

FORMER YOUTH ATHLETES' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF LIFE SKILL
TRANSFER FROM AN INTENSIVE SPORT CAMP

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ABSTRACT

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There is a growing body of evidence that sport can develop beneficial skills and behaviors for young people to use in multiple life domains (Gould & Westfall, 2013). While this may be true, there is a need for research to examine if this occurs, and how individual and contextual factors influence this long-term psychology change (Camiré, 2014). This study sought to understand former athletes' perceptions of long-term psychological change from participation in an intensive wrestling camp. Specifically, the purposes of this study were first, to examine what, if any, former athletes' believe are the long-term psychological effects attributed to participation in an intensive wrestling camp, and are transferred to life domains outside the wrestling camp. Second, to examine how and why former athletes believe long-term psychological effects occur and are transferred to life domains outside of the wrestling camp. This study used a phenomenographic research approach and interviewed 12 former campers from an intensive wrestling camp. All of participants had previously reported, through a letter to the camp director, that the camp had a positive impact on their lives. Additionally, the camp director was interviewed to gain his perspective on the long-term psychological effects of the wrestling camp. The study found that participants learned and developed knowledge, behaviors, skills and dispositions from the camp. Participants then transferred these assets to other life domains collectively as a personal guiding identity for success. This identity was defined by a strong work ethic and a deep belief in one's ability to use that work ethic to overcome any task or experience in life. This work ethic was guided by a personal motivational orientation that

fueled the quest for success. The transfer of this identity was influenced by individual psychological and autobiographical factors (e.g., openness to learning), program features and coaching approaches (e.g., experiential learning), and transfer context factors (e.g., opportunities to use skills). Possible explanations for the transfer of life skills were identified (e.g., meta-cognitive schema) and the transfer differed in directionality, timing and awareness. These process of life skills transfer was individualized and participants varied in the way they remembered their experiences and used their identity for success in life outside the camp. These findings are discussed with connections to research in sport-based life skill transfer with the promotion of a holistic approach to examining the phenomena. Implications for research and practice are provided, along with limitations and directions for future research.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sport is infused throughout society and is viewed by many as a vehicle that can help young people develop many beneficial physiological (e.g., health and fitness), and psychosocial outcomes (e.g., teamwork and discipline). One common societal assumption is that “sport builds character.” This conception has become the expectation for many coaches and parents who promote sport participation for young people (Forneris, Camiré, & Trudel, 2012). Pioneer college football coach, Amos Alonzo Stagg, once stated, “I won’t know how good a job I did for 20 years. That’s when I’ll see how my boys turned out,” (Batterson, Foth, Foth Aughtmon, 2015). While there is a growing body of research showing that under certain conditions, sport can develop beneficial skills and behaviors for various life domains (see Gould & Westfall, 2013 for review), research in sport and exercise psychology has yet to be able to help Coach Stagg answer this question. Psychosocial skills learned in sport become life skills when they are transferred from the sport context to other life domains (Gould & Carson, 2008), but without an understanding of if, how and why these skills transfer, research in life skill development in sport has not gained a complete picture.

This proposed phenomenographic study will gather the perspectives of former athletes at an intensive summer youth sport camp that has been shown to enhance psychosocial development young people (Driska, Gould, Pierce, & Cowburn, under review; Pierce, Gould, Cowburn, & Driska, under review), and seek to understand former athletes’ perceptions of long-term psychological change from participation in an intensive wrestling camp. Specifically, the study will explore if, how, and why life skills transfer from a summer sport camp to other life domains. Moreover, the research literature will be extended by looking at potential life skills

effects 5, 10 and 15 years post camp involvement. Gaining insight into the process of life skills transfer will help to fill the gaps in sport psychology and youth development literature, identifying if life skills transfer occurs, and what individual learner psychological characteristics and specific teaching strategies help to facilitate the transfer of life skills from sport to other life domains. Additionally, findings will provide valuable information for key stakeholders in sport (e.g., coaches, parents, administrators) to help them create conditions to best facilitate this transfer.

As a researcher, my motivation for this research project is driven by both personal and professional experience. My interests in personal development through sport were initially sparked growing up as a sports fan in New Zealand. While in my youth, the coaches of the national rugby team (the All Blacks) presented and promoted a team motto, “better people make better All Blacks.” This proclamation caused me to explore the issue of personal development and sport more closely. I became curious as to whether personal development can occur through sport participation, and if so, how this personal development actually occurs alongside the quest to develop athletic skills. On a more personal level, I strongly believe that sport has had a strong impact on who I am as a person. Additionally, I have seen the positive impact of sport on former teammates, yet, have seen teammates who did not gain similar outcomes. I have always wondered how some people can take the lessons taught by coaches and the sport and apply them to other life domains, while others do not.

Professionally, my research experiences have guided me toward a desire to understand the long-term transfer effects of psychosocial skills learned in a young sport experience. Over the past two years, I have been involved in a study that assessed the learning and short-term transfer effects of psychosocial skills at an intensive youth wrestling camp. Attending the camp as a

researcher had a profound effect on me. Anecdotally, I believe that I have developed life skills from the experience. Empirically, the participants of the study reported similar effects. The study found that youth athletes experienced increases in a range of mental skills (e.g., confidence, coping skills, hope) over the 14 day sport camp, and were able to maintain these mental skills over the nine months following the camp (Driska et al., under review). Additionally, through interviews with a smaller subset of the campers, the study found that additional psychosocial skills were developed through the camp experience (e.g., discipline, personal responsibility, relationship skills), and were being used as life skills in the nine months following the camp (Pierce et al., under review). While these findings do suggest that life skills have been developed by youth as a result of the wrestling camp and transferred to school, work, and relationships in the short-term, the study did was not able to assess the long-term impact of this experience. The initial studies could not directly address the long-term claims by the camp director, who advertises that, “it’ll change your life, I guarantee it” and “the change will last forever”. The proposed study therefore addresses this issue by sampling former participants of the wrestling camp, to explore their perceptions of life skill transfer.

Research in sport psychology and youth development has long been interested in understanding how positive youth development (PYD) can occur through extracurricular activities, such as youth sport. The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002) put forward eight recommendations to best facilitate PYD in youth settings, and these were well received by sport researchers and practitioners. This movement has led to a focus on three key factors in the sport psychology research and interventions, including (1) identifying a desirable activity in an appropriate environment; (2) having external assets in the form of caring adults

mentors a caring community; and (3) teaching internal assets or skills that are important for life success (Fraser-Thomas, Coté, & Deakin, 2005; Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, & Jones, 2005).

In addition to this focus, Gould & Carson (2008) built off previous work by Steve Danish and other researchers, to direct the study of PYD in the sport context toward the study of life skills. Life skills were identified as a way to operationalize the study of PYD in sport, and were defined as “those internal personal assets, characteristics and skills such as goal setting, emotional control, self-esteem, and hard work ethic that can be facilitated or developed in sport and transferred for use in non-sport settings” (Gould & Carson, 2008a, p. 60). This emphasis on PYD and life skill development in the sport context over the past 15 years has provided researchers and practitioners with valuable information on how to coach or teach life skills and how to structure the sport learning environment to facilitate this development.

The youth sport context has been identified as an extracurricular activity that provides young people with unique positive and negative experiences (Fraser-Thomas & Coté, 2009) that can provide opportunities to learn a range of psychosocial skills such as self-knowledge, emotional regulation (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003). As a result, intervention programs have been designed and implemented with the goal of teaching life skills through structured education approaches. For example, programs such as the First Tee have been found to be successful in teaching life skills to young people (Weiss, 2005; Weiss et al., 2013). In addition, researchers have investigated the role of coaches and their influence in developing life skills in high school and youth sport athletes (e.g., Gould, Collins, Lauer, & Chung, 2007; Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2012). These approaches have been very fruitful in enhancing the understanding of how life skills are taught in the sport context and learned by young people.

This line of research has culminated in recent reviews that highlight the critical factors in developing life skills through sport. Gould and Carson (2008) presented a heuristic model that outlines the process of coaching life skills in sport. Additionally, Camiré (2014) has provided a literature review exploring how life skills can be developed in the high school context, and Turnnidge, Côté, & Hancock, (2014) have attempted to categorize different approaches to coaching life skills. Collectively, these reviews have outlined that the individual learner will interact with three key factors that help to facilitate the growth of life skills. It is recognized that youth will enter the sport context with a number of existing characteristics and assets that may or may not facilitate the development of life skills (Gould & Carson, 2008). The individual will then interact with a number of factors inside the sport context. First, coaching characteristics (e.g., having a developmental coaching philosophy and building positive coach-athlete relationships) appear to be necessary to facilitate life skill development. Second, explicit or direct life skills coaching strategies are important for coaching life skills. Specifically to facilitate life skill development, coaches should deliberately identify skills to be taught, provide the athlete with the opportunity to use the skill, and discuss and promote the use of the skill outside of sport. Finally, in-direct life skills coaching strategies and experiential learning of life skills have also been identified. This approach states that coaches can facilitate life skill development by structuring the sport environment to promote a motivational climate to facilitate life skill development, and that young people on their own, will often learn life skills that they can use in other areas of their life (Camiré, 2014; Gould & Carson, 2008; Turnnidge et al., 2014).

These reviews highlight the growing understanding of how to coach life skills, however, it is only recently that researchers have begun to explore the athletes' perspective of this development. These studies have agreed that youth are learning and developing life skills in the

sport context, through experiential learning (Jones & Lavallee, 2009), social interactions (Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008), and life skill focused coaching strategies (Camiré et al., 2012). Additionally and importantly, recent studies have started to provide evidence that youth athletes believe that they are able to transfer these skill from the sport context to other life domains (Allen, Rhind, & Koshy, 2014; Camiré et al., 2012; Jones & Lavallee, 2009). Because a skill is only a life skill when it is transferred from the sport context to another life domain (Gould & Carson, 2008), it is imperative that research in sport psychology investigates the transference of skills. While these recent studies provide promising evidence to suggest that life skill transfer can occur, a greater emphasis needs to be placed on how this life skills transfer is occurring, and what psychological factors and contextual factors facilitate this transfer (Camiré, 2014; Gould & Westfall, 2013).

The phenomenon of learning transfer has yet to receive the attention that is needed in the sport context. Learning transfer is a contested phenomenon across various scientific disciplines with debate about whether transfer is the replication of discrete skills and moving those skills from one context to another, or whether transfer is a process of ongoing learning and the learner is transformed through this process (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009; Perkins & Salomon, 1992). While it must be recognized that “abundant evidence shows that very often the hoped-for transfer from learning experiences does not occur” (Perkins & Salomon, 1992, p. 2), there is evidence that transfer of learning can occur. For example, participants in outdoor leadership camps believe that they have transferred skills and knowledge to other life domains (Sibthorp, Furman, Paisley, Gookin, & Schumann, 2011). While debates of learning transfer are highly theoretical and provide few specific directions for how transfer should be studied, it is clear that researchers should seek to understand the individual learner and their psychological and autobiographical

characteristics, the learning context and the skills and knowledge being taught and developed, and the transfer context and factors outside of the learning context that influence development (Burke & Hutchins, 2007).

To dissect the complexity of life skills transfer, it is necessary to extensively review and integrate this knowledge from multiple disciplines interested in learning transfer. There is strong evidence to suggest that the individual learner is the integral, constant factor throughout the process of life skills transfer (Bereiter, 1995). The individual athlete learner has a distinct set of skills, knowledge and dispositions, as well as personal autobiographic experiences that will constantly influence the process of life skill development and transfer (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Gould & Carson, 2008). The individual will enter a sport learning context and be exposed to a program design that will influence psychosocial development. This program will be experienced concurrently with teaching or coaching strategies that explicitly or implicitly influence psychosocial development. Through this interaction of program design and teaching strategies, the individual has the opportunity to internalize psychosocial skills, knowledge, and dispositions (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Gould & Carson, 2008; Turnnidge et al., 2014).

Beyond the sport learning context, the individual then has the opportunity to transfer and externalize this psychosocial development to other life domains. There are possible psychological explanations and theories to potentially explain how the individual transfers life skills from sport (Leberman et al., 2006). In the transfer context/s (e.g., classroom, workplace), there are a number of factors that may help or hinder the transfer and externalization of skills and knowledge (Allen et al., 2015; Burke & Hutchins, 2007). It is proposed that this transfer is multidimensional and can differ in directionality, timing, and individual awareness (Leberman et al., 2006; Perkins & Salomon, 1992). Finally, this transfer results in psychosocial outcomes for

the individual that are characterized as life skills. Throughout the entire process of life skills transfer, the individual and learning and transfer contexts are influenced by the wider sociocultural environment and its norms and processes.

There is consensus in the sport psychology literature that for something to be considered a life skill, it must be transferred and used in other life domains (Gould & Carson, 2008).

Researchers have however only started to explore the process of life skill transfer, and there is reluctance across disciplines to directly address the issue of learning transfer (Hager & Hodgkinson, 2009). While challenging, it is therefore imperative that research seeks to understand if, how, and why athletes learn from sport and transfer life skills. It is clear that learning transfer occurs through the interaction of the individual learner and their psychological and autobiographical characteristics, the learning context and the skills and knowledge being taught and developed, and the transfer context and processes and factors outside of the learning context that influence development (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Leberman et al., 2006). These key issues will therefore be addressed in this proposed research that directly explores the transfer of life skills from the sport context to other life domains.

Research Purposes

The overall purpose of this study is to understand former athletes' perceptions of long-term psychological change from participation in an intensive wrestling camp. This will be addressed through two main purposes, and five sub-purposes.

1. What, if any, do former athletes' believe are the long-term psychological effects are attributed to participation in an intensive wrestling camp, and are transferred to life domains outside the wrestling camp?

2. How and why do former athletes believe long-term psychological effects occur and are transferred to life domains outside of the wrestling camp?
 - a. What do athletes' believe are the individual psychological and autobiographical factors that influence the transfer from the intensive summer sport camp to other life domains?
 - b. What do athletes' believe are the program features and coaching factors that influence the transfer from the intensive summer sport camp to other life domains?
 - c. What do athletes' believe are the psychological processes or explanations that influence the transfer from the intensive summer sport camp to other life domains?
 - d. What do athletes' believe are the factors in the transfer contexts that influence the transfer from the intensive summer sport camp to other life domains?
 - e. What do athletes' believe is the influence of directionality, time and self-awareness on the transfer from the intensive summer sport camp to other life domains?

For the purposes of this study, life skills will be defined as “those internal personal assets, characteristics and skills such as goal setting, emotional control, self-esteem, and hard work ethic that can be facilitated or developed in sport and transferred for use in non-sport settings” (Gould & Carson, 2008a, p. 60). Psychological change will be defined as a process that encompasses *both* learning and transfer of psychological knowledge, skills, and dispositions. These *psychological effects* will be used to define the learning or development of knowledge, skills and dispositions as a result of the wrestling camp. The term *transfer* will be used to define when

these psychological effects have then been transferred as knowledge, skills and dispositions from one domain to another to positively or negative influence performance in life domains away from sport. Specifically, transfer will be defined as “when learning in one context enhances or undermines related performance in another context” (Perkins & Salomon, 1992, p.1). This definition encompasses the conception that transfer can be the movement of discrete skills and behaviors from one context to another, and that transfer involves the transformation of an individual where their social and embodied self includes skills and behaviors (Hager & Hodgkinson, 2009).

It is expected, based on existing literature in sport psychology and various disciplines, that the transfer of life skill will be a complex process that is influenced by the individual learner, the intensive summer camp learning context, and the experiences the individual has had following the camp experience (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Gould & Carson, 2008). It is hypothesized that the transfer of life skills will differ for each individual, based on how he/she perceives him/herself as a learner, the camp experience, and the experiences following the camp. Additionally, it is anticipated that the life skills that will most likely be transferred will be the assets and characteristics that were believed to be explicitly taught and reinforced at the camp experience (Gould & Carson, 2008; Petitpas et al., 2005).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sport permeates throughout society (Danish et al., 2003), and is widely viewed and proclaimed to be a context that can develop character and contribute to positive youth development (PYD). From a scientific perspective, this cultural belief provides an important, yet complex phenomenon to study. There is a wealth of research from both sport psychology and youth development that indicates that sport can provide numerous positive developmental experiences for young people (see Gould & Westfall, 2013; Turnnidge et al., 2014 for review). However, there is evidence that some youth have negative developmental experiences in sport (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; Fraser-Thomas & Coté, 2009), and that positive development does not automatically occur through sport participation (e.g., Martinek, Schilling, & Johnson, 2001; Martinek, Schilling, & Hellison, 2006). In the academic realm, there have been several critiques of the ability of sport to contribute to the positive development of young people, and suggestions that researchers have not been critical enough when examining these developmental effects (Coakley, 2011; Hartman & Kwauk, 2011).

Two of the major reasons for these critiques are the inherent assumption that sport has positive long-term psychosocial effects on the individuals who participate, and the reluctance of researchers to fully explore the issue of learning transfer from the sport context. While a knowledge base is developing that suggests that when structured under the right conditions, youth sports participation is associated with positive life skills development, much less is known about whether these life skills are transferred beyond sport to other life contexts. Therefore, the specific purpose of this study is to understand former athletes' perceptions of long-term psychological change from participation in an intensive wrestling camp.

To address this aim, this extensive review of the literature in sport psychology, youth development, and other relevant learning disciplines will provide insight into the phenomenon of developing and transferring of life skills. First, the concept of life skills will be defined and operationalized in sport psychology. Second, the existing literature related to the development of life skills in the sport context will be reviewed, highlighting the studies focused directly on life skills transfer will be provided. This review will rationalize the need to further understand the transfer of life skills. Third, to allow for a deeper understanding of transfer to be gained, learning transfer will then be defined. This will be followed by a detailed review of relevant literature across sport and other education-based disciplines that outline the current knowledge base related to learning transfer and will help to inform the understanding of life skill transfer. This will uncover a process of learning transfer that includes the individual learner characteristics, learning context factors, transfer context factors, psychological processes influencing transfer, and transfer dimensions of generality and timing. Each of these influential factors or processes will be reviewed with links to relevant literature, and presented in a heuristic working model to provide possible explanations for the transfer of life skills from the sport context to other life domains.

Understanding Life Skill Development in the Sport Context

Research in sport psychology and youth development has made strides in defining PYD as a guiding framework for understanding the potential influence of sport on personal development, and in using the construct of life skills to operationalize what can be learned and developed in the sport context. While this progress should be celebrated, the puzzle is not complete until there is a greater understanding of whether and how life skills and positive youth development are transferred and translated into contexts outside of sport.

PYD represents a theoretical framework, grounded in positive psychology with the focus on producing positive developmental change in youth. It opposes a ‘deficit reduction paradigm’ model that focuses on solving problems that exist in youth (Larson, 2000; Damon, 2004; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This paradigmatic change shifts the focus from studying what children do not have and a focus on fixing their problems, to one on developing more fully capable children who can explore their universe, build competence and make a positive difference in society (Damon, 2004). This framework distinguishes between the concepts of development, intervention and prevention. Development focuses on growth and skill acquisition, while intervention aims to reduce negative or compromising behaviors and prevention aims to guide individuals away from addicting behaviors, toward healthy behaviors (Petitpas et al., 1995).

Central to the study of PYD is the focus on life skills. Outside the sporting domain, the World Health Organization (WHO) has defined life skills as “psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.” (Unicef, 2014). Inside the sporting domain, Danish and colleagues (2004, p. 40) have defined life skills as “those skills that enable individuals to succeed in the different environments in which they live, such as school, home and in their neighborhoods.” While the definitions are slightly different, both WHO and these definitions by Danish and his colleagues (2004) refer to behavioral (being assertive) or cognitive (making effective decisions); interpersonal (communicating effectively with peers and adults) or intrapersonal (setting goals) (Danish et al., 2004).

How life skills can be developed through sport has been a topic of interest to those in sport psychology and PYD for almost two decades. Gould and Carson (2008) conducted an

integrated review of literature to create a heuristic model for understanding the process of coaching life skills through sport. Turnnidge and her colleagues (2014) provided a more recent review of explicit and implicit approaches to developing life skills in youth sport programs. Finally, Camiré (2014) conducted a systematic review of literature focused on high school sport and how life skills are developed in that specific context. These reviews have provided a detailed understanding of what is known to date. They have revealed that a clear link exists between sport participation and life skills development (e.g., Weiss, Stuntz, Bhalla, Bolter, & Price, 2013); key life skills needed by young athletes have been identified (e.g., responsibility, motivation/goal setting, communication) (e.g., Gould, Collins, Lauer, & Chung, 2006); coaches who appear to be more effective at teaching life skills have philosophies that place prime importance on the objective of life skills development (e.g., Collins Gould, Lauer, & Yongchul, 2009); while some life skills may be acquired from simply participating in sport, more consistent findings result when life skills are intentionally fostered (e.g., Camiré et al., 2012); coaches' ability to develop trusting relationships with athletes is critical for developing life skills (e.g., Gould, Collins, Lauer & Chung, 2007); creating caring climates for athletes, focusing on task oriented environments and utilizing direct and indirect teaching strategies are correlated to the development of life skills in young athletes (e.g., Fry & Gano-Overway, 2010); and, the sport context not only provides opportunities to directly teach life skills but allows young people to test and demonstrate already developing life skills (e.g., Holt, Tamminen, Tink & Black, 2009).

Gould and Carson (2008) created a model because of the lack of theoretical explanations to understand life skill development in the sport context and the constraints associated with this. They used it as part of an integrated review of the literature. Therefore, it is a heuristic model with good face validity, but was also an untested framework. However, it has stimulated more

focused research on how to develop life skills in young people through sport, with a particular focus on *coaching* life skills (e.g., Camiré et al., 2012). Finally, while this approach to youth development in sport does not directly address the learning process of the young athlete in sport from the athlete's perspective, it incorporates the key learning factors identified across disciplines that have been found to influence the learning and transfer of life skills in the youth sport context.

Gould and Carson's (2008) model is presented in Figure 1 (p. 19). The model states that, to coach life skills, coaches must first understand that the individual learner has internal assets (e.g., personality characteristics) and external assets (e.g., parents and peers), that help to form the existing make-up of the young athlete. The second component of the model focuses on the sport experience where life skills can be taught and coached. Coach characteristics, direct life skills teaching strategies (e.g., defining clear and consistent rules), and indirect life skills teaching strategies (e.g., creating positive social norms) were identified as the influential characteristics in the sport experience. The third component identified by Gould and Carson (2008), is the possible explanations, or mechanisms, that contribute to the development of life skills. Two major explanations were outlined, including mechanisms in the social environment with social norms in that environment, and the importance and utility of the life skills outside of sport. The fourth component of the model focuses on the competency and dispositional outcomes that can be taught through sport, with reference to both positive and negative outcomes. Finally, the fifth component of the model, which is most relevant to the present study, focuses on the transferability of life skills, including factors that may influence the transfer of skills from sport to other life domains (Gould & Carson, 2008). Informed by Gass (1985), it was argued that

certain conditions should be met by the coach for youth participants to transfer life skills (e.g., belief that skill is valued in life domains outside of sport).

In reviewing the literature in this area, Gould and Carson (2008) emphasized that by definition transfer is needed for something to be a life skill. Specifically, life skills were defined as “those internal personal assets, characteristics and skills such as goal setting, emotional control, self-esteem, and hard work ethic that can be facilitated or developed in sport and transferred for use in non-sport settings” (Gould & Carson, 2008a, p. 60). Ultimately, they noted that the topic of life skills transfer has not been empirically explored to a great degree and more research is needed on the topic.

Not only is there an issue in the youth sport context that coaches assume transfer occurs (Trottier & Robitaille, 2014), there is also an underlying assumption of many studies that by engaging in a well-designed sport context, youth will develop psychosocial skills and be able to transfer these to other life domains (Turnnidge et al., 2014). In the early the life skill research in sport research and theorizing, it is important to note that transfer was seldom discussed. Instead it was implicitly assumed that life skills learned in sport would automatically transfer to other life contexts. What is noticeable is the lack of research in the sport context that focuses on the mechanisms influencing the transfer of life skills, and the understanding of the transfer context (Camiré, 2014; Gould & Carson, 2008). In particular, the literature related to transfer is often diverse and disconnected (Martinek & Lee, 2012), and “too often researchers have failed to identify explanations for how life skills may function to improve a young person’s life and well-being” (Gould & Carson, 2008, p.67).

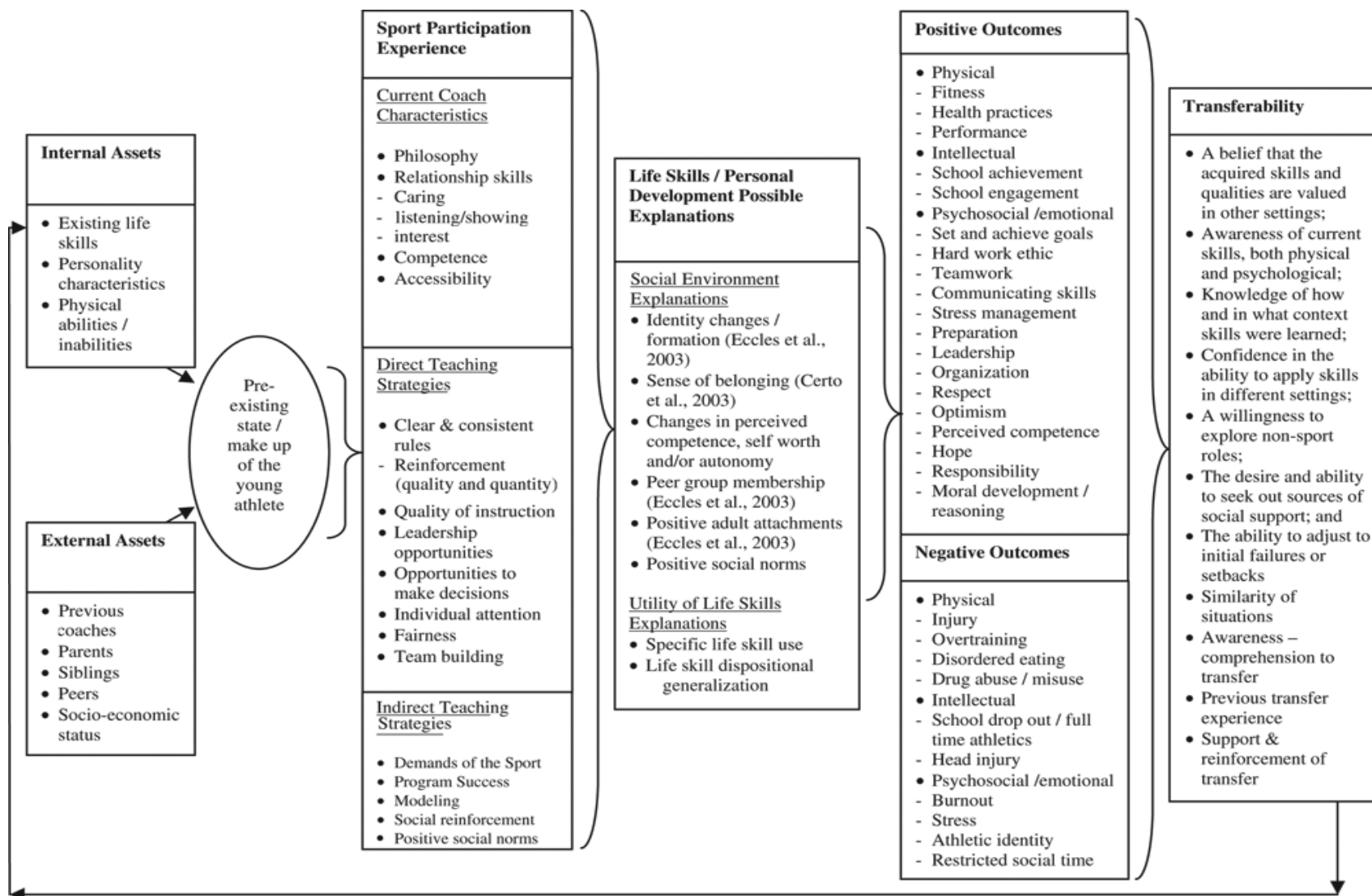


Figure 1. A model of coaching life skills through sport (Gould & Carson, 2008).

Overview of the Literature in Life Skill Development through Sport & Transfer

Given the concerns outlined in the previous section, there is certainly a need to examine if and how life skills learned in sport might transfer to other contexts. Sport research examining life skill transfer has been conducted in two ways. First, transfer has been addressed as a component of life skill development, and some studies have helped to outline the integrated process of life skill development and life skill transfer. Second, a few recent studies have sought a direct and detailed examination of the transfer of life skills from the sport context to other life domains. These studies and an overview of their transfer-related findings will be reviewed below.

Research has studied the life skill and life skill transfer together. As a thought provoking study in youth development literature, Martinek, Schilling and Johnson (2001) found that youths had difficulty transferring skills from an after-school program to the classroom. Since then, a number of studies investigating life skill development have recognized the outcome of transfer, and paved the pathway for examining the phenomenon of life skills transfer. Exploring former youth athletes' perceptions of life skill development from sport, Holt and colleagues (2009) found that social skills were developed in sport and had significant "meaning in the later adult life". While not directly assessing transfer, the study emphasized the retention of the meaning of life skills for former athletes. Similarly, Jones and Lavalley (2009) examined the life skill development of a former elite tennis player and provided evidence for the transfer of communication skills and confidence to life domains such as academia. Examining coaches and athletes' perceptions of life skill development and transfer, Camiré and colleagues (2012) found that both groups believed transfer occurred for the athletes. The complexity was highlighted across individual athletes, with questions being raised about the awareness of transfer for some

participants. Finally, in a recent study by the author of this dissertation and his colleagues and as a purview to this study, life skill development and the short-term transfer of life skill was identified in participants of the intensive wrestling camp of interest. Campers believed that they were able to transfer skills from the camp to other life domains, but this varied based on the individual's capacity for transfer, their experiences outside the camp, and timing (Driska et al., under review; Pierce et al., under review).

While it is promising that these recent studies have integrated transfer as a component of the study of life skill development (Camiré, 2014), it is necessary for research to explicitly and directly explore life skills transfer. This has been the focus of recent work by Maureen Weiss and her colleagues (2005; 2013) in their evaluation of The First Tee. These studies found important evidence to suggest that life skills transfer is occurring for former participants of the program, and has promoted the development of the Life Skills Transfer Survey (Weiss, Bolter, & Kipp, 2014) to assess transfer. Additionally, Allen, Rhind, and Koshy, (2014) have recently identified enablers (e.g., peer support, opportunities to use skills) and barriers (e.g., lack of opportunity to use skills), to the transfer of life skills from a sport-based life skill program to the classroom.

This reviewed collection of studies have provided valuable insight to help researchers enhance their understanding of life skills transfer, but a greater depth of insight is needed. To facilitate this, this review will explore what is known about transfer from other learning-based scientific disciplines. There is a need for sport and youth development scientists to view transfer through a multi-disciplinary lens, especially in light the challenges and critiques in studying transfer that have been identified across disciplines.

Learning Transfer through a Multi-Disciplinary Lens

Through this review of literature across multiple learning-based disciplines, it is evident that the study of the phenomenon of transfer is complex. This section will highlight how researchers have only begun to scratch the surface of when, how and why life skills are transferred from sport to other life domains. The bottom line is that, for researchers and practitioners interested in life skills transfer from sport, there appear to be more questions than answers. Most importantly, however, this review will help to outline the numerous opportunities and possible directions for life skills research.

Research, outside of sport psychology, has concluded that to fully understanding the learning process and resultant transfer of skills and knowledge, three primary factors must be explored and understood (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Burke & Hutchins, 2007). First, the individual learner has psychological and personal characteristics that influence the learning process (e.g., cognitive ability and motivation) and as a result, influence their ability or willingness to transfer knowledge and skills from one context to another. Second, the learning context consists of a training program or intervention designed to deliver skills or knowledge to be transferred (e.g., setting learning goals). Third, the transfer context is where the skills or knowledge are applied to the workplace environment, and embodies a number of factors that help or hinder the transfer and use of skills and knowledge (e.g., peer support) (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Burke & Hutchins, 2007). In addition to these three factors, educational psychology research has also directed attention to the psychological mechanisms that influence the learning and transfer process, as well as the dimensions (direction, timing, and awareness) of transfer (Leberman, McDonald, & Doyle, 2006; Perkins & Salomon, 1992). Each of these areas will be discussed later in this review, integrated with the existing knowledge in sport-based life skills transfer.

A prescribed caution in studying transfer is especially relevant when considering the scientific evidence and debates occurring in other learning disciplines. Woodworth and Thorndike (1901) were the first to explore the phenomenon of learning transfer in educational psychology by examining subjects' ability to transfer knowledge of shapes and their identical elements. Notably, Woodworth and Thorndike (1901) failed to find the transfer of learning from one context to another, and these findings re-emerged in additional studies focused on transferring school education throughout the 20th century (see Perkins and Salomon (1992) for review). It has therefore been concluded by some researchers that, "abundant evidence shows that very often the hoped-for transfer from learning experiences does not occur" (Perkins & Salomon, 1992, p. 2), and transfer "seems to vanish when experimenters try to pin it down" (Schoenfeld, 1999, p.7).

Defining Transfer. Gould and Carson (2008) and Danish and colleagues (2004) emphasized that a clear operational definition of life skills was needed if it was to be scientifically studied and successfully used by practitioners who are designing and implementing developmental programs. As researchers in sport and exercise psychology or positive youth development have yet to provide a definition for life skills transfer, it is clear that an operational definition is required to advance the study of this important concept.

The phenomenon of transfer has a variety of definitions across learning-based disciplines. As a result of the variations in these definitions, critiques and challenges have been identified. Examples of the definition of transfer are provided below.

- "Transfer is the application of knowledge learned in one setting or for one purpose to another setting and/or purpose" (Gagne, Yekovich, & Yekovich, 1993).

