's second level of the THM, for the marginalized students to have a sense of belonging in their ECAs.

The participants were passionate about their clubs and other clubs for the students to have broader connections with their peers, other club members, and their community. Pike stated, "I really think that when they join a club or an ECA and get to interact with their peers, it does give them a sense of belonging." Current literature supports the benefits of ECAs' participation that promotes peer-to-peer interactions through a broad list of activities (Siperstein et al., 2019; Ziegler et al., 2020).

All ECAs' sponsors and coaches shared funding and transportation concerns. The participants expressed how they continue to encourage students to join their ECAs regardless of the limitations. All participants generated funds by having their ECAs' members be active in fundraising, writing letters to businesses in the community and planning in-school activities for

the student body. Others managed the transportation concern by speaking with the parents and

students about the ECAs' members sharing rides home from the after-school events. In this, the

ECAs' sponsors, coaches, and members operated from Maslow's (1943) THM's safety level.

Scope of Interdependence. Teachers at MAHS operate from a place of autonomy and

the ECAs' sponsors and coaches elect to recruit other teachers or ECAs' sponsors and coaches to

be yoked in their efforts. The ECAs' sponsors and coaches enlist support from each other and do

not operate from a place of disconnect or isolation, thus the theme of recruitment signifies the

cohesive nature of the participants' collaborative desires. Ziegler et al. (2020) suggested the

benefits of peer-to-peer relationships for ECAs' members through reciprocity. The reciprocity of

ECAs' sponsors and coaches merging their efforts to bring more opportunities for their ECAs'

members is not found in recent literature. This independently, selected small-scale partnering

was an unexpected outcome of this research study and becomes new knowledge. The partnering

process of ECAs' sponsors and coaches allows for relationship modeling for other ECAs'

sponsors and coaches, teachers, and students, and then, becomes a paradigm shift of operating

ECAs from the views of one sponsor or coach to two sponsors or coaches for each ECA.

The scope of interdependence is seen as two-fold: first, between ECAs' sponsors and

coaches of various ECAs, and second, between ECAs' sponsors and coaches and their ECAs'

participants. All participants provided responses that expressed their passion for the ECA that

they sponsored or coached. The participants collaborated with their colleagues for technology

support and guidance with academic support that demonstrated their relatedness through

professional, personal, and cultural experiences.

ECAs provide an opportunity for ECAs' sponsors and coaches to nurture the teacher-

students' relationships as Run Road stated, "For ninth-graders separately, when they come to the

high school they do not belong to anything, so this [ECA] is a nice way for them to get a little sense of family." Run Road's response exemplifies how building relationships with the ECAs' participants support for this research's central research question of: How do high school ECAs' sponsors and coaches describe their experiences with the inclusion of marginalized students at the rural MAHS? In addition, Gorski (2021) determined that ECAs' peer relationships supported a sense of belonging as value-laden of a family origin.

ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' scope of interdependence should not be limited. Run Road suggested, "Something to look for: How are they [ECAs] introduced in elementary school?" The ECAs' sponsors and coaches continue to express their mindset for interdependence possibilities. The rationale for the ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' desire to welcome other teachers to share the ECAs' sponsorship experiences and to welcome marginalized students as ECAs' participants is that the ECAs' sponsors and coaches see the ECAs' benefits. Most assuredly, the ECAs' sponsors and coaches want to convey a sense of belonging to their colleagues.

Extensions of ECAs' Participation Benefits. Human motivation determinants are represented in past and future actions (Maslow, 1943). A sense of belonging is not an innovative concept, yet considerations or abstractions of potential interests need to be generated from a contemporary stance to substantiate the inclusive process. The theme of benefits had 24.8% frequency within the data collection.

While considering benefits, thinking "out of the box" to introduce a new ECA that closely represented the culture and students' interests at MAHS was mentioned by Gap. The new ECA that Gap sponsored focused on supporting at-risk students and they met every Sunday. Within one year this ECA supported a county-wide event sponsored at MAHS. Team jerseys were ordered and game supplies were made by MAHS students enrolled in the woodshop course.

The ECAs' members practiced agency from a place of vision and support for a sense of belonging for MAHS students and students from neighboring high schools. Gap stated, "They can create a friendship within that program and today some of them are still talking, so even some groups that were upperclassmen took them [the ninth-graders] under their wing, so that was very helpful." Gap's vision to embed a new ECA that embraces culture paves the way for innovative thinking for new ECAs that the students value. Teachers need to be innovative thinkers to provide ECAs that align with students' interests. There are traditional ECAs that the students and community embrace but teachers and administrators need to envision newness of ECAs that corresponds with the students' need, aligned with community support. The diversity of ECAs was identified in recent literature when Burns et al. (2021) concluded that intramural ECAs should have community connections.

A new direction for Cliff's ECA was to include robotics. Cliff shared:

The cognitive part of it challenges themselves [ECA members] to get through obstacles that are setup or simple tasks that they can do with robots which our up and coming companies are looking for…so that when you graduate you have the tools necessary to go out into the real world.

This research study's participants were concerned about preparing their ECAs' members for life after school with their local, regional, and global endeavors. Subsequently, research findings confirm that a sense of belonging is a strong predictor for college entrance (Lecy, 2021; Meier et al., 2018; Zhang & Kuncel, 2020).

Implications for Policy or Practice

This section represents the implications of this research. First, the implications of policy explain how diverse viewpoints elevate lived experiences through ECAs' membership

opportunities. Secondly, the implications for practice to explain how ECAs' sponsors and coaches view their ECAs from a broader brush, beyond their schoolhouse walls, as impactful for creating a sense of belonging. In this, ECAs' participants at the rural setting experience inclusion on a larger scale. Implications for policy and practice are elaborated to support education reform of ECAs' benefits through the following subsections: Implications for Policy and Implications for Practice.

