

An Examination of Former High School Athletes' Perspectives on Life Skill Development and
Transfer

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Statement of Support

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Abstract

The purpose of this Master's thesis was to examine former high school athletes' perspectives on life skill development and transfer. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with 22 individuals (12 females, 10 males) between the ages of 18-56. Participants were recruited from the Southwest and Eastern regions of Ontario, Canada. Based on the data collected, two articles were written. Article one presents the participants' perspectives on their developmental experiences and the influence of the context associated with their high school sport participation. The findings revealed that different types of life skill experiences emanated from high school sport, but that negative experiences also ensued. Participants reported differences in terms of how high school sport was experienced in rural settings compared to urban settings. In article two, the Conceptual Framework for Life Skills Interventions was used to examine the participants' life skill development and transfer experiences. The findings are consistent with aspects of the framework and provide tangible examples of life skill development and subsequent transfer for the same skill by the same individual. Collectively, the findings from this Master's thesis illustrate how the life skills learned during high school sport are being transferred for use at various stages across the lifespan.

Introduction

Sport is important in Canadian society as it can provide opportunities to establish supportive interpersonal relationships that can help build strong and cohesive communities (Canadian Heritage, 2005). Participation in sport can influence many aspects of Canadians' lives, including their physical health, psychological well-being, and sense of relatedness (Clark, 2008). Research has illustrated how sport provides a context suitable for the development of problem-solving, respect, positive attitude, and teamwork (Ward & Parker, 2013). Although there is empirical evidence demonstrating the positive outcomes of sport participation, it is necessary to consider the negative developmental experiences that can also occur, such as feelings of low self-esteem, stress, and excessive parental pressure (Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2009). These potential negative outcomes of sport participation highlight the need for a deliberate approach to the development of life skills through sport that can transfer into broader society.

Exploring how youth develop life skills through sport is of utmost importance if we consider the fundamental principles of personal development, respect, and fair play that should guide the practice of sport in Canada (Canadian Heritage, 2012). Researchers have advocated for promoting sport in schools given that youth are most accessible in this context and coaches who teach life skills can contribute to the educational missions of schools (Danish, Forneris, & Wallace, 2005). In Canada, the high school sport context is one that aims to foster the acquisition of sport-specific competencies as well as enhance youth's personal development through the teaching of life skills (Forneris, Camiré, & Trudel, 2012). Fostering life skill development is especially relevant in the context of high school sport as over 750 000 youth are involved in various forms of sporting activities in this setting (School Sport Canada, n. d.). Given the large

number of participants in and the developmental mandate of high school sport, it is necessary to examine in greater detail the experiences associated with sport participation in this setting.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this Master's thesis was to examine former high school athletes' perspectives on life skill development and transfer. Two questions guided this research: (a) What life skills, if any, do former athletes believe they learned during their participation in high school sport? (b) What life skills, if any, do former athletes believe they transferred from high school sport to other life domains (e.g., school, home, community)?

Paradigmatic Position

A paradigm consists of a set of ontological, epistemological, and methodological beliefs that form a worldview (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Ontology is the form and nature of reality and what can be known about reality. Epistemology is concerned with the nature, scope, and acquisition of knowledge. Methodology refers to the processes and procedures used to explore phenomena. The paradigmatic position informing this Master's thesis is based on the overarching principles of constructivism. Ontologically, constructivists posit that reality is relative and multiple and exists within the individual mind (Grbich, 2007). This fluid and alterable reality is the product of human interactions and social influences. Knowledge is subjective and co-constructed based on the interactive dialogue between researchers and participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Constructivism's methodology is dialectical in nature as the aim is to present the interpretation of participants' lived experiences.

Review of Literature

The following literature review is divided into five sections. In the first section, the definition of life skills is provided. The second section examines the contextual features of

Canadian high school sport. In the third section, the positive and negative developmental outcomes associated with participation in high school sport are presented. The fourth section reviews the influential role that coaches play in teaching their athletes life skills. The final section discusses life skill transfer and identifies the gaps in contemporary literature.

Life Skills

Life skills are defined as internal assets that enable individuals to succeed in the different environments in which they live: school, family, neighbourhood, and community (Danish & Donohue, 1996; Danish, Forneris, Hodge, & Heke, 2004). These skills can be behavioural (e.g., communicating effectively), cognitive (e.g., making effective decisions), interpersonal (e.g., communicating with others in multiple contexts), and intrapersonal (e.g., goal-setting) (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1995). Life skills such as goal-setting, emotional control, and work ethic can be developed in sport and transferred for use in non-sport settings (Gould & Carson, 2008).

Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, and Jones (2005) affirmed that youth rarely understand that the skills they acquired through sport have value outside the sporting domain. Therefore, life skills must be intentionally taught by competent coaches and program administrators (Danish et al., 2004; Danish & Nellen, 1997; Gould, Collins, Lauer, & Chung, 2007; Holt, Tamminen, Tink, & Black, 2009). One context that aims to intentionally facilitate the development of life skills is high school sport (Forneris et al., 2012).

High School Sport

In Canada, high school sport is regulated by School Sport Canada (n. d.) whose purpose is to “encourage, promote and be an advocate for good sportsmanship, citizenship and the total development of student athletes through interscholastic sport” (n. p.). School Sport Canada is a national governing body comprised of provincial and territorial high school athletic associations.

This Master's thesis was conducted in the province of Ontario, where the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations (OFSAA) governs high school athletics and emphasizes the educational value of high school sport. OFSAA consists of 18 regional school athletic associations geographically dispersed across Ontario. According to OFSAA, the values of leadership, commitment, respect, equity, and growth and development should guide the practice of high school sport in Ontario (OFSAA, n. d.). The high school sport context affords students with many opportunities to voluntarily engage in a variety of individual and team sports. Teachers volunteer their time to coach high school sports; however, when there is a lack of teacher volunteers, coaches from the community are recruited to fill vacant positions. Given that Canadian high school sport is often promoted as a natural extension of the classroom (Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008), coaches in this setting are expected to teach life skills through sport in accordance with the educational missions of schools (Forneris et al., 2012).

Developmental Outcomes of High School Sport Participation

Positive outcomes. Large-scale quantitative studies have examined the developmental outcomes associated with participation in high school sport (e.g., Eccles & Barber, 1999; Fox, Barr-Anderson, Neumark-Sztainer, & Wall, 2010). For example, Harrison and Narayan (2003) conducted a study with 50 168 American high school students to examine the behavioural, psychological, and environmental factors associated with participation in school sport teams and other extracurricular activities. Findings revealed how high school athletes reported having higher physical activity levels, a healthier self-image, and lower emotional distress than participants in other extracurricular activities and non-participants. Marsh and Kleitman (2003) analyzed the data from the six-year National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) of 1988 which was sponsored by the United States Department of Education, to examine the effects of

athletic participation on youth's growth and development during high school. Findings from the nationally representative sample of 12 084 youth indicated that grade 12 students who participated in high school sport benefited in terms of grade attainment, educational aspirations, time spent on homework, and highest level of education attained two years after graduating high school. Broh (2002) also analyzed the same data from the NELS of 1988 and revealed how high school sport participation in grades 10 and 12 was positively associated with students' math and English grades and increases in both self-esteem and the amount of time spent on homework.

In terms of smaller scale quantitative studies, Bruner, Boardley, and Côté (2014) administered questionnaires to 329 Canadian high school athletes from 26 teams and findings demonstrated how the athletes who reported having ingroup affect (i.e., positive feelings associated with being a member of their team) indicated more frequently exhibiting prosocial behaviours (e.g., positive feedback) towards their peers. In another study, Wilkes and Côté (2010) compared the developmental experiences of 212 Canadian female basketball athletes involved in either high school, recreational, or competitive programs. Quantitative findings revealed how participants involved in high school and competitive programs reported experiencing more developmental opportunities related to time-management, emotional regulation, and prosocial norms compared to participants involved in recreational sport.

In recent years, there have also been a number of qualitative studies that have examined how participation in high school sport can positively influence the development of youth (e.g., Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2009a; Trottier & Robitaille, 2014). For instance, Camiré and Trudel (2013) conducted individual and focus group interviews with football coaches and athletes from a private Canadian high school and findings revealed how the majority of participants believed that athletes developed leadership and perseverance skills through sport.

Holt et al. (2008) conducted a case study of a male soccer team at an ethnically diverse Canadian high school to examine if and how youth develop life skills through participation in sport.

Results from participant observations and interviews indicated that the coach did not intentionally teach life skills, but was able to provide opportunities for youth to demonstrate initiative and reprimanded disrespectful behaviours. All participants reported that they believe they experienced teamwork and leadership skills through high school sport participation.

Other studies have examined how sport-based life skills programs have influenced the developmental experiences of high school athletes (e.g., Camiré, Trudel, & Bernard, 2013; Olushola, Jones, Dixon, & Green, 2013). For example, Camiré et al. (2013) recently conducted a case study of a Canadian high school ice hockey program that integrates both academic and sport into the school curriculum, as youth typically spend the morning in the classroom and the afternoon involved in ice hockey related sessions. Athletes documented their personal experiences related to ice hockey and life in journals, which were read by coaches on a weekly basis. These journals allowed coaches to nurture relationships with their athletes and to personalize their interventions for intentionally teaching life skills. The findings demonstrated how athletes believe their participation in the program led to increased self-awareness and the development of goal-setting. Olushola et al. (2013) conducted a case study of a high school basketball program for African-American females from a low socioeconomic region in the United States. The program was developed based on the tenets of the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework and findings revealed how the participants developed mutually supportive relationships and discipline, volunteered in the community, and experienced increased educational achievement. Additionally, while working in collaboration with the National Football Foundation, Petitpas, Van Raalte, Cornelius, and Presbrey (2004) developed the Play It

Smart program which uses high school football as a vehicle for fostering life skill development in urban youth. The two-year pilot phase of the program was conducted with 252 male athletes from four schools located in economically disadvantaged regions in the United States and findings illustrated how participants had higher grade point averages and were more likely to pursue higher education compared to their peers.

Negative outcomes. Much of the previously reviewed scholarship on high school sport has explored the positive aspects of participation and only a handful of recent studies were found that specifically touched on the negative outcomes (e.g., Camiré & Trudel, 2010; Dworkin & Larson, 2006). For example, Camiré and Trudel (2010) interviewed high school athletes at a French-speaking Canadian high school and findings indicated how most athletes had been the victim, witness, or perpetrator of different forms of gamesmanship tactics. Dworkin and Larson (2006) conducted focus groups with students at an ethnically diverse American high school to examine the negative experiences associated with organized activities, including sport. Youth indicated that some of the sources of their negative experiences in sport were interactions with peers (e.g., formation of cliques, poor social influences), adult leaders (e.g., favouritism, unknowledgeable coaches), and parents (e.g., pressure to improve performance). Further, Buford-May (2001) conducted an ethnographic study at a predominately African-American high school in the United States and observed how the athletes sometimes violated the standards of sportsmanship (e.g., giving opponents cheap shots) in an effort to win. Through their sport participation, these athletes constantly faced discrimination, racism, and verbal and physical aggression. Overall, the studies reviewed demonstrate that in the context of high school sport, youth can experience both positive and negative outcomes. To promote positive development,

researchers have argued that life skills must be intentionally taught in an effective manner by competent coaches (Allen, Rhind, & Koshy, 2014; Danish et al., 2004; Holt et al., 2009).

Teaching Life Skills

Researchers have documented the strategies that coaches use to deliberately teach life skills through high school sport (e.g., Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2012; Gould et al., 2007). For example, Camiré et al. (2012) examined the strategies that model Canadian high school coaches use to teach life skills and findings revealed how coaches provided opportunities for their athletes to display life skills (e.g., mentoring younger athletes), used keywords to remind athletes of certain life skills (e.g., keyword of social conscience to remind athletes to be respectful), and modelled appropriate behaviours (e.g., respecting the referees). Gould et al. (2007) interviewed award winning high school football coaches from across the United States and findings indicated how the coaches taught life skills by helping their athletes set goals, organizing team building activities, and rewarding effort. Gould, Voelker, and Griffes (2013) also interviewed American high school coaches who were known for fostering leadership skills in team captains and findings demonstrated how the coaches believe they taught leadership skills by providing constructive feedback about leadership behaviours, conducting formal leadership seminars, and allocating time to communicate with captains. Finally, Camiré, Trudel, and Forneris (2014) interviewed model Canadian high school coaches and finding illustrated how coaches believe they learned to facilitate PYD through formal (e.g., national coach education courses), non-formal (e.g., conferences), and informal (e.g., interactions with peer coaches) learning situations.

Life Skill Transfer

Based on the definition of life skills, in order for the skills developed in sport to be classified as life skills, they must be transferred and applied in different life domains such as

school, work, and the family (Gould & Carson, 2008). Although there is a growing body of literature exploring life skill development in the context of high school sport, only a few studies have empirically examined the transfer of life skills from high school sport to other domains (e.g., Camiré et al., 2009a; Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2009b; Holt et al., 2008). Despite touching on life skill transfer, it was not the main focus of these studies. For instance, Camiré et al. (2009a) interviewed Canadian high school athletes and many participants mentioned how the social skills (e.g., cooperation with others, being less shy, and communication) that they believe they learned during high school sport could be transferred to situations at school when working on a group project. Additionally, Camiré et al. (2009b) explored parents' perspectives on the practice of high school sport in Canada and the findings demonstrated how many parents specified how they believe the social skills (e.g., communication, working with individuals you may not necessarily like) that their children developed in high school sport could be transferred and useful in future situations at work and post-secondary education.

Previous research has documented some of the strategies that high school coaches use to deliberately facilitate life skill transfer in their athletes (e.g., Camiré et al., 2012; Gould et al., 2007; Trottier & Robitaille, 2014). For instance, Trottier and Robitaille (2014) compared how high school basketball coaches and community swimming coaches view their role in fostering life skill development in Canadian youth. Coaches in both contexts specified how they promoted transfer by providing examples of the non-sport domains that the life skills can be transferred to and challenging their athletes to practice life skills in non-sport domains. In another study, Gould et al. (2007) interviewed model American high school coaches who believed they facilitated life skill transfer by explaining how the life skills learned in football (e.g., goal-setting) can be useful off the field and by having role models emphasize the value of transfer. Although there are a few

examples of coaches who deliberately teach transfer, it is important to note that some coaches have been shown to assume that life skill transfer is a process that occurs automatically through mere participation in sport (e.g., Camiré et al., 2012; Trottier & Robitaille, 2014).

The previously reviewed studies have provided a preliminary picture of life skill development and life skill transfer in high school sport, but there is still much knowledge missing on how exactly the skills learned in high school sport are applied beyond this context (Camiré et al., 2012). As such, more research examining how life skills are developed during participation in sport and transferred for use in non-sport domains is warranted.

Theoretical Frameworks

Two theoretical frameworks were employed in this Master's thesis to determine the research questions, develop the interview guide, and organize the findings. In article one, the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005) was used to guide how youth development is conceived. In article two, the Conceptual Framework for Life Skills Interventions (Hodge, Danish, & Martin, 2013) was used to theoretically examine life skill development and transfer through high school sport.