- “Transfer of learning occurs when learning in one context enhances (positive transfer) or undermines (negative transfer) a related performance in another context” (Perkins & Salomon, 1992, p. 1).
- “Transfer of learning is the use of past learning when learning something new and the application of that learning to both similar and new situations” (Haskell, 2001, p. 13)

While these definitions of transfer, along with a number of others, have guided the study of transfer across learning-based scientific disciplines, there does not appear to be one consistently accepted and recognized definition for learning transfer (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009; Leberman, McDonald, and Doyle, 2006). Camiré and his colleagues (2012) recently began to identify the challenges associated with studying and understanding life skills transfer, because of its complexity. Researchers across disciplines are in fact concerned that “transfer brings associated baggage that leads to a continuing misunderstanding of the processes it stands for” (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009, p. 621)

In their review and critique of the study of transfer, Hager and Hodkinson (2009) argue against the use of the metaphor of learning transfer to understand what happens when and individual learns in one domain and uses or moves that knowledge to another domain. Hager and Hodkinson (2009) outlined four conceptual lenses for understanding learning and transfer. First, the propositional learning lens suggests that what is learned is a product, thing or substance that is independent/disembodied from the learner and is independent from the context in which it is learned; and that learning involves movement of this product, thing or substance from one place to another. Second, the skill learning lens parallels the propositional learning lens, but it is distinct in that it focuses on skills instead of propositions. Third, the learning through participation in human practices lens suggests that what is learned is a complex social

construction that subsumes the individual learner; the learner moves from insignificance to greater prominence as they engage in the practice of what is being learned; what is learned is significantly shaped by the context in which it is learned; and that learning and the learner change as contexts change. Finally, the learning as transformation or reconstruction lens suggests that the learner is an integral part of the learning and what is being learned; learning is an evolving process that includes the learner evolving; and learning involves emergence of novelty as new understandings are formed (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009). Hager and Hodkinson (2009) suggest that “boundary crossing” should be used as a replacement for “transfer.”

It is contended that “the purpose of transfer is not replication, but a contribution to facilitating ongoing learning” (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009, p. 620), and that the focus should be on learning, as an ongoing process as opposed to a series of events to acquire skills. The authors attest that the use of the transfer metaphor puts the focus on learning discrete skills, where the focus should actually be on the person who’s social and embodied self includes knowledge, skills, dispositions and understanding. According to these authors, then, when studying this metaphor of transfer, researchers should actually focus on learning as a relational web and as a process of ongoing change.

Hager and Hodkinson (2009) promote a focus on learning across boundaries and an emphasis on the process of transitional learning. This approach successfully connects the learner to their surrounding and contexts in an evolving and dynamic and is supported by Armour and Sandford’s (2013) findings in their study of a physical activity intervention program. The study found that participants gained and maintained life skills from the program but maintenance was highly individualized, depending on experiences outside of the intervention context. Through

this dispositional view, transfer is usually thought of as an event rather than ability, and the potential for transfer resides in the learner rather than whatever is being learned (Bereiter, 1995).

While the Hager and Hodkinson (2009) critique and the evolving definitions and lens of the learning process provide new and insightful ways to extend knowledge on the issue of learning transfer, the authors provide few specific directions for future researchers to move. This does raise a valid point, as the same issues can be raised about life skills research in sport psychology. Specifically, few attempts have been made to direct attention toward the process of learning transfer as individuals' move between from the sport context to other life domains. This discussion therefore raises the level of conversation about the definition and process of life skills transfer and provides an open framework to progress the line of thinking about life skills transfer.

It is not the purpose of this review of literature to definitively side with the debates on what transfer is and what transfer is not, but rather, identify and explain possible explanations of learning transfer that will help to inform and advance the research and practice of life skills transfer from the sport context to other life domains. To provide a detailed foundation for the study of life skills transfer in sport, a heuristic model of sport-based life skill transfer has been designed and will be described in detail below.

A Heuristic Model of Sport-Based Life Skill Transfer. The purpose of the model is to outline the possible explanations for how the individual learner experiences transfer. In particular, this model emerged from an extensive review of literature across multiple disciplines that reference the phenomenon of learning transfer, and integrates sport psychology research with literature from other disciplines. This approach captures knowledge in a heuristic model to help guide the study of life skills transfer in the sport context, and provides an empirically-based framework to guide this dissertation. The model outlines the possible factors influencing and

involved in the process of life skills transfer and will be discussed alongside the research that supports these factors (see Figure 2). It is premature to use this model to predict relationships between the factors influencing life skills transfer, but rather, it is designed to help organize the confusion about what transfer is and how it occurs.

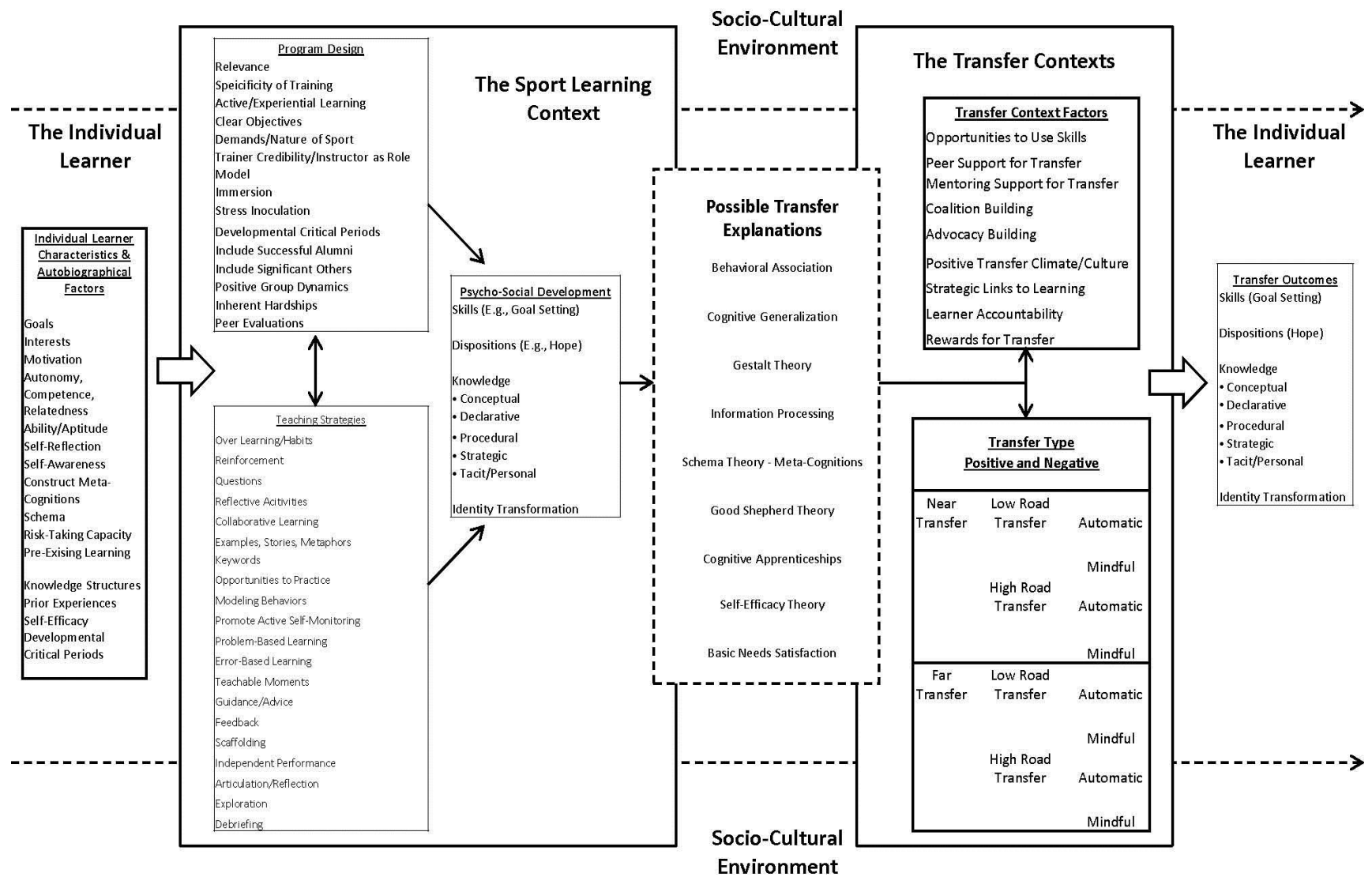


Figure 2. A proposed heuristic model for life skill transfer from sport to other life domains

It is proposed that the individual learner is the integral, constant factor throughout the process of life skills transfer. The individual athlete learner has a distinct set of skills, knowledge and dispositions, as well as personal autobiographic experiences that will constantly influence the process of life skill development and transfer. The individual will enter a sport learning context and be exposed to a program design that will influence psychosocial development. This program will be experienced concurrently with teaching or coaching strategies that explicitly or implicitly influence psychosocial development. Through this interaction of program design and teaching strategies, the individual has the opportunity to internalize psychosocial skills, knowledge, and dispositions. Beyond the sport learning context, the individual then has the opportunity to transfer and externalize this psychosocial development to other life domains. There are possible psychological explanations and theories to potentially explain how the individual transfers life skills from sport. In the transfer context/s (e.g., classroom, workplace), there are a number of factors that may help or hinder the transfer and externalization of skills and knowledge. It is proposed that this transfer is multidimensional and can differ in directionality, timing, and individual awareness. Finally, this transfer results in psychosocial outcomes for the individual that are characterized as life skills. Throughout the entire process of life skills transfer, the individual and learning and transfer contexts are influenced by the wider sociocultural environment and its norms and processes. The following section provides a detailed explanation of each component involved in the process of life skills transfer.

Individual Learner Characteristics and Autobiographical Factors. Gould and Carson (2008) stated that, to teach life skills, coaches need to understand that individual athletes will enter the sport context with a variety of existing personal attributes and psychological characteristics that will influence the learning of life skills. Pointedly, they “do not enter the

sport system devoid of any competencies, life skills and resources” (Gould & Carson, 2008, p.66). Researchers in adult learning domains have posed the dichotomous question of whether transfer resides in the learner rather than whatever is being learned (Bereiter, 1995). Sport psychology and youth development researchers have agreed that individual’s psychological make-up and previous experiences play a pivotal and interactive role in life skill development and transfer, and thus, assert that development is the result of the learner and the contextual and coaching influence. This does raise an important philosophical question in relation to life skills transfer. More research through a dispositional lens (e.g., Jones & Lavallee, 2009), in addition to the contextual or coaching lens (e.g., Gould et al., 2007), could enhance our understanding of life skills transfer. To begin to understand the degree that life skills transfer does “reside in the learner” (Bereiter, 1995), it is necessary to identify the individual factors influencing transfer and promote the further examination of the individual traits or experiences, or sets of factors, that help or hinder the transfer of life skills.

With a focus on transfer of knowledge for workplace training, Holton and colleagues (2001) outlined that four general psychological and autobiographical factors (task-specific ability, motivation, individual differences individual experiences) influence the transfer of learning. In their review, Burke and Hutchins (2007) identified that certain individual variables had moderate or strong relationship with adult learning transfer in human resource and academic realms. These included cognitive ability, self-efficacy, pre-training motivation, perceived utility and value of the training, openness to the experience, career planning and goal setting, and organizational commitment. Anxiety and negative affectivity was found to be inversely related to transfer of learning. The review found mixed support for the individual characteristics of conscientiousness, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as well as internal and external locus of

control. Some initial studies have identified that motivation to learn, motivation to transfer, and extroversion may be influential individual characteristics (Burke & Hutchins, 2007), all of which may provide significant insight for the study of transferring skills and knowledge from the sport context to other life domains.

Researchers in sport psychology and youth development have identified a number of individual internal and external assets that influence the development of life skills. Martinek, Schilling, and Johnson (2001) assessed youths' ability to transfer knowledge from physical activity programs to the classroom setting, and found that transfer differed between individuals and is not automatic (Martinek et al., 2001). In particular, a sense of inner direction and control of learning may influence whether youth are able to transfer skills or values from one context to another (Martinek et al., 2001). Additionally, Schilling, Martinek, and Carson, (2007) outlined individual barriers that influenced one's ability to transfer values from a physical activity program to the classroom. These included personal characteristics, perceived alternatives, and autobiographical "real-life" responsibilities. The personal characteristics included situational mood and negative attitude, perception of relevance, and a lack of dedication.

In a similar vein, positive youth development scholar, Reed Larson and his colleagues, have conducted a series of studies exploring positive youth development and its resultant transfer. Larson (2011) emphasized that youth are active producers of their development and may learn and transfer skills even if not implicitly taught. More positive developmental outcomes occur if adolescents are motivated by enjoyment and the pursuit of future goals (Hansen & Larson, 2007), however, they do not necessarily need to be highly motivated when they enter the learning context to benefit developmentally.

Until recently, minimal research has explored life skill development in the sport context from the perspective of the individual athlete. However, a few studies have been conducted in this area. Jones and Lavalley (2009) conducted a case study to explore how a female tennis player developed life skills over her career. The study found that the individual entered the sport context with skills that were already established and that were then further developed, refined, and reinforced in the sport experience. Skills such as a hard work ethic and the ability to deal with failure, and a disposition to be a perfectionist were identified by the athlete as being further developed through sport. It was also concluded that these skills and dispositions helped the athlete to develop other life skill through the sport experience. Additionally, Holt, Tamminen, Tink, and Black (2009) conducted a study to explore how young adults develop life skills over a competitive season, and concluded that individuals with certain life skills are drawn to sport to further develop their skills. Finally, Camiré and colleagues (2012a) found that young athletes were able to learn and transfer life skills from the sport context to other life domains, but this depends on student cognitive capabilities, age, and the maturity level of the students.

It has been widely recognized that young people are active producers of their own development (Larson, 2011), and that these young learners need to realize that they possess life skills and take ownership of the skills in order to successfully transfer from sport to other life domains (Danish et al., 2004; Martinek et al., 2001). It is interesting however, that little attention has been given to the individual learners prior to this learning experience. While a range of individual characteristics, skills, and dispositions have been identified as having potential influence in the process of learning transfer, few empirical studies have addressed the active role of the individual learner and his/her psychological characteristics in relation to the process of learning and transfer of life skills in sport. It is important that research seeks a greater

understanding of what these characteristics are, and how they influence the learning and transfer experience in sport programs and contexts (Turnnidge et al., 2014).

The Sport Learning Context. The majority of research investigating the development of life skills in the sport context has focused on factors inside the sport context. In addition to Gould and Carson's (2008) work, a number of models and frameworks have been designed that help to identify the factors in the youth sport context that facilitate the learning and transfer of life skills and psychosocial outcomes (e.g., Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; Petitpas et al., 2005). To understand the youth sport context, it is important to distinguish between intervention programs that are specifically designed to facilitate psychosocial development in young people and school sport provides its own unique developmental context in that psychosocial development is just one of a number of goals for participation such as fitness development, fun, and performance success (Gould & Carson, 2008; Pot & van Hilvoorde, 2013).

"Youth sport programs that promote psychosocial development are those that use sport as a vehicle to provide experiences that promote self-discovery and teach participants life skills in an intentional and systematic manner" (Petitpas et al., 2005, p.66). Petitpas and colleagues (2005) argue that youth sport programs that have a primary focus on sport skill development differ from those that strive to teach sport skills and life skills concurrently. This differentiation was further emphasized by Turnnidge and colleagues (2014) who suggested that youth sport programs have used two distinct approaches to achieve the transfer of psychosocial outcomes from the sport context to other life domains. Specifically, sport programs can create environments where the transferability of psychosocial outcomes is explicitly taught alongside sport skills; or programs can teach sport skills and create environments where transferrable psychosocial outcomes are implicitly learned by participants. While these differentiations

between program types are critical to understand, the same program factors have been consistently identified as being targeted and influential when considering the development and transfer of life skills from the general sport context (Camiré, 2014; Gould & Carson, 2008; Petitpas et al., 2005; Turnnidge et al., 2014).

The research in the sport context has identified effective approaches for coaching life skills. Embedded within these approaches has been an assumption that such approaches not only help youth learn life skills, but also help them transfer life skills to other domains. While there is promising evidence to support the contention that life skills are being learned in the general youth sport context, the lack of direct links to short and long-term transfer effects is problematic. The explicit and implicit approaches may be effective, but with little consensus and supportive evidence in the sport context of which strategies work for teaching life skill transfer, and why they work, we have yet to uncover the full complex process of how life skills are being transferred from sport to other life domains.

The factors in the sport learning context can be categorized as either program factors or teaching/coaching approaches, and are viewed as the critical features that facilitate psychosocial development of the individual athlete learner. It is that through the interaction with these program features and coaching approaches, that an individual internalizes or learns the life skills that can then be externalized or transferred to other life domains (Hodge et al., 2012).

Program Factors. Across the sport psychology and youth development literature, a set of key factors have been consistently identified to best facilitate positive psychosocial development: identifying a desirable activity in an appropriate environment; having external assets in the form of caring adults mentors a caring community; teaching internal assets or skills that are important for life success; using evaluation and research to benefit the program, and support from key

stakeholders such as parents, coaches, and policy-makers (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; Petitpas et al., 2005). This work built off the a report from the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002) which identified eight setting conditions associated with positive youth development. These included: (1) a physically and psychologically safe environment; (2) a consistent and clear structure accompanied by adult supervision; (3) supportive relationships; (4) opportunities to belong; (5) positive social norms; (6) support for efficacy and mattering; (7) skill building opportunities; and (8) inclusion and integration of family, school and community efforts. Thus, with the existing structure of school and youth sport programs, it appears that the sport context has the features and ingredients to facilitate positive youth development (Camiré, 2014; Danish, Forneris, & Wallace, 2005). To understand the process of how an individual interacts with these program factors to transfer life skills, it is necessary to dig deeper than the general conditions of youth sport and explore the intricate details of a youth sport program that facilitate or debilitate life skills transfer.

Across various learning transfer domains, a number of program design features have been identified, that influence if and how an individual transfers skills and knowledge from one learning focused domain to another area of life. It has been strongly suggested that thorough and diverse opportunities to practice and display skills are provided (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Camiré et al., 2012; Gass, 1985; Perkins & Salomon, 1992). Burke and Hutchins (2007) identified key variables in the intervention learning context that linked to the transfer of skills and knowledge. Having explicitly stated learning goals and an intervention content that is relevant to the transfer context were strongly or moderately related with transfer, while conducting a needs analysis to identify what learners require, carefully constructed activities to

have learners engage in active learning, and providing technological support to aid learners being trained with new technologies, were influential but in need of empirical support.

The use of active or experiential learning for transfer has been mentioned across learning domains. Furman and Sibthorp (2013) promoted experiential education and learning, and the need for programs to “intentionally leverage experiential learning techniques for transfer” (Furman & Sibthorp, 2013, p. 24). Five types of experiential learning techniques were identified, including problem-based learning, project-based learning, cooperative learning, service learning, and reflective learning, and were promoted to allow learners to make connections between theory, practice and their own individual experiences.

Gass (1985) also a set of program features that could enhance the transfer of learning from adventure activities. These included designing conditions for transfer before the course activities begin; creating elements in the learning environment that are similar to future learning and transfer environments; having consequences of learning be naturally occurring without intervention (e.g., experiencing failure), providing ways for learners to internalize learning and reflect on learning; including past successful alumni in the adventure program; including the learners significant others (e.g., family) in the learning process; and creating focused processing techniques that facilitate learning transfer (e.g., debriefs). This list was expanded upon with research on the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) programs, and the factors that facilitated learning transfer. Sibthorp, Furman, Paisley, Gookin, and Schumann (2011) found that instructors were role models and agents of inspiration, being supportive, and have attributes that resonated with the participants. Group dynamics were seen as important in helping participants work as a team and were linked to many learner outcomes. Inherent hardships in the NOLS courses were identified as being important in teaching participants how to function under

difficult circumstances. Finally, leadership progressions, where leadership was transferred from instructors to participants over time, was viewed as being a mechanism that built confidence in leadership and facilitated transfer.

Additionally, Jostad, Paisley, and Gookin (2012), investigated learning transfer in short (14 days) and semester long (66-93 days) NOLS programs. The analysis revealed that the differences between groups centered on the notion of *over-learning*. Specifically, students in the longer course were able to internalize the information and skill that they learned, and apply them to different contexts later in the course, thus helping them retain the skills post-course. While this shows promising findings to support over-learning as an influential factor facilitating learning transfer, findings across studies have been inconsistent (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). For example, Rohrer, Taylor, Pashler, Wixted, & Cepeda (2005) assessed long term retention of geography facts and found that over-learners had greater retention than low learners, but that the effects decreased dramatically after one week. Similar to the findings of Martinek and his colleagues (2001), the timing and dosage of learning appeared to be an influential factor in the learning context. This is an area in need of further exploration.

The idea of the experiential learning of life skills has received recent attention in sport psychology literature, where the skills and values incorporated in sport programs are the same as those that are required in all life domains, and young people on their own will often transfer them to other life contexts (Turnnidge et al., 2014). For example, Jones and Lavalley (2009) found that the tennis context created experiences where an athlete was required to learn new life skills and the interaction of factors in the sport context facilitated the experiential learning of life skills. Similarly, Holt and colleagues (2008) found that social interactions with key social agents were identified as being more influential than direct life skill teaching approaches in facilitating life

skills development. Specifically, athletes discussed the development of social skills through their interactions with peers.

The unique demands in youth sport have been identified as being suitable for the implicit learning of life skills. Holt, et al., (2009) found that the structure of team sports provide opportunities for youths to display and use teamwork, cooperation, and leadership skills. This was reinforced by Camiré (2014) in his review article, who stated that high school sport is a context where youth are exposed to both positive (e.g. opportunities for teamwork), and negative (e.g., discrimination) experiences which can influence the development of skills and values in young people. With a more direct focus on how the programs facilitate life skill development, Flett, Gould and Lauer (2012) surveyed 239 youth athletes and found that a mastery-oriented motivational and caring climate was more conducive to developing life skills than an ego-oriented climate.

While this insight has helped coaches design sport programs for life skill development, the emphasis on transfer has been lacking. Few studies have empirically assessed athletes' perceptions of what and why specific program features influence the long-term outcome of life skills transfer. Camiré and his colleagues (2012) identified that the incorporation of peer evaluations in sport programs can help athletes increase self-awareness and perceived transfer of emotional control skills, while Pierce and colleagues (under review) found that the intensive wrestling camp helped to facilitate life skill development and short-term transfer in youth wrestlers. This occurred through an immersive environment, a stress inoculation-based training program, and a systematically designed program.

Teaching or Coaching Strategies. To understand how life skills may or may not transfer from the sport context, it is necessary to explore the influential coaching or teaching strategies

that have been identified across disciplines. In their model of coaching life skills, Gould and Carson (2008) identified direct and indirect life skill teaching strategies used by the coach which were ultimately hypothesized to influence the transfer of life skills. These included strategies included clear and consistent rules and reinforcement of rules, the quality of the instruction, providing opportunities to lead, providing individual attention, being fair, promoting team building, and modeling behaviors (Gould & Carson, 2008). While this list provides great insight into the role of the coach, a review of the relevant literature from across disciplines can highlight some more specific strategies that have been supported or hypothesized as helping or hindering if an individual learner learning and transfers the skills and knowledge learned.

Burke and Hutchins (2007) identified teaching related variables in the intervention learning context that linked to the transfer of skills and knowledge. Providing adequate feedback, modeling behavior for the transfer context; and using error-based examples of what can go wrong when transferring skills and knowledge identified across various adult learning disciplines, were teaching strategies that had a strong or moderate relationship with transfer.. Additionally, preparing learners with self-management strategies such as goal setting and self-regulation behaviors was hypothesized as a teaching strategy to facilitate transfer. Conversely, while promoting cognitive overload was speculated as having a potential negative influence on transfer, where learners are provided with excessive information, and are unable understand and interpret it, and therefore unable to transfer it. Gass (1985) also hypothesized that teachers' place responsibility for learning with the learner when possible, while Furman and Sibthorp (2013) recommended six teaching approaches to facilitate the transfer of learning. These included group reflection, social dialogue, promoting learning communities, assessment, leveraging multiple viewpoints, and group decision making. Such teaching approaches focused on creating a student-

centered environment with collaboration necessary to effectively learn and transfer skills and knowledge.

With the closest link to community and high school based youth sport programs, Danish, and colleagues (2003) outlined five strategies for transferring life skills from sport-based life skills programs (e.g., SUPER and GOAL programs) to other life domains. First, instructors should discuss how life skills being taught link to sport performance. Second, instructors should also provide participants with examples of how skills can be used in multiple domains, and then third, provide opportunities to practice and utilize these skills in sport. Fourth, instructors should assist in creating plans and goals for using these skills outside of the sport context. Finally, instructors should debrief about successes and failures in using the skills in sport and other life domains.

In the sport context, coaches who focused on building strong coach-athlete relationships and creating an environment where their core values were emphasized (e.g., having clear expectations for the team and promoting a fun and caring climate) were seen to be effective in coaching life skills (Camiré et al., 2012; Gould et al., 2006, 2007). Gould et al., (2013) found that coaches gave youth athlete real responsibilities in the sport setting to develop leadership through experiential leadership. However, similar to the lack of empirical study of program factors, sport-based researchers have only recently begun to explore how individual athlete learners engage with and interpret coaching approaches and their influence on life skills transfer. Camiré and his colleagues (2012) did broach this issue when they explored coaches and athletes' views of the strategies used to coach life skills for transfer. Teaching strategies to facilitate transfer included using keywords that connected coaches' philosophies to the teaching and learning of life skills; modeling appropriate life skill related behaviors as a coach; taking

advantage of teachable moments and opportunities to teach life skills in practice and games; and promoting volunteerism, which included having students test leadership and life skills outside of sport.

Psychosocial Development. A growing body of research supports that life skills and positive youth development can occur in the sport context (e.g., Weiss et al., 2013). It appears that life skill development occurs as a result of the individual athlete interacting with the specific design of the youth sport program he or she is participating in, and the coaching approaches used in that program. Researchers and practitioners have attempted to categorize and define precisely what a life skill is (e.g., Gould & Carson, 2008). However, the specific types of life skills have been categorized differently across studies (e.g., emotion, intrapersonal, behavioral skills). Through the review of these previously discussed studies, it is evident that learning can be generally categorized as knowledge, skills and dispositions.

Leberman and colleagues (2006) stated that knowledge can be conceptual, declarative, procedural, strategic and tacit. Through the learning context, it is suggested that different types of knowledge will be transferred in different ways. Danish and colleagues (2004, p. 40) have categorized life skills as behavioral (being assertive) or cognitive (making effective decisions); interpersonal (communicating effectively with peers and adults) or intrapersonal (setting goals) (Danish et al., 2004). Turnnidge et al., (2014, p. 205) categorized these skills as “cognitive (e.g., creativity), emotional (e.g., managing anxiety), or social (e.g., teamwork).” While there is no consensus of the precise categorization of life skills, there is consensus of the skills that are developed and transferrable.

Dispositions are acquired schemes of perception, thought and actions (Bourdieu, 1990) that are developed in response to environmental conditions. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1996)

argued that individuals are ‘personifications’ of their environments and the requirements in that environment. Jones and Lavalley (2009) stated that athletes bring dispositions to the sport context where they interact with the rules and structure of the sport, and this provides an opportunity for existing dispositions to be reinforced, developed, or adjusted. These dispositions could include confidence, competitiveness, and perfectionism (Jones & Lavalley, 2009)

Finally, while this area of research has not been connected to the life skill development line of study, some discussion in sport psychology has centered on the concept of athlete identity, defined as “the degree to which an individual identifies with the athlete role, within the framework of a multidimensional self-concept” (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993, p. 237). It is logical that the transfer of life skills from sport could intersect with the athlete identity concept as it can be a psychosocial outcome gained from sport participation.

The Transfer Contexts. Logically, life skills research in sport has focused much of its attention on what is occurring in the sport context. The result of this is that there is little understand of the contexts in which the learners take and use the skills and knowledge that are taught and learned through sport. While numerous studies have explored what and how skills are being taught, there appears to be an underlying assumption that transfer contexts will exist for youth learners and will be suitable environments to use and apply the skills and values that have been taught.

Some researchers have, however, begun to discuss the potential contexts for life skills learned in sport, to be transferred and examined their viability for transfer. Weiss et al., (2014) identified the school/academic setting, the home setting, and in relationships with family and peers, as potential transfer contexts for the First Tee participants to transfer their values. Jones and Lavalley (2009) found that academic setting was the primary setting for an elite tennis player

to transfer her skills. Similarly, multiple TPSR based studies have focused on transferring skills and values from the physical activity setting to the classroom (e.g., Martinek et al., 2001) and Martinek and Lee (2012) have emphasized the need to understand the relationship between the two contexts. Finally, Camiré and colleagues (2012) noted that transfer will depend on the particular contexts each individual moves to outside of sport, but discussed social relationships and the school setting as domains where athletes use life skills learned in sport.

Through the review of studies assessing the TPSR approach to youth development, Martinek and Lee (2012) identified three approaches to use in the transfer context to support the process of transferring knowledge and values from a physical activity program to the wider school setting. First, *coalition building* referred to creating partnerships between the program and the school to collectively embrace the values promoted in the program. Second, *advocacy creation* focused on getting individuals (e.g., school principal) from the transfer context to actively advocate for the program and the values promoted in the program. Finally, *in-school mentoring* proposed finding trained mentors (e.g., teachers) within the school system to work with each program participant and collaborate with the program to reinforce the values taught in the program. By using the metaphor of a “three legged stool”, Martinek and Lee (2012) believed that a focus on these three approaches would create a school culture that would help to facilitate the transfer of values learned in the TPSR program. Further, Schilling, Martinek, and Carson, (2007) outlined individual barriers that influenced one’s ability to transfer values from a physical activity program to the classroom. Perceived alternatives such as having outside activities and social opportunities provided a barrier to learning and transferring knowledge from the program, as did responsibilities such as outside employment, family obligations, and pregnancy or parenthood.

Research outside of the sport domain has begun to focus on the impact the transfer context can have on the learning transfer. In particular, attention has centered on the work environment and the factors within this context that help to facilitate the transfer of skills (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Six variables inside the work environment have been identified as being potentially influential in facilitating transfer. Strong or moderate support has been found for having a *transfer climate* that uses similar situations and consequences that existed in the learning context; having *supervisory support* in the form of instructors who discuss, encourage and participate in new learning; promoting *peer support* and colleagues who share ideas and focus on the same skills being transferred; and having active *opportunities to perform* the skills and behaviors in the work environment. Additionally, a work environment that has *strategic links* and similar goals to the learning context, as well as holding learners *accountable* for the actions and learning, may promote transfer. However, these two variables have yet to receive significant empirical support across learning disciplines (Burke & Hutchins, 2007).

As the only study in the sport psychology literature that has directly explored the role of transfer context factors on the process of transfer, Allen and colleagues (2014) interviewed 18 male (12-13 years old) participants of an intervention program designed to teach transferable life skills from sport to the classroom. Key factors in the transfer context were identified to illustrate the enablers and barriers of transferring life skills in the classroom. Enablers included *support from peers*, having *opportunities to use skills* in other domains, and gaining *rewards for transferring* and using the skills. These were in addition to the psychological mechanisms, gaining *pride* from accomplishments in the intervention program, and *gaining confidence*, that were discussed earlier. Barriers to transfer focused on the classroom transfer context, where a

lack of opportunities to use skills and a *lack of engagement* and interest in the classroom activities hindered the participants' abilities to transfer skills (Allen et al., 2014).

Possible Psychological Explanations for Transfer. Research examining life skill development and transfer from sport has yet to explore explanations of the psychological and social processes that the individual learner engages in or fails to engage in, to successfully or unsuccessfully transfer skills and knowledge from the sport context to other life domains. Hodge and colleagues (2012) have recently provided an SDT-based possible explanation for the internalization of skills in sport and their generalization of life skills. However, on review of other learning-based disciplines, there are a number of other possible psychological explanations for why knowledge, skills, and dispositions do or do not transfer from sport to life.

Leberman and colleagues (2006) provide a detailed explanation for the conceptual background of learning transfer, and highlight a number of possibilities to explain how and why life skills may transfer from the sport context. These approaches have received varying levels of support across disciplines. It is not the purpose of this review to promote or discredit one or more of these possible explanations, but rather, provide an overview of possible conceptual frameworks to explain life skills transfer.

The *mental disciplines approach* is based on Aristotle's faculty psychology theory, focused on the mind's faculties. This approach views the brain as a muscle where general transfer is the result of the mind being trained through rote learning to improve memory, attention, and judgment. The transfer of life skills would therefore result from memorizing skills and knowledge in sport and using this learning directly in other areas of life. Research has largely discredited this approach (Leberman et al., 2006), with the belief that cognitive processing and formal reasoning is required in many cases to transfer skills and knowledge.

As a response to this notion of general transfer, Edward Thorndike and colleagues provided a *behavioral associationism* explanation for transfer. This approach suggests that learning occurs through a stimulus and response where associations are made, and while associations may weaken across contexts, transfer can occur through the same stimulus and response. Skills from sport would therefore be most likely to transfer as life skills when the stimulus and response that were experienced in the sport context (e.g., coach support for leadership in sport), and similar to the stimulus and response in the transfer context or life domain (e.g., teacher support for leadership in the classroom).

In order to understand and account for learning transfer in situations that are not similar, other explanations have been posited. The *generalization* approach believes that individuals can identify dynamic relationships in one situation and apply these relationships to other domains (Bower & Hilgard, 1981 cited in Leberman et al., 2006). It is the meaningfulness of these relationships that helps the learner generalize and connects the skills and knowledge from one domain to another. For example, if an athlete is required to solve some communication issues with a teammate, she may be able to rely on that experience and the personal meaning to her, to generalize that problem solving to communication issues with a co-worker. The *Gestalt theory* expands on the generalization explanation of transfer, with more complex focus on the individual's insight and the generalizing principles (Leberman et al., 2006). The theory suggests that transfer results from the individual's insights of the skills or common principles being learned and if the transfer setting requires the application of these principles. It emphasizes that an individual interprets a learning experience holistically to identify its transferability (Leberman et al., 2006). Related to the transfer of life skills, an individual may have difficult sport season and interpret their responses to the multiple challenges as a pattern of behavior that signifies the

ability to cope with adversity, and then see life contexts where that pattern of behavior is applicable and transferrable.