Implications for Policy

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (2022) warns of the limitations of diverse viewpoints and suggests equity of voice. MAHS, a rural school, is situated in the Appalachian Mountain Range where the culture propagates the characteristic of willingness (Hartman, 2017); however, viewpoints that enhance equity may not be understood outside of the local area. The participants' lived experiences provide a rural uniqueness and diverse viewpoints that are not commonly represented in recent literature. Therefore, educational policy or practices among and between suburban, urban, and rural cultures may be problematic if diverse viewpoints are not recognized at each level as valuable. Remarkedly, when barriers of stereotypes are removed there may also be a crossover effect for rural decision-making of policy and programs to be considered as advantageous for urban areas (Clay, 2021). The rural voice should be heard and given a wider arena for ECAs' events and participation.

ECAs' events that become county-wide and state-wide events may impact the benefits that ECAs' participants have only known at a local level, whether the ECAs' participants are urban, suburban, or rural. The rural distinction identified in this research study's themes may have capacity building for rural, urban, and suburban high schools to implement a sense of belonging for ECAs' participants with equity. Resultantly, the scope of ECAs' participants'

experiences to nurture a sense of belonging has the potential to have a multi-dimensional impact among and between rural, urban, and suburban settings. Therefore, MAHS's ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' examples of collaborative recruitment may be extended in unison as regional ECAs' events. These collaborative opportunities must not be presented as ancillary but as intrinsically beneficial. In acknowledging diversity values beyond a geographic range culture-bound and class-bound values should not be thought of as oppositional (Sue et al., 2019).

According to this research study's findings, regional events are available for some ECAs but not all. It is when MAHS's ECAs have opportunities to attend regional events that they thrive and celebrate their sense of belonging. Gap's ECA, in its first year, sponsored a county-wide event with the proceeds supporting homeless veterans. Therefore, it is within the power of each ECAs' sponsor and coach to promote their ECA to unite beyond their local membership. Therefore, it is proposed that ECAs' sponsors and coaches create events that support regional, state, and global ECAs' participation. This policy change can make a grassroots attempt for providing broader inclusion of marginalized students' opportunities to participate in ECAs' events on a larger scale suggesting that ECAs may be utilized as an abstraction of leveling the playing field to support diversity, equity, and inclusion. A recent research study of twelve high schools from three states in urban, suburban, and rural areas addressed peer interactions for peers with and without intellectual disabilities and concluded that inclusive ECAs warrant further exploration (Siperstein et al., 2019).

Implications for Practice

These research findings support a need for interventions to support ECAs' membership of marginalized ninth-grade students at MAHS. The table below shows the findings that support the research sub-questions, their related themes, and the study's implications for practice.

Table 4

Research Questions, Themes, and Implications for Practice

Research Sub-Questions	Related Themes	Implications for Practice
Sub-question 1:	Concerns	Ninth-graders are intimidated to join ECAs. Scheduling issues for ninth-graders to join in-school courses that align with ECAs.
	Benefits	Leadership, soft skills, and a sense of belonging.
	Values	Hoping for better promotion of ECAs opportunities.
	Recruitment	Collaborate with support staff and other teachers.
Sub-question 2:	Relatedness	ECAs' sponsors and coaches compared their high school ECAs' membership experiences.
	Gratitude	Thankful that ninth-graders join their ECA.
	Inclusivity	Promotion of ECA s' clubs at the eight-grade level.
Sub-question 3:	Willingness	The participants are willing to commit to building knowledge to support the marginalized ninth-graders to join their ECAs.

One practical implication is based on the emphasis participants placed on the need to promote ECAs for ninth-grade students. Pike, Peak, and Hilltop mentioned that Cliff had his ECAs' participants visit the eighth-grade students at the two middle schools to introduce the eighth-grade students to the ECA that Cliff sponsors. All 11 ECAs' sponsors and coaches expressed their concerns about the ninth-graders fears of joining a MAHS ECA. The transition from middle school to high school is not easy (Benner et al., 2017; Duong et al., 2020), since eighth-graders have had three years to establish their identity and sense of belonging at their middle school. As the ninth-graders enter MAHS, they do not have foundational support for safety or a sense of belonging.

Since many participants were concerned with the limitations for the ninth-graders to schedule in-school ECAs or have transportation, another practical implication to support an inclusive process for ninth-grade students at the high school is a planning phase for "specification of needs of particular students" to be embedded in the curriculum (Gordon et al.,

2019). This allows for differentiation of time within the school day for ninth-graders to join

ECAs. Resultantly, ninth-grade students will have a hierarchical need for safety established

within their schedules eliminating the need for transportation.

In addition, a practical implication is for professional development that includes all

ECAs' sponsors and coaches and is framed to assist them with an inclusive process to support

the needs of marginalized students. Including the ECAs' sponsors and coaches as professional

development members show active recruitment and build on the unity as suggested by this

study's participants. School administrators should consider growing their ECAs' sponsors and

coaches to expand the inclusive process to support their ECAs' members to have a sense of

belonging.

This research explored how rural ECAs' sponsors and coaches implemented an inclusive

process in a rural school district as an intervention for supporting marginalized students' sense of

belonging. MAHS is known historically as an academically low-achieving school. The

intervention of ECAs to support marginalized students to have a sense of belonging will create

positive academic outcomes (Agran et al., 2017; Schwartz et al., 2015). When a sense of

belonging is satiated then students' future endeavors will be elevated (Maslow, 1943).