The PYD Framework

Historically, there has been a tendency in research to view youth as problems to be managed by focusing on the strategies to eliminate undesirable behaviours (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). However, problem free youth are not necessarily equipped with the skills needed to succeed in life and, as such, a strength-based approach to youth development emerged in the late 1990s that views all youth as having the potential for successful development (Benson, 2006). Grounded in developmental systems theory, the PYD framework puts forth the notion that it is possible to optimize the relationship between individuals and their ecologies by focusing on

building competencies (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Lerner, Lerner, et al., 2005). The tenets of PYD do not restrict human development to biological influences; rather, it stresses the plasticity of human development and the inherent capacity for change (Lerner et al., 2005). Although PYD principles indicate that the focus should be placed on promoting competencies, recent empirical findings have shown that the best approaches to youth development are those that combine the prevention of problem behaviours along with the promotion of competencies (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004; Hilliard et al., 2014). Competencies are wide-ranging and can include psychological attributes, health habits, and life skills (Benson, 2006).

Conceptual Framework for Life Skills Interventions

The Conceptual Framework for Life Skills Interventions developed by Hodge et al. (2013), integrates aspects of the Life Development Intervention (LDI; Danish & D'Augelli, 1983; Danish, D'Augelli, & Ginsberg, 1984) within Basic Needs Theory (BNT; Deci & Ryan, 2000). The LDI is based on a human development perspective and aims to enhance personal competence by teaching individuals a variety of life skills that will ultimately lead to greater psychological well-being. BNT is a sub-theory of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and proposes that the basic needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness represent universal human requirements. Research indicates that achieving a balance of needs satisfaction across the three basic needs is important for optimal psychological development.

Hodge et al. (2013) proposed in their integrated LDI/BNT LS model that life skill development occurs via the satisfaction of the basic needs which are each associated with specific life skills. For example, the need for autonomy is associated with the development of self-control, positive thinking, and self-directed learning. Competence is associated with problem-solving, coping with stress, and interpersonal communication. Relatedness is associated

with increased social interest, cooperation with others, and caring about others and being cared for by others. The principles of BNT (Deci & Ryan, 2000) infer that individuals who are able to internalize their basic needs are more likely to develop the capacity to transfer skills to other life domains. Therefore, Hodge et al. (2013) assert that life skills programming or contexts, such as sport, that foster the development of life skills that parallel the three basic needs will lead to psychological well-being and that once youth are able to internalize these skills they can transfer them to other life domains.

Methodology

A basic qualitative methodology (Merriam, 2009) guided the elaboration of this Master's thesis. In line with the constructivist paradigm, a qualitative methodology was deemed appropriate as the primary aim of the research was to discover how participants made sense of their lived experiences. Specifically, this type of methodology enabled the researchers to understand: (a) how the participants constructed their reality, (b) how they interpreted their lived experiences, and (c) the meaning they attributed to their experiences (Merriam, 2002). Knowledge was jointly produced based on the researchers' interpretation of the participants' understanding of their lived experiences.

Presentation of the Articles

The findings from the analysis of the 22 individual semi-structured interviews with former high school athletes are presented in two articles. In article one (submitted to *The Sport Psychologist*), the findings that describe participants' developmental experiences and the influence of the context associated with their high school sport participation are reported. Article two used Hodge et al.'s (2013) Conceptual Framework for Life Skills Interventions to investigate

the relationship between basic needs satisfaction and the facilitation of life skill development and transfer in the context of high school sport.

Article One

Retrospective Examination of Developmental Experiences and the Influence of Context in
Canadian High School Sport

Kendellen, K. & Camiré, M. (submitted). Retrospective examination of developmental experiences and the influence of context in Canadian high school sport. *The Sport Psychologist*

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine former high school athletes' perspectives on their developmental experiences and the influence of context during their participation in Canadian high school sport. Retrospective interviews were conducted with 22 individuals (12 females, 10 males) between 18-56 years of age. An inductive thematic analysis led to the identification of three main findings. First, different types of life skill experiences can emanate from high school sport participation as participants provided examples of situations in which they believe they (a) learned, (b) practiced, and/or (c) were exposed to life skills. Second, participants provided descriptions of negative experiences, suggesting that the violent subcultures of some sports have permeated into high school sport. Third, participants reported differences in terms of how high school sport was experienced in rural settings compared to urban settings. Overall, the findings provide a more comprehensive picture of the complex nature of high school sport experiences.

Keywords: positive youth development, life skills, youth, sport, context

Retrospective Examination of the Developmental Experiences and the Influence of Context in Canadian High School Sport

Sport is an activity practiced by millions of Canadians and it provides participants with opportunities to establish supportive interpersonal relationships that help build strong, vibrant, and cohesive communities (Canadian Heritage, 2005). The important place of sport in Canadian society was recently highlighted in a survey by True Sport where Canadians ranked sport as the greatest positive influence on youth, after family (Mulholland, 2008). Although there is a strongly held belief in Canada and in many Western countries that sport inevitably contributes to positive youth development (Coakley, 2011), empirical research has provided a more nuanced picture (Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2009). For instance, participation in sport has been associated with high levels of stress (Gould, Flett, & Lauer, 2012), athletic dropout (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2008), and performance anxiety (Dworkin & Larson, 2006). Positive Youth Development (PYD) is an asset-building framework (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005) that has been extensively used in recent years to guide research efforts examining how sport can best promote positive outcomes for youth (e.g., Vella, Oades, & Crowe, 2011; Weiss, Stuntz, Bhalla, Bolter, & Price, 2013). The main tenet of the PYD framework is that it is possible to optimize the relationship between individuals and their ecologies by focusing on building competencies (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Competencies are wide-ranging and can include health habits, psychological attributes, and life skills. Life skills are defined as internal assets that enable youth to succeed in the different environments in which they live: they can be developed in sport and transferred for use in non-sport settings (Danish & Donohue, 1996; Gould & Carson, 2008). Although PYD principles indicate that the focus of developmental efforts should be placed on promoting competencies, findings have shown that the best approaches to

development are those that combine the reduction of problem behaviors along with the promotion of competencies (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004; Hilliard et al., 2014). Past research has illustrated how sport provides a context suitable for the development of life skills, such as emotional control, confidence, and teamwork (Holt, Kingsley, Tink, & Scherer, 2011), but that sport can also lead to feelings of stress and parental pressure (Dworkin & Larson, 2006). Holt and Jones (2008) have argued that numerous variables influence the nature of youth's experiences in sport and that ultimately, developmental outcomes may vary considerably for different participants, even if they take part in sport within the same context. Therefore, research is needed to examine more closely the subtleties of specific sporting contexts and how these subtleties influence the nature of the participants' developmental experiences. One context that aims to promote PYD that is in need of greater empirical examination is high school sport (Forneris, Camiré, & Trudel, 2012).

High School Sport

In Canada, high school sport is often promoted as an extension of the classroom that leads to the development of life skills (Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008). For example, school sport in Canada is governed by School Sport Canada (n. d.), whose purpose is to “encourage, promote and be an advocate for good sportsmanship, citizenship and the total development of student athletes through interscholastic sport” (n. p.). Fostering life skill development is especially relevant in the context of Canadian high school sport as over 750 000 youth are involved in various forms of sporting activities in this setting (School Sport Canada, n. d.). Despite the fact that sports are practiced in Canadian high schools precisely because they are believed to lead to positive experiences for youth, recent media reports have illustrated how negative outcomes are nonetheless a reality. For instance, during the 2012-2013 high school ice

hockey season, a male player in Ontario was suspended from school after allegedly assaulting an arena employee following a hockey game (Hauch, 2013). The event was considered so severe that all athletes at his high school were temporarily suspended from high school sporting events. In recent years, a number of studies have examined more closely the experiences associated with high school sport participation (e.g., Camiré & Trudel, 2013; Trottier & Robitaille, 2014).

Positive outcomes. Past research has documented the life skills that can potentially be developed through participation in high school sport (Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2009b; Trottier & Robitaille, 2014). For example, Camiré and Trudel (2013) interviewed football coaches and athletes from a private Canadian high school and many participants were of the sentiment that athletes developed the life skills of leadership and perseverance through participation in high school football. Camiré, Trudel, and Forneris (2009a) explored the life skill development of athletes at one private French-speaking Canadian high school and findings indicated that most participants believed high school sport represented a context in which they developed social skills (e.g., ability to meet new people), in addition to enhancing psychological dispositions (e.g., self-efficacy). Further, Holt et al. (2008) conducted a case study of a male soccer team at an ethnically diverse Canadian high school to examine if and how youth developed life skills through participation in sport. Results indicated that the coach did not intentionally teach life skills, but that an environment was created that provided opportunities for youth to demonstrate initiative and experience teamwork and leadership. Gould, Collins, Lauer, and Chung (2007) interviewed award winning football coaches who coached at private, Catholic, and public high schools from across the United States and findings indicated how the coaches taught life skills by deliberately helping athletes set goals, organizing team building activities, and rewarding effort and attitude. Gould, Voelker, and Griffes (2013) interviewed American

high school coaches who were known for fostering leadership skills in team captains and findings demonstrated that the coaches believe they taught leadership skills by providing constructive feedback about leadership behaviors and conducting formal leadership seminars.

Negative outcomes. Much of the recent scholarship on high school sport has explored the positive aspects of participation and only a handful of studies were found that touched on the negative outcomes (Buford-May, 2001; Dworkin & Larson, 2006). For example, Camiré and Trudel (2010) interviewed athletes at a French-speaking Canadian high school and findings indicated how most athletes revealed having been the victim, witness, or perpetrator of different forms of gamesmanship tactics. Dworkin and Larson (2006) conducted focus groups with students at an ethnically diverse American high school and findings revealed how the main source of negative experiences in sport were interactions with peers (e.g., formation of cliques, poor social influences). As an assistant coach of a boys' basketball team at a predominately African-American high school in a low socioeconomic region in the United States, Buford-May (2001) conducted an ethnographic study and observed how the athletes often violated the standards of sportsmanship (e.g., giving opponents cheap shots) in an effort to win. Through sport, these athletes constantly faced discrimination, racism, and verbal and physical aggression.

Overall, the research reviewed indicates that youth can benefit in numerous ways from their high school sport participation, but that negative outcomes can also occur and undesirably impact their development. Although the scholarship reviewed occurred under the umbrella term *high school sport*, closer inspection reveals how the actual physical settings in which the studies took place were highly heterogeneous (e.g., low socioeconomic region, ethnically diverse school, private school). Therefore, the developmental outcomes youth indicated experiencing in high school sport were highly dependent on the contextual factors of where their actual sporting

experiences took place. Yet, in the scholarship reviewed on developmental experiences, few studies have deliberately examined the contextual features of where high school sport participation occurred. As a result, the purpose of this study was to examine former high school athletes' perspectives on the developmental experiences and the influence of context associated with participation in Canadian high school sport. Three research questions guided this study: (a) What positive outcomes (life skills) do former athletes believe they experienced in high school sport? (b) What negative outcomes do former athletes believe they experienced in high school sport? and (c) How do former athletes believe the particular context in which they practiced high school sport influenced their experience? Retrospective interviews were conducted with former athletes because these individuals are positioned to enter into a reflective process (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008) and provide a comprehensive picture of how they believe their experiences in high school sport have subsequently influenced their development across the lifespan.

Methodology

The principles of the constructivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), which posit that reality is relative and knowledge is co-created, guided this study. In line with the constructivist principles, a qualitative methodology (Merriam, 2009) was employed and allowed for insights into the complexities associated with how the participants interpreted their lived experiences within the context of high school sport.

Context

In Canada, a variety of team and individual sports are offered to male and female high school students between 14 and 18 years of age. High school sports occur during after-school hours and students compete in organized leagues, tournaments, and regional/provincial championships. In the province of Ontario, where the current study took place, the average high

school sport season is approximately 2-3 months in duration and students are allowed to practice multiple sports throughout the academic year (Lacroix, Camiré, & Trudel, 2008). The Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations (OFSAA) governs high school sport in Ontario and emphasizes the educational value of this practice, which should lead to the development of students equipped with the life skills necessary to become responsible citizens (Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations n. d.).

Participants

A total of 22 former high school athletes (10 males, 12 females) between 18 and 56 years of age ($M = 31.86$) were recruited. Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) was employed to select participants across different stages of the lifespan in order to acquire varied perspectives of how high school sport is believed to have influenced development. Participants were in their teenage years ($n = 1$), twenties ($n = 13$), thirties ($n = 2$), forties ($n = 2$), or fifties ($n = 4$). Participants also needed to satisfy the following eligibility criteria in order to take part in the study: (a) attended a public and/or private high school in Ontario, (b) completed a minimum of one full season of an OFSAA sanctioned high school sport as an athlete, and (c) did not previously or does not currently coach high school sports. Current or former high school coaches were not recruited in order to minimize the potential for biases toward sport participation in this setting. Participants were recruited from the Eastern ($n = 12$) and Southwest ($n = 10$) regions of Ontario. Twenty-one participants indicated that they competed in both team and individual sports. The most popular sports practiced were basketball ($n = 12$) and track and field ($n = 12$).

Procedure

Approval to conduct the study was granted by the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity at the researchers' university. A recruitment letter containing the researchers' contact

information was distributed at community recreational/leisure facilities (e.g., canoe club) and workplaces (e.g., school administrative office) in both regions. Interested participants contacted the lead author directly (via e-mail) to schedule an interview. Before the interviews, participants were informed of their rights to anonymity, provided written consent, and completed a one-page demographic questionnaire. Prior to the data collection, the lead author participated in a bracketing interview (Rolls & Relf, 2006) to better understand how her past high school sport experiences may influence knowledge construction in the current study. This process was important given that the lead author was a member of multiple high school sport teams and attended provincial championships. Three pilot interviews were conducted with former high school athletes to refine the interview guide (e.g., order of the questions). Researchers deemed one pilot interview to be of high enough quality for inclusion in the final sample.

Data Collection

Data were collected via individual semi-structured interviews, lasting between 42 and 79 minutes ($M = 61:30$). Interviews were audio-recorded and conducted at a time and location (i.e., home, workplace, or university) that was chosen by and was convenient for the participant. The interview guide included six sections and was developed based on previous studies examining athletes' perspectives on Canadian high school sport (e.g., Camiré & Trudel, 2013; Camiré et al., 2009a). In the first section, the purpose of the study was shared and participants had the opportunity to ask questions about the interview procedure. In an effort to reduce social desirability, participants were assured that there were no right or wrong answers and that their personal perspective on their past experiences in high school sport was desired. The second section consisted of questions related to their former coach(es) (e.g., Can you describe your high school coach's philosophy?). Sections three, four, and five broadly explored the positive (e.g.,

Do you think that high school sport helped you learn how to manage your emotions?) and negative experiences (e.g., Were there ever times when your experience in high school sport was stressful?) of high school sport participation. Questions in the final section explored the characteristics of high school sport (e.g., Can you describe any significant similarities or differences between high school sport and club sport?). To conclude the interview, participants were provided with an opportunity to discuss additional high school sport experiences that they deemed to be of relevance for this study (e.g., Are there any life skills that we have not touched on that you believe you learned in high school sport and that you now apply in your life?).