With enhanced recognition of the dynamic and interactive nature of learning transfer, a number of cognitive approaches to learning transfer have been put forward (Leberman et al., 2006). The *information processing* models suggest that transfer results from the encoding, storage and retrieval of information. An individual athlete would therefore learn a skill in the sport context (e.g., how to set goals), store it in his mind, and that information or skill would be ready and available for him to retrieve when he needs it (e.g., setting goals for success in college).

The *Schema theory* provides more depth to the cognitive approaches to transfer by suggesting that individuals create schema and representations from the experiences and learning situations they go through. The individual requires meta-cognition, the awareness of one's own thinking and learning, to make connections between their existing knowledge, the new transfer context environment, and how they can apply and transfer their existing knowledge (Leberman et al., 2006). To transfer life skills, an athlete may remember a demanding training regime and be aware of the discipline skills they developed from that experience. They may then see similar environmental conditions when working long hours in a stressful job, and have the awareness to apply and transfer the discipline learned from the earlier training.

Cognitive Apprenticeships have also been theorized as explanations for learning transfer. This approach suggests that learners develop from being an apprentice to become an independent practitioner. The sequential apprenticeship approach promotes modeling, coaching, scaffolding, fading, and finally exploration to progressively encourage the learner to understanding their thinking processes and learn how to apply and transfer their knowledge (Leberman et al., 2006).

In sport, coaches may progressively teach life skills for transfer by first modeling a skill, and then overtime, eventually letting the athlete explore variation situations to apply that skill. Similarly, the *Good Shepherd approach* to learning transfer emphasizes the role of a coach or educator in the learning context. The probability of transfer is enhanced if the learner is guided in the learning situation by what skills and knowledge to transfer and how to transfer those skills and knowledge (Leberman et al., 2006; Perkins & Salomon, 1992). This approach focuses on the role of teachers understanding how and why transfer occurs and facilitating it in learners. Teachers use different strategies being used, depending on the skill or knowledge being taught. In the sport context, life skills transfer would therefore result from coaches who act as “shepherds” for their athletes and focus on life skills being “provoked, practiced, and reflected on” (Fogarty, Perkins, & Barell, 1992, p. 11) for transfer.

In the sport-based life skills literature, Hodge and colleagues (2012) have posited that the *Basic Needs Theory*, a component of the Self-Determination Theory, may explain how life skills are transferred from sport to other life domains. Specifically, the Life Development Intervention/Basic Needs Theory (LDI/BNT) Life Skills Model states that if a life skills program can create an autonomy, competence, and relatedness-supportive motivational climate, then the more likely that three basic needs can be internalized as values and the more likely that the individual has the ability to generalize or transfer the life skills learned (Hodge et al., 2012).

Finally, a number of researchers in sport psychology (e.g., Jones & Lavallee, 2009) and other learning disciplines (e.g., Ford et al., 1998), have highlighted the satisfaction of self-efficacy and confidence as being important in facilitating learning transfer. Jones and Lavallee (2009) found that perceived confidence was important if an athlete was to try to transfer life skills, and in a recent study on a youth sport camp, Pierce and colleagues (under review) found

that the development of life skills occurred reciprocally, and was dependent on the growth of the belief or confidence in an athlete's ability to use and transfer the skills. It is therefore possible that the transfer of skills and knowledge from the sport context is an important factors helping or hindering life skill transfer.

Dimensions of learning transfer. Early work in cognitive and educational psychology strongly indicated that learning transfer cannot be taken for granted. As a result, Perkins and Salomon (1992) emphasized the need to conduct a closer examination of the conditions under which the transfer of learning does and does not occur, and the associated mechanisms at work to influence this transfer. To understand transfer outcomes, Perkins and Salomon (1992) defined the use of three dimensions. First, transfer needs to be differentiated from ordinary learning. While no absolute line can be drawn, transfer differs from ordinary learning as it assumes learning beyond that context. For example, learning certain grammar skills in English class (ordinary learning) is different from using those skills in everyday speech (transfer). Second, transfer can be categorized as either positive or negative. Positive transfer occurs when the learning from one context enhances the performance in another context, while negative transfer occurs when learning in one context has a negative impact on performance in another context. Interestingly, in the sport psychology literature little mention is made of the potential negative transfer of life skills (e.g., a young athlete learns to take charge and lead in sport but does so in another context where adults only want students to be seen not heard). Finally, transfer can be categorized as either near or far. Near transfer refers to transferring learning between very similar contexts, and far transfer refers to transferring learning to contexts that appear to be remote and unfamiliar to one another (Perkins & Salomon, 1992).

Gass (1985) outlined three types of learning transfer that were viewed as being applicable to adventure education. First, specific transfer refers to the learner taking habits and associations learned from one experience (e.g., hand skills of belaying) and applying them directly to a new, related experience (e.g., hand skills or rappelling). Second, non-specific transfer refers to the learner generalizing the common principles from one experience (e.g., developing trust in one camp activity), and uses those common principles in another experience (e.g., developing trust in a school activity). Finally, metaphoric transfer refers to the learner transferring similar principles from one context (e.g., working efficiently with a team canoeing) then generalizes them and applies them to another context (e.g., working with a business). The difference between non-specific and metaphoric transfer lies in the nature of the principles where principles in metaphoric transfer are not common or in the same structure but are similar and can be generalized to another domain.

Furthermore, Leberman and colleagues (2006) provided some clear definitions to differentiate simple transfer from complex transfer. Simple transfer happens when little or no effort is required to apply the learning from one domain to another, while complex transfer requires effort and cognitive application to achieve the transfer. This differentiation is linked to the conceptions of automatic versus mindful transfer. Automatic transfer, or low-road transfer (Perkins & Salomon, 1992) occurs with time and practice, where individuals will extend their behaviors or skills automatically across domains. Conversely, mindful transfer occurs deliberately through the conscious thought and intellectual effort (Leberman et al., 2006). It is apparent that while timing has not been explicitly explored in learning transfer literature, it is inherently integrated in the discussion and study of directionality and awareness. In the context

of life skills transfer from youth sport to other life domains, it does appear developmentally necessary to investigate timing as a dimension of transfer.

Through the review of sport-based life skills transfer literature, it is evident that researchers have yet to delve into directly addressing the dimensions of directionality, timing and awareness of transfer. It is however noticeable that some studies have hinted at interests and findings related to these dimensions. For example, Camiré et al., (2012, p. 255) found that while athletes are able to identify the link between sport skills and life skills, they did note that “life skill transfer is not something they consciously think about.”

Transfer Outcomes. While it may appear procedural that what is learned in the sport context would transfer directly in life domains, the complexity of learning transfer should prompt researchers to not assume that transfer outcomes are not linear and easily predictable. Transfer outcomes could be the same knowledge (e.g., Leberman et al., 2006), skills (e.g., Danish et al., 2004), dispositions (e.g., Bourdieu, 1990), or identity formation/transformation (e.g., Brewer et al., 1993), as outlined in the earlier section labeled ‘Psychosocial Development.’ To holistically understand the process of life skills transfer, it appears that research should directly examine what these outcomes are and how they occur with through the interactive experience of the individual learner with their learning and transfer contexts.

Rationale for Study

Through the integration of literature in life skills transfer through sport and multiple learning-based disciplines, the proposed heuristic model provides a “best guess” as to the processes and factors that influence life skill development. This is not a predictive model, but rather, an integration of multiple knowledge bases to help to advance the understanding of the process an individual may follow to transfer life skills from sport. It is evident that the individual

athlete interacts with his or her environment to gain their own unique experience of life skills transfer. To holistically examine and understanding if, how and why life skills transfer occurs, there is a glaring need to explore the full set of factors that influence transfer. These include: individual psychological characteristics and autobiographical factors; the sport program factors and coaching approaches; the psychosocial outcomes from sport; transfer context factors; possible psychological explanations for transfer; and the transfer dimensions of direction, timing and awareness. Research in sport psychology has been piecemeal in addressing life skills transfer and has not studied the phenomenon in the depth required. There is a need to directly examine each of these factors, as outlined in the heuristic working model of life skills transfer.

This study will be guided by the heuristic model of transfer life skills from the sport context (see Figure 2), and address some of the important gaps in the life skills development and transfer literature in sport. Specifically, this study will build off recent studies and is unique in its direct and detailed examination of the holistic process of life skills transfer, as outlined in the heuristic model. While this working model provides insight and a best guess about the process of life skills transfer, it is not possible to understand the process without gaining the perspective of individuals who believe that they have experienced life skills transfer. To best understand the individualized process of life skills transfer, the logical scientific step is to gain insight from those individuals who have lived, or who are living the process.

While there are a number of ways to examine these factors, gaining individual insight of developmental journeys appears to be a valuable approach. The goal of this study is to explore the role of these factors and gain in-depth insight into the process of life skills transfer, and a common approach to understanding processes of learning and development is to examine the experiences and perspectives of those who have lived the experience (Marton, 1981; 1986). This

approach of interviewing former athletes about their developmental experiences, has been effective in the study of expertise and athletic talent development (e.g., Bloom, 1985; Gould, Dieffenbach & Moffett, 2002).

Further, this study will address the underlying assumption of many studies that by engaging in a well-designed sport context, youth will develop psychosocial skills and be able to transfer these to other life domains (Turnnidge et al., 2014). This study will explore former athletes' perspective, and addresses the need to examine the individual and contextual factors that help or hinder the transfer of life skills from sport to other life domains (Camiré, 2014). With the majority of research examining life skills development and transfer from the coaching perspective, this study will address the need to investigate how the learner perceives youth sport and the individual dispositions, interactions, and experiences inside and outside of the sport context, and continue to build a holistic picture of how the process of life skill learning and transfer can occur through sport (Jones & Lavallee, 2009). Furthermore, the research in sport that has focused on the transfer of life skills, has primarily addressed if and what skills are being transferred. This study will seek to explore the link between the *what* and the *how* of transfer of life skills in the sport context, and thus, delve into the complex process of learning transfer (Perkins & Salomon, 1992).

Research Purposes

The overall purpose of this study is to understand former athletes' perceptions of long-term psychological change from participation in an intensive wrestling camp. This will be addressed through two main purposes, and five sub-purposes.

1. What, if any, do former athletes' believe are the long-term psychological effects are attributed to participation in an intensive wrestling camp, and are transferred to life domains outside the wrestling camp?
2. How and why do former athletes believe long-term psychological effects occur and are transferred to life domains outside of the wrestling camp?
 - a. What do athletes' believe are the individual psychological and autobiographical factors that influence the transfer from the intensive summer sport camp to other life domains?
 - b. What do athletes' believe are the program features and coaching factors that influence the transfer from the intensive summer sport camp to other life domains?
 - c. What do athletes' believe are the psychological processes or explanations that influence the transfer from the intensive summer sport camp to other life domains?
 - d. What do athletes' believe are the factors in the transfer contexts that influence the transfer from the intensive summer sport camp to other life domains?
 - e. What do athletes' believe is the influence of directionality, time and self-awareness on the transfer from the intensive summer sport camp to other life domains?

For the purposes of this study, life skills will be defined as “those internal personal assets, characteristics and skills such as goal setting, emotional control, self-esteem, and hard work ethic that can be facilitated or developed in sport and transferred for use in non-sport settings” (Gould & Carson, 2008a, p. 60). Psychological change will be defined as a process that encompasses

both learning and transfer of psychological knowledge, skills, and dispositions. These *psychological effects* will be used to define the learning or development of knowledge, skills and dispositions as a result of the wrestling camp. The term *transfer* will be used to define when these psychological effects have then been transferred as knowledge, skills and dispositions from one domain to another to positively or negative influence performance in life domains away from sport. Specifically, transfer will be defined as “when learning in one context enhances or undermines related performance in another context” (Perkins & Salomon, 1992, p.1). This definition encompasses the conception that transfer can be the movement of discrete skills and behaviors from one context to another, and that transfer involves the transformation of an individual where their social and embodied self includes skills and behaviors (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

To enhance the quality of qualitative research in sport and exercise psychology, Holt and Tamminen (2010) have advocated for the focus on methodological coherence as a guiding principle in qualitative research studies. Methodology coherence is defined by the need for congruence between epistemological and ontological viewpoints, theoretical perspectives, and the research question/s of interest (Holt & Tamminen, 2010; Mayan, 2009; Morse, 1999). In particular, researchers should follow a systematic process in conceptualizing the methodological trajectory of a research project (Morse, 1999). This push for methodological coherence has been followed by numerous grounded theory studies in sport and exercise psychology (Tamminen & Holt, 2012; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012; Knight & Holt, 2014), but the same traction for methodological coherence has not been seen in other qualitative approaches in the field. This section will outline methodological coherence and trajectory of the proposed research study that will use a phenomenographic research approach to understand former athletes' perceptions of long-term psychological change from participation in an intensive wrestling camp.

First, the fit between the phenomenological research approach and the research purpose will be described. Second, the purposeful sampling approach that was utilized for selecting the study participants will be defined. Third, the research procedures will be outlined. Fourth, context and important participant information will be described. Fifth, the use of semi-structured interviews will be described as an appropriate methodology that matched the phenomenological research approach and purpose of the study. Finally, three phases of data analysis will be described in detail that ensured a holistic understanding of life skills transfer was gained, while also ensuring methodological rigor.

Research Approach

Marton (1981, p. 180) described the phenomenographic approach as “research which aims at description, analysis, and understanding of experiences; that is, research which is directed towards experiential description.” This study focused on the phenomenon of transferring life skills from the sport context to other life domains, and was interested in the describing and understanding the individuals’ experience of this phenomenon. Phenomenography was therefore a suitable approach to address this research purpose. This section of the research design will outline the key tenets of phenomenographic research, and will highlight its methodological fit with the purpose of this study.

Specifically, the phenomenographic research approach is appropriate for this research study because it focuses on understanding commonalities and differences in the way people experience phenomena (Marton, 1981; Marton, 1986); it has relevant ontological and epistemological perspectives (Marton, 1981; Richardson, 1999; Barnard, McCosker, & Gerber, 1999); it emphasizes reflective rather than pre-reflective experience (Barnard et al., 1999; Richardson, 1999); it was designed to answer question about thinking and learning (Marton, 1981; Marton, 1986); and it is pedagogically oriented (Barnard et al., 1999).

The ultimate goal of phenomenographic research is to describe the qualitative differences in the way people experience, make sense of, and ascribe meaning to phenomena in the world around them (Barnard, et al.1999; Ornek, 2008). Of particular importance, phenomenography focuses on the qualitatively different ways that people experience, conceptualize and realize various aspects of phenomenon in their world (Marton, 1981; Marton, 1986; Marton & Booth, 1997). This approach is not so much interested in individual experience, but rather on emphasizing collective meaning and the commonality of understanding (Barnard et al., 1999), by

identifying similarities and differences in the phenomenal meaning (Åkerlind, 2012). The phenomenographic research approach emphasizes conceptions of reality and the world as central to describing knowledge (Barnard et al., 1981; Marton, 1981). Specifically, the purpose of studying conceptions is to focus on the differences and changes in understanding of a phenomenon (Barnard et al., 1999). With a focus on understanding the former participants' experience of a youth sport camp experience, and their experiences of transferring life skills following the sport camp, this study was well suited to the phenomenographic research approach.

Phenomenography seeks to understand conceptions of individuals' knowledge and learning. With a focus on the conception of knowledge, it is assumed that knowledge is relational and it is derived from thought, experience, and a phenomenon (Barnard et al., 1999). At the heart of this difference is the ontological perspective taken. Ontology deals with the nature of reality, in terms of objective and subjective realities (Holt & Tamminen, 2010). There has been debate about the relationship between the subject and the object or phenomena being studied (Barnard et al., 1999; Richardson, 1999). The phenomenographic approach takes a non-dualistic ontological perspective, as it is argued that there is not a real, objective world and there is not a real, subjective world. "The world is always both objective and subjective" (Barnard et al., 1999, p. 216) and the object and the subject are not independent from each other (Ornek, 2008). Because of this major tenet, phenomenography takes a "second-order" research approach as it seeks to describe the world as the learner experienced and explained it. This is different from the phenomenological approach which is more interested in individual experience, and takes a "first-order" approach as it seeks to describe the learner and the learner's experience of the world (Barnard et al., 1999; Richardson, 1999).

Previous research indicates that the transfer of life skills from the sport context results

from the individual, their perception of their sport experience and their individual experiences outside of sport (Jones & Lavallee, 2009). The non-dualistic view that the individual learner and the transfer of life skills from sport are not independent therefore fits the ontological perspective of phenomenographic research, and provides a critical rationale for the use of this approach to study life skill transfer. Specifically, taking the phenomenographic perspective, life skills are not going to be transferred themselves, they are going to have meaning to the individual, and transference of life skills is going to be dependent on that meaning and the individual who is transferring the skills. (Marton, 1981)

One of the major differences between phenomenological and phenomenographic approaches to research is the direction toward pre-reflective and reflective levels of consciousness (Barnard, 1999; Richardson, 1999). Phenomenological approaches focused on pre-reflective experiences and concerned with immediate experiences (Marton, 1981; Richardson, 1999), whereas phenomenographic approaches seek to understand the individual and the phenomenon, “regardless of whether those relationships are manifested in the forms of immediate experience, conceptual thought, or physical behavior (Marton, 1986, p. 41-42). Thus, the phenomenographic approach contends that understanding can be gained from reflective experience and conceptual thought (Barnard et al., 1999). This was an important distinction for conceptualizing the retrospective exploration of transferring life skills from the sport context. This study conducted retrospective interviews with participants of a youth sport camp, emphasize was placed on reflective and conceptual thought, thus, making phenomenography an appropriate approach.

Phenomenography is grounded in studies that focused on student learning outcomes (Marton, 1981; 1986), and has served to illuminate the process of learning in higher education

(Limberg, 2008; Richardson, 1999). Specifically, “phenomenography is an empirical research tradition that was designed to answer questions about thinking and learning” (Marton, 1986, p. 28). With the purpose of understanding learning and transfer of life skills from the sport context, this study was well aligned with the learning oriented phenomenographic framework. Furthermore, this study sought to understand how people experienced this learning and transfer of life skills and the meaning they ascribed to this experience, and matched the epistemology of phenomenography. Specifically, this approach maintained an epistemological perspective that focused on what people are thinking, and the meaning they ascribed to the phenomenon and their experiences (Barnard et al., 1999).

Finally, as phenomenography originated from teaching and learning disciplines, it has a pedagogical focus (Barnard et al., 1999; Marton, 1981). This pragmatic nature of phenomenographic research is therefore well suited to research in sport and exercise psychology that seeks to assist in the learning and psychosocial development of athletes. Saljo (1988) highlighted three lines of inquiry for phenomenographic research. First, it is concentrated on general aspects of learning. Second, it is concerned with learning in various domains. Third, it seeks to describe ways in which people conceive their environment and world. Barnard and colleagues (1999) highlighted that these three lines of inquiry align with the goals of health care research, and it is contended, that this is the same for sport and exercise psychology. The pedagogical focus on individual learning appears to parallel the goals of sport and exercise psychology. This research approach could be particularly useful in athlete education, coach education, and looking for commonality in understanding developmental experiences in the sport context (Tesch, 1990).

Researcher's Role and Positionality

This research project provided an opportunity to continue an investigation of the impact of the intensive wrestling camp on the psychosocial development of the youth athletes attending the camp. Because of my continued involvement in this large project, it is important to address researcher role and positionality, and potential validity threats. The original study of the camp found that it helped to develop a range of psychological skills in young people (Driska et al., under review), and that those assets and characteristics were used in other life domains in the nine months following the camp (Pierce et al., under review). This current study addressed the long-term effects of the camp, and must be viewed as an independent study from the original project.

In the original study, I attended and observed the wrestling camp of interest and the participants involved. Through the anecdotal experience and scientific findings, I believe that the camp *can* positively influence the psychosocial development of the participating youth. I do, however, acknowledge that the effects of the camp are individualized and that positive development is not guaranteed. I agree that sport does not automatically develop positive psychosocial skills in young people (Coakley, 2011), and that the transfer of these skills and behaviors from sport to other life domains is a complex and often wrongfully assumed outcome (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009). Because of this balanced perspective, I believe that I was well positioned to investigate the long-term effects of the camp and transfer of life skills from the camp to other life domains. I do not, and did not assume that life skills were developed through the camp experience, and are transferred to other life domains. I do however believe that this transfer is possible.

In conducting this study, the researcher role was a complex one that must be addressed.

In order to collect data, letters were obtained from the wrestling camp staff to be able to contact potential participants (see Sample Justification and Access section). This letter collection involves a two day visit with the camp director and camp staff, whom I have built good relationships with. During this visit, I discussed the camp and its psychological effects with a number of people. I was however, very cautious about my comments and discussions about the research study and to not assume any potential transfer findings. I attempted to stay objective to the possible findings of the study, I did not speculate on possible findings, kept a reflection of my role in field notes, and discussed my role and objectivity with my dissertation chairperson. I was clear in my objective role as a research, as opposed to a consulting with for or with the camp help them identify the long-term outcomes of the camp.

Sample Justification and Access

To understand the transfer of life skills from the sport context to other life domains, it was imperative that an appropriate sample was identified to accurately address this issue. A purposeful sample seeks to select cases that meet some criteria of have particular characteristics (Given, 2008), and was utilized in this study. This purposeful approach to sampling sought to gain in-depth understanding and ‘information-rich cases’ that produced significant amounts of data of relevance to the research investigation (Patton, 2002). Specifically, the criteria for this sample was that participants: (1) must have been a former camper at least one J Robinson intensive wrestling camp where the learning of life skills was a focus; and (2) had personally, or had a parent who, sent a letter or email to the camp director indicating that the camp had a positive influence on his/her life outside of camp.

To understand former athletes’ perceptions of long-term psychological change from participation in an intensive wrestling camp, participants needed to have experienced learning

psychosocial skills in the sport context that would later be used and transferred as life skills (Gould & Carson, 2008; Turnnidge et al., 2014). The first sampling criterion was that participants must have been involved in a sport experience where the learning of life skills was a focus. For this reason, the sampling population was former participants of a youth sport camp that has been found to successfully develop psychosocial skills in young people. The J Robinson intensive wrestling camp has recently been the context of an extensive mixed-method designed research study, conducted by the author of this dissertation and his fellow researchers. Using a survey design, the study found that youth athletes experienced increases in a range of mental skills (e.g., confidence, coping skills, hope) over the 14 day sport camp, and were able to maintain these mental skills over the nine months following the camp (Driska et al., under review). Additionally, through interviews with a smaller subset of the campers, the researchers found that additional psychosocial skills were developed through the camp experience (e.g., discipline, personal responsibility, relationship skills), and were being used as life skills in the nine months following the camp (Pierce et al., under review). The findings from this study provided supporting evidence that this sport camp can develop psychosocial skills in the youth who attend the camp. While the effects cannot be guaranteed for all participants, the camp does promote the development of psychosocial skills as life skills, and thus provided a suitable context to study the transfer of life skills.

The findings from the aforementioned study provide promising learning and short-term transfer effects of psychosocial skills from the youth sport camp (Driska et al., under review; Pierce et al., under review). However, the long-term transfer effects cannot be assumed from this study. As the transfer of skills from the sport context to other life domains is what differentiates life skills from psychosocial skills for sport (Gould & Carson, 2008), it is

imperative that research begins to explore the lasting and enduring impact of these sport experiences. Furthermore, to understand the complex phenomenon of life skills transfer and gain “information-rich” responses (Patton, 2002), it was methodologically valuable to identify participants who believed and independently identified they had experienced life skills transfer. The second sampling criterion for this study was that participant’s had personally, or had a parent who, sent a letter or email to the camp director indicating that the camp had a positive influence on his/her life outside of camp.

As an outcome from previous research projects, an excellent relationship was developed between the researcher, and the camp director and administrative staff of the wrestling camp. The camp director has previously indicated to the researcher that he had a series of letters that had been sent to him periodically over the past thirty years, and that the letters were available to be viewed, if and when required by the researcher. The purpose of sampling from the former campers who sent letters, or had letters sent by their parents, was to provide a sample who had not only previously indicated that they had experienced the phenomenon of life skill transfer, but also to provide with variation in the amount of time that they had been removed from the camp experience. This sampling procedure was selected because participants had significant time to assess if they learned psychosocial skills from the camp, if they have been able to transfer these skills from the sport context to other life domains, how they have been able to transfer such skills, and the meaning of these experiences for the individual and their personal development. Additionally, the purposeful sampling provided former campers from a range of different years. This helped to provide potential similarities or differences in the transfer of life skills, in relation to the timing of a specific sporting experience. Ultimately, this approach helped to assess the qualitatively different ways that a specific phenomenon is understood, and

extended the depth of analysis using the phenomenographic research approach (Åkerlind, 2005).

Research Procedures

Following approval from the Michigan State University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP), the researcher contacted the wrestling camp director and the administrative staff. The researcher visited the camp director and his staff in person where he was provided with copies of the letters sent to the camp director and the staff, and the associated contact details of the former campers and their parents. The contact details of the former campers included name, physical address, email address, and telephone number. In total 38 letters were provided to the researchers. After reviewing each of the letters, the researcher identified 20 letters indicated that the camp had a positive influence on the former camper's life outside of camp, and therefore met the two purposeful sampling criteria. At this time, the research conducted an interview with the camp director about his perspective of camper's long-term psychological change as a result of participation in the intensive wrestling camp. The participant completed a consent form and participated in an interview that was 75 minutes in length and followed a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix C).

Using the contact information provided, all 20 potential participants were sent an informational email that outlined the purpose of the research study and offered them the opportunity to participate in the study (see Appendix B and context section). Using the phenomenographic approach, the preferred method of data generation was semi-structured interviews (Marton & Booth, 1997). If contact was not made with the potential participant with the initial email, messages were sent via phone, online professional networks, or through parent contact information to obtain an email address for the potential participant. When this email

address was obtained, the informational email was sent. The email outlined a proposed telephone, skype or in-person interview and provided contact details for the participant to voluntarily reply and arrange a convenient time for the interview to be conducted.

When an interview time had been arranged, the individual was sent an online participant consent form that has been approved by the MSU HRPP and outlined the study purpose, confidentiality and the participant's rights (see Appendix A). At this same time, participants were sent a copy of the letter that was sent to the wrestling camp staff about them, and asked to read and review the letter. Sending the letter to the participant at least two days before the interview allowed participants the opportunity to reflect on the letter, their camp experience, and primed participants to focus of the interview. When the participant provided voluntary consent and the electronic confirmation had been received, the interview was conducted by the researcher, following a specific interview guide (see Appendix C, and interview section). This interview procedure was followed with 12 participants (see context section), with ten interviews being conducted on the telephone, one interview conducted via Skype, and one in-person interview. All interviews were audio-recorded using two devices. The interviews ranged from 48 minutes to 83 minutes in length, with an average of 63 minutes in length. At the completion of each interview, the audio interview was transcribed by one of three research assistants.

While there is no specific prescriptive sample size for a phenomenographic research study, Creswell (1998) suggests that five to 25 participants while Morse (1994) states that six is the minimum. Two important factors were considered, in order gather rich descriptions of experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon of interest study (Yates, Partridge, & Bruce, 2012). Specifically, the number of interviews needed to find variations in how individuals

experience and perceive the transfer of life skills from the sport context to other life domains, and a saturation point was considered, where new respondents did not provide new findings that differ from those given by previous respondents. Specifically, saturation was reached through the triangulation of major findings, where at least three different sources of evidence were identified in the researcher field notes for the major findings (Trigwell, 2000, Yates et al., 2012). A total of 12 “rich” participants were included in the study, where all participants provided thick descriptions or in-depth explanations and interpretations of their experiences (Patton, 2002).

The Context of the J Robinson Intensive Wrestling Camp

The first section provides a description of the J Robinson Intensive Wrestling Camps as a context where psychological skills may have been learned and developed, and will outline short biographic profiles of the 12 former campers that participate in the study.

Portrait of the J Robinson Intensive Wrestling Camp. The *J Robinson Intensive Wrestling Camps*¹ are unique sport camps for several reasons. For these reasons, the camp provides a fascinating context to study the phenomenon of life skills transfer. First, a unifying concept of the camp model is the *J7*, i.e., seven attributes that the camp director has found that wrestlers must learn to become successful: discipline, determination, hard work, sacrifice, accountability, responsibility, and service. These attributes were not chosen arbitrarily, but instead resulted from the camp director’s 37 years of experience and reflection, both as a coach of elite-level wrestlers and as the camp director. The camp model is also rooted in the camp director’s sincere belief that athletes are not responsive to learning skills until they have been exposed to enough stress and adversity to see a specific value for those skills (Pierce et al., under review). This camp employs a model that is very systematic in its use of physical training and the

¹ The researcher obtained permission from both the Camp Director and university HRRP to use the camp’s name.

teaching and reinforcement of psychological skills and attributes. This systematic approach is the direct result of the camp director's reflective and scientific approach to coaching, which has led to the deliberate design and implementation of a camp model based on the stress inoculation approach that is a prominent feature of Army Ranger School (Pierce et al., under review).

The camp includes a number of features, designed to facilitate the development of campers as wrestlers and people. The intensive camps are run as either 28-day, 14-day, or 10-day events, and are generally held on college campuses, using college facilities for housing and wrestling. During these camps, participants are exposed to a regimented schedule that remains constant over the duration of the camp. The daily schedule includes two, two hour wrestling sessions, two one hour strength and conditioning sessions, and a one hour mental attitude session. During each session, campers are assessed on an effort-based reward system where they can receive a "positive" for exceptional sustained effort and energy, a "neutral" for sustained effort and energy, or a "negative" for not sustained effort of energy. During the camp, the campers also receive "negatives" for not following the explicit rules of the camp (e.g., bringing drink bottle to practice, being on time). Furthermore, they are required to read and review camp materials (e.g., story of the day, thought of the day, and quote of the day) that relate to the J7, and are required to complete daily journal exercises. "Negatives" are also given if these requirements are not met by campers. At the beginning of the camp, participants begin with a specific number of points (e.g., 750 points) and are deducted points if they receive "negatives" by not following the rules. At the conclusion of the camp, the participants are evaluated on their total number of points and if they remain above a specific threshold (e.g., 500 points), they "graduate" from the camp with a t-shirt that has the quote, "I did it!" on the front.

The core components of camp system have been consistently employed since the camps

inception in the early 1980's. Over time specific features have been added and adjusted (e.g., the journal was added in the early 2000's), but the core approach of teaching hard work, discipline and other skills through an army-based wrestling curriculum has been maintained since its inception.

Second, the camp director enjoys an esteemed reputation within the wrestling community. He has experienced success as an NCAA Division I wrestling coach, having achieved one national team title, multiple top-five team finishes, and numerous individual national champions. He has also known for being the founder and director of the intensive wrestling camps, which are held as five distinct camps each summer, ranging from a ten-day camp, three 14-day camps, and one 28-day camp. Approximately 1,000 adolescent wrestlers attend these camps each summer, and there are more than 30,000 program alumni in the camp's 37 years of existence.

Third, the camp commercials, literature, and website emphasize the psychological gains that camp alumni have made as a result of attending the camp. Past participants have anecdotally reported gaining confidence, leadership skills, increased work ethic, discipline, improved academic performance, and a generalized achievement motivation (J Rob Intensive Camps, 2013). The camp director even ends the commercials by looking into the camera directly and stating, "It will change your life; I guarantee it," or stating "The change will last forever."

Participants: Profiles of twelve former campers. The participants in this study were the male, camp director, and 12 male, former campers of the J Robinson intensive wrestling camp. The camp director was 69 years of age, and had been directing the camp for 37 years at the time of interview. The former camp participants ranged in age between 17 and 46 years at the

time of the interview. One of the participants had attended four camps, two participants had attended three camps, three of the participants had attended two camps, and six of the participants had attended one camp. The participants in the sample were located in various geographic areas of the United States. Of the 12 participants, nine had personally written their letter to the camp director and two had a letter written to the camp director by the parent/s. The letters were sent to the camp staff sometime between 1996 and 2015. A more detailed personal profile of each participant, using pseudonyms, will be provided in the results section.

Twelve former campers participated in the research study. For each participant, a profile is provided below that introduces the individual and details their camp participation, key autobiographical facts and information, and outlines a brief summary of what each individual believes they learned and transferred from their participation in the intensive wrestling camp. Pseudonyms will be used for each participant, as chosen from the popular list of names in the year the individual was born. The profiles of participants are presented chronologically, from the year in which they first participated in the intensive wrestling camp.

Stan attended three intensive wrestling camps (1984, 1985, and 1986), and was 46 years old at the time of the interview. In 2002, Stan was in a movie theatre and overheard a group of young males impersonating J Robinson. This led Stan to discuss the camp with the youths and prompted Stan to write a letter to J Robinson, in which he described his camp memories, life experiences and his perception that applying the camp messages had helped him overcome challenging times he had in life. During the interview, Stan stated that he attended the camp as a young man who loved wrestling, wanted to be in the military, and “was very quick to place a lot of trust in coaching type figures.” During the camp, Stan believed that he learned how to work hard, how to mentally prepare to be successful in wrestling, and how to act and communicate as

a leader. Following the camp, Stan won a wrestling state championship in his senior year of high school. He served nine years in the military before leaving in 2000 before completing a MBA degree, and has been involved in starting up small businesses and serving as a chief operating officer for those companies. Stan believes that he his work ethic, ability to perform under pressure, and leadership skills can be attributed to his participation in the three intensive wrestling camps.