Therefore, ECAs' membership provides a supportive foundation for students to have a

sense of belonging in their school and community, resulting in the students achieving a higher

level on Maslow's hierarchy of needs and changing the future academic outcome for MAHS.

These research findings support the assertation of the efforts of a rural high school's ECAs'

sponsors' and coaches' vision to create safe and welcoming ECAs for students to belong. This

assertation aligns with the literature review as mentioned in Chapter 2. Finally, the practical

implications explain how the findings are helpful to administrators, teachers, curriculum

specialists, and ECAs' sponsors and coaches to improve knowledge of inclusive process strategies to support a sense of belonging for marginalized students.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

This section provides the implications of this research. First, the theoretical implications explain how this research findings concurred with the hierarchical structure of Maslow's (1943) THM and Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory to support this research. Secondly, the empirical implications are given, summarizing the finding's contributions to the literature.

Theoretical Implication

The findings of this study were framed by Maslow's (1943) THM with an emphasis on exploring ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences of ECAs' participation to support a sense of belonging by the inclusion of marginalized ninth-grade students. Furthermore, Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory postulates three basic needs: autonomy, competency, and relatedness. When conducting a qualitative research study, themes are derived from the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The conceptual combination of utilizing the two theories by developing a new theoretical framework illuminates a more robust manner. The ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' responses align with Maslow's (1943) THM with an abstraction of goals, supported mentoring, and peer-to-peer interactions for their ECAs' members.

Goals. Maslow (1943) formed a structural model, the theory of human motivation (THM) as a physical representation for understanding the hierarchy of human needs. Previously, in a corroborative qualitative research study, a rural elementary school's principal used Maslow's theoretical framework by beginning at the lowest level and continuing to the esteem level, resulting in positive outcomes for student achievement and culture enrichment (Fisher & Crawford, 2020). MAHS provides adequate resources at the lowest level, physiological.

Therefore, once the ECAs' sponsors and coaches embed support for the next level of safety the

ECAs' members arise to a new motivational need for a sense of belonging. Resultantly,

Maslow's (1943) THM's level of sense of belonging was determined to be the exploration of the

ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' support for an inclusive process; while the inclusive process for

ECAs focused on students with special educational needs as the marginalized population of

interest for an inclusive process for ECAs (Agran et al., 2017; Carter et al., 2019; Siperstein et

al., 2019; Yin et al., 2022). This research study diverged from previous research by identifying

ninth-grade ECA's members as marginalized. Highlands stated, "A lot of the freshmen are

scared." An extension of new knowledge was revealed as the findings indicated that the ECAs'

sponsors and coaches shared a common goal of providing a safe environment for the ninth-grade

ECAs' members as they transitioned from middle school to high school while acknowledging

that professional development support for ECAs' sponsors and coaches as baseless. The ECAs'

sponsors and coaches emphasized the need to create a safe place for their ECAs' members.

Subsequently, the sponsors and coaches thrived from a place of autonomy which aligns with

Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory.

Supported Mentoring. ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' responses supported their firm

belief of creating a safe and welcoming environment as a primary prerequisite to inviting

marginalized students to be ECAs' participants. As Hilltop stated, "Because I am open to the

minorities, the wallflowers, I am very inclusive to my openness to accept the LGBTQ

community. They feel very safe." Resultantly, once safety is established in the ECAs the

members move to develop a sense of belonging. All ECAs' sponsors and coaches conveyed, with

an attitude of gratitude, their mentoring practices as an essential element for fostering a sense of

belonging for ECAs' members. When working with marginalized ninth-graders to support their

transition from middle school to high school, Gap described success as "a variety of things, getting involved with a mentor program, getting them involved with sports programs." Interestingly, Maslow's model of the hierarchy of needs was restructured for struggling schools showing the value of ECAs' participation through alignment with Maslow's (1943) THM's sense of belonging level (Fisher & Crawford, 2020). This research study explores an inclusive process to nurture a sense of belonging for ninth-graders to join ECAs which diverts from previous literature.

Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determinant theory could have been viewed as a theoretical framework to support the ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' understanding of embedding strategies of relatedness for their ECAs' members. This research finding had relevance for Maslow's (1943) sense of belonging and Deci and Ryan's (2000) relatedness when Cliff stated, "Sometimes I cannot get across what the students can get across to the other students." Previous research findings showed how educators' actions may contribute to students developing healthy or unhealthy relationships (Juvonen et al., 2019). Both theories, the seminal theorist, Maslow's (1943) THM and the contemporary theorists, Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory are closely related regardless of time.

Peer-to-Peer Interactions. Pike state, "I really think that when they [ECAs' participants] join a club or an ECA and get to interact with their peers. It does give them a sense of belonging." Previous research aligns with this research finding of peer-to-peer experiences for developing a sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2017; Gorski, 2021; Haghighat & Knifsend, 2019; Leigers et al., 2017; Ziegler et al., 2020). While this research study purports the inclusive process to consider ninth-grade students as the marginalized population, previous research focused on situating peer-to-peer relationships based on the inclusion of students with special educational

needs as the marginalized population (Agran et al., 2017; Carter et al., 2019; Siperstein et al., 2019; Yin et al., 2022).

Empirical Implications

Empirical implications are presented with the cumulation of themes. Willingness and values, concerns, relatedness, and inclusivity are framed as culturally influenced. While gratitude, benefits, and recruitment are suggested as a further dimension to support a sense of belonging within and outside of the setting.