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim, yielding 401 pages of single-spaced data. Transcripts were forwarded (via email) to participants for them to review. Twenty of the 22 participants responded to this email with only one participant making a minor grammatical change to his transcript. Transcripts were uploaded in the qualitative data analysis software NVivo (Qualitative Solution and Research 2012, version 10) to assist with data analysis. An inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was conducted by the lead author, in close collaboration with the second author, to identify and analyze themes (repeated patterns of meaning) present in the data. The analysis started with the first author reading and rereading the transcripts to familiarize herself with the content. Following this step, initial codes (e.g., time-management) were developed from the data. The codes represented the most basic segment of data and formed the basis of latent order themes (e.g., life skill learning). The next step of analysis consisted of sorting the different codes into themes and conceptualizing different levels of themes (e.g., main theme of life skill experiences, sub-theme of life skill learning). At this point, the first and second author independently coded three interviews and then engaged in

extensive discussions to ensure the themes identified were distinct and represented the data in a comprehensive manner. Inconsistencies were discussed until consensus was achieved. Based on the interviews reviewed, both authors discussed what they believed were the most salient inductive findings in the data and how these findings could be cohesively organized in a manuscript format. The lead author selected the participant quotes that best represented the main findings and consulted with the second author on multiple occasions to select the richest quotes that appear in the final manuscript. The lead author wrote several versions of the results section, each of which were reviewed by the second author until agreement was reached on the presentation of the findings.

Results

The findings are organized into three sections: (a) the life skills participants believe they developed in high school sport, (b) participants' views on the negative outcomes associated with high school sport participation, and (c) participants' perspectives on how the context influenced their high school sport experience. Codes were created to ensure participants' anonymity, based on the order in which they were interviewed (e.g., fifth participant interviewed is A5).

Life Skill Experiences

The participants provided a variety of statements, indicating how they believe high school sport was a context where they *experienced* life skills. Based on the analysis, three types of life skill experiences appeared to emanate from the participants' high school sport involvement. Specifically, participants provided examples of situations in which they believe they (a) learned, (b) practiced, and/or (c) were exposed to life skills. The life skill learning experience is defined as the perceived acquisition of new life skills (through high school sport) that the participants did not believe they possessed prior to their participation in high school

sport. The life skill practice experience represents a situation in which life skills were believed to be previously learned in other life domains, but that high school sport signified a context in which those life skills could be practiced and ultimately improved. The life skill exposure experience denotes a situation where participants believed they were exposed to new life skills during high school sport, but only truly internalized those life skills in later stages of life.

Learning. The participants indicated that they believe they learned many new life skills through their experiences in high school sport. First, several participants shared how they believe they learned important social skills. For example, one participant shared how being on a high school sport team enhanced his ability to develop relationships: “I started making friends with people and figured out how the dynamics work; how people become friends and how people get along playing together...I was pretty good friends with a lot of people at the end” (A21). Second, many participants stated how they believe they learned how to socialize with a variety of character dispositions. One participant commented:

I learned that I could get along with all different kinds of people. There are so many different types of people when you're in school, you've got the druggy people, you've got the sport people, you've got the academics, and we had all those kinds of people on our team. I never belonged to one clique; I was one of those people that would be invited to every group's party (A5).

Third, some participants mentioned how they believe they learned the skills needed to be effective leaders. A participant explained that when she was voted team captain, she had to: “Learn how to be a leader and not always having a leader to fall back on...I definitely learned how to step up and how to take on the challenge of being the voice of all the players” (A10). Similarly, when discussing his experience of being the youngest member of his high school

volleyball team's starting line-up, one participant said: "I was put in that leadership role very young and I think it was a huge lesson I learned in high school sport, that in that environment, you're able to become a leader and teach people things regardless of age" (A2). Fourth, several participants reported that it was challenging to meet the demands of both school and sport and as a result, these experiences enabled them to learn time-management skills. One participant said: "I found sports, it had to teach you how to prioritize, multitask...I had to learn how to study, play sports, train" (A16). Another participant discussed a strategy he learned to manage his time:

I was involved in so many sports and so many activities, I think at first I struggled with that, but then I definitely learned to improve that. I'd never used an agenda before, and then I started using an agenda, and that saved me (A2).

Practice. The participants indicated how some life skills were already learned in other domains before entering high school and, as such, they believe that high school sport was a setting that allowed them to practice and refine their existing skills. First, one participant explained how he learned to manage his emotions in previous club sport experiences and how high school sport was used as a setting to practice how to deal with stressful situations: "Yes, there were very stressful moments and before an OFSAA [high school provincial championship] race, my legs were shaking, but I think I learned them [skills] outside of school and I practiced them inside school" (A7). Second, one participant discussed how he believes he learned responsibility from his family, but got to practice this skill in high school sport:

I think already coming into sport, I was very responsible, but I think sport allowed for another venue for me to exercise that. I'm the oldest of two brothers and in my culture, a lot of responsibility is put on the eldest, so I already had that. When I was put in those leadership positions [in high school sport], it was a different way to express that (A2).

Exposure. Some participants indicated how they believe that their experiences in high school sport exposed them to many life skills. However, looking back on their experiences, they believe that some of these life skills were only consciously internalized and applied during later stages in life. First, one participant mentioned how she was never appointed to a formal leadership role in high school sport, but that she gained valuable exposure to leadership in this context, which she believed benefited her later in life when she was assigned a leadership position at work: “I would have watched, observed, decided what I liked about her [high school basketball captain] leadership and what I didn’t like, and then as I became manager at work, I would copy what I thought was good” (A5). Second, one participant discussed how she believes the inherently social nature of high school sport exposed her to situations that initiated the process of learning social skills, but that these skills were only fully internalized during her university studies: “I think everything got further developed in university, but to a small extent, it [high school sport] got me started in terms of social interactions with coaches, teachers, adults, the real world, and also your friends” (A8). Third, a participant explained how he believes he was exposed to goal-setting in high school sport, but only internalized this life skill in university:

I guess my goal was to be a starter on the team...I don’t know how much goal-setting I really learned in high school. I was the student or athlete where things used to just come easy to me...it wasn’t really until later in university that things caught up with me and I actually learned that I had to work towards things [set goals] to get better at them (A6).

Negative Experiences

In this section, five developmental areas (physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and social) are used to organize the negative experiences discussed by the participants.

Physical. Participants described how they commonly witnessed aggressive behaviors while playing contact sports in high school. Three main reasons were highlighted. First, several participants discussed how a lack of emotional control skills often resulted in physical violence. A participant described how an assistant coach on his ice hockey team physically confronted a player, after the coach in question discovered that the player had attempted to prank him by putting ketchup on his shoes: “He [coach] had a death stare, he wanted to kill someone, and that’s when the coach pushed him [player], and pretty much everybody backed out, and then a few 11th and 12th graders went back in and separated them” (A7). Second, participants discussed how physical violence was a regular occurrence and sometimes occurred gratuitously. One participant revealed how he was often physically violent, for no apparent reason, when interacting with his teammates in the dressing room: “When I was in [ice] hockey...one of my best friends, I used to just beat him up, just because” (A1). Third, findings suggest that senior ice hockey players commonly employed physical violence to showcase their power and influence over younger players. For example, one participant revealed how the senior players on his high school ice hockey team initiated the rookies: “We had rookie beats...the rookies [we] would all stay in the same room and the veterans would come in and beat the crap out of us because we weren’t playing, so it didn’t matter if we were hurt” (A1). This same participant ventured to explain why he believes this subculture of physical violence exists in many male contact sports:

I don’t think that a physical way is the best way to get that message across, but when you are a kid in a highly masculine setting where everybody is a pumped up young man and the testosterone’s flowing, that seemed the best way to get your message across (A1).

Former male ice hockey players reported most examples of physical violence, but this subculture also existed, as one female rugby player explained, in other sports and with female athletes:

In rugby, everyone wanted to kill each other...when I thought about tackling someone in rugby, I'm like, 'I'm going to put this person in the ground.' Sometimes when you tackle girls, they would try to kick you in the face with their cleats on the way up, so in that case I marked them and I was like, 'I will get you next time' (20).

Intellectual. Several participants discussed how they believe their high school sport participation negatively influenced their academic performances because they attributed more importance to sport. For instance, one participant explained how he prioritized high school sport over academics because of the increased social status he associated with sport participation: "I put most of my energies towards sports because you would get recognized by your peers more for your sporting achievements than if you were the smartest kid in class" (A1). One participant indicated that she prioritized high school sport over academics because it offered a more enjoyable experience: "I always got more pleasure and enjoyment from doing sport-related things rather than being stuck in a classroom" (A4). Looking back, many participants reported that they regretted their decision to prioritize sport over academics. A participant noted: "I regret putting my school in the back seat. I definitely regret that. I did okay, it wasn't that bad, but I definitely could have spent more time and effort in my schooling" (A10).

Psychological. Participants attributed their negative psychological experiences mainly to the stress associated with balancing school and sport demands. One participant explained how stress levels increased during exam time: "I would say around exam time, that was probably the most stressful because I was trying to study for exams, but then I also had sports...there wasn't really a lot of time to focus that effort towards school" (A20). Other participants stated that they experienced stress in high school sport because they were afraid to make mistakes. One

participant described how her high school volleyball coach's behaviors impacted her psychologically and increased her stress level during play:

He would be very, very mad if you made a mistake, and so I'd get really stressed just getting on the court, so it would make me make mistakes...if you made a mistake, he would take you right off... Before every game, I'd feel like I was going to puke... I'd say stress is an understatement" (A9).

Emotional. From an emotional standpoint, a negative experience that was extensively discussed was receiving minimal to no playing time. One participant shared how she felt embarrassed when her basketball coach instructed her to go on the court for the first time during the last minute of play:

I refused to go on because I just felt so bad...it was embarrassing and it was almost like, oh, put me on now because we can't lose the game...he [coach] wanted me to play right at the end of the game and I wouldn't get off the bench (A13).

Another participant explained how she found it difficult to be an emotionally supportive teammate to her sister who received more playing time than she did: "It was hard in that sense where I sat on the bench a lot more and she [sister] got a lot more playing time" (A16). A few participants explained how a lack of playing time was an emotionally difficult situation that eventually led them to quit their high school sport teams. On this matter, one participant said:

I actually ended up leaving the volleyball team because I knew I wasn't good enough to be a starter in Grade 12, but for some reason that hurt my ego...I don't want to play if I'm just going to sit here and watch in my final year of high school (A6).

Social. Some participants expressed that their negative experiences in high school sport were the result of inappropriate social interactions with coaches. Participants specified that two

behaviors prevented them from socializing appropriately with their coach: (a) coach favoritism and (b) coach superiority. A participant claimed favoritism existed on his high school football team because his coach refused to discipline the best players, even when they engaged in violent behaviors: “The better players who were real jerks used to always start problems with other players and get into fights, but there was no punishment for them...the best players could essentially get away with whatever they wanted and still play” (A21). Two participants provided examples of instances when they perceived that their coach acted in a condescending manner: “He [coach] would constantly talk down to you and make you feel inferior to him and he did not focus at all on developing your skills” (A14) and “My volleyball coach didn’t seem like a guy with open arms. If you went to him with a question or anything, he made you feel dumb sometimes, just by being all-knowing and intimidating” (A6).

Influence of the Context

As described above, the analysis led to the uncovering of numerous positive and negative experiences from participation in high school sport. However, given that high school contexts are not uniform, the following section examines how participants from rural settings experienced high school sport compared to participants from urban settings.

Rural high school sport.

Only opportunity to participate in organized sport. Participants from rural settings discussed how opportunities for youth to engage in organized sport were limited, with high school sport often being the only form of organized sport available in the community. One participant said: “There was only one level of football at the time, so it’s not like you could have any recreational league or junior league, it was as soon as you got to high school that was the only league” (A21). Some participants discussed how they grew up in remote areas and their

high school sport teams had difficulty finding opponents to compete against. One participant specified that his high school cross-country team attended a competition on a reserve (designated area of land where First Nations peoples live in Canada) where only two schools showed up:

“We went to one event on some reserve up North and we were the only school other than that reserve school there” (A1). This participant later provided a rationale as to why he believes some high schools in urban areas often refused to travel to compete against schools in rural settings:

“They [urban high schools] couldn’t afford it or they would say, ‘why do we have to go nowhere to play, when we have all these teams that can do this [sports] within an hour away?’” (A1).

Competitive environment. As mentioned above, in rural settings, most sports were only offered in an organized fashion in high schools. Therefore, high school sport was often the highest competitive level available in the community and as a result, some participants felt that their coaches had approaches that prioritized performance. One participant described her high school basketball coach’s philosophy: “The emphasis was on being competitive and we always wanted to win in our Northwestern area...more about competition than just out there to have fun” (A8). Another participant discussed how his football coach did not distribute playing time equally and only played the best players to have the upper hand in rivalries with other towns:

Unless you were the very best at whatever position you were playing, you wouldn’t play.

If you were super athletic, you would end up playing offense, defense, and special teams, instead of having someone assigned to that spot...it was pretty competitive and since it was a small town, there were some big rivalries, so winning was a big thing (A21).

Importance to the community. According to the participants, most residents of rural settings highly valued high school sports. When describing the fundamental role high school sports played in her community, one participant mentioned: “Growing up in a small town and not

knowing what it's like in a bigger city, high school [sport] was a huge deal...I think everybody was overly involved in a small town" (A8). Some participants revealed people in their town were so invested in high school sports that the local media regularly publicized the results. One participant noted: "Our local paper, the sports section, it was probably the biggest section and they covered every sport in high school...they always had it in and I think in a small town you really get that" (A8). Several participants discussed how high school sports were a source of excitement and pride in rural settings. For example, when explaining how excited his community was when hosting the provincial championships for ice hockey, one participant declared that his town essentially shut down so residents could attend the game: "The school would bus all the kids down to watch the games. People would close up [shop], come and watch the games, the place was packed. We would have 2 000 people at our games" (A1). This same participant later described how residents demonstrated their pride for high school sports in the downtown area:

Each block had streamers and "Go Crusaders" and blue-and-white paintings. They would have pictures of us in the different stores. My dad's store took the mannequins out and dressed them up in hockey gear and had them sitting there watching the TV and the TV was there for the public, and it would broadcast the games (A1).

Urban high school sport.

Concurrent high school and club sport participation. For many participants in urban settings, high school sports were practiced concurrently with club sports. Participants involved in both sporting contexts explained how they perceived high school sports as more recreational and club sports as more competitive. Several reasons were provided to explain this distinction. First, participants discussed how the process of making a club sport team was more difficult than making a high school team. One participant said: "Definitely the club sport was more

competitive because now you've got the top of the top. You might have been the star on your high school team and now you're the bench-warmer on the community [team] (A5)". Second, some participants believed that in an urban setting, the skill level of high school sport athletes was generally lower than club athletes. For instance, when discussing his experience of playing on the senior volleyball team as a grade nine student, one participant reported: "Even at the senior level, it [high school volleyball] was still lower [in skill level] than my age level in club volleyball" (A2). This participant believed that the most successful urban high school teams were those that were primarily composed of athletes also competing in club sports: "The schools that really excelled in high school sport and made OFSAA [high school provincial championship] and really had an impact were the ones that were made of all club players" (A2). Third, because high school sport was perceived to be more recreational in nature than club sport, several participants from urban high schools explained how they did not always put forth the same level of effort in the two contexts. One participant contrasted her effort levels:

I wouldn't take it [high school soccer] as seriously as my actual team [club soccer]...club I would take a lot more seriously because it was competitive and school I don't really consider it competitive...I'm not even trying, it's basically just for fun at school (A9).