Joe attended the intensive wrestling camp in 1985 and was 45 years old at the time of the interview. In 2014, Joe saw a commercial for the intensive wrestling camp on television which caused “an absolute rush of memories” that made him reflect on the camp experience. Shortly after seeing the commercial, Joe wrote letter to J Robinson, thanking J for the “valuable lessons” that he believes he developed as a result of attending the camp. During the interview, Joe reflected on his camp experience and described himself as a “very academic kid” and “not a tremendously gifted athlete” but an individual who was motivated to become a state champion. During the camp, Joe believed that he learned how to work harder and be more disciplined than his competitors. Following the camp, Joe attended college and then completed a law degree. He has spent the past 20 years working as a lawyer, and believes that he his ability to push himself to his limits and work harder than his competitors, and attributes this success to the lessons he learned at the wrestling camp.

Robert attended two intensive wrestling camps (1985 and 1986), and was 45 years old at the time of the interview. In 2014, Robert wrote a letter to J Robinson to thank J for the “tremendous impact” he had on his life. During the same year, Robert had provided a scholarship for a local wrestler to attend the wrestling camp. During the interview, Robert recalled attending the camp as a sophomore who “didn’t really care much for [wrestling]” but that the camp “set off

a light bulb” and as a result, he became a successful wrestler and learned how to work hard and be disciplined to achieve success. Following the camp, Robert finished high school and went into the construction industry and subsequently started his own excavating business in 1990. Ted believes that the success that he has had with his business, 25 years on, can be attributed to the work ethic that he learned and developed at the wrestling camps he attended in 1985 and 1986.

Brandon attended the intensive wrestling camp in 1995 and was 36 years old at the time of the interview. In 1996, Brandon’s mother wrote a letter to J Robinson to provide an overview of his experiences following the camp, to share how the camp had an “outstanding” impact on Brandon’s success in wrestling and in life. During the interview, Brandon said his mother’s letter “hit it right on the head” and remembers attending the camp to help him achieve his goal of being state champion. Brandon believes that he developed his work ethic and perseverance at the camp, and it taught him how to mentally prepare for wrestling. Brandon went on to wrestle at the collegiate level and gained All American honors. He received a teaching degree and became a teacher and wrestling coach at the middle school and high school level. He is now in an Assistant Principal role and is no longer coaching high school wrestling. Brandon believes that he was able to transfer skills from the camp related to coaching and helping wrestlers prepare for success, and to how he communicates with, and helps others as a leader.

Nathan attended three intensive wrestling camps (1995, 1996 and 1997), and was 34 years old at the time of the interview. In 2002, Nathan wrote a letter to J Robinson, after leaving the Army, to inform J about the positive impact he believed the wrestling camp had on the direction of his life. During the interview, Nathan stated that he attended his first camp to improve himself as a wrestler and continued to attend the camp in the following years with a close friend. Nathan believed that the camp taught him how to work hard, persevere, and to

approach challenging situations with confidence. Following the camp, he enlisted in the military and went through Ranger School in 1999. Four years later, Nathan pursued a college education. He completed a bachelors and master's degree, and in 2013 he completed his PhD degree in Psychology. Nathan believes that his work ethic and ability to overcome challenges can be attributed to his experiences at the intensive wrestling camp.

Andrew attended the intensive wrestling camp in 1996 and was 35 years old at the time of the interview. In 2003, Andrew wrote a letter to J Robinson to provide an overview of his camp memories and military experiences following the camp, and to thank J for the “many lessons” that he has applied to life. Andrew believed that he went to the camp as a “little known wrestler” but was a successful state level wrestler the following year. He believed that he learned how push himself to the limits and it enhanced his self-confidence. Following the camp, Andrew went to college and then served in the military for 12 years which included seven deployments around the world. At the time of the interview Andrew was in graduate school and plans to teach at the college level in the future. Andrew believes that his success in the military, his ability to outwork others, and his drive to always be looking for the next challenge has transferred from his participation in the wrestling camp.

David attended the intensive wrestling camp in 1997 and was 34 years old at the time of the interview. One year after the camp, David wrote a reflective story on the camp experience that described the positive impact the camp had on his wrestling and his life, and sent the letter to J Robinson. David attended boarding school and recalls wrestling and the camp being a “really positive experience” during one of his summers at school to help his wrestling and leadership. David believed he received confirmation of the value of hard work from the wrestling camp. After high school, David went to college and although he had “a rough couple of initial

semesters,” he completed his undergraduate degree. He then completed his master’s degree in architecture and had a job in real estate. David believes that the camp helped to provide him with a strong work ethic that he has used in multiple areas of his life however he sometimes struggles with the “all or nothing attitude” that can be transferred from the camp.

Jason attended the intensive wrestling camp in 1999 and was 32 years old at the time of the interview. In 2012, Jason was watching a documentary that included wrestlers with the camp “I did it” shirt. This prompted Jason to reflect on his challenging experience at the camp and write a letter to J Robinson to thank him for “molding” him and pushing him to be successful in wrestling and in life. Jason went to the camp with the goal of being state champion and he achieved that goal in his senior year, following the camp. He believed that the camp taught him how to push himself to his limits and how to overcome adversity. Jason joined the Air Force out of high school and also competed on the Air Force wrestling team. He then worked as a personal trainer and at the time of the interview, was working as a physical therapy assistant while completing a bachelor’s degree in Healthcare Administration. Jason then wants to pursue an MBA to help him move into a leadership role in the Healthcare industry. He also currently competes in endurance running events. Jason believes that his work ethic and confidence can be attributed to what he learned and experienced at the wrestling camp, as can his ability to overcome any challenge that he encounters.

Thomas attended two intensive wrestling camps (2008 and 2009), and was 22 years old at the time of the interview. In 2008, Thomas’s mother wrote a letter to J Robinson to thank the camp for the positive impact it had on Thomas, being more respectful at home and sharing valuable knowledge about finances with his parents. During the interview, Thomas believed that turned him into “more of a man, less of a boy” and taught him how to push himself to his limits.

Thomas described himself as a “really competitive person” and while he had some success as a wrestler after the camp, he struggled to control his temper and believe his high school wrestling coach contributed to the negative wrestling experience that he had in his junior year. Thomas stopped wrestling after that experience and in the following year, went to college. Due to medical and financial reasons, Thomas had to leave college after one year and returned home to work. At the time of the interview, Thomas was working in a construction job and he was planning to return to university to complete his degree. Thomas believed that he has transferred his work ethic and perseverance from the camp to his physically-based construction work. He discussed the difficulty in transferring the skills and knowledge from the camp to his academics but he believed he would not have any problems doing so when he returned to college.

Daniel attended the intensive wrestling camp in 2012 and was 20 years old at the time of the interview. During his camp in 2012, Daniel was asked to write a letter to a role model, thanking them for the positive influence the role model has had. He wrote a letter to J Robinson to inform him about everything that he was learning during the camp experience and to highlight the positive influence he believed it would have on his future life. Daniel believes that he gained a “warrior mentality” or the ability to work hard to overcome any challenge, from the camp. At the time of the interview Daniel was in his sophomore year in college and was serving leadership roles on his fraternity, working a range of jobs, and gaining good grades. He also discussed his commitment to working-out and the benefit it has on his life. Daniel believes that his hard work and discipline transferred to his intense work-out schedule and routine. Daniel also stated that he has been able to apply his work ethic learned at the camp to his many responsibilities in college, and although he was beginning to struggle to balance these roles, he believed that the work ethic learned from the camp would help him overcome this challenge.

Louie attended four intensive wrestling camps (2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013), and was 19 years old at the time of the interview. In 2013, Louie wrote a letter to J Robinson, stating that “you have changed my life and my family in more ways than you can imagine.” Louie is from a small town, is close with God, and remembers always having a “love to learn” as a young child. Along with his two brothers, Louie attended multiple camps and stated that he continued to attend the camp because of the positive influence it was having on his wrestling and life. Louie believed that camp taught him how to work hard, gave him an optimistic outlook on wrestling and life, and helped him develop his confidence. At the time of the interview, Louie was in his sophomore year at an Ivy League college and was on the wrestling team at the college. He believed that he has been able to transfer the work ethic developed at the camp and his continually growing confidence has helped him be successful in wrestling and life, and has helped him develop as a leader.

Chris attended the 14 day intensive wrestling camp in 2014, and was 17 years old at the time of the interview. In 2014 following the camp, Chris’s parents wrote a letter to J Robinson to thank him and the camp staff for the positive impact that they believed the camp had on Chris. They stated that “Chris left for camp a boy and came back a man.” Chris attended the camp after his sophomore year in high school, motivated to improve as a wrestler and to challenge himself. As a result of the camp experience, Chris believed that he gained a greater awareness of himself and his limits, and enhanced his work ethic, discipline and confidence. In high school, Chris considered himself to prioritize his academics over sport, but is active in multiple sports, in school groups and socially. He believed that he has been able to apply many of the lessons from the intensive wrestling camp into sport and the other areas of his life. In particular, Chris believed that his work ethic has contributed to his successes outside of the camp and he attempts

to self-evaluate his effort, discipline and level of hard work based on the standards he developed in the intensive wrestling camp.

Data Sources

Data sources for the study included document analysis, athlete interviews, and a camp director interview. The athlete interviews served as the primary data source.

Document Analysis and Observations. Prior to each individual interview, participants were sent their personal letter (sent to J Robinson). The letter was emailed to the participant one week prior to the interview and the participants were asked to read this prior to the interview. The purpose of sharing this document with the participant was to attempt to elicit thoughts, feelings, and memories related to the camp experience so that they were primed to discuss the experience during the interview.

Athlete Interviews. Using the phenomenographic approach, the most common and preferred method of data generation is semi-structured interviews (Marton & Booth, 1997). The purpose of individual interviews was to allow the participant to reflect on his/her experiences and then relate those experiences to the interviewer, in order to create a two way understanding about the meaning of the their experience (Ornek, 2008). Phenomenography focuses on the limited possible ways of experiencing a given phenomenon across a group of individuals (Marton, 1986), and the interview provided the means to explore the variation in participant experiences and understanding of life skills transfer (Yates et al., 2002).

The epistemological perspective of phenomenographic research focuses on what people are thinking, and the meaning they ascribe to the phenomenon and their experiences (Barnard et al., 1999). The focus of the interview was the relationship between the participant and the phenomenon of interest (Marton, 1986), and the goal was to allow the researcher to gather data at

the individual level to provide a starting point that was built upon to gain a collective awareness from the set of interviews (Yates et al., 2012). For this reason, the interviews for this study were interested in gaining an understanding about what individuals thought about their transfer of life skills from the sport context, and the meaning that they personally ascribed to any related experiences. The interviews explored the relation between each participant and the phenomena of transferring of life skills from the sport context, as a means of gaining an in-depth understanding of the collective awareness of life skills transfer from sport, and the variation across participants.

The most feasible interview method for the study was phone interviews which were conducted with ten of the participants. One interview was conducted on Skype, and one in person with the participant. Interviews were semi-structured and focused on exploring the individual's experiences in great depth without leading (Trigwell, 2000). The interviews were conversational in nature, and utilized distinctly open-ended questions that were designed to orient the interviewee toward their experiences of the phenomena of transferring life skills from the sport context (Yates et al., 2012).

The interview began with a grand-tour question that provided an open-ended question for the interview to begin and to give the interviewee the opportunity to openly discuss the phenomenon of interest. The grand tour question for the interviews prompted a reflection and discussion of the participant's letter to J Robinson. "Describe the thoughts, feelings and emotions you had when you reviewed the letter." This was followed by another general question to open the discussion of the interview. "Think back to the J Robinson intensive wrestling camp(s) you attended and describe the wrestling camp experience." This question was generally followed by two questions: "Do you think the camp had an influence on you as wrestler?" and "Do you think

the camp experience has impacted your life since? If so, how? If not, why not?” It was imperative that the interviewee independently identified if or if not the sport experience had an impact on the participant’s life. Most questions in a phenomenographic interview followed from the comments of the participant (Trigwell, 2000). The researcher initially used the interview guide questions as probing questions and not a sequential list of questions. The timing and use of the questions depended on the responses from the participant, however, the researcher ensured that all questions are asked by the conclusion of the interview.

Throughout the interview, this specific set of questions guided the researcher to focus on the phenomena of transferring life skills from the sport camp context (see interview guide in Appendix C), and in particular if, how and under what conditions the individuals perceived doing so. During the interview however, the researcher did not introduce these ideas until they were directly mentioned by the interviewee (Yates et al., 2012). All of the participants indicated early in the interview that the camp did impact their life, and the series of questions guided the conversation to focus on how and why skills, knowledge and information were learned, retained and transferred from the camp (see question 3 in interview guide).

The interview guide was developed from the current scientific understanding of the of how learning transfer may occur (e.g., Perkins & Salomon, 1992), and the process of learning life skills in the sport context (e.g., Gould & Carson, 2008) The questions related to the specific learning and transfer of life skills explored definitions of the skills the individuals claim to have learned; how these skills were learned; how the skills have been used in both sport and life contexts; how the individuals believe they were able to transfer the skills; and if and why the skills are believed to be important for life outside of sport. The questions relate to the process of learning and transferring life skills from the sport context to other life domains will explore the

participant's perceptions of themselves as learners prior, during, and after the camp; the role of the camp learning context and if teaching strategies were perceived to assist transfer; the role of alternative learning contexts; and the role of various life contexts in helping or hindering transfer (see Appendix C for full interview guide).

It was understood that interviews occurred on the interpersonal level, in the form of the interaction between the researcher and the participant, and the metacognitive level, where the participant was connecting his/her awareness of their experience (Marton & Booth, 1997). As a result, while the researcher attempted to remain focused on conceptions of life skills transfer, the participant were provided with opportunities to express nuances and specific details. The participants were provided opportunities to tell their own story with flexibility to describe their own experiences as they wish, and thus, interviews proceeded down different paths (Marton, 1986). Additional questions were added if participants mention factors not encompassed in the interview guide. For example, some participants discussed military experiences and questions were asked about the links between the camp and the military experience.

Each participant was left with contact information of the researcher and asked to contact him if any additional perspectives arise following the interview. The researcher sent a follow-up email to thank the participant within three days following the interview. This email outlined the participant's opportunity to further discuss the phenomena if desired, and the possibility that the researcher may wish to follow up with the participant (see Appendix D). All participants offered to be involved in follow up interviews but no follow up interviews were conducted.

Camp Director Interview and Document Analysis. In order to gain a holistic picture of life skills transfer from the intensive wrestling camp, the camp director's perspective of the phenomena was also gathered. This involved a semi-structured interview that provided a

secondary data source. The interview will focused on his perspective of if, how and under what conditions youth participants transfer life skills from the camp to other life domains. A prepared interview guide was followed (see Appendix E.) that addressed each of the research sub-purposes.

Data Analysis and Rigor

Following the completion of the 12 camper interviews and camp director interview, all interviews were transcribed verbatim. Data analysis then occur in a three-step process, specifically (1) using open-coding with phenomenographic analysis, the analysis first created individual narrative profiles to understand the individual experiences of life skills transfer and then conducted an open-coding phenomenographic analysis across participants to understand the collective meaning of life skills transfer; (2) using theory-base coding to understand conceptions relating to existing theory and knowledge of life skill learning and transfer across participants; and (3) deductive analysis of the secondary data sources to understand how the camp director and former camper letters relate to the athlete perspectives. The purpose of taking three approaches to the analysis was to maximize the understanding of life skill transfer from sport. As very few studies have explored how life skills transfer actually occurs from the sport context, the first necessary step is the exploratory, open-coding. However, as there is some understanding across disciplines about how learning transfer occurs (e.g., Leberman et al., 2006; Perkins & Salomon, 1992), it is then useful to use a theory-based coding approach to see how the collective experiences of the participants in this study link and relate to existing knowledge. Finally, it was important to understand how the perspectives of the former athlete interview sample relate to the perspective of the camp director.

Common principles exist for phenomenographic research to ensure that methodological

rigor is considered prior to the data analysis process (Åkerlind, 2002). First, it necessary for the researcher to set aside predetermined views of life skill transfer and avoids drawing conclusions too quickly about the categories being described. This was imperative, considering a heuristic model of life skills transfer from sport had been outlined earlier in the paper. While the guiding categories (e.g., individual psychological factors, program features, coaching approaches) were used to frame the analysis, the open-coding analysis was an inductive process without links and references being made to the heuristic model in the analysis process. Also, by including the theory-based coding approach, the researcher was helped to bracket predetermined views in the first phase of analysis, because there was an understanding that the links to preexisting knowledge of transfer were going to be addressed in the second phase of analysis. Second, it is necessary to ensure that a focus is on the collective experience by viewing transcripts and descriptions as a set. The meaning or variation in meaning in life skills transfer was searched for across interview transcripts. This was addressed by conducting the study in two distinct phases that both focus on gaining a holistic picture of life skills transfer. Each phase included a number of steps to ensure methodological rigor and are described in detail below.

Athlete Interview Open-Coding. The first phase of the data analysis aligned with the phenomenographic research orientation and focused on describing conceptions of life skill transfer from the participants (Yates et al., 2012). Specifically, the aim of this analysis was to explore the range of meanings and experience of life skills transfer from the sample group. This was done individually to understand personal meaning and experiences, and then collectively, to gain the range of meanings across the 12 participants (Åkerlind, 2012). Yates and colleagues (2012, p.103) noted that “there is no single process or technique prescribed for the analysis of phenomenographic data.” While there has been variation in the approaches that have been

reported in literature across academic disciplines (Åkerlind, 2012; Yates et al., 2012), it is agreed that intended outcome for phenomenographic data analysis is the identification of a number of categories that reflect the various ways that a phenomena is experienced (Yates et al., 2012).

The open coding phase of this analysis followed six stages to ensure that the set of categories and meaning ‘emerged’ from the data, in relationship with the researcher (Åkerlind, 2012; Marton, Carlsson, & Halasz, 1992; Saljo, 1988; Yates et al., 2012).

The first stage of the analysis was familiarization with data. The researcher read and re-read each transcript to understand the individual’s perceptions and experiences of life skills transfer and psychological change. During this step, important conceptions were noted for each individual and their personal narrative (e.g., perception of being an underdog) and what they highlighted as important factors and experiences in their lives. This helped the researcher begin to understand general patterns and experiences of life skill transfer from the sport context to other life domains across the 12 participants. As a result of this initial stage, individual narrative profile notes were produced for each participant. Further, common “working” narrative themes were identified and triangulated across the 12 narratives. These themes emerged from the similarities and differences in the way participants articulated and reflected on their developmental journey, and provided an initial identification of key conceptions emphasized by participants. These themes included the lens through which developmental journey was explained, the role of adversity, internal formulas for success, conceptualization of hard work and success, and motivational orientations.

The second stage moved the researcher from understanding general experiences of life skills transfer to increasing understanding of phenomenographic conceptions of interest. Conceptions for this study were the dominant characteristics of differences and similarities of

how life skills transferred is understood and experienced by participants (Barnard et al., 1999). Conceptions helped to answer the research purpose and related sub-purposes. The researcher read the transcripts and delved into not only what was being said by the participant, but how the conceptions of life skills transfer were understood by the participant (Yates et al., 2012). Possible conceptions, or general categories, were identified based on the review of literature and research purposes and questions. It is important to highlight that these general categories emerged from the the heuristic model of life skill transfer and helped formed the following research questions:..

1. What, if any, do former athletes' believed were the long-term psychological effects are attributed to participation in an intensive wrestling camp?
2. What former athletes' believed were are transferred from the wrestling camp to life domains outside the wrestling camp?
3. What do athletes' believe are the individual psychological and autobiographical factors that influence the transfer from the intensive summer sport camp to other life domains?
4. What do athletes' believe are the program features and coaching factors that influence the transfer from the intensive summer sport camp to other life domains?
5. What do athletes' believe are the psychological processes or explanations that influence the transfer from the intensive summer sport camp to other life domains?
6. What do athletes' believe are the factors in the transfer contexts that influence the transfer from the intensive summer sport camp to other life domains?
7. What do athletes' believe is the influence of directionality, time and self-awareness on the transfer from the intensive summer sport camp to other life domains?

Based on the seven research questions, eleven key conceptions were identified for this

phase of the analysis (What was learned; What was transferred; Individual psychological factors; Autobiographical factors; Program features; Coaching approaches; Transfer context factors; Psychological explanations for transfer; Awareness; Timing; Not Transferred). NVivo software was used to organize data. Meaning units from all 12 interviews were placed in one of eleven general categories on the NVivo software.

The third stage of the open coding analysis consisted of the researcher explicitly identifying and confirming the general categories based on all of the participant data. These seven categories, listed above, were confirmed as the specific conceptions of interest to best explain the participants' experiences of life skills transfer (Yates et al., 2012). Across the entire the 12 interviews, hierarchical content analysis was followed. Within each of the eleven categories, sub categories were identify to explain the category in detail. Sub-categories were triangulated and consisted of specific meaning units that provided verbatim definitions and explanations of the categorical meaning. A list of sub-categories then emerged to provide more detail and specificity to the general eleven categories of interest. For example, for the first category "What was learned or developed," five sub-categories emerged (Knowledge, Behaviors, Intrapersonal Skills, Cognitive Skills, Interpersonal Skills, and Dispositions). Furthermore, in the Coaching Factors category, a "passionate personality" sub category emerged that included meaning units such as "he's clearly passionate about everything he does. He does not do anything halfway". The fourth stage of the analysis involved re-read transcripts and sorting the relevant verbatim participant data into relevant the categories and sub-categories identified in stage three. The researcher identified specific meaning units that directly relate to the categories identified, and placed those meaning units in each category. Each category and sub-category revealed something distinctive about the way of understanding the process of life skills transfer

from the sport context to other life domains.

The fifth stage of the analysis reviewed the categories that had been identified. In this stage, the categories of similar data were reviewed in depth to help to create a category and sub-category description. Each category of collective experiences was defined and described, with direct reference to its relevance and significance to the process of transferring life skills from the sport context to other life domains. In addition, the narrative profiles for each participant were reviewed to confirm that the categories and sub-categories were accurate and best explain experiences of life skills transfer. During this phase, investigator triangulation with two outside researchers was conducted. Each category and sub-category was critiqued and challenged in relation to its name, support from the data and relevance in the process of life skills transfer. Adjustments were made to more clearly explain the data. For example, the sub-category of “behavioral skills” was removed. Some of the meaning units in this sub-category were re-categorized as “behaviors”, others as “intrapersonal skills”, while a small number were removed because the meaning units did not clearly and directly relate to and explain the process of life skills transfer (e.g., how to celebrate success). Additionally, operational definitions for each category and sub-category were revised and more clearly articulated to best explain the process of life skills transfer.

The final stage was establishing the outcome space. The final outcome of the phenomenographic data analysis approach involved representing the categories of description in an outcome space. This outcome space portrayed the complex, different experiences of the phenomenon of life skills transfer, as a collective representation (Yates et al., 2012), and was guided by the general categories in the heuristic model of life skills transferred, which provided a framework for understanding the complex process. Along with the data to explain and provide

detail to the five important factors involved in the process life skills transfer (individual factors, program and coaching features, transfer context factors, psychological processes, and transfer dimensions), five holistic themes emerged in the outcome space to best explain the collective process of life skills transfer. These were the revised and refined narrative themes identified in the first phase of the analysis. The eleven categories and inclusive sub-categories were reviewed and analyzed holistically with a focus on understanding the process of life skill transfer. The goal was to use the participants' perspectives and interpretations of how the process of life skills transfer occurs over time. Each category and sub-category was reviewed, defined and explained with an emphasis on how it connects and contributes to the process of life skill transfer. For example, "individual autobiographical factors" were placed at the beginning of the process, and explained in relation to how individual background and experiences relate to, and connect with transferring life skills from sport to other life domains. The outcome space emerged as temporal model to depict how the interrelated categories explain the transfer of life skills from the sport context (Yates et al., 2012). Each category and sub-category was critiqued and challenged as to its relevance and placement within the model, with some adjustments and revisions made.

Ultimately, the phenomenographic outcome space represented both the phenomenon of life skills transfer, and the various ways participants in the study have experienced life skills transfer. The outcome will be represented as diagram to depict how each category relates to each other to explain the transfer of life skills from the sport context (Yates et al., 2012), as well as a discussion of the four holistic themes of life skills transfer as experienced by the 12 participants in this study.

Theory-based coding. The second phase of the data analysis took a theory-based, deductive coding approach to understanding the process of life skills transfer from the sport

context. Specifically, the detailed heuristic model of life skills transfer from sport in the literature review section of the paper was used to guide the analysis. Glaser (2013) argues that is “epistemologically naïve” to completely ignore the “theory-ladenness” of observations from participant data. This approach took into account the all of the specific, detailed factors identified in the heuristic model that were not looked at in the first stage of the analysis (Glaser, 2013). The theory-based coding approach was therefore appropriate for the second phase of the analysis because it took into account the current scientific understanding of life skills transfer and learning transfer, but did so after the phenomenographic exploratory analysis of the experiences of the participants in the study has been completed. This phase of the analysis followed three stages outlined below.

The first stage of the analysis was re-familiarization with data. This researcher re-read the transcripts and moved the focus from understanding of phenomenographic conceptions of interest to understanding life skills transfer and the possible links between the interview transcripts and previous research on life skills transfer and learning transfer.

The second stage of the theory-based coding analysis involved listing all of the categories and sub-categories and specific factors that have been derived through the heuristic working model of life skills transfer in the sport context. These categories included the same seven general categories identified in the heuristic working model, and used in the phenomenographic open-coding. This analysis differed, however, in that each specific factor was searched for deductively in the participant data. For example, in the “program design” category, all 15 specific factors (e.g., relevance, repetition, coach role models, immersion, stress inoculation), were searched for.

The third stage of the analysis involved confirming or disconfirming verbatim participant

data with the specific factors, sub-categories and categories in the heuristic model. The researcher identified specific meaning units that directly relate to the categories identified, and placing those meaning units in each category (e.g., identified direct teaching of life skills as a coaching factor). As the open-coding phenomenographic analysis had provided a detailed explanation of the process of life skills transfer, the deductive, theory-based coding was used in a checklist fashion to understand connections and relevance of the participant data to previous literature.

Deductive Analysis of Secondary Data Sources. The secondary data source in this study was an interview with the camp director. This of data was analyzed using a deductive analysis approach to further understand the similarities and differences of the process of transferring life skills from the wrestling camp to other life domains. Specifically, the interview transcript of the camp director was analyzed after the first two phases of analysis, relative to the emergent categories from the open-coding phase of the athlete interview analysis. This followed a third step process, outlined below.

First, the transcript of the director was read and re-read with a focus on his thoughts and perspectives related to the research purpose. Second, the categories identified in the open-coding outcome space were then used as a deductive guide in the analysis. Specifically, the researcher searched for any thought, perspective or experience relating to the categories in the outcome space as well as other related thoughts. These were identified and highlighted as meaning units. Third, a list of meaning units was then compiled under each category. Additional relevant meaning units were identified as ‘other’ in order to provide a deeper picture of the perceived similarities and differences of life skill transfer. Each meaning unit was labeled with the appropriate source and provided a holistic picture of the transfer of life skills from the camp to

other life domains(Marton, 1986).

Methodological Rigor

For each of the three phases of the analysis process by the researcher, a series of critical steps were taken to ensure methodological rigor. Phenomenography holds inherent assumptions of qualitative research and therefore must address the issues of credibility and trustworthiness (Åkerlind, 2012). To enhance credibility and trustworthiness, three steps were taken and will be described in detail below: Investigator training; audit trail, triangulation and descriptive validity; communicative validity.

Investigator training. The researcher has taken a number of courses in qualitative research and has conducted a number of research numbers using various qualitative research approaches. As a result of these experiences, the researcher is aware of the nuances of qualitative research and the need to ensure methodological rigor. Consequentially, the phenomenographic research approach has been extensively read and reviewed and the study was systematically designed and conducted to adhere to the steps of achieving methodological coherence (Holt & Tamminen, 2010; Mayan, 2009).

Audit trail and triangulation. An audit trail is a narrative account of all research decisions and activities for the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Due to the nature of this phenomenographic research study as a doctoral dissertation, coder reliability will not be employed. An audit trail therefore served as a vital methodological tool. Field notes were written after each interview, outlining the important information related to the research question and helped to outline adjustments to the interview guide. While no questions were deleted or added during the process, the order of the questions was adjusted to gain the most detailed insight possible. The audit trail included journaling and memoing to provide reflective accounts of the

thought processes involved in the analysis. The researcher made his interpretive steps clear to the reader by fully detailing the analysis steps in the data analysis section of the paper, and using verbatim examples in the presentation of the results (Åkerlind, 2012; Creswell & Miller, 2000). The use of the audit trail ensured that attention stayed on the specific analysis of the participant data as opposed to the gaining inter-researcher reliability, which can dangerously divert attention (Åkerlind, 2012). The audit trail helped to show the specific methodological procedures used and ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the results presented (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Furthermore, the audit trail and associated field notes provided the data source for which saturation was assessed. The field notes included the initial major themes identified from each interview, and helped to assess whether triangulation of major findings has been reached, and saturation was met across the 12 participants.

In the data analysis, data were triangulated with a minimum of three sources of evidence to support my major sub-categorical codes under each category. For example, in this level of analysis, the related to the category “what was transferred from the wrestling camp,” were triangulated on the sub-categories such as “intrapersonal skills”. While the data collected also provide valued triangulated findings for each sub-category, for the purposes for this dissertation and the presentation of the data, descriptive validity is limited to the primary categories. The purpose of this study was to find evidence for this learning and transfer of life skills and the factors influencing this process, and thus the key categories and sub-categories were the primary focus.

The inductive, open-coding analysis was followed strictly, to identify similarities and differences in the major categorical codes (such as awareness of transfer, timing of transfer, directionality of transfer). Similarities and differences emerged through the open-coding, such as

transfer to physical or sport-domains and transfer to life domains. For clarity and descriptive validity in the results, some names of categorical codes were changed to match previously agreed upon terms (for example, transfer to life domains is referred to as far transfer). This does not indicate that far transfer was deductively searched for, but rather, linked following the analysis for scientific clarity.

Communicative Validity. As a common approach to ensuring credibility and trustworthiness of phenomenographic and qualitative analyses, communicative validity or peer debriefing was used extensively in this study. There was a need to create an interpretation that is defensible (Marton & Booth, 2007), and this validation was achieved by gaining feedback on the analyses from the individuals who are familiar with the population and who are the intended audience of the findings. First, during the interview process, the key findings and interview process was periodically shared with an expert in youth sport and life skill development, to ensure that the interview procedures were being followed and adjusted to maximize the usefulness of the insights being gathered. Second, during the analysis process, the researcher shared interview data with an expert in qualitative research with both individuals completing the analysis, following the steps in the open-coding analytic process. This ensured the researcher was accurately following the analytical steps. Third, the preliminary results were presented to research experts in the areas of youth sport and athlete development (especially life skills development). This helped to identify components of the analysis to delve into deeper and identify effective ways to present and explain the data in understandable and insight ways. Presenting the preliminary results to this group of individuals, and receiving their feedback on how these findings are valid and credible for the study of transferring life skills from sport, and helped the research understand that these findings are valid to the scientific community where

the findings will be presented (Åkerlind, 2012). Finally, at the conclusion of the analysis process, the steps following and compiled data were presented to an expert in qualitative research and an expert in youth sport. This helped to review the presentation of the data to ensure greater credibility and trustworthiness, and to finalize the explanation and presentation of the data.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The overall aim of this study was to understand former athletes' perceptions of long-term psychological change resulting from participation in an intensive wrestling camp. This purpose includes two specific purposes. First, the study sought to identify the long-term psychological effects the athletes attributed to participation in an intensive wrestling camp, and transferred to life domains outside the wrestling camp. Second, the study aimed to identify how and why former athletes believed long-term psychological effects occur and were transferred to life domains outside of the wrestling camp across time. For the purposes of this study, psychological change has been defined as a process that encompasses *both* learning and transfer of psychological knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The term *psychological effects* will be used to define the learning or development of knowledge, skills and dispositions as a result of the wrestling camp. The term *transfer* will be used to define when developed psychological effects have been transferred as knowledge, skills and dispositions from one domain to another to positively or negative influence performance in life domains away from sport.

To address these purposes, the results chapter is organized in four sections. The first section of the results will address the first purpose of the study, outlining what campers' believed they learned and developed at the wrestling camp, and then what campers' believed they transferred from the camp to other areas of their lives. This section will provide an important foundation for the results by outlining that former campers believed that the wrestling camp facilitated psychological change. Similarities in the psychological change across the 12 participants will be presented. The second section of the results will address the second purpose of the study, outlining why and how campers' believed psychological change occurred. This

section will provide an overview of the influential factors that helped or hindered psychological change. Specifically, the following sets of factors will be reported: individual psychological and autobiographical; wrestling camp program and coaching; possible psychological and social processes; transfer context; and the dimensions of transfer generality, timing and awareness. These findings represent perceptions across the 12 participants and are necessary to help to identify commonalities in explaining how and why psychological change occurred. The third section of results will address both purposes of the study and provide a holistic account of what, how and why psychological change occurred for the participants. This section will identify key similarities as well as important differences in the process of psychological change among the former campers, and integrate the insight presented in Sections 2 and 3 of the results. Ultimately, this section is critical in detailing the process of psychological change and highlighting individual journeys that were influenced by an interaction of identity, experiences, and outcomes. Finally, the fourth section of the results will outline the perceptions of the camp direction about long-term psychological development and overview the similarities and differences from athlete perspectives.

Section I. Long-term Psychological Effects and Transfer from the Intensive Wrestling Camp

The first purpose of the study was to identify what former athletes' believed were the long-term psychological effects are attributed to participation in an intensive wrestling camp, and are transferred to life domains outside the wrestling camp. First, an overview of the psychological effects learned and developed is presented. Second, the findings focused on what campers' believed transferred from the camp to other areas of life are forwarded. Third, the formation a personal guiding identity for success is presented as the ultimate transferrable outcome from the camp.

Psychological effects of participation at the intensive wrestling camp.