Willingness and Values. Willingness was revealed as nine of 11 participants volunteered to be ECAs' sponsors and coaches. This provides new knowledge for the literature and further relevance to setting. Recent research for ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' views of an inclusive process is limited. Willingness and values were seen as rural characteristics (Hartman, 2017). Therefore, an assumption for ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' rural characteristics of willingness and values to become ECAs' sponsors and coaches warrants further exploration.

Concerns, Relatedness, and Inclusivity. Cultural competency was revealed as significant by this study's participants. The ECA's sponsors and coaches shared concerns about being prepared to relate to the culture and provide a welcoming environment to support all students to be ECAs' members. According to recent literature, rural educators work through a place of authenticity and autonomy to embrace their uniqueness (Clay, 2021), yet previous research has not provided significant evidence of rural ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' views. Furthermore, Clay's (2021) research findings noted perceptions of the rural voice as oppositional to urban and suburban schools, resulting in limitations of rural significance. Consequently, this research study's participants shared their concerns to create district-wide and beyond events to enhance the inclusive process for their ECAs' members.

Gratitude, Benefits, and Recruitment. Gratitude, benefits, and recruitment themes of

this study covered 45% of the collected data content. The data to support these themes was

generated through the lens of the participants' actions to support a sense of belonging. These

themes were acquainted with fostering unity within a family structure. Current literature frames

support for a sense of belonging as a rural family structure (Clay, 2021; Fisher & Crawford,

2020; Grant et al., 2021). Moreover, Gap suggested the lack of family involvement at MAHS as

a barrier to creating a sense of belonging for ECAs' members. Resultantly, support through

recruitment becomes significant and the ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' collaborative actions

become a significant support to create a sense of belonging for MAHS's marginal population.

Given that an inclusive process is viewed as interventions between students with and

without disabilities, researchers must employ rigorous study designs that explore ECAs'

sponsors' and coaches' experiences of gratitude, views of benefits, and their recruitment

practices to provide empirical evidence identifying programs and policies that can lead to

outcome improvement.

Limitations and Delimitations

This section provides a discussion of the limitations and delimitations of the study. The

limitations are factors outside the researcher's control. The delimitations are deliberately chosen

areas of focus that precluded other factors from influencing the research.

Limitations

One limitation was that there were three males and eight females in this study.

Participation in this study was voluntary with no opportunity for vetting beyond the 11

participants. All participants were Caucasian, the dominant ethnic group at MAHS, with two

through 30 years of service. While five participants were from rural regions and six were from

suburban regions, this study's findings supported the actions of the rural and suburban

participants as unified in the data collection responses, noting that suburban participants

mentioned their experiences for furthering their understanding of their rural work setting and the

rural population. Further research should consider professional development opportunities to

support cultural awareness for ECAs' sponsors and coaches.

Secondly, two, Cliff and Mount, of the 11 participants had scheduled courses that aligned

with their ECAs. Therefore, the ninth-grade students who could schedule the course that aligned

with the ECA had automatic membership without needing to stay after school. This research

finding suggested that staying after school was problematic for ninth-grade students and further

supporting evidence is found in Table 3, Cliff's ECA's ninth-grade population was 34 and

Mount's was zero. The difference between Cliff's and Mount's ECAs' ninth-grade population

resulted in Cliff's ninth-grade students having no scheduling conflict, while Mount had zero

ninth-grade students in her scheduled course due to scheduling conflict.

Delimitations

This study holds delimitations associated with limiting the participant purposeful

selection to teachers. However, not all ECAs' sponsors and coaches are teachers. This

delimitation was purposefully elected since ECAs' sponsors and coaches who are teachers

receive professional development. This setting has focused on inclusion as a universal

professional development topic without applying specifics for ECAs' sponsors and coaches.

In addition, the experience of scheduling concerns that limit ninth-graders from

scheduling courses that coincide with the ECA would not be known to ECAs' sponsors and

coaches who are not teachers. The ECAs' sponsors and coaches without educational certification

would not have the professional knowledge of strategies, goals, and theoretical concepts for supporting inclusivity for the ECAs' members.

Lastly, the abstraction of ECAs' club titles was necessary to affirm the confidentiality of the participants. Referencing the ECAs by academic or nonacademic was sufficient identification for the ECAs' clubs without minimizing the exploration of the ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' understanding of an inclusive process for marginalized students.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations for future research are based on the limitations and delimitations of this study. This study focused on ECAs' sponsors and coaches who had two years of teaching experience. Delimitations of the teacher criterion from the participant eligibility to allow for ECAs' sponsors and coaches that are not teachers may provide enhancement of this research topic. At MAHS, there were many ECAs' sponsors and coaches who were not teachers; however, all ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences could contribute to supporting marginalized students to become ECAs' members. Broadening the scope of participant selection may reveal nuances not uncovered in this research study. Therefore, future research should view ECAs' participant selection as a determinant for the research study.

Further studies should consider district-wide ECAs and how future ECAs may be introduced based on the students' interests or contemporary trends. Incidentally, Run Road provided a research recommendation, to begin with the elementary ECAs in the research study. Such a study could find that alignment of ECAs from elementary school through high school creates a support intervention that is beneficial for nurturing a sense of belonging for all students. A quantitative experimental design to confirm and quantify the benefits identified in this study and to look at ECAs in another setting (Buckley & Lee 2021), such as elementary, middle, and

high schools to determine how students' interests in ECAs occurs support transitional ease as students enter a new school building should be thought of as a worthy research exploration. District-wide ECAs' research findings may provide a rationale for embedding a specification of ECAs into the district-wide curriculum to support an inclusive culture.