Minimal importance. In contrast to the integral role high school sports occupied in rural settings, some participants reported that there was generally not much importance given to high school sport participation in urban settings. Most participants in urban settings noted that they received minimal recognition from the student body for participating in high school sports. A participant asserted that her high school sport participation did not increase her social status within the school: "It [high school sport] wasn't that much of a big deal... it wasn't like the more sports you did the more popular you were. People don't even acknowledge the fact that you play

sports. It was nothing” (A9). One reason advanced by a participant as to why the student body was not overly supportive of high school sport was the presence of specialized schools in some urban settings: “We went to a major arts school...I think it was nothing against the athletes, it was people either played sports or they didn’t. If people didn’t, they didn’t really care for sports” (A4). This same participant discussed how the arts focused teachers at her school did not approve of students missing class to participate in high school sport: “She [teacher] always scolded me whenever I came in late, always told me that rugby shouldn’t be a priority in my life, that I’m a smart girl, going to university and that I should focus on my academics” (A4). Although the findings suggest that there was a general lack of support for high school sports in urban settings, there were some exceptions. Some participants indicated that students at their school did support a select few sports. One participant affirmed: “Every basketball game, our gym was filled with spectators, hundreds of spectators. Every other sport you’ll find thirty, forty people. Outside of that, I don’t think the players were too highly valued outside of basketball” (A2). In sum, for most participants from urban settings, club sport was believed to be more important than high school sport. One participant summarized this notion: “I guess a win outside of school on that [club] team would mean more than a win at school” (A9).

Discussion

Past research has demonstrated how high school sport can be a context suitable for the development of life skills (Camiré & Trudel, 2013; Trottier & Robitaille, 2014). One of the contributions of the current study resides in extending this previous research by demonstrating how high school sport appears to be a context where a variety of life skills can be experienced in different manners (i.e., learning, practice, and exposure). Gould and Carson’s (2008) model of coaching life skills through sport can be used as one possibility to explain such findings.

According to the model, the pre-existing make-up of an individual consists of internal (e.g., physical competencies, personality traits, life skills) and external assets (e.g., coaches, parents, environmental factors). Given that the participants did not enter the sporting context as *tabula rasa*, their hypothesized pre-existing make-up influenced the nature of their life skill experiences in high school sport and whether they believe they learned new life skills, practiced existing life skills, and/or were exposed to life skills that were only internalized in later stages in life. These findings parallel the results of Voelker, Gould, and Crawford (2011) who showed that former high school athletes' previous sport and non-sport experiences influenced their leadership ability. The identification of the life skill exposure experience supports the recent work of Camiré, Trudel, and Forneris (2012) who interviewed model high school sport coaches and their athletes. The coaches indicated that some of their athletes did not have the maturity necessary to comprehend the concept of transferability and thus, believed that life skill transfer only occurred in later stages of life.

The current study's findings enhance our understanding by illustrating how participation in sport is a complex process that does not lead to a uniform experience for all involved; the development of life skills can manifest itself differently (i.e., learning, practice, and/or exposure) based on the theorized pre-existing internal and external assets (Gould & Carson, 2008) that youth bring to the sporting context. This information is especially relevant for coaches, as the findings can help them recognize the importance of getting to know who their athletes are in order to customize their interventions for optimal development. The results from a study conducted by Camiré et al. (2012) support this claim, indicating that high school sport coaches who personalized their coaching philosophies according to the needs of their athletes (e.g., socioeconomic status, existing life skills) reported effectively facilitating life skill development.

Nonetheless, more research is needed in this area to determine if the types of life skill experiences identified manifest themselves in different contexts (e.g., other countries, contexts other than high school sport) and age groups (e.g., university athletes, young children).

Another aim of the current study was to examine in greater detail the negative outcomes that can be experienced in high school sport. Our findings are in line with previous research demonstrating how negative experiences can occur during participation in high school sport when coaches exhibit inappropriate behaviors that can lead to athletes dropping out of sport entirely (Dworkin & Larson, 2006). The finding that is most cause for concern is the often vivid and graphic descriptions provided by the participants of violent and aggressive behaviors occurring in high school sport, particular in contact sports, such as ice hockey. Previous research has explored the subculture of youth ice hockey (Bernard & Trudel, 2004; Emery, McKay, Campbell, & Peters, 2009), often evidenced by a lack of respect for opponents and a propensity for rule breaking. Our findings indicate the existence of a violent subculture in high school ice hockey as violence was described by the participants as often occurring gratuitously. If the purpose of high school sport is to, as School Sport Canada (n. d.) stated, promote “the total development of student athletes,” (n. p.), then deliberate efforts from school sport leaders are needed to ensure that the violent subcultures of contact sports do not permeate into the high school context and reduce participants’ opportunities to experience positive life skills. One example of a deliberate effort to reduce violence in high school ice hockey is an annual provincial tournament in Ontario which operates using a system whereby the results of matches are determined not only by scoring, but also by a team’s discipline record during the game (Casselman High School, 2014). These and other initiatives that promote positive development, and work to reduce violent incidences, are in line with the best approaches to PYD (Catalano et

al., 2004; Hilliard et al., 2014) and must be implemented in order for high schools to continue justifying the offering of contact sports known to have violent subcultures. Although most examples of physical violence emanated from ice hockey, our findings extend the literature by showing the existence of physical violence in other contact sports (e.g., rugby) and with females.

In the present study, efforts were made to provide a representation of high school sport in which the positive experiences were weighted against the negatives. Coakley (2011) has argued that researchers must be more critical in terms of how they view sport by refraining from assuming that “sport is essentially good and that its goodness is automatically experienced by those who participate in it” (p. 309). As the best approaches to PYD are those that combine the prevention of problem behaviors with the promotion of competencies (Catalano et al., 2004; Hilliard et al., 2014), additional research examining in greater detail the negative experiences of athletes in sport is needed, especially as it relates to how these negative experiences potentially affect other aspects of athletes’ lives. Increased knowledge in this area can lead to the development of targeted strategies, which concurrently reduce negative experiences and provide opportunities for youth to learn, practice, and gain exposure to life skills through sport.

Finally, one of the novel contributions of this study was exposing how the context in which high school sport is practiced can significantly influence the nature of participants’ experiences. For example, the participants from rural settings reported having limited opportunities to engage in organized sport, with high school sport often being the only form of organized sport available in the community. This finding supports the works of Eime, Payne, Casey, and Harvey (2010) and Tammelin, Näyhä, Hills, and Järvelin (2003) who found that individuals living in urban settings had more opportunities to participate in organized sports and greater accessibility to sporting facilities compared to individuals living in rural settings.

Further, findings from a study conducted by Côté, MacDonald, Baker, and Abernethy (2006), demonstrated how the size of the city where elite athletes gained their formative experiences influenced their likelihood of playing professional sport. Findings from the current study add to the literature by illustrating how community size and geographical location represent important variables that can influence how competition level, community involvement, and personal effort are perceived by the participants. The tendency to view sport as a single entity (Gould & Carson, 2008) and the lack of knowledge regarding the contextual differences across sport domains (Holt & Jones, 2008) represent limitations in existing research. The findings of the current study begin to address this gap by demonstrating how the particular context in which high school sport is practiced can greatly influence the nature of participants' experiences. This finding offers empirical support for Holt and Jones' (2008) claim that developmental experiences can vary within the same sporting context.

Results from the current study must be considered in light of their limitations. First, data were collected from the province of Ontario and the experiences reported by the participants may not be representative of high school athletes in other Canadian provinces or other countries. Second, the positive and negative experiences presented in this study represent the personal perspectives of former high school athletes and may or may not be accurately reflecting their actual lived experiences or the current state of affairs in high school sport.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings from this study illustrate that high school sport can potentially be framed as a PYD context as participants provided insights into how they believed they learned, practiced, and/or were exposed to life skills during their high school sport experience. The nature of their perceived sporting experiences was heavily influenced based on the theorized pre-

existing internal and external assets (Gould & Carson, 2008) they brought into the sporting context. Coaches can use the findings to understand the importance of knowing who their athletes are in order to develop effective intervention strategies. The findings also point to the fact that mere participation in sport does not guarantee PYD as the participants reported many examples of negative experiences in high school sport. One of the novel contributions of this study resides in having explored how the features of the particular context in which high school sports are practiced play a major role in explaining the nature of participants' developmental experiences. As such, it is essential that moving forward, researchers and practitioners refrain from viewing and labeling sport as a single entity.

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Article Two

Basic Needs Satisfaction and the Facilitation of Life Skill Development and Transfer in High
School Sport

Kelsey Kendellen & Martin Camiré

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the life skill development and transfer experiences of former high school athletes using Hodge, Danish, and Martin's (2013) Conceptual Framework for Life Skills Interventions. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with 22 participants (10 males, 12 females) between 18-56 years of age ($M_{age} = 31.86$). Purposeful sampling was employed to select participants across different stages of the lifespan to acquire varied perspectives of how high school sport was perceived to have influenced their development. Findings from the deductive thematic analysis support aspects of the model and provide tangible examples of life skill development and subsequent transfer for the same skill by the same participant. Overall, the findings of the current study offer empirical support to the notion that the life skills learned in high school sport can transfer and be used in other life domains.

Keywords: life skills, development, transfer, basic needs theory, youth sport

Basic Needs Satisfaction and the Facilitation of Life Skill Development and Transfer in High School Sport

Of the millions of youth who engage in sport around the world, only a tiny fraction of a percentage will become professional athletes (Danish, Forneris, & Wallace, 2005). Therefore, for sport to be of value to the masses, the skills developed in this context must transfer and be applicable in domains other than sport (Danish, 1997). There is a growing body of literature demonstrating how sport provides a context suitable for the development of various competencies and dispositions, including making new friends, gaining in confidence, solving problems, and exhibiting respect (Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2009; Ward & Parker, 2013). In the literature, these competencies and dispositions fall within the realm of what are considered life skills, defined as internal assets that enable individuals to succeed in different life environments (Danish, Forneris, Hodge, & Heke, 2004; Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1995). In order for what is developed in sport to be classified as a life skill, it must be transferred and applied in different life domains such as school, work, and the family (Gould & Carson, 2008). Recent theoretical (e.g., Lee & Martinek, 2013; Turnnidge, Côté, & Hancock, 2014) and empirical research (e.g., Allen, Rhind, & Koshy, 2014; Weiss, Stuntz, Bhalla, Bolter, & Price, 2013) in sport has been conducted to examine more closely the process of life skill development and transfer. One sporting context in which life skill development and transfer are particularly emphasized is high school sport (Forneris, Camiré, & Trudel, 2012).

High school sport

Researchers have advocated for promoting sport in schools given that it affords participants opportunities to build competencies in an enjoyable and safe environment (Danish et al., 2005). In Canada, high school sports are practiced by over 750 000 student-athletes and

overseen by 52 000 coaches dispersed all throughout the country's provinces and territories (School Sport Canada, n. d.). High school sports are justified principally because of the expectation that students can learn life skills through participation, in accordance with the educational mandates of schools (Forneris et al., 2012). In recent years, some studies have taken a closer look at the state of affairs as it relates to life skill development and transfer in the context of high school sport (Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2009a, 2012; Trottier & Robitaille, 2014).

Life skill development. Past research has examined the perspectives of high school athletes who reported developing many life skills through their sport participation (e.g., Camiré, Trudel, & Bernard, 2013; Gould & Carson, 2010). For example, Camiré and Trudel (2013) interviewed Canadian high school athletes who discussed how being given roles as captains and facing moments of adversity on their school's football team allowed them to develop the life skills of leadership and perseverance. Holt, Tink, Mandigo, and Fox (2008) conducted a case study of a Canadian high school male soccer team and results indicated that although the coach did not intentionally teach life skills, the athletes reported how their experiences during the season allowed them to learn teamwork and leadership skills. Other studies have explored life skill development from the perspectives of coaches and findings revealed how American coaches believed they developed leadership, goal-setting, and teamwork skills in their student-athletes (Gould, Collins, Lauer, & Chung, 2007; Gould, Voelker, & Griffes, 2013). In the studies by Gould and colleagues, the coaches specified how they implemented team-bonding activities and conducted formal leadership training to develop life skills in their athletes. Based on the scholarship previously reviewed, there is a growing body of literature that has examined life skill development in the context of high school sport; however, much less research has explored life skill transfer (Camiré et al., 2012; Holt et al., 2008; Trottier & Robitaille, 2014).

Life skill transfer. Qualitative studies have examined how athletes (Holt et al., 2008) and parents (Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2009b) believe life skills can be transferred from high school sport to other life domains. For instance, findings from Camiré et al. (2009a) indicated how Canadian high school athletes believed the social skills (e.g., cooperating with others, being less shy, communicating effectively) they learned during high school sport could be transferred to school, such as when working in groups for class projects. Camiré et al. (2009b) showed how many Canadian parents of high school athletes believed that the social skills (e.g., communicating effectively, working with individuals you may not necessary like) their children developed in sport were transferable to work and post-secondary education. Although athletes and parents seem to believe that the life skills learned in high school sport are transferable, coaches have been shown to have more varied opinions on the topic of transfer. To illustrate, Camiré et al. (2012) interviewed Canadian high school coaches who believed that many of their athletes simply did not have the cognitive maturity necessary to understand the concept of transfer and that for those athletes, transfer probably only occurred in later stages of life. In other studies, coaches provided examples of the strategies they use to teach life skill transfer (e.g., identifying the non-sport domains where the life skills would be useful and encouraging athletes to practice life skills in non-sport domains), but some coaches were shown to believe that transfer is a process that occurs automatically through simple participation (Camiré & Trudel, 2013; Trottier & Robitaille, 2014).

Although previous studies have examined life skill development and to a certain extent life skill transfer, there is still a lack of exhaustive knowledge regarding the life skills that are learned in sport and how athletes believe they apply these life skills beyond (Turnnidge et al., 2014). An important step in addressing this issue consists of examining the perspectives of

former athletes because they are in a preferred position to provide a comprehensive picture of how they believe they have transferred the life skills they developed in high school sport to different domains across their lifespan. To our knowledge, only a few studies have retrospectively examined the experiences of former high school athletes and these studies were conducted with American university students only one or two years removed from high school (Gould & Carson, 2010; Voelker, Gould, & Crawford, 2011). Hence, the findings from these studies offer a narrow picture of transfer because participants were not yet in an optimal position to thoroughly reflect on the extent to which their high school sport experiences influenced their development at various stages of life (e.g., university, entering the workforce, raising a family). More retrospective research is needed with individuals from different age groups to increase our understanding of if and how the life skills learned in high school sport are believed to transfer beyond sport. As a result, the purpose of this study was to examine former high school athletes' perspectives on life skill development and transfer.

Theoretical Framework

This study was framed using the Conceptual Framework for Life Skills Interventions developed by Hodge, Danish, and Martin (2013), which integrates aspects of the Life Development Intervention (LDI; Danish & D'Augelli, 1983; Danish, D'Augelli, & Ginsberg, 1984) and Basic Needs Theory (BNT; Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Based on a lifespan human development perspective, the aim of the LDI is to enhance personal competence through the teaching of life skills, which in turn leads to greater psychological functioning. The LDI has been used in research and programming (e.g., Lavalley, 2005; Petitpas, Van Raalte, Cornelius, & Presbrey, 2004), but is limited in its scope as it does not address underlying psychological development (process of change) that may have occurred during life skill interventions. To

address this void, Hodge et al. (2013) argued for the integration of BNT within the LDI. BNT is a sub-theory of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and proposes that satisfaction of the three innate psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, will lead to optimal psychological well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Autonomy is concerned with individuals having the ability to make decisions and acting in accordance with one's sense of self. The need for competence represents experiencing a sense of mastery through effective interactions within the social environment. Relatedness is defined as feelings of connection to and acceptance by others. The basic needs are universal and manifest themselves across cultures (Ryan & Deci, 2002). When these basic needs are satisfied, individuals are theorized to experience positive psychological development (Ryan & Deci, 2000a), which corresponds to the desired outcomes of most life skill interventions (e.g., Brunelle, Danish, & Forneris, 2007; Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish, & Theodorakis, 2005).