The psychological effects of participation at the intensive wrestling camp are defined by what knowledge, skills and dispositions former campers' believed they learned or developed at the camp. It is recognized that learning (acquiring *new* knowledge, skills or dispositions) and developing (growing *existing* knowledge, skills or dispositions) can be viewed as conceptually different processes. However, they are similar in nature, and are both important phenomena of interest in this study. It must be noted that in some cases, it was not possible to determine precisely if the participants explicitly did or did not have the knowledge, skill or disposition prior to the camp experience, however, it was possible to determine that the participants' believed the camp experience was responsible for growing or enhancing the knowledge, skills or dispositions. As a result, the variations of the terms *learn* and *develop* will be used with the emphasis on the growth and enhancement of knowledge, skills and dispositions, as opposed to the explicit gaining of *new* assets.

The participants believed that, during the camp, they learned knowledge, a range of skills, and began to develop dispositions that helped them first survive the camp experience (e.g., complete the camp and graduate) and then achieve success at the camp (e.g., receive positives and receive the “black hat”). These psychological effects included learning knowledge, behaviors, intrapersonal skills, cognitive skills, interpersonal skills, and developing dispositions, and are presented in Table 1. The specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions were identified through the inductive open-coding analysis process and placed in categories of psychological effects that were identified from previous literature (Danish et al., 2004). Specifically, the knowledge, skills and dispositions in Table 1 represent psychological effects that were identified and discussed by the participants, along with the number of former campers who discussed each psychological effect. Each category of knowledge, skills and dispositions will be described with supporting quotes and perceptions from the participants.

Table 1

What participants' believed was learned or developed from the intensive wrestling camp

| Knowledge | Behaviors | Intrapersonal skills | Cognitive skills | Interpersonal skills | Dispositions |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|---|---------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| Importance of Mental Performance | Pushing Self Beyond Limits | Respect | Focus/Concentration | Helping Others | Confidence |
| Financial Management Advice | Hard Work | Honesty | Visualization | Exposure to & Understanding Diversity | Task-Focused |
| How to Physically Prepare | | Goal Setting | | | Ego-Focused |
| How to Mentally Prepare | | Self-Awareness Responsibility Accountability Time Management | | | Hope Optimism |
| | | Discipline Dealing with and Overcoming Adversity | | | |
| | | Integrity Perseverance Dedication Determination | | | |

Knowledge developed from the wrestling camp. The participants' discussed knowledge that they learned while at the wrestling camp. Knowledge was defined as explicit knowledge, 'knowing that,' and tacit knowledge, 'knowing how,' and (Lubit, 2001). Participants believed that the camp was responsible for teaching them explicit knowledge the *importance of the psychology* and mental attitude to help perform in sport and life. This is highlighted by the following quote from Joe, who was reflecting on his camp experience, “over 14 days, it had nothing to do with your legs getting faster. It had everything to do with your mind pushing your body faster. Like, you can endure more pain than you think.” Furthermore, learning explicit knowledge about the *importance of preparation* for wrestling and for life was also identified by former campers, “J always talked to us a lot about preparation, I think he called it his 7 P’s, prior preparation prevents p(piss) poor performance” (Louie). Knowledge acquisition also included gaining tacit knowledge about how to *manage finances*, as recalled by Thomas, “we actually had a couple of financial classes with J... if you take a penny and double it like every day, in like 20 something days you have a million dollars, so that was the most memorable thing.”

Behaviors developed from the wrestling camp. Behaviors were defined as observable, measurable movement of some part of the body through space and time. The 12 former campers emphatically explained the camp was responsible for teaching them how to *work hard* and relatedly, how to physically and mentally *push themselves to the limit*. This is highlighted by Louie who stated that he learned “the whole idea of never giving up and keep working hard, because that was what was really drilling into me at camp” (Louie). This is also emphasized in the following quotes from Joe and Thomas who were reflecting on their camp experiences.

when I went to that camp it was an introduction that this is what it looks like, feels like, this is what it means to work hard at something. You work harder to push yourself

further than you think you can go. That is the first time that I was ever exposed to that.

(Joe)

that place just really taught to reach deep inside myself and like don't quit, especially when you're on the mat, just don't quit, and it helped me really get in this mindset of how to actually work hard, instead of what just everyone else thinks hard work is, that's something J taught us (Thomas)

Intrapersonal skills developed from the wrestling camp. The participants identified a range of intrapersonal skills, defined as skills related to “one's ability to know and manage oneself” (Ismail, Yussof, & Wie, 2011, p. 52) that were attributed to the camp. These skills of *personal responsibility* and *accountability* were identified by a number of the former campers. Reflecting on his camp experience in the mid-1980's, Stan stated that:

it was a great combination of extreme challenge and regimentation...a lot of personal responsibility everything from how you formed in the practices to how to – when you left practice you had to shower and get to the meal. You had to take care of your stuff you know for an extended period of time...you know if you were late to dinner then you don't get to eat and your starving and bonk during practice but uh it was good in that respect. Um and then obviously the facing um well you knew it was going to be extremely physically challenging twice a day every day for a month and um that you would be held accountable for how you preform (Stan)

As intrapersonal skills that were described as being beneficial for success in the camp and in life, *goal setting* and *time management* were identified as being psychological effects attributed to the camp. Nathan identified learning how to set goals, stating:

he would have you write like “Hey, list ten goals for your life for the next year.” You know, “List ten goals for your life that you want to accomplish in five years and 10 years, and just writing those things down makes them more tangible...writing things down makes things more real. Like you feel that they’re more attainable just cause you put them on paper.

Stan described how he believed he learned *time management* along with understanding the importance of preparation:

I think it comes down to planning your day. Um in a way that is connected to a goal. I remember each day they would post that – again I don’t know if it’s the same – you know it was 4 practices a day, and they would post tomorrow’s schedule the night before

While not mentioned by all of the former campers, the similar skills of *honesty*, *respect* and *acting with integrity* were identified by a small number of participants as intrapersonal skills developed at the camp. Collectively, these were value-based skills that the participants learned to understand and manage themselves. For example, Brandon discussed his approach at the camp:

“I tried to act with the upmost integrity...I mean there was somebody watching or at least you felt like it at all times. Engaging where you were at and your output was. And if your output wasn’t at where the percentage that they thought it would be, or you weren’t getting the effort that they thought you could, they were going to let you know.

Similarly, Thomas discussed how he learned how to be honest with himself while he was at the camp. He learned this through being honest in how hard he was working, “just being honest, always giving your best even if you don’t have to...it’s an honest thing to do is try your best” (Thomas).

Dealing with adversity was another skill that individuals believed was developed internally as a result of the camp experience. This focused on an intrinsic belief that each individual learned how to deal with difficult and challenging situations at the camp. Chris discussed how he learned to function and perform with little sleep and energy:

There are nights when you don't get enough sleep and that is something at Jay Rob that happened quite often. You would have your last workout end at 10pm and you would go back and shower. Then, you go to bed at 12 and are waking up at 6am to run. That is 6 hours of sleep with an incredible amount of activity and exertion. You are running on fumes and you are tired and just being able to function when you are not at your best, you know? I would definitely say I feel the impact of J Rob there: learning how to perform when you did not get enough sleep the night before. (Chris)

Jason discussed the wrestling sessions at the camp and how he learned how to deal with the challenges put in front of him.

I wrestled with everybody from my weight up to heavy weight. And there were some pretty damn good guys upstate, or out of country. And we should have challenged each other every single day with no end. And that's just what we do we just kept pushing ourselves and breaking ourselves, breaking mental barriers (Jason).

As conceptually similar intrapersonal skills, participants interchangeably described the skills of perseverance, discipline and dedication. These skills were defined as the ability to stick to the task at hand and remain committed, and were attributed to the camp experience. As examples, Brandon discussed the importance of learning how to persevere, "it taught me how to persevere and get through different aspects of wrestling and life – maybe more so than it taught technique," while Daniel reflected on his two week camp experience and what he believed

learned. “The discipline. Nobody wanted to get up at 5:45am. We were all so groggy, but it was making yourself get up.”

As an encompassing intrapersonal skill, the former campers described an increased *self-awareness* as a result of the camp experience. The following statements describe how campers believed that the camp challenges made them more aware of their physical state and their personal limits. Brandon said, “it’s something you don’t forget. So when you are feeling about when you have nothing left, and you come to find out you still have a lot more, there’s a feeling that comes with that,” while Robert provided a similar description of the camp and his enhanced self-awareness:

the general umm atmosphere of the camp was that they would just work on you and work on you and push you and push you and you know, no matter to what point they pushed you to, they would always ask you for more and what that does is, or what that did I should say is it teaches you that you’ve always got more, you’ve always got more inside you, no matter how tired you think that you are, no matter how worn out you think that you are, you just you’ve always got more in there.

Cognitive skills developed from the wrestling camp. Cognitive skills were defined as learning skills, such as attending, memory and thinking (Gilles, 2015). The development of cognitive skills as an outcome from the camp experience was identified with less frequency and detail across the participants. However, some former campers did reveal cognitive skills that they believed they developed. For example, some campers relived the visualization exercises they did at the camp and stated that *visualization* or imagery was a skill that they learned. Joe and Andrew both reflected on learning visualization skills, stating,

I remember he did a visualization exercise where everyone would lay down on the mat. And, you would have to relax. It is meditation, essentially. I remember that, and then you visualize exactly what you want to have happen. I still do that actually. You go until where you totally clear your mind, and then you imagine your step by step movements. (Joe).

cause J did those he did those visualization sessions that were just phenomenal...like that year umm let's see, that year I took fourth in state I actually had dreams that I had gone to state and I really made like a lot of practice of visualizing matches and my favorite moves (Andrew).

Additionally, some participants believed that they learned how to *focus* and block out distractions as a result of going through the wrestling camp. David relived his experience at the camp, and identified what he learned:

don't look at the next couple of weeks as you know this giant mountain that you have to conquer, just concentrate on what you're doing when you're doing it and ignore everything else and that's a much easier way of getting through a difficult experience and that's something that we all learned eventually but it was a very sort of easily applicable lesson to what we were going through (David)

Interpersonal skills developed from the wrestling camp. Interpersonal skills are defined as the techniques and methods that foster effective and empathic communication (Massachusetts General Hospital, 2015). Similar to the cognitive skills, interpersonal skills were not as easily identified as being attributed to the wrestling camp, and were discussed by the participants with less frequency. The skills of *helping others* and *working with others* were however identified by some campers as being developed through the camp experience. Brandon

stated that , “it taught me to help others you know through tough and trying times, almost like an armed service’s approach you know. Help others before yourself and by doing that good things will happen to you.” (Brandon). Similarly, Thomas stated that:

they always taught you to look out for the guy next to you, you know whether it be helping them get better or helping them mentally survive a workout or you know missing home, like they always just taught you to be there for the next guy, because if everyone’s there for the next guy then everyone’s covered (Thomas)

In addition, some former campers believed that the wrestling experience was important to them in providing exposure to diversity and learning to *understand and appreciate diversity* and people from different backgrounds. For example, Chris said:

I got exposed to different viewpoints and people that I would not normally meet...It exposed me to different lifestyles and different situations that kids were in. I think that is really good...I definitely think it has changed the way I interact with people and think of people (Chris).

Dispositions developed from the wrestling camp. While the participants described specific knowledge and a range of skills they believed they learned and developed at the camp, they also discussed their dispositions that the camp was responsible for developing. Dispositions are defined as a tendency to act or think in a particular way” (Merriam-Webster, 2015). For the participants, the camp helped to provide a new dispositional direction or confirmed a disposition that participants believed they already possessed. The majority of participants described how the camp helped them develop a task-mastery motivational orientation, driven by effort and personal improvement. Brandon stated that he was “focusing on the task at hand, you know I rarely – at camp didn't they talk about winning and losing. It was always about competing. And if you

competed at your highest level, then winning and losing took care of itself. Similarly, David described how he learned to focus on the task-at-hand and break it down to a process, “breaking things down to their component parts and just sort of umm not getting overwhelmed by looking at the big picture that was a big part of you know getting through those two weeks.” Some participants described the development of an ego or outcome motivational focus, where they were driven by competing and comparing. Joe said, “that was the first time that I realized that if you want it that bad, then when you step on the wrestling mat, you better be 100% convinced that the other guy has not worked as hard as you,” and simply that, “the place I learned what it really takes to beat somebody, was there.” Similarly, Andrew stated that “every time we wrestled and then every practice and J taught us like you know like “Well you gotta outwork the other guy at the end of the day.”

The former campers also described how they not only learned how to set goals, but they learned how to achieve their goals and gained a belief and confidence in their ability to achieve the goals. This disposition of hope and optimism (Snyder, Sympson, Ybasco, Borders, Babyak, & Higgins, 1996), was described by many participants, attributed to the camp, and highlighted by the following quotes from Nathan and Jason. Nathan said, “the culminating message is uhh “You can do anything that you set your mind to and nothing of value comes without discipline and hard work,” and this was supported by Jason, who stated, “the main thing that- that I took away from the camp was that I can...I can do things that I have umm that maybe initially seemed un- unattainable or maybe that- maybe that you would hear about other people doing.”

Finally, as an encompassing disposition that was developed at the camp, all of the participants believed that they gained a greater sense of self-belief and confidence in the sport of wrestling and in all areas of life. This is emphasized and summarized in quotes below. First, Joe

remembered developing confidence with reference J's quotes. Second, Louie recalled the general sense of confidence in developed.

"Want, believe, achieve! First you want something, everybody wants something, but then you must believe it and then you will achieve it" (Joe)

[the] camp really just gave me the confidence to do a lot of the stuff and really believe that if I work hard enough and I put that effort in, I can achieve my goals, and even if I don't achieve my goals, like I'm better because I went there and I tried for it. (Louie)

The transfer of knowledge, skills and dispositions from the wrestling camp to life domains.

The participants believed that, following the camp, they were able to transfer knowledge, skills and dispositions that were developed at the wrestling camp, to other life domains. These psychological effects that were transferred are presented in Table 2. Similar to the analysis and presentation of the psychological effects, the specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions were identified through the inductive open-coding analysis process and placed in categories of psychological effects that were identified from previous literature (Danish et al., 2002). Specifically, the knowledge, behaviors, skills (intrapersonal, cognitive, and interpersonal) and dispositions in Table 2 represent psychological effects that campers' believe transferred. All of the six categories were discussed with positive outcomes for the participants. Additionally, some intrapersonal skills were discussed with negative outcomes for the participants. Each category of knowledge, behaviors, skills, and dispositions is presented with supporting examples and participant quotes below.

Table 2.

What participants' believed transferred from the intensive wrestling camp to life domains.

| Knowledge | Behaviors | Intrapersonal Skills | Cognitive Skills | Interpersonal Skills | Dispositions |
|--|--|--|---------------------------|--|---|
| How to Physically Prepare Importance of Mental Preparation | Hard Work | Goal Setting | Visualization | Helping & Praise Others | Task-Effort Focused |
| | Pushing Self to Limits Exercise/Sport Participation | Overcoming Adversity Performing Under Pressure Accountability Responsibility Time Management Self-Awareness Integrity Perseverance Discipline Determination Dedication Commitment | Effective Decision Making | Respect & Care for Others Understand & Appreciate Diversity | Ego-Outcome Focused Leadership Hope Optimism Approach & Seek Challenges Confidence |

Knowledge transferred from the wrestling camp with positive outcomes. While the majority of the psychological transfer effects were skills and dispositions, some participants did describe transferring specific knowledge from the camp to other domains. Knowledge was defined as both tacit knowledge, 'knowing how,' and explicit knowledge, 'knowing that' (Lubit, 2001). For example, Stan discussed learning explicit knowledge about military politics and operations from J and transferring and reflecting on that knowledge to while serving in the military. He stated that,

He [J Robinson] said 'you know you are going to learn that it is pretty political and everything boils down to your officer efficiency reports' and for me, like Jay, I wanted to work with people who just motivated and I found that to be very accurate (Stan)

Former campers discussed how they used and transferred his tacit knowledge of how to physically and mentally prepare for athletic success. Brandon used his knowledge to help his high school wrestling coaching career. He stated that,

it prepared me to move on to the next level and then also you know into the coaching field it helped me um have the knowledge base to prepare athletes to perform and my own children today to wrestle. So its kind cool, it's gone full circle. A lot of things that I learned there I still use (Brandon).

Jason used his knowledge of how to mentally prepare when he joined the Air Force and was teammates with other talented athletes. He stated,

[I went on] to join the Air Force and in 2000, right out of high school, I traveled the entire world. And I had a chance to be with the Air Force wrestling team. It was pretty interesting and that was hard as hell as well but doing the camp set me up for the mentality of dealing with world class athletes at this time (Jason).

Behaviors transferred from the wrestling camp with positive outcomes. Behaviors were defined as observable, measurable movement of some part of the body through space and time. The similar behaviors of *hard work* and *pushing themselves to the limit* were the assets that were most frequently and deeply described by participants as being transferred from the wrestling camp. All participants described transferring these work ethic-based behaviors to other life domains. For example, Joe provided an explanation of how he applied this hard work to law school.

Law school may be the biggest application of this hard work and discipline thing, as I look back on it...It is all about how hard you can study. It is all about class rank and beating other people and it is just a competitive academic environment (Joe).

Andrew provided a more general description of how he transferred his hard work following the camp.

every time I did anything after that camp I just really took on more of a- I had to be cliché about it- but kind of like a lawyer approach of like “Well you’re gonna have to drag me out of here dead,” or “You might beat me up, but you’re gonna regret that you started a fight with me,” type of thing (Andrew).

Daniel discussed how he transferred his hard work and desire to push himself, to the weight room and his physical fitness routine. He stated emphatically that,

Right now, the way I see it, in the weight room I am training for every day!...The way I look at it, when I am in the weight room and training...this happens in a public place to, I'll collapse, you know from straight exhaustion (Daniel).

Intrapersonal skills transferred from the wrestling camp with positive outcomes.

Intrapersonal skills were strongly identified as psychological skills that were transferred from the

camp. Intrapersonal skills were defined as skills related to “one's ability to know and manage oneself” (Ismail, Yussof, & Wie, 2011, p. 52) *Responsibility* and *accountability* were skills that were identified as being important for success in and out of the camp. This is outlined in Brandon's example of the use of the skills in the camp and in his job as a teacher.

getting up again and again and doing it and getting past those mental blocks. I mean it is so easy for us in aspect of life to say I can't do it and um everything there is 'I can' it's actually a lot like in our school system. I mean or what we try for even kids in this school – 'I can' or 'I will' you know. The only person holding yourself back is you. It's a belief. So it's a belief system there.

Goal setting and *time management* were intrapersonal skill that participants claimed to transfer and apply in their professional lives. Both of these skills are emphasized by Chris and he described the positive influence he believed the camp had on his academics.

I have a white board in my room and I have written down 3 goals and those are 1) to become a state champion in wrestling, 2) get a 95% average in school, and 3) get a 2100 on my SAT. And, I just accomplished the 95% average this past quarter, so I got to cross that off and that was an incredibly rewarding feeling...Just every time I walk into my room, I look at the goals on my board and I think, even if it is setting up a sub-conscious to accomplish those things, having it there and a tangible reward and a tangible reminder written down is something I got from Jay Rob and that has been huge. (Chris)

Before Jay Rob, I would get it [homework] done eventually and I will put in the time necessary to get it done, but post Jay Rob I will get it done as soon as possible.

Procrastination was the biggest thing for me academically before Jay Rob. I would put in the time and I would stay up late if I had to, but I would mess around a little bit before I

would start my homework. At Jay Rob, there is no down time, so you just get in the habit of constantly working. I think that really helped me in that way. I do not procrastinate nearly as much in school and that is a direct impact from Jay Rob. (Chris)

Ten of the 12 participants explicitly described how they believed they transferred discipline and perseverance from the wrestling camp to other areas of their lives. Many of the former campers discussed discipline, in relation to the task of getting out of bed early in the camp, and talked about the transfer of that skill. For example, Daniel stated his transfer of discipline as a college student,

I feel like I got the discipline from Jay Rob. I am working out 6 days a week. Like I said, I have finals and I have to get a workout in today. It is always on my mind. There are days, like right now, where I do not want to work out. But, I go do it anyway. That is something I truly got from Jay Rob.

Robert, as an older individual in the workforce, described his application and transfer of discipline and perseverance to his life and work.

it's the discipline and the thought process of, if you, one of the sayings that J always used to say is "you can anything you want if you want it bad enough" and umm you know it's one of those things, it's something that I really enjoyed doing you know, so it's kind of like I don't, it doesn't tire me and it just doesn't get old to me and it just, and when things get rough, and everyone has their rough times and what not, it's just the perseverance that I picked up from being at the J Rob camp

While respect, honesty and integrity were not skills that were frequently or emphatically discussed as being learned and transferred from the camp, some of the participants did highlight these as transferrable psychological skills. They were transferred as value-based skills to help

participants understand and manage themselves. For example, Brandon continued to identify links between the camp and his profession as a teacher, and how he has transferred the skills he learned.

I try to act with the upmost integrity. I'm always feeling like people are watching what I'm doing. And they are and that is engrained into my mind. Somebody is always watching what you are doing so I make sure I am doing the right thing...you know I work with bosses today everybody has a boss. If I'm not putting forth the effort, or I'm not producing um with the output of the school, or like for standardized tests, I mean they are calling me on it I have to make changes, adapt and that happens and I did the same thing doing buddy carries at J. Robinson (Brandon).

Across the participants, there was a belief that they a newfound ability to internally *deal with adversity* and perform under pressure. A number of examples were provided where former campers described the transfer of these skills to achieve success in other life domains. Nathan described the transfer to his experiences in Army Ranger school and college,

whenever I encounter something difficult uhh in the Ranger's I thought the same thing like hey you- you know this isn't as tough J. Robinson was and you made that and then once I got through the Ranger's you know uhh in college I was like oh I have an exam to study for, oh that's nothing.

Finally, the participants had described gaining greater self-awareness through the wrestling camp experience. This skill was identified by some participants as being transferrable to other life domains. Stan discussed how he applied his self-awareness in different areas of his life, for example, in the college classroom to gauge his work ethic and level of accountability.

With classes I found boring...where I sit now there is still a – I know if I am working. Uh I'd say that I am aware of the level of effort even now that I put towards things and I am able to accurately gauge – hold myself accountable – are you working hard on this or not?

Intrapersonal skills transferred from the wrestling camp with negative outcomes.

While there were numerous positive outcomes for the transfer of intrapersonal skills from the wrestling camp, some participants identified some downsides to the transfer of intrapersonal skills. A number of participants discussed the pitfalls of being too determined and disciplined in the quest for success. Jason was discussing his work ethic and determination, and stated that “[as] another thing that I learned at the camp was kind of the fault like a drawback...I never feel satisfied anymore like I always have to keep going for the next accomplishment,” and highlighted a sense of frustration at not celebrating his successes or appreciating his achievements.

In addition, Jason also described the transfer of determination and discipline with the negative outcome of him being too narrow in his life focus. Jason stated that “when you get so mentally driven to attack and attack and attack, you put blinders on. And you don't focus on anybody or anything else and you just drive.” He described relationship problems that resulted from his this determination and narrow focus, and that

you lose track of your surrounding areas. And the next thing you know – the months fly by because you don't stop to like assess what you do. And I think that was one of the things like you don't really assess what you do, you just move on to the next thing. And you kind of – for me you neglect things in life, you neglect people more so than things I should say.

Additionally, David described his “all or nothing” attitude as something that he transferred from the camp, which resulted in negative outcomes. David said

the pitfall of that, kind of working that hard for that long for that period of time I think is that you can kind of umm adopt an all or nothing attitude towards a lot that can kind of stay with you for a long long time

David discussed the pride he experienced following the camp and the transfer of the ability to work hard, but how his work ethic transferred as an “all or nothing” mentality that caused him to give either give an intense, high amount of effort to tasks outside of camp or very little.

I finished it with this great sense of accomplishment and sort of this sense that if I played my cards right, I really wouldn’t have to work that hard again in my life...there’s still this feeling that I don’t really want to have to climb this enormous mountain, I’d rather just coast for a little bit.

Additionally, a small number of participants stated that they had transferred the skills and discipline and determination. As a result of the transfer of many intrapersonal skill related to discipline and dedication to achieve success, participants discussed that social relationships were sometimes sacrificed. Participants identified this transfer as a balancing act to be successful, with a downside to the transfer being recognized. For example, Robert stated

what I tend to say about that in terms of social types of things, what I remember was something J said...“if you want to be great at what you do, you’re going to have to sacrifice a lot of things”...the social thing that you’re talking about, umm now no, it’s not for me, you guys go ahead and do what you’ve got to do, and I’ve kind of retracted

socially I guess you could say, I just felt that, I dunno to me that doesn't seem of importance.

Finally, the downside to transferring accountability was also recognized and discussed by a small number of participants. For example, Brandon discussed how he holds himself accountable for his work and the work for his team, but sometimes struggles to delegate responsibilities to others.

I guess you could say it is a negative or you have to just re-evaluate is when you don't settle or you don't want to delegate something in my job I'm in now... You know I like to take care of things myself because I know it's going to be done right.

Cognitive skills transferred from the wrestling camp with positive outcomes. While there were only a small number of cognitive skills developed from the camp experience, the participants did believe that they transferred the skills from the camp to other areas of life. Cognitive skills were defined as learning skills, such as attending, memory and thinking (Gilles, 2015). For example, some former campers described the value and use of *visualization* outside of the camp. Louie stated,

It [visualization] definitely relaxes me and lets me focus in on the moment, like I need to do exactly this, cause I get really stressed out here at college, like I'm thinking about "next week I have this assignment, and this assignment due" but if you really just like stay focused on what I have to get done today, what I need to do today to be ready for tomorrow (Louie)

Similarly, three participants discussed how they transferred the cognitive skills of *focusing* and blocking out distractions. This skill was discussed by Brandon, identifying the challenge of being faced with distractions in any context.

being able to block out other things because it did get – sometimes that camp got pretty tough – but it's no different than in life you know there are times in life that get pretty tough and you have to be able to push that aside and focus on this (Brandon)

Jason discussed the how he transferred cognitive skills, reflecting on using the visualization technique to help him stay focused outside of the camp.

basically just lay down on the field and they would have us visually picture ourselves doing whatever it is we were wanting to achieve. At the time it was all of us winning state. Because we were in high school and we wanted to be the best. But it helped me further down the line to where it helps keep me focused on what I'm doing. And that's been going to school and accomplishing my degree while working full time (Jason).

Interpersonal skills transferred from the wrestling camp with positive outcomes.

The transfer of interpersonal skills from the camp to professional and social lives was identified by the small group of participants who had previously identified learning interpersonal skills as at the camp. Interpersonal skills are defined as the techniques and methods that foster effective and empathic communication (Massachusetts General Hospital, 2015). For example, Louie discussed how he applied the skills of helping others outside the camp with his examples of helping college wrestling teammates and peers in and out of the classroom.

He [J] has the J7 and the last thing is service, and that's definitely it...and that is a big thing too, to go beyond wrestling and so I like to share all of these stories and stuff that I've had from camp, and the life lessons that I've learned through camp with other people, and it's like helping out other people in any way I can, if it's helping them through wrestling, showing them new moves, teaching them life lessons, if it's helping

them with their school work, if it's helping them with social problems, just talking through, like if you're having stuff with social stuff (Louie)

Additionally, participants discussed how they used and transferred their understanding and appreciation for diversity. For example, Chris described the transfer of this appreciation for diversity into his social interactions.

before the camp I associated education with intelligence. But, after Jay Rob it was an eye opening experience. These are smart, hard-working kids, but they cannot go to college and they need to help their parents pay the bills. They are as smart as I am, they are just in a different situation. They're forced to do these things that I do not have to do. I definitely think it has changed the way I interact with people and think of people. (Chris)

Similarly, Stan discussed how the camp helped him when he went to the military and transferred his understanding and appreciation.

I mean the military is total melting pot, very diverse um and you are forced into very tight living quarters with all types um and I would say I was probably better prepared for that in the military because of Jay's camp because my – like I said my high school was very fortunate but it wasn't the most diverse situation you have ever been in. (Stan)

Dispositions transferred from the wrestling camp with positive outcomes. As a result of the camp, the participants described how they were beginning to develop new dispositional qualities. The participants explained that they were able to transfer and strengthen these dispositions outside of the camp environment, and talked extensively about using these dispositions outside of the camp. Dispositions were defined as “a tendency to act or think in a particular way” (Merriam-Webster, 2015). The majority of the participants discussed the transfer of the task-mastery motivational orientation from the camp. For example, Brandon suggested

that he has continually used the process approach in his life since the camp, “I haven’t stopped yet so always thinking about the next thing that I can do to better myself so that’s a lifelong attribute from that camp...always putting forth some effort each day and putting a lot into it.” This effort-based evaluation was also emphasized by Louie, and his experiences after he left the camp.

my brothers and I are out working, like we’re all like working in a field or something, we’re out hauling square bales of hay and like, I have that mentality that these people are paying me \$10 an hour to move hay, I better move as much hay as I possibly can in an hour, so I’m like sprinting and throwing hay bales on the truck as fast as I can, it’s always I guess doing your best, like there’s so many things from the camp that have transitioned (Louie).

As an alternative motivational orientation, some former campers described the transfer of the ego-outcome motivational orientation from the wrestling camp. Participants focused on the competitive nature of the sport of wrestling and stated they transferred a focus of competing and comparing from the camp. Joe discussed his experiences as a wrestling and a lawyer and the value of transferring the ego-orientation.

I think part of the other thing that wrestling overall teaches you, because it is a combat gladiator sport. You are going onto the mat and you will either win or lose. That lesson as well is valuable in life. Everything you do, at least for me as a trial lawyer, it is kind of a combat sport. Every time you go into a courtroom you will either win or lose. (Joe)

Across the participants, there was a perception that they had transferred a dispositional hope (Snyder et al., 1996), as goal-based focused with the belief that they could achieve their goals and had the personal assets to do so. The transfer is highlighted by Jason in his goal focus,

I feel like you always have to have that goal in mind, like what you want to do with yourself. So, like short minded my goal is to obviously graduate in the fall and become an administrator in the healthcare setting. When I get there I'm going to be dealt with a lot of adversity trying to be a new administrator coming in to change things for the better (Jason).

The transfer of hope is also emphasized in this statement from Daniel who discussing how he reflects on the camp experience.

Just lying in bed and you don't go to sleep, you just sit there and you think about everything. I think about my goals. I have a goal sheet. It is sitting on my desk right now and it is taped there. At the very bottom it says, "I am going to be somebody" and I got that from Jay Rob. That, I guess, is my thing. When I am reflecting everything that I have done and gone through, who will I be? Do I want to be someone or am I going to be no one. (Daniel)

Finally, the transfer of a disposition-based confidence was emphasized by all of the participants in the study. There was a consistent belief across the former campers that they had been able to transfer and apply a self-belief and confidence developed at the camp, to multiple life domains. Nathan stated that,

the biggest thing um- J. Robinson and J. Robinson is- is kind of integrated in my mind with what wrestling has done for me I think of 'em both as the same journey umm it really gave me a true, true confidence in myself and the way that I um carry myself, it's like um really transformed who I am and again it gave me this level of belief in myself (Nathan)

Similarly, Joe described the confidence he gained and transferred from the wrestling camp, with the focus on convincing himself in his work ethic.

People are out there in the world who want it that bad. That was the first time that I realized that if you want it that bad, then when you step on the wrestling mat, you better be 100% convinced that the other guy has not worked as hard as you. And that had been my motto in life ever since. When I walk into the courtroom, I need to 100% convinced that the other lawyer has not worked as hard as me. (Joe)

The formation of a personal guiding identity for success.

While it was abundantly clear that the participants believed that they learned and transferred a range of skills, knowledge and dispositions from the camp experience, the process of learning transferring was not simplistic and linear. Acquiring knowledge, behaviors, skills or dispositions did not result in the linear transfer of that knowledge, skill or dispositions. The individual did not leave the camp with singular, discrete pieces of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that were then transferred and applied independently in different life situations. Rather, it emerged that the individual left the camp with a set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that interacted and were transferred and applied collectively in different life situations. When discussing the transfer effects, participants emphasized a holistic change within their deeper psychological core, rather than abilities and skills that could be used in specific situations. The long-term psychological change emerged as a personal guiding identity for success that was attributed to participation in the intensive wrestling camp.

Defining a personal guiding identity for success. Across the 12 participants, there was a strong perception that the camp helped the individuals either form a new personal guiding identity for success or develop and amplify an existing personal guiding identity for success. In

particular, the change was defined by **a strong work ethic and a deep belief in one's ability to use that work ethic to overcome any task or experience in life. This work ethic was guided by a personal motivational orientation that fueled the quest for success.** The realization of this identity was guided by the increased self-awareness and self-evaluation during the camp and its continued enhancement following the camp. Similar, to self-concept, this developed identity was “how a person perceives himself or herself. It includes feelings of self-confidence, self-worth, self-acceptance, competence, and ability” (Marsh, 2007). It is necessary to note that distinct differences were identified across the 12 participants in the strength and commitment to this personal identity, in relation to the motivational orientations and the way participants viewed and perceived success, and the depth of self-awareness and self-evaluation. However, the general framework of work ethic, confidence and motivation for a personal guiding identity was consistent across the former campers, and was attributed to participation in the intensive wrestling camp.

While all the participants discussed and defined their personal guiding identity in different ways, using different terms. The emphasis on the collective behavioral work-ethic skills, a strong sense of confidence and self-belief, and a personalized motivational orientation was evident. This is collectively highlighted in Jason's description of his “mentally tough” identity.

Honestly that's the biggest thing. Is when you have to be mentally tough. And when you do it you get put in a situation where you start reflecting back. Your mind starts reflecting back on adversities that you had to overcome. So whatever how big or how small it is, it's still an adversity to you as an individual. And you are like alright I know I can do this, I've done this before. I'm built to do this, I know how to do it. And that's just the

biggest thing...I am fortunate enough to have that mentality of toughness to where I can handle certain objectives – a lot more than what most people can – and help me just be mentally tough to juggle a lot of obstacles in life. (Jason)

With a slightly different frame of reference, Daniel discussed his work ethic and the belief in his work-ethic, as something he wants to be remembered by.