Interestingly, after this research study's data collection, MAHS's administration granted two new ECAs based on cultural needs and contemporary trends. One new ECA is a diversity club. Hagler (2018) cautioned selecting a dominant majority ECA's sponsor for a culturally diverse ECA, suggesting culturally responsive professional development as a priority. The other ECA is a gaming club that provides an opportunity for students who enjoy gaming to compete with other MAHS students and with other students on a regional level. Moreover, contemporary research suggests educational reforms consider contemporary trends when making curriculum changes. Adding ECAs is not a common occurrence at MAHS. This research study had no known influence on the administration's decision to include two new ECAs.

In addition, given that an inclusive process is largely viewed as interventions between students with and without disabilities, researchers must employ rigorous study designs that explore ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences as identified in this study's themes to provide empirical evidence identifying programs and policies that can lead to outcome improvement. This research study focused on the ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences with the inclusion of marginalized students at a rural high school. Historically, urban educational institutions influence rural educational institutions (Clay, 2021). Resultantly, the rural voice, beliefs, and values may not be considered significant. Therefore, future research should consider the uniqueness of the rural setting and culture as supported by rural theory.

Conclusion

This qualitative case study answered how high school ECAs' sponsors and coaches describe their experiences with the inclusion of marginalized students at the rural MAHS. The data collected through interviews, physical artifacts, and journal writing responses were categorized into eight themes to answer the research questions. The data collection revealed that the participants' motivation to provide marginalized students with support for a sense of belonging to be part of their school and community was generated from a place of willingness, relatedness, gratification, inclusivity, concerns, benefits, values, and recruitment. One of the most distinct findings was the theme of willingness, albeit a rural characteristic, there was limited research on the association of willingness and ECAs' sponsors' and coaches' experiences with the inclusion of marginalized students as ECAs' members. Interestingly, the ECAs' participants' universal thought was a desire for more teachers' involvement with ECAs.

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Appendix A

Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. Please describe your educational background and career through your current position.
   SQ3

2. Please describe your educational background and career through your current position,
   elaborating on your experiences of involvement with extracurricular activities (ECAs).
   SQ3

3. Please describe your experiences with ECAs participants' development of a sense of
   belonging. CRQ

4. How does your social connection to our rural high school support an inclusive process of
   equity, access, and a sense of belonging for marginalized students? CRQ

5. How do you mentor the ECAs' participants with their pathway of belonging among
   academic, general, and vocational tracking at the high school level? CRQ and SQ2

6. How could the inclusion process be enhanced for the ECAs that you sponsor or coach to
   provide opportunities for ECAs' membership for marginalized ninth-graders? SQ1

7. What challenges, if any, have you experienced or anticipated when considering the
   inclusive process to include marginalized ninth-graders in your ECA? SQ1 and SQ2

8. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with implementing ECAs to create a sense of belonging for marginalized ninth-graders or other high school students? CRQ

9. Describe any challenges that you may or may not have experienced when working with marginalized ninth-graders as they transition to high school. SQ2

10. Describe practices you use to ensure equal access for academic, vocational, general, and distance learning students. SQ1

11. What professional development experiences with inclusion have you had that prepared you to support marginalized students? SQ3

12. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with marginalized students? SQ1

13. Describe your experience in making curriculum development decisions that support equal access for marginalized students to participation in ECAs. SQ1

14. Describe successful practices you use when working with marginalized ninth-graders to support their transition from middle school to high school. SQ2

15. How are supportive interventions, such as ECAs for marginalized ninth-graders, considered for fostering a sense of belonging? CRQ

16. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences of creating support for ninth-graders to develop a sense of belonging by participating in ECAs? CRQ

17. Describe your perception of how the curriculum could be enhanced by embedding ECAs for marginalized ninth-graders to propagate success with cognitive and social skills. SQ2

18. Describe the barriers for students to become ECA participants. SQ2

19. Describe the benefits for students to become ECA participants. SQ2

20. How are budgetary concerns being addressed to create more opportunities for

marginalized students to become ECA participants? SQ2

Appendix B

Permission Response

6-3-2022

████████████████████████
████████████

Dear Kimberly Swaney:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled A case study: Exploring high school extracurricular activities' sponsors' and coaches' experiences with the inclusion of marginalized students, I have decided to grant you permission to contact our extracurricular activities' sponsors and coaches and invite them to participate in your study at ████████ High School.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

__X__I will provide our membership list to Kimberly S. Swaney, and Kimberly S. Swaney may use the list to contact our members to invite them to participate in Kimberly S. Swaney's research study.

__X__I grant permission for Kimberly S. Swaney to contact ████████ High School extracurricular activities' sponsors and coaches to invite them to participate in Kimberly S. Swaney's research study.

_____I will not provide potential participant information to Kimberly S. Swaney, but we agree to send/provide Kimberly S. Swaney study information to extracurricular activities' sponsors and coaches on Kimberly S. Swaney's behalf.

__X___The requested archival data WILL NOT BE STRIPPED of identifying information before it is provided to the researcher.

Sincerely,

████████████████████████
████████████

Appendix C

Central Research Question

How do high school ECA sponsors and coaches describe their experiences with the inclusion of marginalized students at the rural MAHS?

The sub-questions narrow the focus of this inquiry with an overarching aim of understanding how and why ECA sponsors' and coaches' experiences contribute to their decision-making or educational policies to enrich awareness of any limitations within the ECA.

Sub-Question One

How would ECAs' sponsors and coaches improve a sense of belonging for marginalized ninth-graders to join the ECA that they sponsor or coach?

Sub-Question Two

How would ECAs' sponsors and coaches address the benefits or barriers for marginalized ninth-graders to have academic and nonacademic equity to participate in ECAs?