Hodge et al. (2013) proposed in their integrated LDI/BNT LS model that life skill development occurs via the satisfaction of the three basic needs and the findings of empirical research are used to support the association between each basic need and specific life skills. For example, autonomy is associated with independent thinking, self-directed learning, and self-regulation. Competence is associated with the development of problem-solving, coping with stress, and social competencies. Relatedness is associated with the development of cooperation with others, consideration for others' feelings, and increased social interest. One of the tenets of BNT is that healthy psychological development occurs when individuals internalize the three basic needs into their sense of self so that their values, behaviours, and life skills become internally regulated rather than externally controlled (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The internalization of the basic needs is theorized to be influenced by the creation of needs-supportive motivational

climates, which represent the values, behaviours, and life skills promoted by influential agents in the social environment (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Specific to the context of high school sport, the LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013) can be used to postulate that if a needs-supportive motivational climate is promoted, athletes will internalize the three basic needs and be in an optimal position to transfer the life skills they learned in sport to other life domains. Two research questions guided this study: (a) What life skills, if any, do former athletes believe they learned during their participation in high school sport that are theorized to foster their three basic needs? (b) What life skills, if any, do former athletes believe they internalized and transferred from high school sport to other life domains?

Method

Context

High school sports in Canada are offered to male and female students between the ages of 14 and 18 and are generally practiced after-school hours. Students can participate in a variety of team and individual sports and compete in organized competitions and tournaments. In Ontario, where the current study took place, the typical high school sport season lasts approximately 2-3 months in duration (Lacroix, Camiré, & Trudel, 2008). In the majority of cases, teachers volunteer their time to coach high school sports; however, when there is a lack of teacher volunteers, coaches from the community are recruited to fill vacant positions. High school sport in Canada is often promoted as an extension of the classroom (Holt et al., 2008). In fact, School Sport Canada (n. d.), the governing body for high school sport in the country, communicates in its mission statement that its purpose is “to encourage, promote and be an advocate for good sportsmanship, citizenship and the total development of student athletes through interscholastic

sport” (n. p.). As a result, there is an inherent expectation that coaches in this setting work towards teaching students life skills through sport (Forneris et al., 2012).

Participants

The sample was comprised of 22 former high school athletes (10 males, 12 females) between 18 and 56 years of age ($M = 31.86$). Participants were purposefully sampled (Patton, 2002) at different stages, including the teenage years ($n = 1$), twenties ($n = 13$), thirties ($n = 2$), forties ($n = 2$), or fifties ($n = 4$), to acquire a more comprehensive picture of how high school sport was believed to influence development across the lifespan. This study was conducted in the Eastern ($n = 12$) and Southwest ($n = 10$) regions of Ontario, where high school sport is governed by the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations (OFSAA). The following eligibility criteria were used: (a) attended a public and/or private Ontario high school, (b) participated in at least one full season of an OFSAA sanctioned sport as an athlete, and (c) does not currently coach in the high school context. Current high school sport coaches were not invited to participate in this study in an attempt to minimize the potential for positive biases towards sport participation in this setting. Participants indicated that the most popular sports practiced were track and field ($n = 12$) and basketball ($n = 12$). In terms of highest level of education completed, participants indicated they held a high school diploma ($n = 4$), college ($n = 2$), bachelor ($n = 15$), or master’s degree ($n = 1$). Participants stated their civil status as being single ($n = 13$), married ($n = 7$), divorced ($n = 1$), or common law ($n = 1$). Five participants reported having children.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, approval to conduct this study was obtained from the University’s Office of Research Ethics and Integrity. A recruitment poster containing the purpose of the study and the researchers’ contact information was disseminated at sport and

recreation facilities (e.g., soccer fields) and workplaces (e.g., public sector offices) in both regions. Interested participants contacted the researchers directly via email to schedule an interview at a time and location that was convenient for them. Before the interviews, the participants were explained the procedures in place to assure anonymity, provided written consent, and completed a one-page demographic document with questions related to age, gender, civil status, children, education, occupation, and past high school sport experiences. The semi-structured interviews lasted between 42 and 79 minutes ($M = 61:30$ minutes), were conducted face-to-face, and were audio-recorded.

Interview Guide

The interview guide was designed based on the LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013) and organized into six sections (for sample questions, see Table 1): (a) introduction (b) past experiences in high school sport, (c) autonomy, (d) competence, (e) relatedness, and (f) concluding statements. In the first section, the purpose of the study was shared and participants had the opportunity to ask questions regarding the interviewing process. The second section consisted of questions related to participants' motivation for practicing high school sport and experiences with their coach(es). The third, fourth, and fifth sections were designed to touch on the life skills that correspond to each basic need. Participants were asked if they believe they learned a particular life skill during their high school sport participation and if they believe they transferred this same life skill to other life domains. The sixth section obtained information on how participation in high school sport was perceived to have influenced global development.

Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed verbatim, yielding 401 pages of single-spaced data. The researchers sent an email to the participants to review their transcripts and twenty participants

responded with only one asking for minor grammatical changes to be made. Transcripts were uploaded into the qualitative data analysis software NVivo (Qualitative Solution and Research 2012, version 10) which facilitated the creation of themes and categories (Creswell, 2013). The first author, while working in close collaboration with the second author, followed the six steps for conducting a deductive thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). In the first step, the first author read and reread the transcripts to immerse herself with the data. Second, the data were coded using the LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013), with initial codes generated based on the life skills (e.g., coping with stress) associated with the basic needs (e.g., competence). For each life skill, the coded material was further organized as either referring to the notion of development or transfer. The third step involved analyzing the codes and conceptualizing how some of them can combine to form main and sub-themes. During this process, deliberate efforts were made to find and organize codes from participants who provided examples of life skill development and life skill transfer for the same skill (e.g., developing self-control in high school sport and transferring self-control to other life domains). These codes formed the basis of the three main themes (i.e., autonomy, competence, relatedness). In the fourth step, the three main themes were reviewed to ensure that there was sufficient evidence to demonstrate life skill development and transfer across all three needs. Fifth, the researchers reviewed the themes to ensure that the examples provided were distinct from one another and were related to specific life skills (e.g., self-control and self-regulation). The final phase consisted of writing the manuscript. The first author selected the quotes that she believed best represented life skill development and transfer from the same individual and then engaged in extensive discussions with the second author on multiple occasions to select the richest quotes that appear in the final manuscript. The first author wrote several versions of the results section

and each version was reviewed by the second author until consensus was achieved that the presentation of the findings answered the study's research questions.

Methodological Rigor

Strategies were employed before and after data collection to enhance the methodological rigor of this study: (a) bracketing interview, (b) pilot interviews, and (c) investigator triangulation. First, the first author participated in a bracketing interview (Rolls & Relf, 2006), which helped her reflect on how her previous high school sport experiences may influence knowledge construction in this study. Given that the first author was a former high school athlete, it was necessary to identify preconceptions prior to undertaking the study as well as monitor them through the research process (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Second, the interview guide was piloted with three former high school athletes to ensure that the questions asked elicited in-depth responses. The researchers deemed one pilot interview to be of high enough quality to be included in the final sample. Third, at the beginning of data analysis, investigator triangulation (Thurmond, 2001) was conducted as the first and second author each coded three interviews and then engaged in extensive conversations to assess their agreement of coded data. Based on the three interviews reviewed, both authors discussed what they believed were the most salient findings in the data that should be coded. Although the authors agreed on the majority of the codes, discrepancies existed, which were discussed until agreement was achieved.

Results

The findings from the deductive analysis are consistent with aspects of the LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013). The results are presented in three sections according to each basic need (see Table 2). In each section, quotes were selected to provide concrete examples of (a) the life skills the participants believe they learned through high school sport and (b) how participants

believe they subsequently transferred those same skills to other life domains. A number was assigned to represent each participant and to protect their rights to anonymity.

Autonomy

Many participants were of the sentiment that during their high school sport experience they developed and transferred several of the life skills that are hypothesized to foster autonomy.

Self-directed learning. The participants discussed how they believe high school sport represented a context in which they learned how to be a self-directed learner, which is defined as the process by which individuals take initiative to identify their learning needs and implement learning strategies to achieve their goals (Knowles, 1975). One participant discussed how he believes he learned in high school sport to deliberately allocate practice time to a particular skill he wanted to improve: “In basketball, something that I struggled with were free-throws, and I remember taking time in the summer and practicing free-throws on my own. Taking my own initiative” (2). This same participant later provided two examples of how he believes the self-directed learning skills he developed in high school sport have transferred to everyday life. First, he discussed how he applied this skill in his present sporting activities: “Golf is an incredibly hard game, so I use the skills that I learned from high school sport, like practice, having consistent practice. I’ll go to a [driving] range and have practice time” (2). Second, he shared how he used his self-directed learning skills to learn a second language for work: “I’m looking to develop my French language skills, so I’m actively taking courses to do that and I want to improve my French writing” (2). Another participant discussed how during one season, a knee injury left her unable to compete in high school basketball. She mentioned how she took initiative to change her approach to leadership and created a new leadership role for herself in which she contributed to her team’s success through her observations: “I would cheer them on

from the bench and I would be present at every practice...I was able to take on a leadership role right there. I learned to be a leader in that sense” (14). This same participant later described how the self-directed learning skills she believes she learned in high school sport have transferred and now help her solve problems independently at her clinical placement. She recalled an experience in which she observed her pedorthist (footwear specialist) supervisor interact with a patient and noted: “I would be sitting in placement and my supervisor would do something and he wouldn’t say why he was doing it, but I would go and try and figure it out, whether through textbooks or the Internet” (14).

Self-control. Several participants specified that they believe they developed the skills needed to control their emotions during high school sport participation. Self-control refers to the restraint exercised over an individual’s responses and emotions (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2007). A participant shared the example of how he believes he learned to remain calm when receiving negative feedback from his high school coach. He stated: “If a coach was mad at me, I would normally not even listen to them...I learned during [high school] sports, forget about if the coaches are screaming at you, it’s not the right time to argue against them” (7). This same participant later revealed how he believes he transferred the self-control skills he learned in high school sport to situations at work when he communicates with angry customers: “I just try and calm them [customers] down. I think that’s always what you have to do. If I’m talking to a customer, and I’m screaming, it’s not worth it” (7). Another participant described how he believes he learned the value of being able to control his emotions after he impulsively quit his high school volleyball team because he received minimal playing time at a tournament:

I learned that I shouldn’t act based on my short-term emotions just because I wasn’t playing. I should have at least confronted the coach and said ‘I’m not having the best

time here.' I learned [during high school sport] to think about alternatives before I act based on emotion (6).

This same participant later indicated how he believes he transferred the self-control skills he learned during high school sport to situations at work, when he has to restrain his frustrations with colleagues he does not particularly care for: "I have to put on that poker face and I have to put on the smile...I'm at the office, they're [colleagues] part of my team and I have to work with them...it's the same attitude for sure" (6).

Self-regulation. Some participants discussed how through their high school sport participation they believe they learned to make decisions for themselves given that their parents were not always present to regulate their behaviour. Self-regulation involves the regulation and adaptation of individuals' behaviour to their environment (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004). One participant stated how going to tournaments with his high school hockey team allowed him to learn how to regulate his spending in a financially responsible manner in order to participate in high school sport:

My parents wouldn't give me money, I worked. When we [hockey team] went out of town, I paid out of my own pocket for my meals. I had to learn how to budget my money...going away and not blowing all my money on stupid things (1).

This same participant later stated how self-regulating his finances in high school sport was a skill that transferred and helped him manage his budget while at university: "Translates into today where I have rent to pay, I have tuition to pay, I have to pay for my car, and I have to pay for food. I guess it helps you budget better" (1). Another participant mentioned how she believes she learned during high school sport to regulate her behaviour in accordance with her continuously changing social environment:

Personal ability to adapt because every situation you encounter in [high school] sport is different and unique, every person you work with is different and unique. I think being able to adapt to the changes, being injured, how do you handle being injured? (20).

This same participant later described how the ability to self-regulate her behaviour in high school sport transferred and facilitated her transition from living with her parents to being independent in a new city: “I came to a university that was six hours from home, nobody else I knew came here, and I adapted. I think definitely playing sports and being put in all these different situations so many times, I never got complacent” (20).

Competence

Most participants shared concrete examples of how they believe that during their high school sport participation they developed and transferred some of the life skills theorized to satisfy the basic need of competence.

Interpersonal communication. The participants discussed how they believe high school sport was conducive to the development of interpersonal communication, which refers to the verbal and non-verbal (e.g., facial expressions, body language) processes by which individuals directly interact (Hargie, 2011). One participant described how she believes she learned that it was socially inappropriate to publicly criticize a teammate for making a mistake during a high school basketball game. This participant discussed how following a confrontation, she made a conscious effort to be more sensitive to her teammate’s feelings when providing verbal feedback: “It made me realize even though I’m really outspoken and I’m upfront about how I’m feeling, other people might not take that so well. I still say what I want to say, but just phrase it better” (4). This same participant later explained how she believes the communication skills she learned in high school sport have transferred and now enable her to appropriately communicate with her

colleagues at work. Specifically, after noticing a new colleague was frequently making mistakes, this participant mentioned how she spoke to her in a constructive manner: “I just pulled her aside and said, ‘Listen, you’re doing a good job, you’re new, but mistakes will happen. Don’t worry about it’” (4). Another participant indicated that she learned in high school sport how to communicate with her teammates in an open and respectful manner: “I learned how to take constructive criticism, whether it was from the coach or other players...and to be able to give it to somebody else and deliver it in a way that they take it, not in a defensive way” (14). This same participant further discussed how she believes the communication skills she learned in high school sport have transferred and now help her train new employees at work. She described how she would often reflect on her past high school sport experiences with coaches, and uses these experiences to shape how she communicates with new employees:

I don’t want to talk down to them because that’s exactly how my coach was in grade nine. He would talk down to us and I didn’t want to do anything that he told me too. I use these skills on a regular basis when it comes to work (14).

A participant indicated that in high school sport, she believes she learned that she does not need to like her teammates to work effectively with them. She shared an example of how she and her assigned doubles tennis partner were successful in sport, even though they did not socialize with each other outside of sport: “I didn’t particularly care for [tennis partner], but we played okay together. We won a couple of games, but he certainly wasn’t anyone I chummed around with at school. He was nice, but off the court that was it” (13). This same participant later elaborated on how she believes her tennis experiences have transferred to work and she is now better equipped to work with colleagues she does not particularly like. She noted:

I think those experiences [in high school sport] certainly help you tolerate people or be a little more patient or understanding of where others are coming from...mostly at work where you're on a committee and you've got some irritating persons that talk too much or gets on your nerves and you have to just bite your tongue (13).

One participant stated how he believes he became a better listener by paying attention to members of his high school volleyball team during competition: "In high school, it's hard to listen to somebody else and agree to what they think because you're at that age where it's my way or nothing. Especially through the [high school] volleyball that I played, communication was definitely key" (11). This same participant later provided a tangible example of how he believes his high school sport experiences related to communication have transferred and now help him listen to his colleagues during meetings:

For work, we do a lot of team stuff and I know how to listen to somebody and even if I don't 100% agree with what they're saying, I won't get mad at them...I think my communication with a team is pretty good because of all these different situations I've been in with all the [high school] teams I've played for (11).