If there is anything I want people to remember me by, it is my work ethic. Like I said, I challenge myself everyday...I just want people to remember me by my work ethic. I want to pass that on, you know? I feel like that is where I am going to leave my footprint in life. I developed it through Jay Rob and wrestling. (Daniel)

The holistic development of an identity. The transfer of a personal guiding identity for success occurred as the result of participants developing a set of knowledge, skills and dispositions in the wrestling camp, and then using and applying the knowledge, skills and dispositions collectively outside of the camp environment. While the participants believe the psychological effects were predominately developed as skills while they were in the intensive wrestling camp, discussion and reflection of the transfer of these skills was framed as the transfer of a “general philosophy as opposed to specific skills” (Joe) and something that “all blends together” (Andrew). Thus, psychological change was perceived by each individual as the simultaneous and interactive transfer of knowledge, skills and dispositions outside of the camp, which resulted in a personal belief that they were functioning with a new, improved or reinforced personal guiding identity for success in life outside of the camp.

For some campers, they believed that the collective learning from the camp was responsible for providing the foundation for this work-ethic-based personal identity that was transferred, such as Joe, who stated that “I can really say that this seed of a lot of my personal

beliefs today about the value of hard work and discipline came from that camp.” Similarly, Thomas believed the camp was a pivotal experience for providing him with the identity.

I think that a lot of it might come from there [wrestling camp] because that was a very influential period of your life and that’s when I really started to grow as a person so I have to credit a lot of it to that (Thomas).

While for other campers, they believed that the collective learning from the camp confirmed, reinforced and further developed an existing personal identity for success, such as Louie who said “I had a lot of the skills before camp, the camp just amplified them, and then other things are brought in too, it expanded my definition of hard work and stuff, it really changed my perspective on life.” Jason viewed the identity as something he always had, and the camp helped to amplify it and teach him how to use it, “I think individuals that either have it or don’t have it, and I fortunately was an individual that did have it. All I needed was someone to tell me how to utilize it” (Jason).

During this interactive and continuous transfer of knowledge, skills and dispositions from the intensive camp to other life domain, some assets were more likely to transfer than others. Specifically, skills and dispositions were more likely to transfer if they were able to be linked and aligned with the developing personal guiding identity for success. For example, the skill of goal setting, confident disposition and optimistic outlook were developed at the camp and were more likely to transfer because participants identified how well the skills and dispositions fulfilled the personal guiding identity to facilitate success.

it helped me further down the line to where it helps keep me focused on what I’m doing. And that’s been going to school and accomplishing my degree while working full time- I’m a full time employee and full time student...But so I have to just – what I do every

day, is like keep reminding myself this is why we're here. This is why we are doing it. So what they would tell us is for every – for everything that you envision, your goal is how are you going to get there. So without the steps to get you there, to your goal it's basically a wish, you wish you were there. So it helped me to evaluate things, situations and okay it's like alright this is how we are going to get to our goal. (Nathan)

Jason discussed transferring his goal setting, and confidence in his ability to achieve goals, and related it to the need to use his ability to overcome obstacles. He stated,

I feel like you always have to have that goal in mind, like what you want to do with yourself. So, like short minded my goal is to obviously graduate in the fall and become an administrator in the healthcare setting. When I get there I'm going to be dealt with a lot of adversity trying to be a new administrator coming in to change things for the better. What you learn is the structure of how to deal with it. (Jason).

The participants believed that they successfully transferred dispositions from the wrestling camp that aligned with their personal guiding identity for success. It was interesting that additional dispositions emerged that participants believed were transferred as a result of the wrestling camp by some participants. Specifically, former campers identified the dispositions of leadership and approaching and seeking challenges, as dispositional transferrable outcomes that resulted from the collective use of knowledge, skills and dispositions developed in the camp. It was particularly interesting that participants did not discuss learning leadership or the trait of approaching and seeking challenges in the wrestling camp, but rather, they discussed these as dispositions that transferred as a result of using and applying other skills outside of the sport context. This notion of transfer is highlighted by Chris and Stan in relationship to the transfer and progressive growth of leadership as a component of their identities.

I think Jay Rob also taught me to be a leader. Not so much at the camp because we all kind of felt as though we were equals at the camp. But, coming back from the camp and into my regular community, my regular school, and into my family, I almost felt like I had some sort of responsibility to lead others in the way that Jay has led us and the staff at Jay Rob has led us. After going through that, I felt like I almost owed it to Jay to kind of spread those values that he instilled in us. I think that metabolized my leadership and helped me become a better leader. I've seen examples of that in school and in life. My coaches and teachers have told me that they think that I have matured. My wrestling coach has told me directly that he thinks Jay Rob has helped me do that. I have gotten actual leadership positions at school and I think that I accredit Jay Rob with a lot of that (Chris).

I did think when I was in the military I did think of it time and time both from a – as a you know – as a leader in the military you think about how to motivate and what your guys are going through. So I thought about the camp from time to time (Stan).

Similarly, the participants discussed their dispositional orientation to approach and seek new challenges outside of the camp environment. Participants did not discuss this as something that occurred in the camp, as the physical and psychological challenges were perceived as being day-to-day unavoidable occurrences at the camp, but identified this disposition after leaving the camp. With a new work ethic and discipline, participants gained the confidence in approaching and seeking new challenges, and the new disposition became a component of their personal guiding identity for success. This is highlighted in the following quotes from Nathan, discussing his general approach to life after the camp, and Robert talking about his farm work following his camp experience.

the culminated message is uhh “You can do anything that you set your mind to and nothing of value comes without discipline and hard work. So I’ve always known- I’ve always kind of approached challenges like hey if- if I’m given the opportunity, that’s all I need you know you just give me an opportunity and then I’m gonna attack it a hundred percent to completion. (Nathan)

I grew up on a farm so I did a lot of work growing up and stuff but you know, even that, cause I can remember when I came back from camp when we were doing the farm work and stuff, it was just like that didn’t even seem, I mean up until the time that I went to camp, you know the farm work and stuff, that was hard and it sucked and all this and that, but then after going through that at the camp, coming back the farm work didn’t seem hard at all, it was just kind of like a work out type of thing and I kept trying to, as crazy as it sounds, I would try to look for ways, in the farm work especially, I would try to look for ways to make it harder to do, as crazy as it sounds, just try to look for ways to make it harder, just to push myself (Robert)

An ‘instilled’ identity. The participants discussed the transfer of psychological effects as something that changed within their deeper psychological core and as identity-based characteristics, rather than abilities and attributes that could be brought out and used when a specific situation was presented. To represent this interpretation of the development of a personal guiding identity for success, Table 3 provides a list of the terms and phrases used by participants to explain how they perceived the psychological change attributed to the intensive wrestling camp. In particular, the group of participants discussed the depth of this change as an identity that was “instilled” and “ingrained” and formed a “foundation” or “template” that is “a part of me” and something “I couldn’t get away from if I tried.” It is important to note, that the

interviewer initially discussed psychological effects in reference to skills learned and potentially transferred, and it was the participants themselves, who first referenced deep psychological and personal change. This was evident across all 12 participants.

Table 3

Participant quotes reflecting the learning and transfer of a personal guiding identity for success.

| Participant | Quote |
|-------------|--|
| Stan | a mental template...I think that template was that wrestling camp I think it just calibrated me to what was hard work my template |
| Joe | the root seed a lot of my own personal beliefs about hard work and discipline a positive mental attitude, your sub-conscious is a computer the general philosophy as opposed to specific skills the mental lessons stuck, but they were just not at the front of my brain sort of sticks in a deep way lessons get imbedded into your brain |
| Robert | it changes your mental attitude ingrained into your mind ingrained into you at the camp it has been ingrained in me the work ethic that's been filled upon me |
| Brandon | it's a part of me I guess I mean it was prelude to life that has been instilled in me If I sit down and think about it yeah but now it is just kind of a part of who I am engrained into my mind |
| Nathan | I think that was just something that umm was- was more kind of engrained in me is kind of integrated in my mind it changed my character |
| Andrew | it all blends together |
| David | an attitude that's lasted to this day drill into us |
| Jason | embedded in your memory it's just all the simple building blocks. You take all the pieces of the puzzle...so everything that it helps you with is how are we going to piece this puzzle together |
| Thomas | I just grew up a lot...it helped me grow up a lot it gives you a different mindset really my character started to grow |

Table 3 (cont'd)

Participant quotes reflecting the learning and transfer of a personal guiding identity for success.

| Participant | Quote |
|-------------|---|
| Daniel | he changed my mind-set to be a better man carved into my being my work ethic. I want to pass that on, you know? I feel like that is where I am going to leave my footprint in life |
| Louie | that habit to get up and go the mental attitude those values that he instilled in us |
| Chris | instilled in yourself to work hard something that I couldn't get away from if I tried and it has become a part of me. |

Section II. How and why do former athletes believe long-term psychological effects occur and transfer

The second purpose of the study examined why and how campers' believed psychological change occurred. As outlined in chapter two, previous literature has identified key sets of factors influence learning transfer: individual learner; learning context, transfer contexts, possible psychological and social explanations for transfer; and dimensions of transfer (directionality, timing, and awareness). With this understanding in mind, the current study used an interview guide and open-coding analysis with these topics as guiding categories.

This section of the results outlines the influential factors that helped or hindered psychological change, and provides insight into how each individual believes he formed his personal guiding identity for success. Specifically, this section will outline participants' perceptions of the individual psychological and autobiographical factors, wrestling camp program and coaching factors, possible psychological and social explanations for transfer, transfer context factors, and the dimensions of transfer generality, timing and awareness that influenced the interactive process of psychological change. These findings will be presented from perceptions across the 12 participants to identify similarities and differences in explaining how and why psychological change occurred.

Influential Factors that Help or Hinder Long Term Outcomes

Based on participant interviews, it was evident that psychological changed occurred through a process that involved the individual continually interacting with the environment to form their own personal guiding identity for success. The wrestling camp learning context was a common experience across the 12 participants and was perceived to be the catalyst for forming and developing the guiding identity for success. However, an individual's personal

characteristics and background and their experiences following the camp were also viewed as being critical in influencing what and how psychological change occurred, and shaping the identity for success. Hence, the participants reported that psychological change occurred through an interactive process involving the individual camper, their life experiences before the wrestling camp, their experience in the wrestling camp, and their life experiences following the wrestling camp. Critically, individual self-perceptions and perceptions of the experience were influential in how and why psychological change occurred as a result of the wrestling camp. These findings are presented in Figure 3 and in the detailed description of participant experiences.

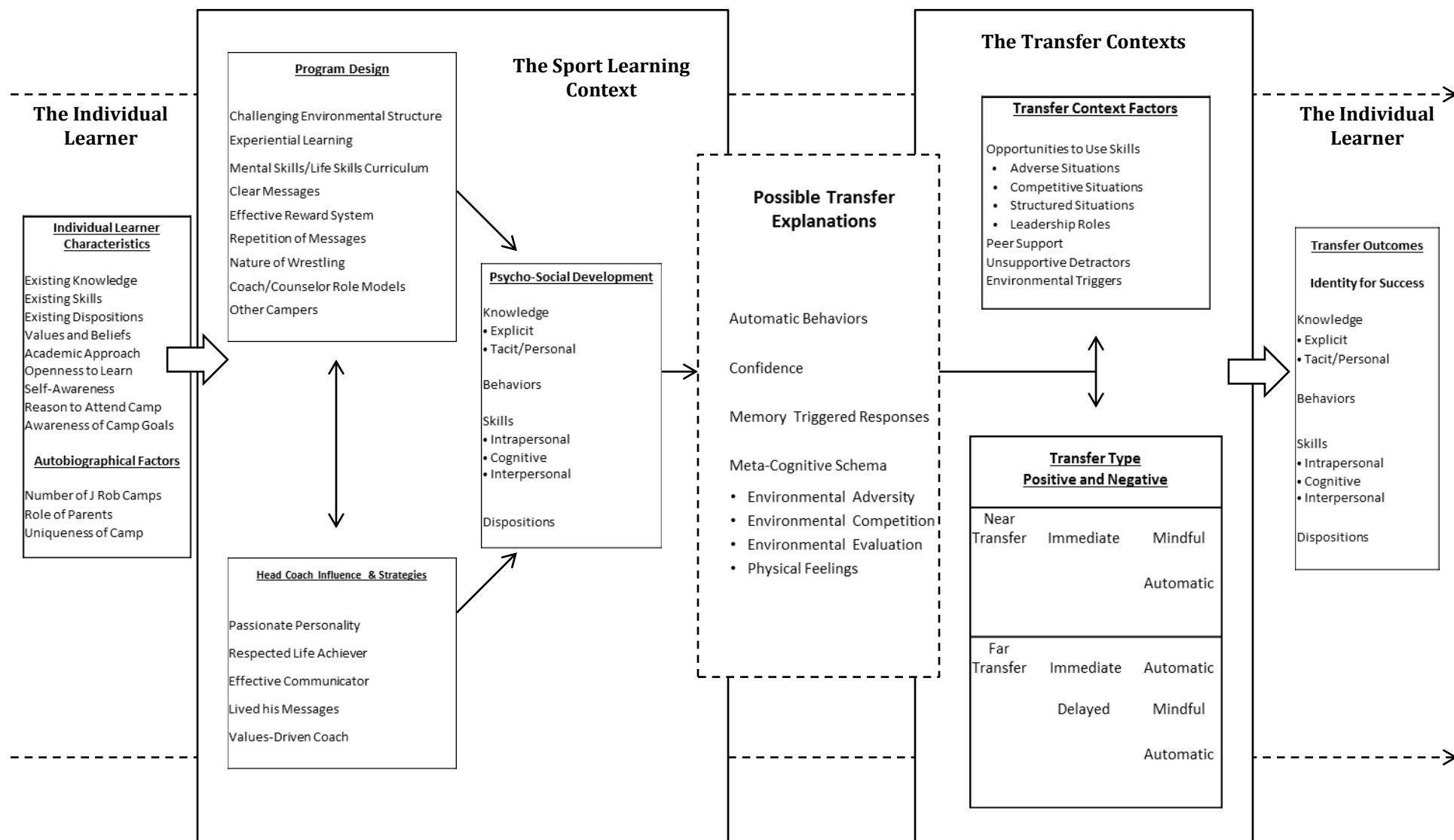


Figure 3. Participant perspectives of the factors that influence psychological change

Individual factors and autobiographical experiences. From the interviews, it was evident that individual psychological make-up and autobiographical factors, as well as factors brought to the camp, influenced the way the wrestling camp was perceived and experienced, and how each individual's resultant personal guiding identity for success was formed and defined. This section of the results will, first, outline the influential psychological factors that helped or hindered the process of psychological change, with reference to similarities and differences across the 12 participants. Second, the types of autobiographical factors that athletes believed helped or hindered the process of psychological change will be presented, again, referencing similarities and differences across the former campers.

Individual psychological factors influencing transfer. The former campers reflected on who they believed they were prior to the camp, and on their *existing skills, knowledge and dispositions* entering the camp environment. While it is difficult to create detailed psychological profiles for the campers, the reflections provide insight into the psychological factors that they believe influenced the way they perceived and experienced the wrestling camp. These psychological factors are presented in Figure 3 and italicized through the presentation of the results. It was evident that individual's entered the camp with existing knowledge, skills, dispositions and values or beliefs. These existing assets, and self-perceptions of these assets provided a foundational psychological framework that was strengthened or altered by participation in the wrestling camp. For example, Nathan voiced concern when he characterized his "sensitive self-awareness about my place in the social hierarchy" during high school. Following the camp, he discussed how confidence was something that significantly changed and transferred as a result of the camp, "it really gave me a true, true confidence in myself and the way that I carry myself". Of specific interest to the formation of the identity for success, the

majority of participants indicated that they had a good work ethic prior to the camp, as emphasized by Chris “before I went to Jay Rob I was still a hard worker and I had a relatively good work ethic.” They then discussed how the work ethic was amplified as a result of the camp. Some participants, however, discussed a lesser work ethic prior to the camp, or the belief that “I didn’t really have a lot of impetus,” as stated by David.

Former campers also discussed their perceived *academic approach* which included learning styles, and level of interest in academics prior to their camp experience. Across participants, there were vast differences in perceived academic abilities and interest in academics. Perceived ability and interest in academics did not determine whether or not a former camper transferred a guiding identity for success. There were, however, trends in where an academic focus and interest in education directed their guiding identity for success. For example, Brandon stated that he “came from a pretty strong educational background” and later became a teacher. Joe considered himself to be “a very academic kid,” and subsequently applied his identity for success to the profession of law. Conversely, Andrew stated that he “wasn’t the smartest guy in school.” Similarly, Robert described himself as less interested in academics, and subsequently discussed his career in physical labor, “the work ethic type of thing, I am not an office guy, I cannot just sit in the office, it’s about as boring to me as it can get, I’ve got to be out there working” (Robert).

The desire and *openness to learn* was one psychological factor that was discussed by participants as being influential in the process of psychological change as a result of the wrestling camp. Some participants reflected on being engaged and interested learners of new assets, while others reflected on having no desire to gain new knowledge or skills that did not relate directly to the sport of wrestling. With a “love of learning” Louie stated that,

I always loved learning but there was a quote at camp that said “learn as if you’ll live forever, live as if you’ll die tomorrow” like that’s been impactful for me because knowledge is power, I love to learn and it’s something that I always enjoy doing (Louie)

Alternatively, Jason reflected on not being too interesting in learning about anything outside of wrestling skills at the camp. He stated “I was young and still had that ‘I don’t give a shit’ mentality as a young 21 year old. So basically we all were like ‘you can’t tell us anything’...My mentality at the time was ‘I don’t care’.” While pre-camp psychological factors, such as interest and openness to learning, were influential in guiding the direction of the identity outside the camp (e.g., toward educational or employment endeavors), they did not dictate whether or not the personal guiding identity for success was transferred from the sport camp to other life domains.

While there were multiple *reasons for attending the camp* across the 12 participants (e.g. prompted by friends, to be a state champion), all of the former campers stated that they attended the camp out of personal choice and autonomy, and all campers discussed their motivation for, and commitment to the sport of wrestling. This perception is highlighted by Thomas, who said,

I wanted to be the best I could possibly be and I literally told my Mom, look on the internet please and help me find the best wrestling camp in the country and that was the best wrestling camp in the country so that’s the one I went to, because I wanted to be good at wrestling, more than anything else in the world (Thomas).

The participants provided mixed reflections on their *awareness of the camp goals*, and particularly, the focus on promoting life skills and psychosocial development outside of sport. This appeared to subsequently influence the perceived timing of transfer from the camp to other life domains. For example Chris believed that he clearly recognized the life skills focus of the

camp while he was there. “Jay was very honest with us. He said to us and our parents as well at the beginning of camp, “yes, this is a wrestling camp, but it is also a life skills camp.””(Chris). Within one year of completing the camp, Chris was confident he had transferred his identity for success. Alternatively, when asked about his perception of the focus on the camp, Brandon stated that “at the time I was more focused on the wrestling part of it to be honest,” and subsequently believed that “I quickly saw it [transferrable identity for success] around 22 or 23 when I walked into the work force.” This issue of timing will be explored in more detail later in this section.

Overall, the participants all reflected on their autonomous decision and motivation to attend the camp to improve as a wrestler. While there were differences in their perceived intelligence, motivational orientations, level of confidence, and openness to learning, and interpreted focus of the camp, all participants were able to transfer the personal guiding identity for success attributed to the wrestling camp.

Autobiographical factors influencing transfer. To understand the individual participants and their developmental experience from the camp, it is important to understand the common and uncommon autobiographical factors that participants believed were influential in their process of psychological change. Across the participants, it emerged that the number of intensive wrestling camps, role of parents and significant others, and the uniqueness of the camp experience were influential in the way the learning and transfer was perceived and experienced.

The participants varied in the *number of J Robinson Intensive Wrestling Camps* each of them had attended. For example, Louie attended four camps and Stan and Nathan attending three camps, while David and Brandon attended one camp each. While all participants believed they formed their personal guiding identity for success, irrespective of the number of camps attended, those who attended more camps believed the multiple experiences were important in “drilling in”

the messages from the camp. For David, he reflect on the benefit of his one, “adventurous” camp experience,

I think that it was probably one of the first things that I did that was sort of truly, I don’t know, maybe a peculiar word but adventurous, you know I did have direct control of whether I was going to go or not, it was entirely up to me and I elected to go for it (David).

Louie suggests that the dosage may be an influential mechanism for facilitating the transfer of knowledge and skills. He stated that his first camp was predominately about survival, and that going to multiple camps gave him to opportunity to grow,

like my first year, I was really focused on surviving and then I absorbed a little bit of the life lessons and then every year after that I was less focused on surviving and more on becoming a better person and a wrestler (Louie).

As an important source of support and a critical socializing agent for young men, the participants discussed the *role of parents* prior to the camp. It was particularly noticeable that a number of participants identified that the messages be taught and shared at the camp were similar to those that they had received or heard from their parents in the past. For example, David discussed the messages his father would share with him growing up, he stated, “my father was always someone who was sort of into platitudes...I grew up with a bit of a background of him telling me things like “you have to take it one day at time” (David). Additionally, Jason discussed the similarities in personality between J Robinson and his grandfather, “I think J and my grandfather could have been like best damn friends because they both came from like the same mold” (Jason). A number of participants discussed the positive role parents had played in

their development, and that the wrestling camp was not solely responsible for developing their personal guiding identity for success.

It was common for participants to discuss the *uniqueness of the intensive wrestling camp* experience. For most, this 14 or 28 day experience signified a unique and shocking experience that they believed had a significant impact on their lives. A number of participants discussed how this experience occurred at a developmentally important time, where they were ready to learn and develop skills and knowledge to achieve success in life. For example, Nathan stated that “still to this day I think about it like that really built some character at a young kind of sensitive age, critical age of my development.” For many campers, the camp represented the first time they were away from home for an extended period of time and that forced them to learn and develop. Joe stated that , “I traveled by myself and I think it definitely taught me a lot and in terms of maturity and self-confidence”. Similarly, Daniel recalled that,

It was the first time that I have been that far from home by myself. That is the longest I have been away from home by myself. The first time I flew by myself on a plane. It was definitely the independence that I had. I am a very independent person, so I absolutely loved it. The reliability and being able to rely on myself to do everything that I did. To be self-motivated to get up every morning and to keep going when I didn't want to. It was just all me. (Daniel)

While the experience was unique for most campers, David discussed how the camp was similar to his boarding school experience, “I went to prep school which in it of itself was kind of a very challenging experience umm where it was sort of a very very regulated and busy schedule umm with very little available free time” (David). With these two similar experiences, David did not appear to perceive the camp to be as developmentally impactful as the other campers, and

experienced more barriers and challenges in transferring the skills and knowledge from the camp. In particular, he believed that he struggled to transfer his work ethic with the freedom and lack of supervision in college following the camp experience. This will be explored later in ‘transfer context factors hindering transfer’ section.

Key Program and Coaching Factors. It is important to highlight the factors within this wrestling camp environment that participants believed helped or hindered psychosocial outcomes. This section will , first, outline the influential camp program features that participants perceived to helped or hinder the formation of an identity for success, with reference to similarities and differences across the 12 participants. Second, this section will identify the specific aspects of J Robinson, as head coach, that were believed to influence the formation of an identity for success. Again, similarities and differences will be provided between participant experiences.

Program factors influencing transfer. Across the former campers, a number of features of the intensive wrestling camp were discussed that they believed influenced their learning and transfer of a personal guiding identity for success. While some specific features were directly linked to the learning and transfer of a specific skill, the participants discussed how the holistic design or the camp environment and the repetitive interaction of multiple camp features helped to facilitate the positive psychological effects.

The participants’ reflected on the intensive wrestling camp and believed its’ *challenging environmental structure* was important in “instilling” the knowledge, skills, and dispositions into a personal guiding identity for success. The former campers believed that the demanding schedule, military style approach, a lack of distractions, and being in an isolated environment that was controlled to negate outside influences and distractions, was a powerful setting for the

knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be learned or developed. Stan reflected on the power of having a controlled environment by saying, “Jay has total control of the little test tube,” and expanded on the power of the controlled, demanding environment, when he said,

We have four practices in a day for whatever it was, get up early and you have a practice, then you have breakfast, then you have morning practice, then you have lunch, then you have early afternoon practice. You can get a lot done in a day if you are efficient about it and working, I think that would be the primary thing. And then, yeah, I do think there is something to the structure of: this practice is for technique, and this practice is for conditioning, you know, in a different... Um, that was the first time I’ve been exposed to that structure and I thought it was really good (Stan)

Based on his experiences, Andrew discussed the value of the demanding, military style approach.

The purpose of it is to have you more like a- a Ranger’s school type thing like J says uh since I have had the uh- the luxury of going to Ranger school then after his camp...it’s- it’s that you know you’re broken down and now- now what can you do- now everybody’s the same really too, there’s not a whole lot of variation anymore once you break everybody down (Andrew)

The participants discussed that the demanding schedule meant that there was no time or energy to dedicate to possible distractions. Andrew stated, “the way I remember it is we were all pretty tired. We were kept tired enough that you just didn’t have extra time to go screwing around,” and thus, the focus remained on wrestling and the messages shared at the camp.

The *nature of the sport* was perceived as an influential camp feature. The campers’ emphasized how the individual sport of wrestling was well-suited to the development of the

identity of success based on work ethic. Jason stated that the work ethic and adversity-based messages fit well with wrestling because “no other sport is harder than wrestling.” Joe agreed, stating “let’s face it, wrestling is not a sport like football or basketball...it is a combat, gladiator sport,” and “the credit belongs to the man in the arena who takes the risks to do things in front of other people and either win or lose in front of other people. That is a valuable lesson that wrestling in particular teaches.”

The participants reflected on what they believed was a valuable *curriculum that focused on both mental skills and life skills* that could be used outside of wrestling context., the curriculum was identified by many as being surprising and unique, but as a curriculum that was very applicable to achieving success in sport and life. David emphasized this by saying,

So he would give us nightly lectures just on sort of the mental component of what we were doing there and the lessons that we could glean from it that might be applicable to anything that we would want to apply them to in life. (David)

The participants believed that the *clear messages* understandable, and relatable. Chris reflected on the messages by saying, “they weren’t trying to tell you that there were secrets for success,” and believed the camp staff were very clear in stating that camp was designed to teach life skills that would be applicable in multiple domains. Chris continued, “Jay was very honest with us. He said to us and our parents as well at the beginning of camp, “yes, this is a wrestling camp, but it is also a life skills camp.” (Chris).

Alongside the curriculum, the *effective rewards system* was emphasized by participants as being powerful in learning how to take an effort-based approach to success and learning to be accountable to their actions and behavior, as well as experiencing failure. Chris reinforced this by stating, “the positive/negative system was very effective. They gave us a tangible reward and

measured it based on effort. It wasn't based on how good of a wrestler you were or how fast you were,” while Brandon said, “the entire camp I felt like someone was watching me. And they were watching me and calculating whether or not you were giving 100%...I almost mind tricked myself to thinking it was only 50 and I was working harder.” Additionally, the multimodal *repetition of the curriculum* was identified by participants as being critical in remembering the messages and having the identity for success being shaped and reinforced. Remembering one quote, Louie stated, “like the same things they teach you over and over, like “a lazy man works the hardest”. Jason provided more detail when he stated,

it’s just something you practice for 28 straight days...you need like 1000 repetitions to have it embedded in your memory – your autonomic memory system? And you just see that so much to where – they get you to where you don’t think about it – you just do it.

(Jason)

Within this structured environment that used a detailed curriculum, participants discussed emphasized the power of *experiential learning* of knowledge, skills, and dispositions and bringing everything together to mold the personal guiding identity for success. Joe stated that, “I learned it from the experience and actually doing it. These lessons get imbedded into your brain because of the experience of it,” while Andrew emphasized that,

there’s something to be said there for that camp is he’s teaching principles, they’re actually life principles and then he’s forcing you to test them the very next day or twice that day and you’re testing principles and he’s repeating the principles and he’s keeping it simple enough (Andrew)

The experiential learning of developing a strong work ethic and self-belief in overcoming adversity and challenges, occurred from a stressful and challenging physical workload. This is

emphasized by Jason, who stated, “the biggest thing the camp will ever do to you is either break you and just tear your mentality down, or it’s gonna make you stronger, as strong as your mentality can be and how much you can push yourself.” Alongside this challenging workload, the participants reflected on the nightly lectures that focused on teaching mental skills for wrestling and life, and the use of a journal for reflection on the learning. The participants emphasized the heavy intensity and volume of work as being a unique experience that they had never been through in their lives. For example, Joe remembered the “Intensity. That was it you know, I had been to sports practices, I had been to wrestling practices, I had been to you know what I thought intensive, physical activity was. But, nothing like this.” (Joe). Further, a number of participants stated that it was “the hardest experience” of their lives at that point. Reflecting on the camp years later, many participants emphasized the “real life simulation” that this experiential learning provided, which facilitated the applicability of the personal guiding identity for success.

The *camp coaching and counselor staff* was identified as being vital for the reinforcement of the camp curriculum. The former campers reflected on the impressive technical coaching quality of the staff, but un more detail on their position as role models for the young campers. Participants remembered coaches as former college and national-level wrestlers who were very successful in the sport and successful in applying the messages being taught at the camp. Brandon remembered the coaches “that are in college are coaching Olympic champions and the whole nine...so what he does works and it’s been validated 1000s of times.” Similarly, Stan reflected on their role and stories, stating “those are very potent because they are really sort of personalized the demystified the journey to be what we were all trying to be at that point was just a state champion at wrestling.” The counselors were seen to “set the standard” for success

and provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge to have the young campers apply and develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions being taught at the camp. Ultimately, the coaches and counselors were viewed as relatable role-models that provided successful examples of the camp curriculum in action.

Finally, some participants reflected on the role of *other campers* in facilitating the development of knowledge, skills and dispositions at the camp. Other campers were viewed as being motivated, mentally tough in dealing with adversity, and supportive, which the participants' believe helped them in apply the messages being taught at the camp. Thomas stated, "I dunno the biggest thing getting through the camp for me was like having friends and like knowing my roommates and stuff you know, because if you didn't make new friends, it would have been really hard." In a different story, Brandon reflected on another camper from 1995 and who completed the final marathon run while on crutches, which to him, emphasized and reinforced the work-ethic based messages taught at the camp.

Ultimately, the participants believed that a personal guiding identity for success was developed through a combination of experiential learning and clear explicit messages at the wrestling camp. These messages were articulated by coaching role models through an integrated life skills and wrestling focused curriculum, and delivered in a stressful, challenging and controlled camp environment.

The influence of head coach, J Robinson on transfer. While J Robinson was an integral component of employing and operating the structure of the camp environment, the participants identified a number of individual coach characteristics and behaviors that they believed influenced the development and transfer of a personal guiding identity for success.

The participants reflected on their experiences and interactions with J Robinson and identified a number of personal characteristics and *passionate personality* traits that they believed facilitated the development of knowledge, skills and dispositions at the camp, which were transferred as an identity for success after the camp. The characteristics of the head coach included his intelligent, charismatic and confident approach to teaching life skills. David simply stated, “I liked J, he was a very charismatic guy,” and Chris said, “the thing I remember most about J Rob was just the way he carried himself...his confidence and character.” J Robinson was viewed as an intense coach, but one who balanced his support and challenge of the campers, and ultimately cared and respected the campers during their experience. Summarizing J’s role during the camp, Jason stated “I mean he cares! He cares enough to keep doing it. He doesn’t have to do it”. Similarly, Thomas highlighted “his intensity but like his compassion, like he’d be really intense during practice and even sometimes after but at the end of the day there was always the compassion.”

The former campers viewed J Robinson as a *respected life achiever* and had great *respect* for him because of his success in wrestling, coaching and other areas of life, such as the Army Rangers. This is emphasized by Nathan, who said, “the things that he would say were new, and you had to believe them because he was so successful.” Furthermore, the campers believed that his effectiveness was based on his knowledge and insight gained from his many life experiences. Chris reflected on this by saying,

That is just a guy with a lot of life experience trying to pass on what he thinks is valuable knowledge. I think that just shows he wants to help the future generation and future leaders not just to become better wrestlers, but he is trying to help us become better men.
(Chris)

Along with a set of characteristics that made him successful in facilitating psychological change as a coach, the participants identified a range of actions and behaviors that contributed to his success. The campers viewed J as an *effective communicator*. Participants' remembered J as a story teller and recalled that his stories, anecdotes and examples being based on his many life experiences. Brandon emphasized J's role by saying, "he's a great story teller too - I don't remember all the exacts but he had some good stories and it gets you kind of fired up and like definitely he was an all-in kind of guy. I think it rubbed off on a lot of us." Chris also discussed J's multiple communication strategies.

"he would just give us specific examples of abnormal people who represented what he was trying to teach us. It was not just a lot of talking at us, but he would show us through examples kind of the way he wanted us to live. Every morning, he would post a story of the day or a quote of the day or a joke of the day" (Chris).

There was an overwhelming perception that he was effective because he "*lived the messages*" (life skills) that he is trying to teach. While recalling a number of J's stories from camp, Chris and David both emphasized this by saying,

The biggest thing it did for me was that it showed me that these were not just empty statements that we were hearing and unrealistic things that the staff was suggesting we do. It's hard, it's difficult to live your life in that way, but it showed me that this guy is doing everything he is asking of the campers and more. (Chris)

He was middle aged and spent a life time beating the shit out of his body, umm I remember him telling stories, he was in the green beret or army ranger maybe, and he would tell us anecdotes about that that would make our experience at wrestling camp sort of pale by comparison and the stories of the challenges that he had gone through and how

he coped with the and saw himself through mentally and how we could apply it to our situation (David)

The former campers believed that his messages were driven by values. Participants believed that J was highly relatable, honest, and driven by valuable life skills that were applicable in wrestling and life. Across campers, a number of quotes were remembered from J Robinson, because they believed he repeated the messages multiple times and the messages in the quotes were very valuable. This is best highlighted by Chris' quote,

He is very opinionative. I think that I have a lot of different beliefs than him based off of what I could infer from what he told us. But, he's clearly passionate about everything he does. He does not do anything halfway. He is the quintessential figure of what this camp is trying to do (Chris).