Sub-Question Three

How would professional development support an inclusive process for ECAs' sponsors and coaches?

Appendix D

Participant Invitation Email Survey

Dear Fellow, Extracurricular Activities Sponsor/Coach:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my study is to research how extracurricular activities' sponsors and coaches describe their experiences with the inclusion of marginalized students at the rural high school. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study. Participants must be a current extracurricular activities' sponsors or coaches at the high school and have at least two years of teaching experience. Participants will be asked to complete an audio-recorded face-to-face interview, five journal entries by email, and a review of their interview and journal writing transcripts by email. The interview will take about 60 minutes to complete, and the journal writing will take about 20 minutes to complete. Reviewing the transcripts, and member checking should take a total of 15 minutes. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential. A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please type your name and date on the consent form, save a copy to your computer, and return the signed consent form as an attachment to me by email before completing any procedures.

If you would like to participate, for your convenience, you can reply with the email text below:

Dear Kimberly,

I would be pleased to be a participant in your study. I can confirm that I am a current extracurricular activities sponsor or coach school at the high school. Please find the signed

consent form attached. I am located in [City, Country] and a few preferred days and times for an interview are [days and times].

Sincerely, [Your name]

Thank you for considering being a part of my study.

Best Regards, Kimberly S. Swaney

Appendix E

Acceptance/Rejection Letter

Sponsor/Coach Acceptance Letter

Date

Dear Sponsor/Coach,

Thank you for your interest in my research. You have been selected to participate in the study.

Please complete the attached informed consent form and return it to me by _____. Once you have

completed the consent form, you will participate in the interview and journal writing. Students'

records will be requested. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,

Kimberly Swaney

Sponsor/Coach Rejection Letter
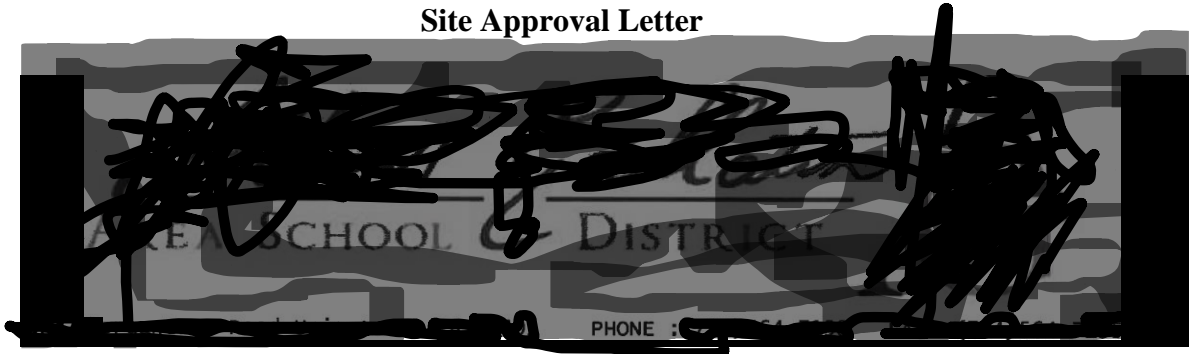
Date

 Dear Sponsor/Coach,

Thank you for your interest in my research. However, you have not been selected to participate

in the study at this time. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,

Kimberly Swaney

Appendix F

Site Approval Letter

Site Approval Letter

6-27-2022

School District Superintendent

Dear ,

I am writing to obtain permission to conduct a research study at your institute, School District for extracurricular activities' sponsors and coaches in your high school to participate in a research study titled: A case study: Exploring high school extracurricular activities' sponsors' and coaches' experiences with the inclusion of marginalized students. The purpose of the case study will be to explore extracurricular activities' sponsors' and coaches' experiences of an inclusive process that supports marginalized students as extracurricular activities' participants at a rural high school. I am currently enrolled in the Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction program at Liberty University, in Lynchburg, Virginia, and I am writing my doctoral dissertation.

To conduct my research, I plan to request the participation of extracurricular sponsors and coaches. The requested participation will include documentation providing all potential participants with an informed consent form before participation. All participants are informed that taking part in this study is completely voluntary.

If the approval is granted, I will ask the extracurricular activities' sponsors and coaches to be interviewed and participate by responding in writing to journal questions to gather qualitative data. In addition, students' records will be requested to gather data. Data from this study will be kept entirely confidential and anonymous using the pseudonym, Mountain Appalachian High School. The setting will be referenced as a rural high school in southwestern Pennsylvania. No other identifiers of the institution will be given to protect the research's site and participants. Pseudonyms will be used for each participant. The institute and participants will occur no cost.
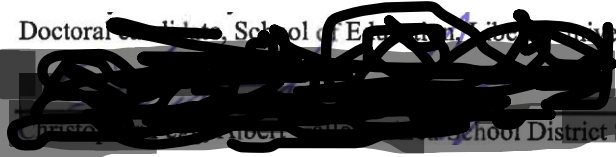
Lastly, research will only be conducted upon approval of the Liberty University Institutional Review Board. .

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing. Please sign below and return the signed form via email as a scanned document if you approve of this research contingent upon Liberty University IRB approval. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Swaney

Doctoral candidate, School of Education, Liberty University

School District Superintendent   6-27-2022

Please print and sign your name on the line above to confirm your approval of this education research at this site.

Approval subject to Liberty University IRB approval.

Appendix G

Audit Trail

8-4-2022

- Proposal Defense at 10:30 AM with the dissertation chair, Dr. Constance Pearson and the methodologist, Dr. Straffacia.

- Proposal defense was presented and approved.

- Institutional Review Board (IRB) application completed and submitted to Dr. Pearson.