Another participant shared an example of how he believes that in high school sport he learned the importance of taking initiative to communicate his ideas to his teammates:

I think being assertive is something that I learned because on the field I think it was something that I was forced to do, especially in rugby because people are put into positions not really knowing the strategy in the game, so you have to teach on the fly (2).

This same participant later elaborated on how he believes the communication skills he learned in high school sport have transferred and now help him during work meetings to: "Identify the times where you do have to communicate something and times where you have to sit back. I feel

comfortable in saying what I'm thinking and how that's going to contribute. I think it started with [high school] sport" (2). Finally, a participant reported that during her high school sport experience, she learned how to communicate with her teammates in different manners based on the social situation at hand: "I found [high school] sport made me see the best of both worlds. I'm going to be close with the girls and want to joke around with them, but we're here for a job, we're here for a goal" (4). This same participant later explained how the communication skills she believes she learned in high school sport have transferred and help her prioritize her conversations with clients at work. She reported:

It's good for us [colleagues] to be close and chummy, but on the other hand, we need to stay professional...we can talk about our weekends, but as soon as a client is here, okay, conversation over, and I find that directly comes from sports (4).

Coping with stress. The participants spoke of how they believe participating in high school sport put them in situations where they had to learn strategies to cope with stress. Coping is defined as the cognitive and behavioural efforts that individuals consciously employ to manage their perceived internal and/or external demands (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). One participant indicated how she believes high school sport provided her with opportunities to learn how to manage stress: "I was always a nervous participant just at the start of the race...I think the more practice I did, the more repetition of it [track races], made for more success and less stress" (22). This same participant later explained how the lessons she learned in high school sport have transferred and now help her fulfill her public speaking responsibilities at work:

I think that [high school sport] plays out in what I do today or what I have done in my career because I've often had to be speaking publicly and at the beginning it used to

cause me stress, but I repeatedly did it and then I would speak in front of 300 people and

I realized that practicing reduces your stress, you become confident in your abilities (22).

Another participant explained how he believes through high school volleyball, he learned how to cope with stress due to the pressures on his team to win: “When playing volleyball I had to manage a lot of stress because we did have a good team and we had such high expectations on going places and we ended up not going” (11). This same participant later commented on how this lesson has transferred and now helps him maintain a generally calm demeanor:

I think today, now the stresses that today causes are a lot different, but high school sport, just being put through that kind of situation definitely helps today for sure...outside of sport, I manage it [stress] quite well because I don't really get angry at anybody (11).

Other participants described how high school sport itself was used as an activity to cope with stress. For example, one participant stated: “[High school sport] was always like a coping skill and mechanism, so if I was really stressed at home, work, or school, I knew that during practice, I would just completely forget about it” (2). This same participant later revealed how this lesson has transferred and he deliberately uses physical activity or sport to cope with the stresses associated with personal conflicts at home, such as arguing with his wife:

That's something that I use sport for still today. I'll tell her, 'I'm just going for a run. I just need to go for a run.' I need to really have time to think and really get physical and then I'll come back and I'll have a clearer mind (2).

Another participant explained how she believes high school sport served as an excellent release from the stresses of everyday life:

If it was school, if it was work, family life, anything going on, it [high school sport] helped with the stress...I got to relax, I got to be with people, or if there was a tournament on the weekend, I'd do that and go away, so it was always a de-stressor (8).

This same participant later stated how she has transferred this lesson and now makes a conscious effort to incorporate adult recreational sports into her life to help her cope with stress and maintain a positive work-life balance:

I have softball and it works as a fun activity to get your mind off things because for an hour, there's no Blackberry, no one is trying to reach me. I'm just there to have fun...I know that if I did it [sports] more often, I would probably be less stressed (8).

Relatedness

Some participants discussed how they believe that during high school sport they developed and transferred life skills theorized to satisfy the need for relatedness.

Consideration of others' feelings. The participants mentioned how they believe their experiences in high school sport have taught them to be more considerate of their teammates' feelings. Being considerate of others' feelings or being empathetic refers to an individual's ability to share the emotions and experiences of others (Clark, 1980). One participant explained how his involvement in high school sport allowed him to experience a situation in which he learned to empathize with a suspended teammate: "I felt really bad for him because he joined the team because of this tournament, he plays five minutes, and gets kicked out...I felt horrible for him because he was just sitting there when I was playing" (11). This same participant later described how he believes he has transferred what he has learned in high school sport to work by, for example, exhibiting empathy for colleagues who are on leaves of absence due to illness: "I have to feel for somebody [colleague] if they're not feeling well. If they're sick...I need to be

emotionally accepting of that kind of thing” (11). Another participant indicated how she believes the relationships she developed with members of both the female and male rugby teams at her school provided her with opportunities to express her consideration for others’ feelings. She described how the male and female rugby teams held a joint celebration for individuals who had qualified for the provincial rugby teams: “Our coach bought pizza and we did a big celebration for them. We’re a family, when something good happens, it’s great, when something bad happens, it’s terrible and I even see that now” (4). This same participant later discussed how she believes her ability to empathize has transferred and facilitated her ability to be emotionally supportive when her rugby friend’s mother passed away. She commented: “He literally had all of us [rugby players] there surrounding him...you see that bond last more than just the highs and lows on the field. You feel it outside too” (4).

Social responsibility. The participants communicated that high school sport afforded them opportunities to learn how to become responsible members of society. Social responsibility refers to the process of acting on one’s feelings of concern for others in society (Conrad & Hedin, 1981). As a member of his high school’s senior volleyball team, one participant described how he felt a sense of responsibility towards the junior volleyball team when he learned that they did not have a coach: “My first volunteer experience was coaching the [junior] volleyball team while I was in high school...they didn’t have a coach, so I was coaching them as a student volunteer” (2). This same participant later explained how he believes his propensity to help others has transferred and helps him actively volunteer in his community as an adult. He noted that his high school coaching experience:

Led to another five years of coaching when I had already graduated [high school] and that was my first experience in volunteerism. Then I branched out into the health care

setting...I volunteer with a local hospital and organize a recreational program for a house for disabled children (2).

Even as an adult, this same participant mentioned how he stills feels responsible for ensuring that someone is available to coach the volleyball teams at his high school:

I was disappointed this year because the [volleyball] team didn't happen because they didn't have a coach and I was the first one that was asked, but I was getting married and things were really crazy, so I couldn't do it, and I still feel bad (2).

Another participant shared how she learned through her high school coaches the importance of acting in a socially responsible manner by giving back to the younger athletes at school: "They [coaches] taught me that I had the skills necessary and they wanted me to come back and teach these skills to other students that were maybe starting out. I wanted to give that to other students too" (14). This same participant later discussed how she believes the social responsibility skills she learned in high school sport have transferred and have influenced her decision to volunteer with high school sport teams as an adult:

I was coaching the [high school] basketball and track team...because I enjoyed it so much, I wanted to give back...I've use my past experiences and related to these people that I've been working with and giving back (14).

Discussion

Past research has shown how athletes believe life skills can be developed during participation in high school sport and then transferred for use in non-sport domains (e.g., Camiré & Trudel, 2013; Camiré et al., 2009a; Camiré et al., 2012; Holt et al., 2008). However, in all of the aforementioned studies, the development and transfer of a particular life skill was not linked to the same individual, making it difficult to determine if the skills deemed to be developed were

indeed transferred outside of sport. Further, the studies provided minimal details on *where* and *how* participants were actually transferring the life skills they believed they developed in high school sport. The contribution of the current study resides in having presented tangible examples of life skill development and subsequent life skill transfer for the same skill by the same participant. The findings advance the life skill literature by providing vivid examples of life skill development (e.g., exhibiting self-control with teammates) and transfer (e.g., remaining calm with angry customers at work) situations prompted by the same individual and by providing information on *where* and *how* the life skills learned in high school sport transferred.

Gould and Carson (2008) argued that an existing limitation in the life skill literature is the lack of theoretical explanations and the current study begins to address this gap by using the LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013). In order to test the fidelity of the LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013) in the context of high school sport, the current study focused on one piece of the model (i.e., life skill development and transfer) and did not measure other aspects of the model (i.e., the needs-supportive motivational climate) due to the retrospective design. However, the examples the participants provided of the life skills they believe they developed and transferred (e.g., self-control, coping with stress, social responsibility) tend to suggest that the context of high school sport supports the basic needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Based on the LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013), it appears that the participants internalized the life skills they learned in high school sport into their sense of self, which facilitated their ability to transfer those skills to numerous life domains.

A notable contribution to the life skills literature resides in having recruited participants from a broad range of ages. Given that the LDI (Danish & D'Augelli, 1983; Danish et al., 1984) is based on a lifespan human development perspective, the participants were able to extensively

discuss how the life skills they believe they developed in high school sport transferred across the lifespan. Past research has been conducted with former high school athletes (Gould & Carson, 2010; Voelker et al., 2011), but the participants in those studies were only a few years removed from high school and thus, their limited life experiences reduced their ability to provide examples of transfer. In the current study, the participants provided many examples of how they learned important life skills that were transferred and applied at work, at school, and in the community. In future research, the LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013), can be used to interpret how life skill transfer manifests itself with athletes in different contexts and cultures.

Researchers have explored how sport can be a context suitable for the development of important social skills (e.g., Camiré et al., 2009a; Weiss et al., 2013). Findings from a study by Jones and Lavallee (2009) revealed how athletes, coaches, and sport psychology experts believed that social skills were the most important skills for British youth to learn through participation in sport. Likewise, Canadian high school athletes mentioned how they believed being involved in high school sport allowed them to develop numerous social skills, such as meeting new people and establishing meaningful peer relationships (Camiré et al., 2009a). Our findings are consistent with and extend previous research as interpersonal communication was the most frequently cited life skill developed and the participants provided numerous examples of how this skill transferred for use beyond sport. Given the importance that the participants attributed to the development and transfer of communication skills, coaches should make deliberate efforts to optimize social interactions and have pedagogical strategies designed to increase their athletes' awareness and confidence in using the social skills developed in sport in a variety of settings.

Although the use of the LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013) allowed for the findings to be organized and interpreted in a novel manner, there were some limitations to using this

model to explain the type of development that occurs in high school sport. First, the model does not take into account how negative experiences in sport may thwart basic needs satisfaction and thus negatively impact individuals' psychological well-being. The current study's participants also discussed negative experiences they were subjected to in high school sport, but due to the model's restrictions and the deductive analysis, these had to be analyzed and ultimately reported in a different paper (Kendellen & Camiré, submitted). As the best approaches to promoting positive youth development are those that combine the reduction of problem behaviours along with the promotion of competencies (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004; Hilliard et al., 2014), developmental models in sport must encompass negative experiences and how they influence life skill development and transfer. Second, the LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013) associates each basic need with specific life skills, but some skills overlapped (e.g., cooperation with others and interpersonal communication). Future research is needed to specifically define the life skills discussed in the model to determine how they are associated with each basic need.

Overall, the findings from the current study offer valuable insights into the life skill development and transfer experiences of former high school athletes, but must be considered in light of their limitations. The examples provided of the life skills learned in high school sport and their subsequent transfer beyond sport represent the personal perspectives of the participants and do not demonstrate a causal link between the two. Moreover, the data were collected in a single Canadian province and the experiences reported by the participants may not be representative of high school athletes in other provinces or countries. In light of those limitations, longitudinal research is needed with cohorts of high school athletes as they move to emerging adulthood and beyond to track how their high school sport experiences impact their developmental trajectories.

Further, research on life skill development and transfer is needed in sporting contexts beyond school sport (e.g., community sport) where sports are practiced with the intended purpose of enabling participants to develop in a holistic manner.

Conclusion

The current study is one of the first to use the LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013) to examine the role of high school sport in offering a needs-supportive context that facilitates the development and transfer of life skills. Interpersonal communication was the most frequently discussed life skill that was believed to be developed and transferred, which illustrates how high school sport is a context conducive to the development of social skills. The findings of the current study advance our knowledge by providing empirical evidence of development and transfer for the same life skill by the same individual. Linking development and transfer in such a manner demonstrates the substantial influence high school sport experiences can have in the lives of individuals long after their playing days are over.

Table 1

Sample Interview Questions Based on the LDI/BNT LS Model (Hodge et al., 2013)

Section A: Introduction

1. Participants are reminded that the interview is not an evaluation, there no right or wrong answers, and to base their responses on their experiences specifically in the context of high school sport.

Section B: Past experiences in high school sport

1. Why did you decide to practice high school sport?
2. Can you describe your high school coach(es). Was the coaching emphasis on competition or participation?

Section C: Autonomy (self-control)

1. Life skill development: Do you think high school sport helped you learn how to manage your emotions (e.g., anger, frustration, or excitement)? Example?
2. Life skill transfer: Can you discuss if you believe dealing with such situations in high school sport has helped you develop self-control now as an adult? Example?

Section D: Competence (coping with stress)

1. Life skill development: Do you believe your participation in high school sport has allowed you to learn the skills needed to manage stress? Example?
2. Life skill transfer: Do you believe you are good at managing stress in your life today as an adult? Example?

Section E: Relatedness (consideration of others' feelings)

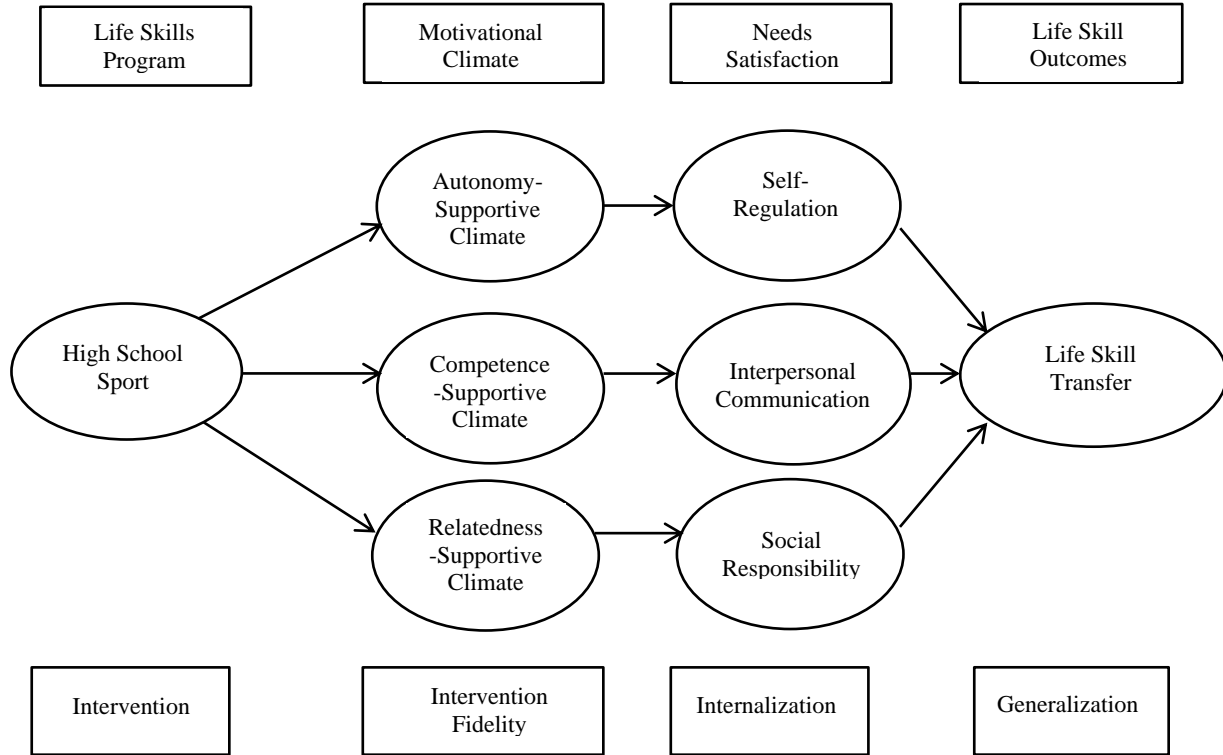
1. Life skill development: Were you happy when your teammates had success (e.g., made a provincial team) and sad when they faced challenges (e.g., injury)? Example?
2. Life skill transfer: Is considering others' feelings something that is important for you now as an adult? Example?