Overall, the former campers remembered J has a respected role model who they were able to relate to. The participants believed that he possess some strong personal characteristics that made him confident and intense but caring at the same time. Furthermore, he was viewed as a highly successful and respected former athlete, coach, and veteran who “lived” the messages and life lessons that he was sharing through the camp curriculum and environment. He was viewed as an effective story teller because he engaged the campers with practical, relatable examples and anecdotes. Ultimately, J Robinson helped to outline a formula for success and directly provided the campers with the contents of a personal guiding identity for success.

Key Factors in Transfer Contexts. The process transferring a personal guiding identity for success was influenced by what life experiences an individual had outside of the camp context, and how those experiences were perceived and reflected on. Factors in the transfer context were defined as individuals or experiences outside of the camp that helped or hindered

the transfer effects from the wrestling camp. The participants all affirmed that their personal guiding identity for success was transferred and applicable in multiple life domains. This is emphasized by the following quote from Nathan,

I always kind of felt like no matter what situation I was in the things that he had taught me- that he had talked about were directly helpful umm I don't know that there was anything where I was thinking like: "Oh well this is kinda counter to what I was taught at J. Robinson." (Nathan).

All of the participants acknowledged that external factors in life domains (e.g., employment, school, social relationships) influenced how psychological change occurred. A number of these transfer context factors were seen to help or hinder the transfer of the personal guiding identity for success. These will be outlined along with examples of similarities and differences across the 12 participants.

Opportunities to use knowledge, skills, and dispositions. While discussing the transfer and use of the identity for success outside of the camp context, the participants identified a range of life domains that they were provided opportunities to use the knowledge, skills, and dispositions gained from the camp. The former campers reflected on many *adverse situations* in life outside the camp, and by connecting the challenging conditions or experiences, were able to identify opportunities to use the messages learned from the camp. For example, Robert talked about how he used his learnings from the camp to help during the economic recession,

it was with the bump in the economy in 2010, 2011 ah we were having some real hard times and people were going out of business left and right and I went back and popped a CD in that J sent me, and I would listen back on some of the talks and kind of put those into the current life situation, I guess you could call it, and it just made me realize that no

matter how challenging things might seem, there is a way to get it done, and that helped tremendously (Robert)

Some participants provided examples of *competitive situations* outside of the camp where they believed they identified opportunities to use and apply the skills learned in the camp. Joe discussed his profession as a lawyer and how the competitive nature of wrestling and trial law provided him similar opportunities to use his preparation skills learned at the camp.

There is a natural parallel between how am I going to succeed in this trial and what I learned from many years ago as a wrestler. By detail and focus on detail. When I am getting ready for a case, and I talk to the young lawyers that work here, you know you have to read thousands of pages of transcripts or whatever. And, that kind of discipline and preparation, you know at least for me, I think is rooted from the philosophies from how hard I need to work to win. It really comes from that camp I think. (Joe)

Andrew had a similar competitive approach, irrespective of the domain that he was transferring his work ethic and approach to challenges. He stated,

every time I did anything after that camp I just really took on more of a- I had to be cliché about it- but kind of like a lawyer approach of like “Well you’re gonna have to drag me out of here dead,” or “You might beat me up, but you’re gonna regret that you started a fight with me,” type of thing (Andrew).

Similarly, participants identified *structured environments* outside of camp, such as school or work, in which they believed they had opportunities to use and transfer skills from the camp. For example, referring to his business executive roles, Stan stated “the power of a planned day – that’s a big deal you know – and also you know hard work and being honest with yourself about working hard and how much more you can push or push your team all applies.” The former

campers also identified numerous physical tasks and vocations (e.g., construction) outside of the camp where there were opportunities to transfer assets learned at the camp. Louie discussed how he compares his work environment to the camp environment and applies his effort-based work ethic skills to overcome the physical challenges,

we're out hauling square bales of hay and like, I have that mentality that these people are paying me \$10 an hour to move hay, I better move as much hay as I possibly can in an hour, so I'm like sprinting and throwing hay bales on the truck as fast as I can, it's always I guess doing your best, like there's so many things from the camp that have transitioned (Louie)

Finally, some participants identified *leadership or coaching roles* where they were able to identify opportunities to transfer knowledge and skills from the wrestling camp. Brandon discussed his first job as a teacher and a coach as the time when "bigger life comes into perspective" which he referred to as opportunities to apply the life skills from the camp. He stated,

As a leader today it is because I am more calculated – I'm thinking you know 5 steps ahead and trying to determine what might happen. But even though it sounds so far apart they are still so closely related because they are about thinking they are about leading people, making big time decisions (Brandon).

Stan had a similar reflection on his leadership role in the military. He reflected on the links with to the camp by saying,

I was in the military I did think of it time and time both from a – as a you know – as a leader in the military you think about how to motivate and what your guys are going through. So I thought about the camp from time to time (Stan).

The role of supporters and detractors. The participants also identified various groups of people outside of the camp who facilitated the transfer of knowledge and skills. Supporters were defined as individuals outside the camp who acted in ways to support messages from the camp. Detractors were defined as individuals who acted in ways that did not support messages from the camp. Support from peers was identified as something that could help participants use and apply messages outside of the camp. For example, some campers talked about connections with other former J Rob campers as reminders of what was learned and could be transferred. Brandon stated, “when you start talking about things around your wrestling buddies, the connections are quickly made.” Support from mentors or significant others were also identified as helping the transfer. Some participants discussed having bosses or mentors reinforcing similar messages or evaluative approaches to the wrestling camp coaches, which helped to trigger the application of the personal guiding identity for success. Interestingly, some participants discussed the role of peer detractors as transfer context factors that helped in the application of assets outside the camp. Detractors were people who acted in ways that did not support messages from the camp. Specifically, this definition was a categorization by the participants, of people who acted and behaved in ways that were contrary to transferred mindset and identity for success. For example, Jason discussed how detractors and doubters motivate him to apply his work ethic to life situations,

there were so many people telling me ‘ you don’t want to go into administration, there is so much headache, so much debt, blah blah’ and I reply with ‘well that may not be what you want to do, but this is what I want to do.’ And I’m going to do it (Jason).

Additionally, some of the participants discussed how they would compare themselves and their work ethic to others outside of the camp environment, and this positive self-evaluation

would develop confidence and the likelihood of further application of the work ethic outside of camp. This was emphasized by Robert who said,

just the working around other people and just kind of just seeing how other people view going to work and how other people act when they are at work, and it was just kind of like you can tell that people don't have any level of motivation I guess I would say...it was just kind of like as we had some success, and then you realize that you have a different set of mental skills (Robert).

Environmental triggers for transfer. A number of individually unique triggers were identified by participants as being beneficial in facilitating the transfer of knowledge, skills and dispositions from the wrestling camp. These triggers predominately served as a reminder of the camp being the source of the personal guiding identity for success. However, Joe discussed how he saw the wrestling camp commercial on television which confirmed the source of his identity for success and “renewed” the messages learned at the camp.

I am telling you, until I saw that TV commercial and went on that website, I never fully connected those dots as to how much credit this camp probably deserves. And, you know the type of person I have become and how hard I work at things.

Similarly, Robert identified the use of recorded audio of J Robinson's mental attitude talks to trigger and help his transfer of skills, while Chris and Daniel both discussed how they keep pictures and quotes from the wrestling camp in their bedroom as reminders of the camp lessons and messages.

Transfer context factors hindering transfer. While the participants predominately provided examples of transfer context factors that facilitated the transfer of knowledge, skills and dispositions from the camp context to other life domains, some participants discussed transfer

context factors that hindered transfer. These factors included perceived differences between contexts and a lack of opportunities to use skills, and interpersonal issues with detractors in the transfer contexts.

The participants defined the wrestling camp context as a stressful and challenging learning context. While many this helped many participants relate in challenging contexts outside of the wrestling camp, some of the former campers identified examples of being unable to transfer skills and knowledge because some life experiences outside the camp were not as challenging as those experienced inside the camp. Louie stated that “there are so many ideas that don’t really apply to people unless you’re in that tough situation,” and this statement was supported by examples from David and Thomas. First, David discussed how he struggled to transfer his work ethic to college because of the lack of structure, supervision and oversight of his accountability.

being in a very regimented environment for a long time at a very formative age, and wrestling camp was like a distillation of that you know, umm there was no, everyone was telling you what to do and when to do it and that part was not in your hands, what was in your hands was how well you performed when you were doing what they were telling you to do umm so having that sort of not be the case anymore, was something that was very difficult for me to cope with and understand how to navigate and I guess if we’re being honest, it still kind of is (David).

For Thomas, he identified the challenge of applying his work ethic and identity for success to school because he found it too easy. He did not see the same challenge that he experienced at the wrestling camp, and for this reason, believed that he was unable to transfer the skills to his school work. Talking about school, Thomas stated,

it came so easily to me, it was so easy that I didn't want to try, but with wrestling it was so hard...but it was always so hard for me to be good at, so that's why I worked so hard at it, but school it was so easy, it was the opposite, it was like well I can just go to class, I don't have to study and I can like get a B on it probably so it's, you know it was laziness (Thomas).

In the college environment, Daniel discussed how he was applying the work ethic and mindset of approaching and seeking challenges that he developed at the camp, but was not getting the same positive outcome of success that he experienced in the camp. Specifically, he talked about taking on a number of leadership roles in college, and by working hard and holding himself accountable, he expected success in those roles. However, with the more complex environment, he has experienced challenges with this transfer.

As far as accountability goes, I am still working on it. I just had a big realization 2 nights ago. I had a breakdown with one of my friends. Currently I hold 2 positions in my fraternity, risk manager and philanthropy chair. I am currently employed at our recreational sports gym as a generational operations staff. I got another job as a special events worker, and they run all of the events and tournaments at Oregon State.

Volleyball, wrestling, and all of them. I am helping to organize and manage all of them. Then, on top of that, I just got a promotion at my job to be supervisor next fall. On top of all of that, I have an internship this summer for a construction company in the Portland office. I have a lot of shit going on. My grades this term have taken a hit. (Daniel)

Finally, Thomas discussed the issues he had with his high school wrestling coach, and because of a poor relationship, he believes he was unable to apply the skills to wrestling, and chose to quit the sport in his Junior year. Thomas discussed how his coach kept him out of

participating in a regional tournament because for injury related reasons. Thomas, however, believed that he was fit and able to wrestle. Thomas believed that this disagreement ultimately forced him to quit wrestling. Thomas said,

I took that so personally from my coach and I, that destroyed everything at the end of the day...we didn't advance to sectionals so we couldn't go to state, which means it was just a worthless season, so it was horrible...that wrecked me mentally, like that is probably what led to everything, like my emotions (Thomas).

Subsequently, Thomas did not appear to have the same confidence and belief in his skills as other former campers who experienced success with the skills in wrestling.

Psychological Processes and Explanations for Change. It emerged that participants had specific conscious and subconscious strategies for transferring the knowledge, skills and dispositions from the camp to other life domains. This section will highlight those processes, defined as the psychological explanations for transferring effects from the wrestling camp to other areas of life.

As a possible explanation for transfer, some participants discussed the *automatic transfer of behaviors*. This direct, subconscious form of transfer was discussed when participants believed they transferred their work ethic from the wrestling camp, to their high school wrestling and then to other physical domains. Referring to his ability to work hard, Louie discussed transferring his work ethic to wrestling tournaments outside of camp. He stated,

I guess the whole idea of never giving up and keep working hard, because that was what was really drilled into me at camp, when you're in practice, you're in that hard practice, you're wrestling hard, you're tired, your body's sore, but you get up and you go again and you attack that guy again and never let off, and just that continual effort and doing

your best all the time really came through for me because there were a few times there in the tournament that I was down by points but I just kept working hard and wrestling hard (Louie)

Jason stated that he learned to work hard at the camp through repetition and was able to automatically transfer that to other areas of his life.

“you need like 1000 repetitions to have it embedded in your memory – your autonomic memory system, and you just see that so much to where – they get you to where you don’t think about it – you just do it... that’s probably my one thing. That how I mentioned you just – you get into that repetition and everything starts to become automatic and everything you do for a goal – you start taking all the pieces and putting them out in front of you – and you are just jumping from piece to piece.” (Jason)

It is important to note that the three participants who provided this behavioral explanation for their transfer of work ethic only made reference to transferring skills to the physical domain, such as wrestling or working out.

As a second possible explanation for transfer, some participants discussed the role of *confidence* in being a crucial facilitator of transfer from the camp to other life domains. In particular participants gained a strong confidence in the applicability of the knowledge, skills and dispositions learned in camp and in their new personal guiding identity for success. For example, Louie stated that “camp really just gave me the confidence to do a lot of the stuff and really believe that if I work hard enough and I put that effort in, I can achieve my goals, and even if I don’t achieve my goals...I knew I can work hard enough, I can accomplish this through J Rob.” Similarly, Robert discussed how he gained an increased amount of confidence in his work ethic following the successes he experienced.

I guess that when you do all the hard stuff and you put all of the hours in and when you see results...it just makes you feel like all the hard work is worth it and you want to strive for bigger things (Robert).

As a third possible explanation for transfer, some participants believed that *memories from the camp would trigger the application* of one's personal guiding identity for success. For example, Daniel discussed his encoded response to his alarm clock going off in the morning where he would apply his stored work ethic response to the environmental trigger.

When my alarm went off, I was going to war every morning. I was up and ready to go...It is something that I definitely apply to school now. When I am going into finals, my alarm wakes me up and I feel like I am in the same spot. I am going into war, and it is funny considering it is a final. (Daniel)

In this previous example, it is difficult to determine if the participant was meta-cognitively aware of this response. For others however, they discussed how they would actively remember and recreate memories from the wrestling camp to trigger the application or transfer of the skills and knowledge learned at the camp. For example, Louie talked about how he would remember and use quotes to activate his work ethic, "I went out there with that mindset, like J told us "anyone can be beaten, we're all people and everybody has their up days and everybody has their down days." J always told us "consistency is the greatest measure of success" (Louie). Additionally, some participants discussed these memories as a responsibility and obligation to apply and transfer the identity for success to other life domains. Chris said,

I think Jay Rob also taught me to be a leader. Not so much at the camp because we all kind of felt as though we were equals at the camp. But, coming back from the camp and into my regular community, my regular school, and into my family, I almost felt like I

had some sort of responsibility to lead others in the way that Jay has led us and the staff at Jay Rob has led us. (Chris)

Finally, participants discussed how they used a *meta-cognitive, schema*-based method to consciously transfer their personal identity for success from the wrestling camp context to other life domains. In particular, participants made connections between the wrestling camp environment and their transfer context environment and actively identified and applied useful skills and knowledge learned in the wrestling camp learning context to the new transfer context. First, participants provided examples of making environmental connections based on adversity in both contexts. David stated that “I was always comparing and be like ‘whatever else, it can’t be harder than that [Wrestling Camp], this isn’t harder than that, and it’s just not! If I can get through that, I can definitely get through this.” Second, participants provided examples of making connections based on competitive natures of both contexts. Joe discussed the close links between the competitive environments between being a lawyer and a wrestler,

There are a lot of parallels, and it is kind of funny now that I think of it. There is a lot of parallels between being a lawyer and a wrestler, because it is not one of these, you know every time you try a case, someone will lose. Every wrestling match, someone will lose. (Joe)

He then carried on, saying, “I did very well in law school. Law school may be the biggest application of this hard work and discipline thing, as I look back on it...Law school is very intense mentally and it is a very competitive environment.” (Joe). Third, participants made connections based on evaluative situations in both contexts and explained their active application of skills from the camp to the new context. Brandon discussed the transfer of his effort-based work ethic,

I mean there was somebody watching or at least you felt like it at all times. Engaging where you were at and your output was. And if your output wasn't at where the percentage that they thought it would be, or you weren't getting the effort that they thought you could, they were going to let you know. You know I work with bosses today everybody has a boss. If I'm not putting forth the effort, or I'm not producing um with the output of the school, or like for standardized tests, I mean they are calling me on it (Brandon)

Additionally, participants provided examples of making connections between the physical feelings experienced in the wrestling camp and those in transfer contexts. Specifically, participants discussed how they would experience feelings of fatigue and tiredness outside of the camp, remember back to their tiredness from the camp, and apply the work ethic to overcome the adversity of tiredness. This is highlighted in the following quote from David,

It was really obvious right away, just because I woke up the next morning probably almost too sore to move, like haha I have to function, I'm very tired at 6:30am, I slept for a few hours and I have to do this again, you know everything that I did yesterday, and you know what's coming and I have to function when I'm tired, so that was brought into very clear focus right away and of course when you're going through life you sort of find things to apply it to that aren't obvious at first (David).

Overall, there was no one obvious psychological explanation for how the transfer of knowledge, skills, and dispositions from the wrestling camp to other life domains occurred. There were, however, a number of explanations shared from the participants to explain why they believed they were able to successfully have this transfer occur.

The Timing and Awareness of Transfer Outcomes. Each individual experienced a unique journey of psychological change, as a result of how they perceived themselves and how they experienced the wrestling camp and life outside of the camp. This resulted in common experiences and variations in the directionality, timing and awareness of the transfer of the personal guiding identity for success. Directionality referred to the transfer of knowledge, skills and dispositions, ranging on a continuum from near to far transfer. Near transfer referred to contexts similar in nature to the wrestling camp, such as wrestling or other sport-based contexts. Far transfer referred to contexts that are less similar in nature to the wrestling camp, such as school, places of employment, and social relationships. Timing referred to the transfer of assets on a continuum, and was experienced either immediate transfer from the wrestling camp to other domains, or in a latent or delayed transfer from the wrestling camp. Awareness referred to the participant's awareness of the transfer occurring with explicit conscious links to the wrestling camp, and also ranged on a continuum from mindful to automatic. Mindful transfer was experienced with full participant awareness while automatic transfer occurred when participants recalled no conscious awareness of the transfer. These findings emerged inductively through the open-coding analysis. In the presentation of these findings, terms to define the transfer (e.g., near, far, mindful) have been used based on previous literature (Leberman et al., 2006), to provide the most accurate description of the transfer experience.

Near transfer. The participants discussed the *near* transfer of knowledge, skills and dispositions from the wrestling camp as an important step in the formation of their personal guiding identity for success. In particular, the *near, immediate* transfer of the behaviors, intrapersonal skills, and confidence in competitive wrestling was identified, and this was perceived to help to confirm these as valuable assets to maintain and use outside of the camp. For

example, Joe stated, “in terms of pushing myself harder, believing I was going to win. I started doing that right away because that translates naturally into athletics.” All of the participants discussed an improvement in their wrestling performance following the camp, which for many, contributed to success in the sport, and subsequently reinforced the importance of the skills. This is emphasized by Nathan, who had wrestling success following the camp,

If I had gone to these camps and believed in what he said and applied them and- and then still never won a match like I don't think I could- I wouldn't allow myself to believe anything that he had said. You know? So it came with believing what he said and- and then seeing the results (Nathan)

The *immediate* transfer of the assets from the camp was also experienced in other *near*, sport-based domains. The majority of the former campers discussed the discipline-based skills they built which they remembered transferring these immediately after the camp, almost in an automatic, habitual fashion. This is highlighted by Robert and his reflection of his *near*, *immediate* transfer,

I think what happened was what you learned at the camp and then me personally, I took it with me and then I was up every morning before school, I would get up at 4:30, 5 o'clock, whatever it took and I would run and work out and so forth before I'd even go to school, and that was every day, you know and just you know that was something that was ingrained into you at the camp (Robert).

The participants discussed the near transfer to camp-related domains as being *automatic* because it was “ingrained into your mind” (Robert) at the camp. Transferring skills to wrestling and other tasks such as getting out bed early, some participants suggested that these behaviors,

intrapersonal skills, and dispositions became habit after the camp. The participants discussed little reflective activity in transferring their assets to near domains.

Far transfer. While the participants strongly believed that near transfer occurred immediately, they discussed more complexity in the process of far transfer. Put simply, Brandon stated, “it took a little while because there is so much more to being a human being than wrestling.” The far transfer to non-physical domains away from the sport context was perceived to occur in more of a delayed fashion, often prompted by factors and experiences in potential transfer contexts. Specifically, participants discussed the need for opportunities to use the skills in transfer contexts, as the primary reason for far transfer. David referred to the *far, delayed* transfer of life skills by stating,

it’s something that you can sort of, not as a 17 year old but as you kind of grow up and go through life, you can understand more about how applicable all of those lessons are to all of what you need to go through (David).

In this quote, David highlights what he perceived to be the occurrence of mindful transfer where he actively reflected on the camp experience to transfer knowledge, skills or dispositions later in life. This *far, delayed, mindful* transfer was discussed by many participants who, using schema-based explanations for transfer, provided examples of how they applied lessons to life. As an example, Andrew discussed his mindful reflections on the camp and how these helped him transfer skills and knowledge,

I can truthfully say periodically uhh I don’t know what it maybe- maybe once every few months, at least once a year throughout ever since J. Rob I’ve thought about- it’s crossed my mind...I’m doing this because it’s still something I learned at J’s or I’m teaching

somebody about J's principles of "fear failure, feel fatigue" and then uh "hard work and dedication and raise what your definition of work is" (Andrew)

While this mindful transfer was identified, participants emphasized the power of their personal guiding identity for success as driving their actions and behaviors, which consequently does not require them to actively reflect on the camp experience to be able to transfer their skills and knowledge. Rather, they discussed the application of their ingrained identity for success when presented with opportunities to use it years after the camp. This represented *far, delayed, automatic* transfer. For example, Brandon said, "a lot of things that I learned there I still use. You know I don't know if I – I don't always make the connection oh yeah it was J. Robinson." Additionally, Jason stated,

you get older, which I am still learning, I would say probably in the past four years, four maybe five years is when you start implementing more of it... I mean you learn it, I just don't think you really learn how to utilize it until you kind of get presented with something (Jason)

Jason's discussion raises an interesting point that was identified by many of the older participants. Specifically, there was a belief that it does take many years and many experienced for former campers to really experience, understand, and believe in the full transfer of a personal guiding identity for success from the camp. This is reinforced by the following quote by Robert, who stated,

I think the main thing that I would say is that you can do anything that you want to do, even though they told you that at the camp and tried to instill that in you, you never really, you never truly believed until years later, I didn't anyway, you thought you did but you didn't truly believe (Robert).

While this points to an awareness that the older participants' possess the skills and knowledge, it is important to note that the older participants (Stan, Robert, and Joe) discussed how they are not consciously aware when they transfer skills, rather it occurs because the skills are a deeply embedded part of their personal guiding identity for success. This is highlighted by the following quote from Joe, who only came to the realization that camp was responsible for his identity over 25 years after the camp, "I think I can really say that this seed of a lot of my personal beliefs today about the value of hard work and discipline came from that camp. And, I just hadn't realized that for many many many years" (Joe).

This contention is confirmed by the views and perceptions of the younger participants, who, while believing that they understood that they learned valuable skills and knowledge for later in life, were aware that they have not fully utilized these skills. From Daniel's perspective as a 20 year old, he stated was trying to *mindfully* apply the messages when relevant and relatable experiences and opportunities arose. From a different perspective, Thomas provided an interesting example of not being able to transfer the skills to school. He believed that he was not "mature" enough, however after three years and a greater understanding of life's challenges, he believes he will be able to transfer the dormant skills when he returns to college. He stated,

when I got to college, it like my GPA like I said, wasn't bad but I could have had a lot more success if I would have tried a little harder and applied the J Rob mindset to school but for some reason I could only apply that to something physical, but like that's why I'm glad I'm actually taking a little time of school and going back to finish, because now when I go back, being more mature, I'm, I plan on working really hard at it, but when I was younger it was really hard for me (Thomas)

Overall, the participants provided detailed examples of the near, immediate, automatic transfer of skills to the wrestling and sport context. It became more complex for the former campers when it came to far transfer. Far, delayed transfer was experienced when participants were presented with experiences and opportunities in life to really apply and transfer their identity for success. This was mindful when the participants used environmental schema to make connections and transfer their skills and identity. It was automatic when they used their naturally used their identity in certain situations. The older participants believed that it took a number of years and experiences to really believe in the identity and appreciate the power and utility of the camp experience for success in life.

Theory-Based Analysis of Psychological Change

The phenomenological open-coding analysis served as the primary and most informative form of analysis in this study. While the theory-based coding was conducted following the steps outlined in the method section, this approach served mainly to confirm the insight gained in the first phase of analysis and highlight the similarities and differences between the findings from this study and the knowledge-base from literature across sport psychology and multiple learning disciplines. The theory-based coding is presented in Figure 4 with the triangulated findings highlighted. Specifically, this figure shows which of the factors in the pre-identified heuristic model were relevant and identified by former campers who were describing their experiences of life skills transfer from an intensive wrestling camp. Discussion of these factors is limited because each has been described in detail in the previous section, and will be combined for discussion in chapter five of this dissertation.

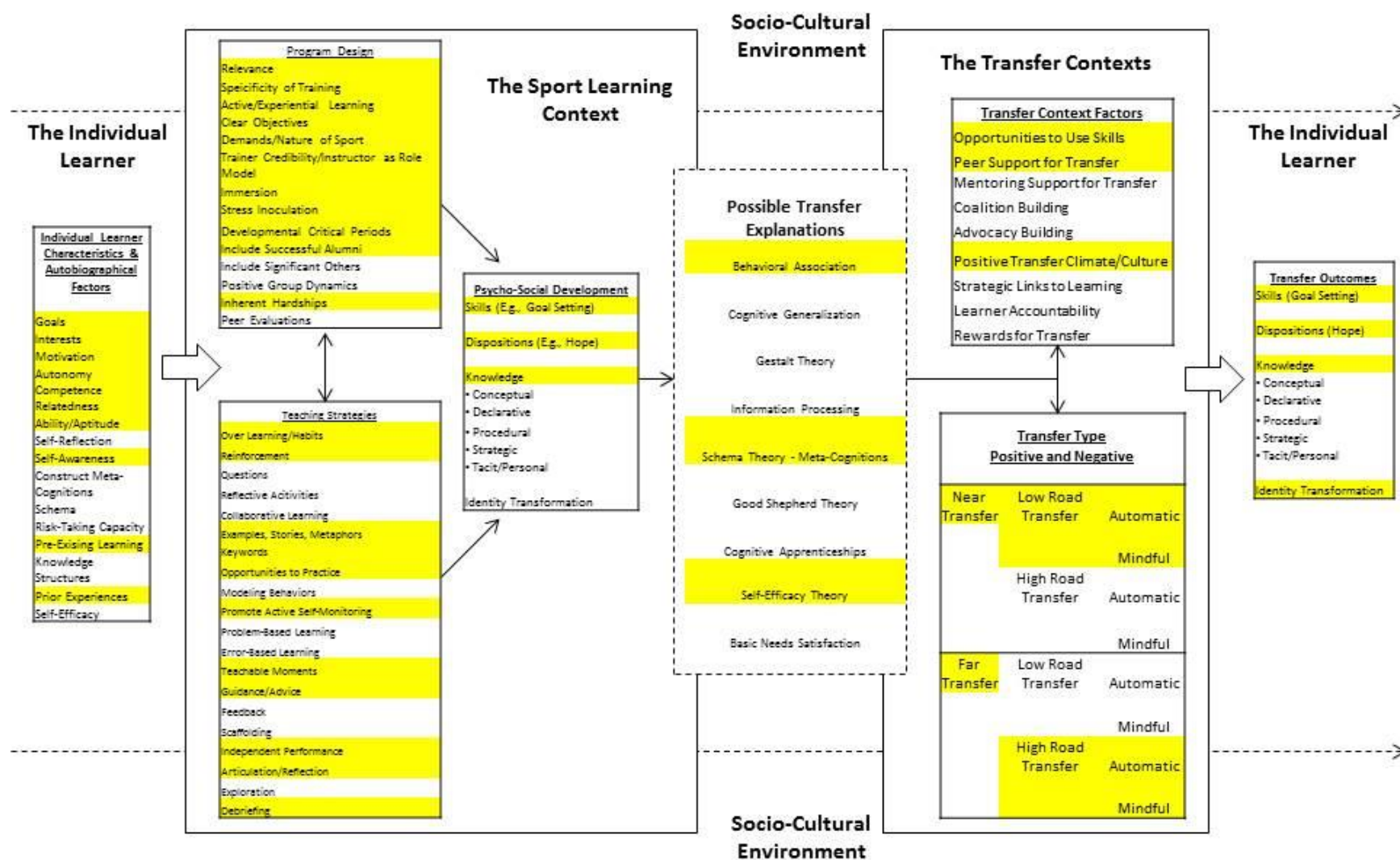


Figure 4. Heuristic model of life skills transfer with theory-based analysis from former campers experiences

Section III. Holistic Accounts and Experiences of Long-Term Psychological Change

The final section of results will address both purposes of the study by providing a holistic account of what, how and why psychological change occurred for the participants. It will highlight individual journeys that were influenced by an interaction of identity, experiences, and outcomes. This section will outline the similarities and differences in the process of psychological change between the former campers.

To understand the individual journeys of identity, experience and outcomes for each wrestler, it is necessary to review the overall construct of a personal guiding identity for success that was identified by the compilation of the stories of the 12 participants. While participants differed in the strength and belief of this identity, the personal guiding identity for success was consistently defined and experienced across former campers as a strong work ethic and a deep belief in one's ability to use that work ethic to overcome any task or experience in life. This work ethic was guided by a personal motivational orientation that fueled the quest for success.

Following the creation and analysis of individual narrative profiles for the former campers, five important themes emerged to capture the individual journeys of psychological change as a result of the intensive wrestling camp, and to explain how the personal guiding identity for success influenced life experiences, outcomes and perceptions of success. The themes included (1) the lens through which participants viewed themselves and described their journey of change, (2) the way participants perceived and experienced adversity in the camp environment and in later life situations, (3) the belief that participants developed a formula for success in life, (4) the way participants conceptualized the relationship between hard work and success in life, and (5) the motivational orientations of the participants and how that influenced the way the camp experience and other life events were approached and perceived. Each of these

themes will be described in detail, highlighting similarities and differences in the way that participants believed that psychological change was experienced as a result of participating in the intensive wrestling camp.

The narrative lens for psychological change.

While reflecting on the wrestling camp and their life experiences since the camp, the participants created a story or narrative about their personal long-term psychological change. While each story was unique in its own way, three narrative themes emerged across the 12 participants to describe some commonalities in the experiences and views of development.

“The Underdog.” Three of the participants reflected on their childhood self and their wrestling camp experience, and believed that they were an “underdog” who overcame barriers to be successful. Participants’ suggested that they entered the camp as “a little known wrestler” (Andrew) or as a wrestler who “got beat a lot!” (Robert). Additionally, they referenced early life events where the odds were against them, stating that “I definitely wasn’t the smartest guy at school” or reflecting on family situations where we “do not have a lot of money and you are trying to get ahead. I was just a kid and I think I always wanted my life to be a little better.” (Joe). The individuals who followed this narrative viewed the camp as the catalyst for learning the value of hard work in contributing to success in wrestling and life. In fact, each of the former campers made reference to their vast improvements in wrestling in the season/s following the camp, and attributed the success to the enhanced work ethic from the camp.

More importantly than wrestling success however, was “the underdog” belief that the camp gave them the ability to move from a position where they were not successful, to a new position in wrestling and life where they could be successful. It was interesting, that as an outcome of being an underdog earlier in their lives, they focused on competing and comparing

themselves to others in later life, and were more likely to discuss a sense of elitism that was gained from the camp experience. In particular, they believed that the camp gave them a specific set of tools that made them unique, and gave them the ability to outwork others and be successful. Robert stated that,

“you know just the working around other people and just kind of just seeing how other people view going to work and how other people act when they are at work, and it was just kind of like you can tell that people don’t have any level of motivation I guess I would say...it was just kind of like as we had some success, and then you realize that you have a different set of mental skills” (Robert).

Similarly, Andrew discussed his experience in the military and the comparisons he made between himself and other people who were experiencing a challenging situation for the first time,

it’s the hardest thing they’ve done physically in their life, they’ve never been told what to do, had to be up for breakfast or anything like that and uhh other than school, you know? I remember just seeing kids just loonngggg faces a bunch of crying babies is all I remember. (Andrew).

“The Perfect Target.” Some participants reflected on their camp experience/s and their perspective on life prior to the camp, and believed that they were “the perfect target” as an adolescent. They were ready and willing to learn how to improve as a wrestler and learn how about how to succeed in life. Early in his interview, Stan stated that,

I think I was an easy target, you know? I wanted to be in the military, so I think that like I said, I was an easy target. He was just a very passionate, tough, and seemed to me to be very knowledgeable with a lot of experience. (Stan)

The perfect target for the camp emerged as a camper who had described himself as a young person with an interest in learning, as highlighted his belief that he was prepared for the experience. Brandon stated, “I knew what I was getting into I was mentally prepared prior to leaving.” Additionally, those following this narrative described themselves as someone who loved to work hard and challenge themselves prior to the camp, as highlighted by Louie, “I love doing this, I love to work hard and put myself in this position where I challenge myself mentally to go through the mental battles.”