- Dr. Pearson reviewed, approved, and certified my IRB application.

8-11-2022

- Dr. Pearson received an email from School of Education Doctoral Review stating that my research rubric was received and to proceed to my next milestone.

- I began to edit the Abstract and Chapter 1 from future tense to past tense.

8-26-2022

- I received IRB approval to conduct my research.

9-6-2022

- I began to send the invitations and participants' consent forms via email.

9- 19-2022

- First interview

9-20-2022

- Second interview

9-27-2022

- Third interview

9-28-2022

- Fourth interview

9-29-2022

- Fifth interview

9-30-2022

- Sixth interview

10-03-2022

- Seventh interview

10-5-2022

- Eighth interview

10-11-2022

- Ninth interview

10-18-2022

- Tenth interview

10-24-2022

- Eleventh interview

10-2022 until 12-2022

- Begin data analysis of interview responses.

- Began collection and data analysis of physical artifacts.

- Began collection and data analysis of journal responses.

12-1-2022

- Continued to compose chapter four of dissertation.

12-1-2022 until 12-30-2022

- Begin to compose interview questions and participants' responses into an excel spreadsheet.

- Begin to compose physical artifacts data into an excel spreadsheet.

- Begin to compose journal questions and participants' responses into an excel spreadsheet.

- Read and reread the transcripts and used inductive coding by bolding relevant words.

- Review and create line by line coding by color-coding data into themes.

12-31-2022

- Begin thematic analysis with a general overview of the data.

- The overview provided various themes and codes, 13 themes at this time. Construct pivot tables to generate sums and percentages to determine patterns and conceptualize the data to decide which are the most relevant. Look for data that aligns with my research's theoretical conception and trends that appear with the data analysis.

- Improve data coding to be more systematic by identifying themes and creating subthemes.

- Begin to prioritize the themes and identify where the subthemes connect to the themes.

1-4-2023

- Label the themes and describe the connections between each theme to form a summary for results.

- Decide if there is a hierarchy among the categories. Decide if one category is more important than the others. Decide if some themes may be eliminated or combined.

- Look for new knowledge from the exploration of the participant's responses.

- Reminder to remain unbiased.

1-6-2023

- Timetable goal to complete Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, then submit to my dissertation chair for review on January 16, 2023.

1-8-2023

- Review the descriptive coding method to summarize extracts by a word to understand the meaning of the text, then continue with line by line coding.

- Begin to triangulate the data from data collection.

1-12-2023

- Continue to review data and derive coding from data.

- Eight themes have been identified.

- Hybrid approach: Inductive coding and I am reflecting on the human-based analysis of coding to provide broader data analysis. I determine to use descriptive coding and value coding to avoid processing errors.

1-21-2023

- Near completion of chapter 4.

- Review case study research design and methods to justify and support the rationale.

1-22-2023 until 2-5-2023

- Completed chapters 4 and 5 and submitted to Dr. Pearson for review.

2-20-2023

- Revised my dissertation, following Dr. Pearson's feedback, and will submit for the methodologist.

2-24-2023

- Dr. Pearson submitted my revised dissertation to Dr. Staffacia for a methodologist's review.

2-26-2023

- I received feedback from Dr. Staffacia to complete and submit to Dr. Pearson for Director's review.

Appendix H

Journal Questions

1. Please, explain how data from extracurricular activities' participation has been generated and utilized for the ninth-graders transition from middle school to high school.

2. What do you view as academic advantages and/or disadvantages for extracurricular activity participants?

3. Please, explain how ninth-graders are introduced to extracurricular activities.

4. What support or encouragement is provided for ninth-graders to join an ECA or club?

5. Please, describe how respect and acceptance are shown to students based on extracurricular membership.

Appendix I

Physical Artifacts

Name of Extracurricular Activity:

Extracurricular Activity:

- Aim:

- Objective(s):

- Strategies:

- Number of extracurricular activity participants per grade level:

    o Ninth grade:

    o Tenth grade:

    o Eleventh grade:

    o Twelfth grade:

Appendix J

Researcher's Note Taking

1st Interview

Date: 9-19-2022

Participant's Pseudonym: Pike

Observational Notes Checklist

Time	Composure	Distractions	Clarification	Willingness	Other Notable Comments
2:20 pm	Pleasant	None	Questions 1-4 were clarified by the participant, as the audio was weak.	The participant had no reservations with the interview or any questions	A very impressive demonstration of eloquence and professional knowledge.

2nd Interview

Date: 9-20-2022

Participant's Pseudonym: Knob

Observational Notes Checklist

Time	Composure	Distractions	Clarification	Willingness	Other Notable Comments
2:32 pm	Pleasant	Interestingly, as we approached the 19th question, there was a knock at the door and two students had a question. We both were able to speak with the students to hear their	None	The participant had no reservations with the interview or any questions	A very impressive demonstration of eloquence and professional knowledge.

		concerns about an extracurricular activity matter.			

3rd Interview

Date: 9-26-2022

Participant's Pseudonym: Peak

Observational Notes Checklist

Time	Composure	Distractions	Clarification	Willingness	Other Notable Comments
2:32 pm	Pleasant	None	None	The participant had no reservations with the interview or any questions	A very impressive demonstration of eloquence and professional knowledge.

4th Interview

Date: 9-28-2022

Participant's Pseudonym: Cliffs

Observational Notes Checklist

Time	Composure	Distractions	Clarification	Willingness	Other Notable Comments
12:32 pm	Pleasant	None	None	The participant had no reservations with the interview or any questions	A very impressive demonstration of eloquence and professional knowledge.