Section F: Concluding Statements

1. Do you believe that your participation in high school sport served to teach you life skills that led to your global development as a person? Example?
 2. Do you believe participating in high school sport taught you the skills needed to contribute to society? Example?
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Table 2

Results Based on the LDI/BNT LS Model (Hodge et al., 2013)



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General Discussion

The overall purpose of this Master's thesis was to examine former high school athletes' perspectives on life skill development and transfer. In article one, the findings from an inductive thematic analysis led to the uncovering of three main findings. First, it appears that high school sport can lead to different types of life skill experiences as the participants provided examples of situations in which they believe they (a) learned, (b) practiced, and/or (c) were exposed to life skills. According to Gould and Carson's (2008) model of Coaching Life Skills through Sport, youth enter the sport domain with internal (e.g., personality dispositions, physical competencies, existing life skills) and external assets (e.g., socioeconomic status, family, previous coaches) that influence their ability to learn life skills. As such, in the current study, the hypothesized internal and external assets the participants entered high school sport with ultimately influenced whether they believe they learned new life skills, practiced existing life skills, and/or were exposed to life skills that were only truly internalized in later stages of life.

The life skill learning experience parallels the findings of Holt et al. (2009) who illustrated how youth learned important life skills (e.g., ability to work with other people, effort) through interactions with peers, parents, and coaches in a competitive sport setting. The identification of the life skill practice experience is in line with Jones and Lavalley (2009a) who, through the case study of a British female tennis athlete, demonstrated how the participant further developed and refined her natural tendency to work hard through her experiences in sport. The life skill exposure experience is consistent with a study by Camiré et al. (2012), in which high school coaches revealed how some of their athletes did not have the cognitive maturity to comprehend the notion of transfer, and as a result, believed that life skill transfer occurred in later stages of life (after high school). Overall, these findings extend the life skill

literature by illustrating how the life skill experiences vary (i.e., learning, practice, or exposure) based on the theorized internal and external assets that youth enter the sporting domain with.

The second main finding from article one was the participants' vivid and detailed accounts of their negative experiences in high school sport. Many participants were of the sentiment that their participation in high school sport interfered with their academic performance because they attributed more importance to sport than school. Although the participants' perceptions may or may not reflect their actual performance in the classroom, this finding is not in line with previous quantitative studies (e.g., Fox et al., 2010; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003), which have demonstrated a positive relationship between sport participation and grade attainment. However, of most concern is the description provided by the participants of the violent and aggressive behaviours occurring in contact sports, mainly in high school ice hockey. The participants explained how they frequently witnessed violent acts as the result of players lacking emotional control skills and senior players employing violence to showcase their power over younger players. Particularly alarming was the notion advanced by some participants that violence was often unprovoked by external events and occurred for no apparent reasons. This finding supports past research (e.g., Bernard & Trudel, 2004; Emery, McKay, Campbell, & Peters, 2009), which has examined the subculture of youth ice hockey, often characterized by a lack of respect for opponents and a propensity for rule breaking activities. Our findings add to the literature by demonstrating that ice hockey's violent subculture exists not only in community clubs, but is also pervasive in the high school sport context. Based on the findings of this Master's thesis, high school sport seems to be a positive experience for youth, but given that negative experiences are still encountered by participants in this setting, more work is needed to improve this context and align it more with the educational mandate of high school sport.

The third main finding of article one is how rural high school sports and urban high school sports present different features (i.e., opportunities to engage in organized sport, competition level, support from school and community) that ultimately influence the nature of participants' experiences. This finding supports previous research showing how individuals living in urban settings had more opportunities to participate in organized sports compared to individuals living in rural settings (Eime, Payne, Casey, & Harvey, 2010; Tammelin, Näyhä, Hills, & Järvelin, 2003). Our findings extend the literature by illustrating how community size and geographical location represent important variables that can influence how competition level, community involvement, and personal effort are perceived by the athletes. Further, this finding supports the claim made by Holt and Jones (2008) that sport participation is not a homogeneous experience for all individuals and different types of developmental outcomes can occur, even within what is labelled as the same sporting context, in this case high school sport.

In article two, the findings from the deductive thematic analysis were consistent with aspects of the LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013). The participants provided many examples of the life skills (e.g., self-regulation, coping with stress, social responsibility) they believe they learned in high school sport and subsequently transferred to everyday life situations, suggesting that they were able to internalize the life skills they learned in high school sport. According to the LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013), this internalization process facilitated the participants' ability to transfer the life skills learned in sport to numerous life domains. Our findings are consistent with and extend previous research, demonstrating how sport can be a context suitable for the development of important social skills (Camiré et al., 2009a; Jones & Lavalley, 2009b), as interpersonal communication was the most frequently cited life skill developed and transferred for use beyond sport.

In order for what is developed in sport to be classified as a life skill, it must be transferred and applied in different life domains such as work, school, and in the community (Gould & Carson, 2008). If a skill cannot be transferred, it is a sport-specific skill and cannot be deemed a life skill (Jones & Lavallee, 2009a). Although the notion of life skill transfer may seem simplistic, in reality, it is a complex process that is heavily influenced by individual dispositions and environmental factors (Allen et al., 2014; Camiré et al., 2012). To date, only a few studies in sport have empirically explored life skill transfer (e.g., Jones & Lavallee, 2009b; Walsh, Ozaeta, & Wright, 2010), but the findings of article two extend this body of research by providing concrete examples of how the transfer of skills from high school sport to everyday life situations manifests itself. Specifically, tangible examples of life skill development (e.g., providing verbal feedback in a sensitive manner) and transfer (e.g., addressing a colleague's mistake privately) that correspond to the same skill prompted by the same individual were presented. Furthermore, our findings provide information on *where* and *how* the life skills learned in high school sport transferred. Linking development and transfer in such a manner advances previous literature and provides empirical support for transference efficacy in a sport context.

Taken together, the findings of this Master's thesis provide a more comprehensive picture of the developmental experiences that can occur in high school sport. By exploring more closely important areas of interest in the life skill literature, the findings of this Master's thesis add complexity to concepts that had been previously considered single entities. First, a novel contribution was adding complexity to the concept of *life skill development* which appears to manifest itself differently (i.e., learning, practice, or exposure) based on an individual's theorized pre-existing internal and external assets (Gould & Carson, 2008). Therefore, in future studies, researchers should use caution when employing the term *development*; deeper analysis is needed

to determine if youth's developmental experiences in sport actually represent learning experiences, practice experiences, or exposure experiences. Second, this Master's thesis has shown how high school sport cannot be considered a singular context as there are great variations in terms of how development is experienced, based on the nature of the context in which their sport participation took place. Such findings, illustrate the pitfalls of clustering rural and urban high school sport as one context because with the numerous variables at play, it makes it difficult to identify what features of each context are inherently responsible for the developmental outcomes. Moving forward, to better understand the nature of participants' developmental experiences in sport and programming, future research should avoid grouping rural and urban sport, ECA (extracurricular activities), and out-of-school activities and instead consider the particular features of each context to really understand what is happening.

Given that the main focus of this Master's thesis was to more closely examine life skill transfer, recruiting former athletes at different stages of life provided a more comprehensive picture of how the life skills believed to be experienced in high school sport manifest themselves across the lifespan. In fact, one of the strengths of this Master's thesis resides in having used a retrospective design, which yielded unique insights into the participants' developmental experiences that could not have been revealed if the interviews had been conducted with current athletes. For example, the findings from this Master's thesis demonstrated how the life skills experienced by the participants in high school sport were used as they progressed into adulthood and encountered critical life events (e.g., starting university, entering the workforce, raising a family). Past research assessing life skill transfer has primarily examined the perspectives of current athletes and the findings from these studies revealed (a) a lack of consensus and (b) a lack of details regarding the possible transfer of skills beyond sport (Allen et al., 2014; Camiré et

al., 2012; Holt et al., 2008; Jones & Lavallee, 2009b; Weiss, Stuntz, Bhalla, Bolter, & Price, 2013). The findings from this Master's thesis advance the transfer literature by suggesting how a comprehensive understanding of the concept of transfer may only occur after individuals' have finished participating in high school sport and have had the time to reflect on their past experiences. If future research is to look more closely at transfer, then working with a retrospective design might be important to pursue more regularly when exploring the life skills experienced in particular sporting contexts (e.g., university, club, community) and how these skills subsequently transfer to different domains across the lifespan. The use of a retrospective design could enable future studies to examine the potential long-term effects of sport participation on individuals' development at various stages of life (e.g., emerging adulthood).

The examples of life skill transfer advanced by the participants tend to suggest that high school sport uses an implicit approach to transfer (Turnnidge, Côté, & Hancock, 2014), in which the focus is on contributing to the global development of student-athletes within the sport context and not the transfer of skills to other life domains. Although the findings from this Master's thesis demonstrated transference efficacy in the context of high school sport, future research should examine how coaches can deliberately teach life skill transfer (i.e., explicit approach) and ultimately enhance youth's ability to transfer the life skills learned in sport to other domains.

In their literature review on the benefits claimed for physical education and school sport, Bailey et al. (2009) argued that "there is a need to determine not only the *product* of participation but also the *process* of change" (p. 11). The findings from this Master's thesis illustrated the *product* (i.e., developmental outcomes) associated with high school sport participation. Further, through the use of the LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013), initial theoretical evidence for the *process* of change (i.e., satisfaction of the basic needs) was also provided. As the satisfaction

of the basic needs was not actually measured in this Master's thesis, additional research is needed to examine more closely the link between basic needs satisfaction and life skill development in sport. Moving forward, it is essential to gain a greater understanding of the processes that facilitate development to make inferences about the developmental outcomes of participation in particular sporting contexts.

Limitations

It is essential to address the limitations of this Master's thesis. First, the participants were recruited in Ontario and their personal experiences might not necessarily be representative of participants in other provinces. For example, in Quebec, many high schools offer the *sport-etude* format where students have a compressed academic schedule and spend one half of their day in the classroom and the other practicing a selected sport. In Ontario and most other provinces, high school sports are practiced after school hours. Second, the life skill development and transfer experiences presented in this Master's thesis represent the personal perspectives of the participants. Although collecting and analyzing qualitative self-report data emanating from interviews is in line with the paradigmatic position of this Master's thesis, it is important for those adopting a post-positivistic worldview to understand that no causal inferences can be made. Third, recruiting individuals across various stages of life allowed for a better understanding of how the participants' believed the life skills they learned in high school sport were transferred for use across the lifespan. Nonetheless, the retrospective interview procedure may have impacted some participants' ability to accurately recall specific details regarding their participation in high school sport. However, because this Master's thesis explored the participants' life skill development and transfer experiences and not the specific details of their involvement (e.g., number of games played, practice content, teammates' names), the emphasis

was placed on the meaning the participants attributed to their developmental experiences, in line with the paradigmatic position of this thesis.

Future Research

Although this Master's thesis has increased our understanding of the developmental experiences associated with high school sport, it has also raised many new questions and shown the need for additional research in two main areas. First, to increase our understanding of how transfer occurs, future research is needed to explore the factors that facilitate or hinder life skill transfer. One important avenue for future research would consist of empirically testing the factors theorized in Gould and Carson's (2008) model of Coaching Life Skills through Sport. For example, future research could be conducted to investigate if/how some transfer factors (e.g., confidence in the ability to apply life skills) might be more important than others (e.g., ability to adjust to initial transfer failures). Given the integral role coaches play in teaching transfer (Allen et al., 2014; Weiss et al., 2013), the findings of such research could help coaches optimize their interventions with athletes and increase transference efficacy. Further, such findings could lead to the development of training programs that allow coaches to learn the strategies needed to promote transfer in an optimal manner.

Second, given that this Master's thesis was one of the first to employ the LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013) in a sport context, additional research is needed to examine the fidelity of this model in other countries and contexts. The LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013) also takes into consideration how a life skills intervention creates a needs-supportive motivational climate, but examining these aspects of the model was beyond the scope of this Master's thesis. Future research should explore the strategies that influential agents (i.e., program

instructors, teachers, coaches) can adopt to deliberately create a needs-supportive motivational climate that supports the satisfaction of the three basic needs.

Theoretical Implications

In their comprehensive literature review of life skills development through sport, Gould and Carson (2008) claimed that a major limitation in existing research is the “lack of extensive theoretical explanations” (p. 65). These authors explained that this limitation weakens the life skill development field because few overarching frameworks exist to explain why life skills do or do not develop through participation in sport. The use of the LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013) in this Master’s thesis begins to address this existing limitation and by having examined the life skill development and transfer experiences of the participants, the findings provide some preliminary theoretical evidence that high school sport might be a context that fosters the three basic needs. It is essential to note that this Master’s thesis did not empirically examine the basic needs, but used the LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013) to explore what happens (i.e., life skill development) when the basic needs are theoretically satisfied.

Practical Implications

The findings presented in this Master’s thesis can be used by coaches and practitioners within the context of youth sport. First, the findings showed how sport participation might put student-athletes in positions where they cannot fully dedicate themselves to school and sport. As a result, school sport leaders must work to provide resources and support so that student-athletes do not have to choose what they should focus on. First, one strategy could consist of offering seminars covering topics like essay writing, test preparation, goal-setting, time-management, and note-taking, to provide students with the skills needed to manage both the demands of school and sport. Second, high schools could implement study hall periods where student-athletes would be

mandated to dedicate time to complete their schoolwork. Third, academic tutors should be made available to student-athletes to offer assistance when they face academic challenges.

Our findings also indicated how participants from rural settings experienced high school sport differently compared to participants from urban settings. Coaches can use this finding to ensure their coaching approaches are in line with the features of the context in which they operate. Although coaches in urban settings might have athletes who play club sports and view high school sport as less serious, coaches can still teach important life skills to their athletes, such as the importance of giving their best effort in whatever they undertake in life. Moreover, coaches can foster leadership skills in their student-athletes by encouraging those who also participate in club sport to mentor and assist in the physical skill development of their peers. In rural settings, where coaches were perceived to prioritize performance, efforts should be placed on distributing playing time equally, even during intense rivalries with other towns so that all student-athletes have the opportunity to learn life skills through high school sport participation.