5th Interview

Date: 9-29-2022

Participant's Pseudonym: Run Road

Observational Notes Checklist

Time	Composure	Distractions	Clarification	Willingness	Other Notable Comments
2:22 pm	Pleasant	None	None	The participant had no reservations with the interview or any questions	A very impressive demonstration of eloquence and professional knowledge.

6th Interview

Date: 9-30-2022

Participant's Pseudonym: Mount

Observational Notes Checklist

Time	Composure	Distractions	Clarification	Willingness	Other Notable Comments
2:25 pm	Pleasant	None	None	The participant had no reservations with the interview or any questions	A very impressive demonstration of eloquence and professional knowledge.

7th Interview

Date: 10-3-2022

Participant's Pseudonym: Highlands

Observational Notes Checklist

Time	Composure	Distractions	Clarification	Willingness	Other Notable Comments

11:00 am	Pleasant	None	None	Participant had no reservations with the interview or any questions	Very impressive demonstration of eloquence and professional knowledge.

8th Interview

Date: 10-5-2022

Participant's Pseudonym: Ridge

Observational Notes Checklist

Time	Composure	Distractions	Clarification	Willingness	Other Notable Comments
2:30 pm	Pleasant	None	None	Participant had no reservations with the interview or any questions	Very impressive demonstration of eloquence and professional knowledge.

9th Interview

Date: 10-11-2022

Participant's Pseudonym: Gap

Observational Notes Checklist

Time	Composure	Distractions	Clarification	Willingness	Other Notable Comments
12:32 pm	Pleasant	None	None	Participant had no reservations with the interview or any questions	Very impressive demonstration of eloquence and professional knowledge.

10th Interview

Date: 10-18-2022

Participant's Pseudonym: Trail

Observational Notes Checklist

Time	Composure	Distractions	Clarification	Willingness	Other Notable Comments
2:22 pm	Pleasant	None	None	Participant had no reservations with the interview or any questions	Very impressive demonstration of eloquence and professional knowledge.

11th Interview

Date: 10-24-2022

Participant's Pseudonym: Hilltop

Observational Notes Checklist

Time	Composure	Distractions	Clarification	Willingness	Other Notable Comments
2:32 pm	Pleasant	None	None	Participant had no reservations with the interview or any questions	Very impressive demonstration of eloquence and professional knowledge.

Appendix K

IRB Approval Letter

September 2, 2022

Kimberly Swaney
Constance Pearson

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-103 A CASE STUDY: EXPLORING HIGH SCHOOL
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES' SPONSORS' AND COACHES' EXPERIENCES WITH THE
INCLUSION OF MARGINALIZED STUDENTS

Dear Kimberly Swaney, Constance Pearson,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in
accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug
Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review.
This means you may begin your research with the data-safeguarding methods mentioned in
your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations
in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR
46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests
(cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or
observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the
following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity
of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to
the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required
by §46.111(a)(7).

**Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be
found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study
on Cayuse IRB.** Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the
consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information
electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available
without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix L

Participant's Consent Form

Title of the Project: A Case Study: Exploring High School Extracurricular Activities' Sponsors'
and Coaches' Experiences with the Inclusion of Marginalized Students
Principal Investigator: Kimberly S. Swaney, RBA, M.Ed. Scholar at Liberty University,
Doctor of Philosophy in Education Academic Department

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be an educator who
sponsors or coaches an extracurricular activity and has at least 2 years of teaching experience.
Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in
this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the case study will be to explore extracurricular activities' sponsors' and
coaches' experiences of an inclusive process that supports marginalized students as
extracurricular activities' participants at a rural high school.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:
1. Participate in an audio-recorded face-to-face interview (Time estimate:1 hour).
2. Provide physical artifacts of extracurricular activities' aims, objectives, strategies, and
   roster with grade level and the number of extracurricular activity participants. Also, the
   proximity of the extracurricular activity member to the extracurricular activity
   meeting/event. Participants will have 1 week after the interview to provide the physical
   artifacts by email or in person to the researcher.
3. Complete journal writing responses to five questions based on the participants'
   experiences of involvement with an inclusive process with extracurricular activities'
   participation through the context of equity, access, and a sense of belonging for ninth
   graders' extracurricular activities membership opportunities. (Time estimate: 20 minutes
   writing time). Journal prompts will be sent by email to participants within 1 week of the
   individual interview. Participants will have 1 week to complete the journal prompts and
   return them by email to the researcher.
4. Transcript review (Time estimate: 15 minutes total). Each participant will be asked to
   review the transcript of their interview and their journal questions' responses. Transcripts
   will be sent to each participant within 2 weeks after the interview and returned by email
   within 1 week of receipt.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include adding to the research literature concerning high school extracurricular activities' sponsors' and coaches' experiences with the inclusion of marginalized students at a rural high school.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

As an educator, the researcher is a mandatory reporter, therefore any information given in the process of this research that triggers the mandatory reporting requirements for child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others will be reported.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participants' names will not be used, and their written documents will be coded with a fictitious name (e.g., pseudonyms). I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and locked box and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and any hard copy data will be shredded.
- Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored securely on a password-locked computer and only the researcher will have access to the records. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Journal questions' responses will be collected by email. Research records will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Electronic images of physical artifacts of extracurricular aims, objectives, strategies, and student records will be stored on the researcher's password-coded computer.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

What are the costs to you to be part of the study?

There is no cost to participate in the research.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

The researcher has no conflicts of interest.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision on whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Kimberly S. Swaney. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact Kimberly S. Swaney at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Constance L. Pearson, at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy of the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____   _____
Printed Subject Name   Signature & Date