In this Master's thesis, the participants provided many examples of life skill development and transfer, which according to the LDI/BNT LS model (Hodge et al., 2013), suggest that the basic needs of the participants were theoretically satisfied. In order to ensure in a deliberate manner that student-athletes' basic needs are satisfied in high school sport, coaches can foster the need for autonomy by encouraging athletes to regulate their own behaviour (e.g., allowing athletes to decide the number of practice sessions and provide input into team rules). The need for competence can be promoted by having coaches provide opportunities for their athletes to communicate with their peers (e.g., allowing athletes to lead team meetings, having captains communicate the coach's instructions to the team, banning electronic devices). To satisfy the need for relatedness, coaches are encouraged to be considerate of their athletes' feelings (e.g.

offering constructive feedback, organizing social events outside of sport to welcome new athletes, providing emotional support for injured athletes). Although such initiatives do not guarantee that all student-athletes will learn life skills, they help build a needs-supportive motivational climate that can promote life skill development and facilitate transference efficacy.

Lastly, the findings revealed how interpersonal communication was the most frequently mentioned life skill that was believed to be developed and transferred. Based on this finding, high school sport coaches should work to optimize social interactions in sport (e.g., encouraging respectful communications with officials) to increase youth's confidence in using the social skills learned in sport in other life domains (e.g., how to effectively communicate in school group projects). Coaches can also use this finding to recognize the importance of providing youth with increased opportunities to develop the less frequently cited life skills, such as self-regulation (autonomy) and social responsibility (relatedness). As research has indicated that achieving a balance of needs satisfaction across the three basic needs is important for optimal psychological development (Deci & Ryan, 2000), it is essential for coaches to provide opportunities for youth to develop the life skills that correspond to each basic need.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings from this Master's thesis advance the literature by providing tangible examples of life skill development and transfer that correspond to the same skill promoted by the same individual. Coaches can use these findings to ensure they are deliberately teaching life skills through sport in accordance with the educational mandates of school.

Although the developmental outcomes findings represent valuable contributions to the life skill literature, future research is needed to examine in greater detail the processes that facilitate development and transfer.

Statement of Contribution

I, Kelsey Kendellen, was responsible for collecting and analyzing the data used in this Master's research. I was responsible for writing the two articles part of this Master's thesis. Dr. Martin Camiré supported all aspects of the conceptualization, analysis, and provided assistance in the writing by reviewing both articles on numerous occasions. Both articles will be published with Kendellen as first author and Camiré as second.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Consent Form



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Faculté des sciences
de la santé

University of Ottawa
Faculty of Health
Sciences

Principal Investigator:

Kelsey Kendellen MA Candidate
School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa

Supervisor:

Martin Camiré Ph.D.
School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa

The purpose of this research project, "An Examination of Former High School Athletes' Perspectives on Life Skill Development and Transfer," is to explore positive youth development in the context of high school sport.

My participation consists of taking part in one (1) individual interview. The interview (lasting approximately 60 minutes) will be audio-recorded and focuses on a) my personal experiences as a high school athlete, b) social development in high school sport, c) the school environment, d) my coach's approach to high school sport, and e) the situations that have allowed me to develop and transfer life skills. My participation can help better our understanding of a) how life skills are developed through high school sport, b) the situational factors that influence life skill transfer, and c) identify the underlying psychosocial development that may have occur as a result of high school sport participation.

I understand that the contents related to my participation will only be used by Kelsey Kendellen and Dr. Martin Camiré's research team. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer questions. If I choose to withdraw from the study, the data collected from my interview until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed and will not be used. I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. Anonymity will be assured through the use of a code number on all documentation, including original transcripts. Tape recordings of interviews and other data collected will be stored at the University of Ottawa, in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office and will be kept for five (5) years after which they will be destroyed. The transcription of my interview will be returned to me by email in order to verify the accuracy of my responses. I will have two weeks to make revisions/clarifications to my transcripts. The transcription will not be protected by a password and I recognize the associated risks.

If I have any questions with regards to the ethical conduct of this research, I may contact the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5, tel.: 613-562-5387, email: ethics@uottawa.ca. There are two copies of the consent form, one of which I may keep. I _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Kelsey Kendellen (Principal Investigator) from the University of Ottawa's School of Human Kinetics.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____ Date: _____

☎ 613-562-5432
📠 613-562-5437

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Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire



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University of Ottawa
Faculty of Health
Sciences

1. **Name:** _____
2. **Age:** _____
3. **Years Removed from High School:** _____
4. **Gender:** Male _____ Female _____
5. **Civil Status:**
 - Single _____
 - Married _____
 - Common Law _____
 - Widowed _____
 - Separated _____
 - Divorced _____
6. **Children:**
No _____ Yes _____ How many? _____
7. **Education: Check all that apply**
 - College Degree _____ Specialization _____
 - Bachelor's Degree _____ Specialization _____
 - Master's Degree _____ Specialization _____
 - Doctorate Degree _____ Specialization _____
 - Other (Specify) _____
8. **Occupation:**

9. **Past High School Sport Experience**
 - Sport _____ Seasons Played _____
 - Sport _____ Seasons Played _____
 - Sport _____ Seasons Played _____
 - Sport _____ Seasons Played _____
 - Sport _____ Seasons Played _____

Appendix C

Information Letter for Participants

Dear former high school athlete,

As part of a comprehensive research program on youth development through sport, our research team (Kelsey Kendellen and Dr. Martin Camiré) at the University of Ottawa's School of Human Kinetics is conducting a study titled "An Examination of Former High School Athletes' Perspectives on Life Skill Development and Transfer." The study's objective consists of exploring how high school sport can be framed as a context to foster positive youth development.

The purpose of this letter is to encourage further participation in this study. The recruitment of potential participants will be achieved by distributing a recruitment invitation (poster) in community centers, workplaces in the cities of London and Ottawa, Ontario, as well as the University of Ottawa. The researcher's contact information will be posted on the recruitment invitation so interested participants can contact the researcher directly. Those participants who decide to participate, following their interviews, will be asked, if they can distribute the recruitment invitation to former high school student-athletes that they think may be willing to participate in the study. Interested participants can then contact the researcher directly. The researcher is recruiting approximately 21 former high school athletes from the cities of London and Ottawa in Ontario that (a) have participated in at least two full seasons of an Ontario Federation of School Athlete Association (OFSAA) sanctioned high school sport, and (b) attended a public and/or private Ontario high school. Three groups of participants will be included in the study: (a) 1-5 years removed from high school, (b) 6-10 years removed from high school, and (c) 10 plus years removed from high school. Participants will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis and your participation would consist of taking part in one (1) individual interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. The interview focuses on a) your personal experiences as a high school athlete, b) social development in high school sport, c) the school environment, d) your coach's approach to high school sport, and e) the situations that have allowed you to develop and transfer life skills.

The researcher emphasizes that your interview will only be used for this research and confidentiality is assured. Anonymity is guaranteed by identifying participants using a number rather than their names on transcriptions. Furthermore, the digital recordings of interviews and transcriptions will be stored at the University of Ottawa in Dr. Camiré's research laboratory to which only the principal investigator and supervisor have access. All participants can remove themselves from the study at any time, refuse to participate, or refuse to answer certain questions. The goal of this research is to better understand how the high school sport environment can influence the global development of student-athletes.

The researcher insists that you are entirely free to participate in this study. If you wish to participate, please contact the researcher directly:

- Kelsey Kendellen (Principal Investigator)

Appendix D

Recruitment Poster

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

Ontario High School Sport

Looking for former high school athletes who:

- Participated in two or more full seasons of an Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations (OFSAA) sanctioned high school sport
- Attended high school in Ontario
- Have **NOT** coached high school sport

Purpose of study: Explore the high school experiences of former athletes

Participants will be selected on a first come/first served basis. If you wish to participate, please contact the researcher



Appendix E

Interview Guide

Appendix: Former High School Athletes Interview Guide**(1) Introduction**

1. Introduction, distribution of demographic questionnaire, summary of the purpose of the interview, reminder to respond based on high school sport experience, and assurance of confidentiality.

The purpose of this study is to explore the high school experiences of former athletes like you! This is not an evaluation of any kind and there are no right or wrong answers; everything you say will remain confidential. I want you to get comfortable and treat this like it's a casual conversation. The only thing that I ask is that you try, to the best of your knowledge, to base your responses and the examples you give me on your experiences specifically in the context of high school sport. With, the example, please try to provide concrete examples of the specific experiences you had during your high school sport participation.

2. Do you have any questions before we start?

(2) Past Experience in High School Sport

1. How many years removed from high school sport are you?
2. Why did you decide to practice high school sport?
3. Can you describe your high school coach(es). His/her/their coaching philosophy?
 - a. Was the coach's emphasis on:
 - i. Competition or participation?
 - ii. Student development or winning?
 - iii. Was there an equal distribution of playing time for athletes?
4. Would you say your high school sport coaches had a win at all costs attitude or was it more important to develop their athletes?
5. Overall it appears that you mostly had positive relationships with your coaches; however, can you think of any examples of a negative experience with your coach?
6. Do you still remain in contact with any of your high school coaches today?
 - a. Do you watch them coach today?
 - b. Follow the success of their teams?

(3) Autonomy*Autonomy: Self-Regulation*

1. Did you learn about how to set goals during your participation in high school sport?
 - a. An example of a goal(s)?
 - b. Do you use goal setting in your life now? Example?
 - i. How confident are you using goal setting in your life now?
2. Did you compare your skills/achievements in high school sport to those of your teammates/opponents or did you focus on your own progress?

Autonomy: Problem-Solving/Coping Skills/Resilience

3. Did you encounter any negative experiences associated with your high school sport participation? Example?
 - a. How did you/your team respond?
 - b. What did you learn from these negative experiences?
4. Did those experiences help you learn coping skills that you use in your life today? Example?

Autonomy: Self-Control

5. Do you think high school sport helped you learn how to manage your emotions (e.g., anger, frustration, or excitement)? Examples?
6. Can you discuss if you believe dealing with such situations in high school sport helped you develop self-control now as an adult? Example?

Autonomy: Independent Thinking/Self-Directed Learning

7. Did your coach(es) encourage you to ask questions, be engaged in decision-making? Example?
 - a. If yes, do you think these experiences help you to take initiative now as an adult?

Autonomy: Positive Thinking

8. Did you enjoy your participation in high school sport?
9. Did participating in high school sport make you feel good about yourself?

(4) Competence*Competence: Self-Learning*

1. What characteristics do you believe you learned about yourself by playing high school sports? Explain.

2. Did you challenge yourself to learn new skills to improve your abilities?
 - a. If yes, example?
 - b. Is learning new skills important for you now as an adult? Example?

Competence: Problem-Solving/Decision Making

3. Did something unexpected ever occur during your participation in high school sport?
 - a. If yes, how did you/your team respond?

Competence: Physical and Psychological Tasks

4. Through your participation in high school sport, did you learn about leadership?
 - a. Do you currently use leadership skills or play a leadership role in your life? Example?
4. Can you tell me about the amount of effort you put into high school sports?
 - a. Do you believe your high school sport participation allowed you to develop a strong work ethic?
 - b. Is having a strong work ethic something that is important in your life today? Example?

Competence: Cognitive Tasks/Coping with Stress

5. Were there ever times when your experience in high school sport was stressful?
 - a. Do you believe participation in high school sport allowed you to develop the skills needed to manage stress?
6. Do you believe your participation in high school sport helped you develop skills to manage stress?
 - a. Would you say you are good at managing stress in your life today? Example?

Competence: Social Competencies

7. Did you feel accepted by your peers/teammates during your high school sport participation?
 - a. If yes, do you have an example of a situation that demonstrated acceptance?
 - b. If no, why didn't you feel accepted?

(5) Relatedness

Relatedness: Cooperation with Others

1. During your participation in high school sport, can you discuss if there was ever a time when you had to interact/work with people you didn't necessarily like? Example?

- a. Do you believe that high school sports helped you deal with these situations?
- b. Do you think these situations in high school sport have helped you interact with people you don't necessarily like today at school, work, or in the community?
2. During high school sport, did you ever face issues with, for example, a teammate, a coach, or a teacher?
 - a. If yes, who did you turn to for social support?

Relatedness: Social Responsibility

3. Did you feel a certain level of responsibility towards your team and your teammates? (Example: doing your best, giving maximum effort so that you are not a detriment to the team).
 - a. Do you believe high school sport participation helped you learn skills necessary to be a responsible individual?
 - i. Examples of responsibility at school, work, or community?

Relatedness: Consideration for Other's Feelings

4. Were you happy when your teammates had successes (e.g., made a provincial team) and sad when they faced challenges or tough situations (e.g., injury)?
 - a. Did you do anything to congratulate them or help them through tough times?
5. Is considering other's feelings something that is important for you now as an adult? Example?

Relatedness: Increased Social Interest

6. How do you believe the student body at your school perceived high school athletes?

Relatedness: Social Responsibility

7. Did you feel responsible for protecting the pride and public image of your school?

Relatedness: Cooperation with Others

8. Can you discuss if your high school sport participation has helped you to develop the skills necessary to form relationships outside of sport?

(5) Concluding Statements

1. So far in the interview, we've touched on a number of skills. Are there any skills we haven't touched on that you believe you learned in high school sport and that you now apply in your life?

2. If you could go back in time, is there anything you would change about your experience in high school sports?
3. During your high school sport participation, did you also play club sports?
 - a. Can you describe any significant similarities or differences between high school sport and club sport.
4. Do you think high school sport served to teach you life skills that:
 - a. Led to your global development as a person?
 - b. Allowed you to contribute to society (e.g., led to volunteer opportunities)
5. Is there anything else that you would like to add that we haven't touched on?

Thank you!

Prompting Questions:

Given what we have discussed today is there anything else you would like to say?

Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

Can you give me an example of what you mean? → This one is good for when they talk about what they learned from participation so that you have actual quotes of them giving examples

That is really interesting; can you tell me more about that?

Appendix F

Ethical Approval Notice

File Number:

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/17/2013



Université d'Ottawa
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa
Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Ethics Approval Notice**Health Sciences and Science REB****Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)**

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Martin	Camiré	Health Sciences / Human Kinetics	Supervisor
Kelsey	Kendellen	Health Sciences / Human Kinetics	Student Researcher

File Number:**Type of Project:** Master's Thesis**Title:** An Examination of Former High School Athletes' Perspectives on Life Skill Development and Transfer

Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
06/17/2013	06/16/2014	Ia

(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)

Special Conditions / Comments:

N/A

File Number:

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/17/2013



Université d'Ottawa
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa
Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

This is to confirm that the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board identified above, which operates in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and other applicable laws and regulations in Ontario, has examined and approved the application for ethical approval for the above named research project as of the Ethics Approval Date indicated for the period above and subject to the conditions listed the section above entitled "Special Conditions / Comments".

During the course of the study the protocol may not be modified without prior written approval from the REB except when necessary to remove subjects from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) pertain to only administrative or logistical components of the study (e.g. change of telephone number). Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes which increase the risk to participant(s), any changes which considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project and safety of the participant(s). Modifications to the project, information/consent documentation, and/or recruitment documentation, should be submitted to this office for approval using the "Modification to research project" form available at: <http://www.research.uottawa.ca/ethics/forms.html>

Please submit an annual status report to the Protocol Officer 4 weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to either close the file or request a renewal of ethics approval. This document can be found at: <http://www.research.uottawa.ca/ethics/forms.html>

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Office at extension 5387 or by e-mail at: ethics@uOttawa.ca.

Signature:

Riana Marcotte
Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research
For Daniel Lagarec, Chair of the Sciences and Health Sciences REB

2

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