These campers were more likely to know who J Robinson was, and respected him as a successful coach prior to the camp. Following the camp, it was interesting that the individuals followed different pathways in life (e.g., military, business, teacher/coach), but all described how they found their way into leadership roles outside of the camp, and were the participants who attributed their leadership development to the camp. For example, Stan reflected on he paid close attention to the role of the camp director and how he learned leadership skill at the camp,

“[He is] so passionate, extremely tough, very knowledgeable, but then he also, at least when I was there, he would practice with us. You know, he’d be doing the workouts as well, he’d be... at the end I remember seeing him take off his shorts and wring them out, you know. It’s just... he was in the mix, and that’s definitely... There is something important about that in the leadership style, and for young people that is very genuine, and I think I’ll definitely try to emulate that when I’m in leadership positions”

“The Warrior.” Finally, a group of participants described their experiences and memories through a lens of being a “warrior”. This was a belief that the camp taught them that life was full of battles, taught them how to be tough in all situations, and gave them the ability to overcome any challenge. While all of the campers described the camp as challenging, “the

warrior's" were more likely to provide detailed descriptive explanations of how challenging and stressful the camp was. For example, Jason stated "the camp in general was absolute hell. I mean there's other way to explain it by being in hell!" As an outcome of the camp, the warriors believed that they could overcome any challenge presented to them. Nathan stated, "the main thing that I took away from the camp was that I can...I can do things that I have umm that maybe initially seemed un- unattainable or maybe that- maybe that you would hear about other people doing." Alongside this belief was the perception that everything in life was a battle. Daniel described how he approaches his days, "when I get up, and especially on those 14 hour days, I need to be there and you do not want to talk to me. I am in battle right now, a personal battle, really. It is all mental on how I get through it."

It was interesting that four of the 12 participants in this study pursued military experience in their lives after the camp. This warrior mentality was perceived to align closely with the desired requirements of the military, and these four participants all described how the wrestling camp experience was beneficial in preparing them for the obligations in the military. In particular, the adversity provided the camp was viewed as an excellent replication of the military experience. Reflecting on a discussion he had with a former camper and Army Ranger, Nathan stated, "the question naturally comes up...what was harder? J. Robinson or Ranger's school? And ultimately we decided the only reason Ranger school was harder was because it was longer." Along with the link to seeking a role in the military, the warrior also had the propensity to continue to seek and approach new challenges in all areas of life. Jason stated, "now I'm having to keep pushing myself and challenge myself all the time."

Perception and reality of adversity

Across the 12 participants, the intensive wrestling camp was unquestionably viewed as a physically and psychological stressful and challenging experience. Examples of the description of the wrestling camp experience included:

- “Pushing me to my mental breaking point” (Jason)
- “You are pushing yourself to the limits” (Brandon)
- “Kicked my ass” (Daniel)
- “That was hell!” (David)
- “Grueling” (David)
- “Horrible” (Louie)
- “You are going into a fight” (Chris)
- “Destroyed me” (Chris)
- “It’s definitely the hardest thing that I’ll have to do” (Daniel)
- “Hardest thing I have ever done” (Robert)
- “The hardest thing at that point in my life that I ever did” (Andrew)

Inherent in many of these descriptions was the personal autobiographical belief that the camp was experienced at a developmentally critical time, which had a significant influence on their success in sport and life. As a result, the participants were consistent in their belief that the wrestling camp challenge provided an unforgettable and definitive benchmark for what hard work is, and how the personal guiding identity for success could be used and applied in different situations. This is emphasized by the following quote from David, “it sort of set a new benchmark for what was tolerable... the bench mark was set when I was at a very young age and the sort of level that it took to get there was so intense” (David). While Thomas, David and

Daniel all provided examples that suggested translation of the challenging learning context to other contexts outside of sport was not always effective, there was a common perception that the camp experience provided a “real life simulation” that could be used as a foundation to employ the personal guiding identity for success. As a result of gaining this benchmark or definition of hard work, the participants believed that they could then compare any future task or challenge to this and gauge whether or not they were working hard. Overall, the perceptions of the value of the adverse experiences in facilitating the transfer of assets from the camp, is highlighted in the following quotes from Brandon, “I’ve never experienced anything tougher. Sometimes I feel like I’ve never seen anything tougher. But it’s also what I know and what I’m accustomed to,” and reinforced by the following statement from Robert.

I really don’t think that physically, anything I’ve experienced in my life was as hard as the camp was, and it’s one of those things where as tough as things get, I compare them back to the camp. I can still remember, even though it was 30 years, I can still remember what it felt like you know at the end of practices and stuff, you were just dragging yourself to get back to the dorm to get some sleep and it’s just, you think you come across hard times and physical challenges and you just think back, well if I could do that, this isn’t impossible here, you just kind of put things into perspective and it just makes it easier to push your way through it, it kind of makes things seem so not daunting as a task, thinking back as to what you had to go through in camp (Robert)

Developing internal formulas for success

Participants developed an identity of a strong work ethic and a deep belief in one’s ability to use that work ethic to overcome any task or experience in life. This work ethic was guided by a personal motivational orientation that fueled the quest for success. Inherent in this identity is an

internal focus, a need to be responsible and accountable for achieving success, and required a disciplined approach. As a result of this internal focus, participants defined and described the formulas that they believed they used to achieve success. This empowering internal focus appeared to be influential in facilitating transfer across life domains because of the lack of recognition and focus on situational or contextual factors. This internal focus was perceived by participants as something they could control and used to be successful, irrespective of events, experiences or barriers outside of their control. Nathan emphasized how he valued his internal growth when he stated,

what I took from wrestling and J. Robinson in particular was- was actions I don't know I- I became one that really valued kind of the internal part of myself...I always know that no matter where I am umm like I'm ready for any kind of situation (Nathan)

A number of the former campers appeared to be resistant to learning or lacked the desire to learn skills unrelated to wrestling, when they entered the camp. For example, Jason emphasized that "my mentality at the time was 'I don't care!'" While this was the case for some, the perception that the mental skills were necessary for wrestling success, and then having them "instilled" as deeper dispositional and identity characteristics through an inescapable challenging experience, appeared to help the campers embrace the change and ultimately develop an internal formula for success. Chris confirmed this with his statement that "my experience is something that I couldn't get away from if I tried, it has become a part of me."

It was evident through the many reflections and stories of the former campers that they focused on utilizing this internal identity for success when approaching any situation. Joe used the analogy of climbing a ladder to be successful. He stated that,

I always say that you have to climb the ladder, but you have to make sure that your ladder is leaned up against the correct wall. Before you start climbing a ladder, make sure it is against the correct wall. So, when I climbed my wrestling ladder, it was not against the right wall. Later in life, I had my ladder against the right wall and I knew how to climb my ladder.

In particular, Joe discussed how the “right wall” for him was being a trial lawyer. The most important meaning to take from this example is that, to all of the participants in this study, the ladder was significantly more important than the wall. The participants believed that they gained a personal guiding identity for success that taught them how to climb the ladder, and that climbing the ladder was the most critical variable in achieving success, not the wall that it is leaned up against.

Conceptualizing the relationship between hard work and success

Validating the value of a personal guiding identity for success, the participants strongly agreed that “The Jay Rob mentality would be hard work conquers everything and mercifulness toil conquers all, if you just keep on trying enough and work hard enough, it will happen” (Chris). All of the participants believed that philosophy was engrained in their beliefs, and as a result believe that hard work *can* contribute to success. Consequently, this was the driving force that caused them to work hard in multiple life domains to try to achieve success. While this philosophy was applied by all participants, there were perceived differences between the reality of the formula that hard work equals success. Participants did differ in their belief and acceptance of the formula that hard work equals success.

Those participants who viewed themselves as being successful predominately attributed their successes to their hard work and the personal guiding identity for success that was

developed at the intensive wrestling camp. For example , Jason who valued his work ethic, reflected on the current state of society and how important he believed this hard work philosophy is.

Everybody wants something handed to them well dammit it's not gonna happen. And that's the biggest thing, we have to earn everything we get. And that's what it helps you learn. And I don't – I think that was a lesson in itself that was so valuable. (Jason)

The investment to this philosophy was repeated by Robert, who not only believed it through his wrestling experience, but believes he confirmed it through the business successes he had with his construction company,

when you do all the hard stuff and you put all of the hours in and when you see results, you do all the hard work and you do that over the summer and you're going into the season and you put all those hours in and when you step on the mat there, you beat somebody pretty bad and that makes you just want to do more, you know what I mean, it just makes you want to continue down that road and push yourself further and it's kind of the same way in business, you take on a project that might be a little intimidating at first glance and you get involved in it and you build it and you get it done and you do well and people complement you on your work and it just makes you feel like all the hard work is worth it and you want to strive for bigger things and it's just kind of like a circle, you just keep going around and you know, hard work breeds success and success makes the hard work not seem so hard you know (Robert).

It was further apparent that those who had experienced the most success in life outside of the camp were most likely to reinforce and proclaim the value in the hard work creates success

philosophy. As a successful lawyer, Joe emphasized the philosophy throughout his reflection of his camp and his career.

It showed a formula and what you have to do and how hard you have to work. Once you are committed to working that hard at everything you do, and to be shown that level of discipline, effort, and confidence you are going to succeed. You are going to get 90% of what you are shooting for (Joe).

While many participants were fully invested in the “hard work breeds success,” there was some recognition by these participants that external, uncontrollable factors can influence your chances of success, and a perception that the camp did not teach the campers how to deal with failure outside of the camp. Dealing with failure was discussed by Joe, as something that you learn in the “real world.” He stated, “I cannot say that life has taught me anything different from what I learned originally at the camp. Except for the one thing I identified, which is that you will lose.”

For some former campers, while they believed that hard work has put them in a good position to be successful, they believed that it will not automatically lead to success. These perceptions were driven predominately from experiences in which the participants were not as successful as they hoped to be, or had an experience where uncontrollable factors interfered with their chances of achieving success. For example, Stan discussed the need to be flexible in the application of that philosophy because life is more complex outside of the camp,

Life is just a lot more complex. So well I mean you get it. I can plan whatever I want at least with what I do these days. You know I could make a great plan for the week and it's going to get blown up by Monday lunch. You know just by life. Um and I think that it probably – you need to give yourself grace with regard to that. And you can't give

yourself a negative um and you need to be flexible and adapt and those are probably not exactly lessons that come out of the camp (Stan).

Additionally, some participants appeared to be generally more critically reflective on the camp experience and the formula that hard work and an internal focus will always contribute to success. For example, Stan and Brandon recognized the complexity of life experiences that they had been through...Chris, as a 17 year old, was also critically reflective on the philosophical position of J Robinson and stated that, "I don't really think that is true. I think sometimes you need to use smarts and be creative and attack things in other ways than just keep on continuing to bang that square peg into the circle hole" (Chris). He continued, by providing an example of where he believes the formula may not always calculate as he perceives it was promoted in the camp.

When applying to college, you can work your butt off and get all A's, you can study hard for the SAT and do well on that, you can be completely qualified to go to your dream school, but if a kid who hadn't worked as hard as you and didn't have the same qualifications as you had a parent who gave a lot of money to that school, they might get in over you. I don't think that's right or fair, but that is kind of just life. That is an example of that you can work hard and do everything you are supposed to, but sometimes that just doesn't work out (Chris).

The motivation to approach life's challenges: A mastery focus, ego focus or both

It was interesting that definitions of success differed across the participants, and consequently, this influenced the motivational orientations of each individual and how he approached challenges. At one end of the spectrum, some participants' defined success by competing and beating others. Their beliefs, interpretation of events, and approach to life

situations followed an elitist mindset and ego-outcome goal orientation. At the other end, some participants' defined success by personal improvement. Their perceptions, interpretations, and approaches followed a motivation for personal excellence and a task-mastery goal orientation. While the 12 participants varied in their preference for one orientation and in some cases, a balance between an ego and task orientation, there were some clear differences between motivational orientations and the way individuals experienced and described perceived psychological changes and life successes.

Those participants with a predominant ego-outcome orientation viewed and remembered the camp experience through a lens of competition and seeking to be better than other wrestlers. These participants attributed their motivational approach to life and subsequent successes to the wrestling camp and these competitive experiences. They described life events, such as academic and professional endeavors, as competitive and interpreted as opportunities to apply the motivational orientation developed at the camp, to out-perform others and be successful. Along with this motivational orientation, a sense of elitism emerged in their discussions of their experiences as a way to frame how they have used their personal guiding identity for success.

As an example of a participant with a strong outcome orientation that drove his identity and quest for success, Joe engaged in a lot of conversation that centered around competing and beating an opponent. Joe considered himself an "underdog" prior to the camp, for example, stating that "I lacked some confidence, physically and athletically." When reflecting on his camp experiences, he would regularly compare himself to his opponent and referred to learning how to beat an opponent, stating that the camp was "the first time that I realized that if you want it that bad, then when you step on the wrestling mat, you better be 100% convinced that the other guy has not worked as hard as you." Following the camp, Joe discussed his law school experience as

being motivated by the need to outperform others, and the value of the camp in teaching him how to do that. Referring to law school, he stated “it is all about how hard you can study. It is all about class rank and beating other people and it is just a competitive academic environment.” Finally, this motivation continued in his profession where, he stated “everything you do, at least for me as a trial lawyer, it is kind of a combat sport.” Overall, Joe was driven by the desire to outperform others and used his identity to achieve that goal. He firmly believed that “if you are willing to work hard, you will separate yourself right away from 98% of the people at whatever you are doing.”

At the opposite end of the motivational continuum, those participants with a predominant task-mastery orientation viewed and remembered the camp as a learning experience that helped to develop a self-awareness and desire to continually challenge them to be successful in sport and in life. These participants interpreted life events as opportunities to challenge them to work as hard as they personal can to achieve personal success. They described life events where they had made significant personal achievements and were more likely to describe experiences where they believed they had the skills and the tools to approach challenges with the mindset of excelling to improve oneself, while also helping others by leading them. Specifically, participants who discussed the application of a more task-oriented motivation appeared to be more likely to look for, and learn interpersonal skills at the camp that were used and applied as leadership related skills

Stan emerged as an example of a participant who claimed to adopt more of a task-orientation as motivation for his personal guiding identity for success. Stan entered the camp with the motivation to improve his wrestling and learn as much as he could from J Robinson and the camp staff. He reflected on his achievement of graduating the camp and stated that, “for

whatever reason I never processed that it is more of an internal achievement.” When working outside the camp, Stan discussed that he would gauge his work ethic on personal standards, “I am aware of the level of effort even now that I put towards things and I am able to accurately gauge – hold myself accountable.” Furthermore, he identified the more important things he learned from the camp as being, “planning and managing your day and you know working hard and then not to be afraid of fatigue and physical discomfort etc. and being able to apply tools when under stress and discomfort.” Finally, with his focus on personal improvement, Stan always saw the camp as an experience where he was able to learn valuable leadership skills that he transferred to help others outside of the camp context.

Review of the individual stories and narrative profiles of the former campers revealed that while participants experienced a similar camp experience, the motivational lens through which they viewed the experience differed. While the participants discussed entering the camp with similar motives of improving as a wrestler, these discussions were framed differently, with some seeking to improve beyond their previous level of performance, while others were seeking to improve for the primary purpose of winning. For example, Daniel stated his goal, “I just wanted to learn something. I didn’t know what I was going to learn, but I wanted to learn something,” while Jason entered the camp with the mission of gaining the skills to become state champion.

Reflecting on the camp, participants recalled very similar program features that were influential on their development. It was how these features were perceived that was important. The campers’ remembered then searched for, and ultimately learning and developing knowledge and skills that helped to fulfill their personal task- or outcome-oriented motivational goals. It appeared that, irrespective of their predominant motivational orientation, the participants’

believed that the camp amplified and reinforced their motivation and their definition of success. For example, Brandon's memories of the camp focused on a personal improvement, and learning that "you are always trying to be successful whether you are winning or not, you are giving 100% effort. You know it was stressed quite a bit." (Brandon). Chris, while discussing both motivational orientations, remembered the emphasis on the competing with others, when he mentioned his perception of the camp goal of "forcing yourself to do the things you don't want to do, so you can do the things that other people can't."

The participants' then translated their motivational orientation to life outside the camp, and sought challenges and life experiences that aligned with their desire to seek personal improvement or compete against others. For example, Robert attributed his success in business to his ability to outwork competitors and stated that, "I used to say was that "all you've got to do to beat somebody is get them to quit" and you know, it's just amazing how easy the average person will quit." Meanwhile, outlining his balanced motivational orientation, Chris discussed how he could excel outside of the camp through his leadership and how he transferred that.

Jay Rob also taught me to be a leader. Not so much at the camp because we all kind of felt as though we were equals at the camp. But, coming back from the camp and into my regular community, my regular school, and into my family, I almost felt like I had some sort of responsibility to lead others.

Overall, through examples, many participants framed and discussed their life experiences around their motivational orientation.

Section IV. What is Being Taught: The Coach's Views of the Process of Psychological Change

To holistically understand the psychological change of former campers, the camp director/head coach was interviewed to gain his perspective on what is being taught at the wrestling camp and how he believes psychological change occurs for the individual campers. It was very clear that the camp director had a clear and accurate understand of what psychological change occurred and how it occurred in the former campers. He also emphasized his personal guiding philosophies that were reflected in camper reflections.

Coach's perspective of psychological change

With almost 40 years of experience, the camp director was confident in his belief of what psychological change looked like for camp participants. He had a clear perspective on what campers' learn in the camp environment and then what transferred to other life domains. It was very apparent that the director's view of psychological change closely aligned with the process described and experienced by participants in this study.

First, he claimed that "everything is a skill." Through the camp, he believes that participants develop a set of the J7 skills (discipline, hard work, responsibility, accountability, dedication, sacrifice, and service) that "are relevant to you, no matter what you do." He believes that there is "only one kind of discipline and that is self-discipline" and that discipline is the most important skill for the campers. This focus on skills does differ from the conceptualization of knowledge, skills and dispositions, identified from the 12 participants. However, the ultimate focus and desired outcome of a personal guiding identity for success was very similar. Pointedly, when using and applying these skills in the camp environment, J Robinson believed that for participants, it "becomes a part of their whole identity." He stated that "they feel a confidence in

their abilities to do things, because a lot of them will reflect on this as the hardest things I've ever done." As a result, he claimed that "confidence builds on itself" and is like a rubber band, where the camp "stretches your rubber band." Through this description of change, he described that "they build their own personal philosophy and then they buy into that philosophy." Generally, the participant stories agree with the rubber band analogy of increased confidence. However, some examples were provided of an over-confidence or decrease in confidence in other life domains. Some participants believed that challenges outside of the camp could not be overcome by merely working hard and being confident.

Coach's perspective on how and why psychological change occurs

The camp director discussed that his goal for the camp was "to get them to develop their [the wrestlers] own formula for success or excellence." To achieve this, he described what he believed are the key program features that have been maintained since the camp's inception. "So, over time you know- and what I say is that, "there's been four constants in the intensive camp, quest for excellence...has never changed, time frame...has never changed, the work load...has never changed, and me." Along with these constant features, the program is designed where "everything that we do is a reinforcement of those seven skills (J7)" and that "we continually drive these skills in." He believes that the reason the camp is effective in teaching the J7 skills is through "rote-repetition." He pointed to the value of the length of the 14 day and especially the 28 day camp, where he stated that "you have to have a certain amount of time to be able to drive it deep enough."

Finally, he referred to his role in the camp as someone who is dedicated to "empowering young people." Specifically, he stated "the Lord put me here as planter...I've been put here to plant

seeds. I'll never sit underneath the shade of the trees that I plant," referring to his role of helping young people develop during this one-off wrestling camp opportunity.

Coach's perspective on an individual's interactions with the environment

It was clear through the interview with the camp director that the focus on the camp was the focus of development was directly on the individual and empowering them. Asked about the role of post-camp environmental factors influencing the transfer of life skills, he responded that "the environment doesn't change, and people around them make a difference, but one of the most important things is how they react to the situation." Furthermore, an effort-based evaluation system was discussed by the camp director, as was a focus on competing and comparison outside of the camp. He emphasized, "one thing we tell em,' that my parents told me, is that you can outwork 90% of all Americans. They learn that if they work hard, they can get to the top." Finally, he further discussed the challenges he laid out for the campers, reminding them that "life is hard...it gets to be really hard, if you know it's gonna be hard you can prepare for it and you're not going to be overwhelmed by it."

Overall, it was clear that the camp director was committed to, and invested in the philosophies of the camp and the way that he teaches it. It was apparent that these were the similar philosophies in which he lives his life by, and thus, how he repeats and reinforces these messages to the campers. As is noticeable in many of the quotes, the camp director while answering the questions in the interview, approached the discussion as yet another opportunity to preach his messages. It appears that these messages are deep within his identity and he is formulaic in the way he communicates his messages to anyone he encounters inside and outside of the camp.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

For years, sport stakeholders have been interested in the long-term influence of participation in sport on the athletes' involved. Pioneer college football coach, Amos Alonzo Stagg, once stated, "I won't know how good a job I did for 20 years. That's when I'll see how my boys turned out," (Batterson et al., 2015) outlining the desire to understand athletes' long-term development. Unfortunately, within the sport psychology literature, little has been done to help stakeholders answer this question. Specifically, the literature related to psychological development transfer effects is often diverse and disconnected (Martinek & Lee, 2012), and "too often researchers have failed to identify explanations for how life skills may function to improve a young person's life and well-being" (Gould & Carson, 2008, p.67). The overall purpose of this study is to understand former athletes' perceptions of long-term psychological change from participation in an intensive wrestling camp. Specifically, this study sought first, to identify what, if any, former athletes' believed were the long-term psychological effects attributed to participation in an intensive wrestling camp, especially what transferred to life domains outside the wrestling camp experience; and second, to understand how and why these former athletes believed long-term psychological effects occurred and were transferred to life domains outside of the wrestling camp. Using the phenomenographic research approach, this study attempted to illuminate the similarities and differences (Marton, 1981; 1986) in the way former campers' believed long-term psychological change was experienced as a result of the wrestling camp experience.

Addressing the first purpose, the study found that former campers believed they learned a range of knowledge, skills (behavioral, intrapersonal, cognitive, and interpersonal skills), and

dispositions from the intensive wrestling camp experience, and that they were able to transfer the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to other areas of their lives. This psychological change did not occur through each discrete asset being learned in the camp and then transferred to another life domain in a simple, linear fashion. Rather, knowledge, skills, and dispositions were learned and developed at the camp and built upon what the individual already possessed. After leaving the camp, the individual then collectively transferred the knowledge, skills and dispositions to applicable life domains. This change was perceived by participants as the formation and transfer of a personal guiding identity for success in sport and life. While varying in strength across participants, the identity was defined as a strong work ethic and a deep belief in one's ability to use that work ethic to overcome any task or experience in life. This work ethic was guided by a personal motivational orientation that fueled the quest for success.

Addressing the second purpose, the study found that individual's entered the camp with psychological characteristics and autobiographical experiences that influenced how they viewed and perceived the camp. They were then subjected to an intense, stressful and challenging wrestling camp environment that was designed to teach mental skills for sport and life, and was directed by a highly knowledgeable and relatable role-model in J Robinson. The participants believed they learned or developed knowledge, skills and dispositions at the camp. Then, by either repeating behaviors or by making meta-cognitive connections between the camp and transfer environments (e.g., linking adverse conditions and ability to work through challenges), they transferred a developing personal guiding identity for success to other life domains. This transfer was helped or hindered by the opportunities for success, as well as supporters or detractors, in the transfer contexts. The identity for success was more likely to transfer to sport-

based contexts automatically and immediately, while the transfer to other life domains was more likely to be mindful and delayed, depending on when opportunities to use the identity arose.

The transfer of the personal guiding identity for success occurred through an interactive process. The individual camper interacted with the camp content and perceived the camp in his own way; he then interacted with various transfer contexts and perceived those his own way; this resulted in transferring, or in some cases not transferring, the personal guiding identity for success. Across the participants, their own developed identity helped them to view success in sport and life as being driven by an internal formula and this formula drove their belief that success was determined by the applying the identity and the ability to work hard. The more participants attributed their successes in life to the wrestling camp, the more likely they were to believe in and promote the philosophy that hard work breeds success. Success was defined as either personal improvement or competing and comparing to others, and this personal definition influenced the way the camp and life events were perceived and experienced.

The study findings provided valuable insight into the process of life skills transfer and psychological change as the result of a youth sport experience. These findings will now be discussed relative to relevant literature in sport psychology, youth development, and learning transfer domains, for the purpose of highlighting how they confirm and provide new insight to the existing knowledge about life skills transfer from sport. First, an in-depth discussion of how this study fits and extends knowledge about the process of life skills transfer from sport will be provided. Second, the continuous interactive process of life skills transfer, between the individual and their environment, will be explored in detail. Third, psychological and sociological implications of the internal focus for success will be examined. Fourth, practical implications for sport psychology, coaching and youth development will be overviewed. Fifth,

discussion about the methodological implications of this study and the use of phenomenographic approach in sport psychology research will be provided. Finally, limitations to this study will be outlined along with directions and possibilities for future research.

The combined process of life skills development and transfer from sport

Research focused on life skills in sport has predominately concentrated on if life skills can be developed (e.g., Weiss et al., 2013), how to structure the youth sport environment to enhance life skill development (e.g., Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005), and how to coach life skills (e.g., Gould et al., 2007). This line of research has predominately been outcome-driven rather than on understanding the individualized process of development (Jones & Lavalley, 2009). Not until recently have researchers in sport psychology begun to investigate the transfer of life skills alongside the development of skills. For example, Camiré et al., (2012) gained athlete and coaches perspectives about life skills that are developed in sport and actually transferred to other life domains. Furthermore, only few studies have investigated the phenomenon of transfer in the short-term, such as Allen and colleagues (2015) who explored transfer after a sport-based intervention program. To expand on this knowledge base, the current study provides an insightful and valuable addition to the literature, providing detail and insight into the interactive process of life skills transfer from sport, and uncovering the complexity of the phenomenon.

Gould and Carson (2008, p. 60), presented the most detailed definition of life skills in the sport psychology literature, when they indicated that life skills are “those internal personal assets, characteristics and skills such as goal setting, emotional control, self-esteem, and hard work ethic that can be facilitated or developed in sport and transferred for use in non-sport settings.” Inherent in this definition is a process of development and transfer of life skills. While this process was a feature of their heuristic model for coaching life skills, no research has

investigated how this process looks from the perspective of the athlete. This study provided a direct and holistic investigation of life skills as a long-term process that involved an individual athlete interacting with a youth sport context to learn, and develop and refine life skills, and then utilizing and transferring the learned skills to contexts outside of sport.

Through both programs designed to specifically develop life skills and more general youth sport programs, sport researchers have clearly established that a range of skills and knowledge can be learned or developed through sport participation, including behavioral (e.g., discipline), cognitive (e.g., creativity), emotional (e.g., managing anxiety), and social (e.g., teamwork) skills, (Danish et al., 2004; Holt et al., 2008; Papacharisis et al., 2005; Turnnidge et al., 2014). There is also evidence to support the idea that skills being taught in life skill programs are also transferred to other life domains, as highlighted by Weiss and colleagues' (2013) examination of The First Tee program. Not only do the present findings provide necessary additional support to show that youth athletes can learn and develop life skills in a coach-driven youth sport context and then transfer the skills to other life domains, it also addresses one of the concerns in learning transfer literature across disciplines that has yet to receive detailed attention in sport psychology literature. Specifically, Hager and Hodkinson (2009) argue that transfer should be viewed as a process of change as opposed to notion that transfer is the movement of one discrete product or skill from one place to another (e.g., Gagne et al., 1993). The current study found that while participants transferred some skills immediately from the camp to other life domains (e.g., goal setting), the transfer of other skills and knowledge occurred in a "relational web" (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009), where the transfer was individualized and dependent on the collection of skills the former camper had, and the experiences he had outside the camp environment (e.g., optimism and hope).

Research in life skill development and transfer from sport has broadly, and uncritically categorized specific life skills outcomes. Studies have listed a range of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills (e.g., Gould et al., 2007) and dispositional qualities (e.g., Jones & Lavallee, 2009) as outcomes from sport participation, while review papers have attempted to identify possible categories of life skills, such as behavioral skills and cognitive skills (e.g., Danish et al., 2002; Turnnidge et al., 2014). What has been lacking is operational definitions and critical discussions of precisely what and why skills fit and should be studied in each life skills category. For example, researchers have yet to engage in debate and discussion about why responsibility is an intrapersonal life skill and why confidence is dispositional quality, but are ultimately both characterized as “life skills”. Furthermore, researchers have yet to delve into discussions about which life skills are most easily or fruitfully learned and developed in sport and which life skills are not as easily and successfully learned and developed in sport, and why this may be the case.

The findings from this study clearly identified that intrapersonal skills (e.g., responsibility, accountability, perseverance) were the primary skills transferred from the youth wrestling camp, as opposed to interpersonal skills (e.g., helping others, respecting others) which appeared to be the secondary skills transferred. This is not surprising as intrapersonal skills were the primary teaching focus of the camp structure and the camp staff. First, this highlights that to understand how and why life skills are transferred, researchers must understand how they are learned and developed. Second, the transfer of life skills needs to be examined with a clear understanding of how and why a skill is categorized. Researchers should seek to understand and operationalize if they are studying intrapersonal skills or interpersonal skills and design studies to address each particular type of skill. It may be fruitful for the transfer of intrapersonal skills to be studied through interviews and observations of the individual learner, while it may be useful

to study the transfer of interpersonal skills through interviews with significant others and observations of interpersonal interactions.

To continue to expand scientific insight on what constitutes a life skill, participants in this study discussed and emphasized dispositions as transferred psychosocial outcomes from the intensive wrestling camp. Dispositions are acquired schemes of perception, thought and actions (Bourdieu, 1990), that are developed in response to environmental conditions. The findings from this study provide clear support for the notion that a youth sport context can shape and mold dispositions (Jones & Lavalley, 2009). For example, in this study, participants developed dispositional confidence and the desire to approach and seek challenges from the wrestling camp. Furthermore this study supported the idea that participants match their personal dispositions to the sport context (Jones & Lavalley, 2009) to help them achieve success. Participants matched their ego, task, or combined motivational orientation to the wrestling camp environment. Ego-oriented participants discussed how they refined their focus on competing at the camp, while task-oriented participants refined their effort-based focus on self-evaluation at the camp (Nicholls, 1984). Following the camp, participants transferred that orientation to other life domains continued to mold their dispositions and match transfer opportunities to suit their psychological make-up (e.g., ego oriented participants' sought competitive vocations).

The most insightful finding from the participants' discussions of the psychological change as a result of the wrestling camp was their insistence that psychological change resulted in the formation of a personal guiding identity for success. This underlines the complexity of life skills transfer. This is important because when transfer has been discussed in the sport psychology literature, the focus has been on the transfer of individual skills rather than the more complex discussion of some overarching schema. In this study, life skills transfer or

psychological change was ultimately characterized by the development an identity defined by a strong work ethic and a deep belief in one's ability to use that work ethic to overcome any task or experience in life. While the discrete transfer of skills from the camp to other life domains was perceived to occur, experiences of transfer were encompassed within a deeper formation or development of a personal guiding identity for success in sport and life (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009). This does not negate the linear movement of one skill from one domain to another, however, it does provide support the need to move us beyond the literal meaning of transfer by highlighting the importance of understanding how people move between contexts, rather than focusing only on how knowledge and skills move between contexts (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009). This provides support for the dispositional view of transfer with the emphasis on the role of the learner in life skills transfer (Bereiter, 1995), and reinforces the need to understand life skills transfer from the perspective of the individual who is living and experiencing the process of change.

Further, this emergence of a life skill-related identity for success provides new insights for the field of sport psychology. Much work has been conducted on athlete identity, as “the degree to which an individual identifies with the athlete role, within the framework of a multidimensional self-concept” (Brewer et al., 1993, p. 237). This work has focused on how the development of this identity in the competitive sport context and the positive and negative impact that this identity inside sport and in other areas of life. For example, Lally (2007) found that collegiate athletes may commit themselves strongly to their athletic goals and experience disrupted identities upon retirement. With a focus on the psychosocial outcomes of athletes outside of sport, it appears that there is an intersection in the research in life skill development and transfer from sport, and the athlete identity literature. In light of this study's findings that an

identity was developed for success in sport and life through a youth sport camp experience, it appears that researchers and practitioners should these lines of research could inform each other. Specifically, if researchers are really interested in understanding whether the athlete identity is “Hercules muscle or Achilles’ heel?” (Brewer et al., 1993, p. 237), these findings of developing an identity for sport and life can be informative to show that an identity can be molded and developed in sport, that seeks to produce a mindset both athletic and life success.

In creating definitions for life skills, Gould and Carson (2008) and Danish and colleagues (2004) emphasized the need to create clear operational definitions for phenomenon to be studied and practically addressed. Across learning disciplines, there has been contention over the definition of “transfer” (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009; Leberman et al., 2006). Definitions have varied from being a discrete event as the movement of one skill from one domain to another, to being a holistic process as ongoing transformational process as an individual changes through contexts (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009). In this study, transfer was defined as “when learning in one context enhances or undermines related performance in another context” (Perkins & Salomon, 1992, p.1). Consequently, the findings encompassed the discrete movement of skills as well as identity transformation from a youth sport experience, as the “transfer” of life skills that was identified in this study. Research on life skills in sport should continue to push boundaries, seek to truly understand how individuals change as the result of youth sport experiences, and aim to establish how youth sport and life skill programs can be effective in their teaching of life skills for transfer. For this to happen, it is imperative studies of “transfer” include a holistic operational definitions that accurately allows for the study of the phenomenon as a process that is influenced by individual and contextual factors.

Key factors influencing the continuous and interactive process of life skill transfer

Identifying the specific factors that influence life skills transfer was a direct purpose of the study and this investigation was successful in dissecting the complexity of sport-based life skills learning transfer and identifying key factors of influence. Specifically, the detailed reflections of the participants provided many examples of how a number of individual and contextual factors were involved in life skills transfer.. This is consistent with the general transfer literature where scholars directed their interest to three key areas: the individual learner, the learning context, and the transfer context (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). While research in life skills transfer has recognized these areas independently (e.g., Jones & Lavallee, 2009; Gould et al., 2007; Allen et al., 2015), little research has explicitly had directly explored the key areas in the same study. Thus, doing so in the present study provides a critical step in understanding the phenomenon of life skills transfer, and providing insight for future research and practice that seeks to understand how to facilitate life skills transfer (Camiré, 2014; Turnnidge et al., 2014).

The factors included existing individual psychological and autobiographical factors. Consistent with previous sport research, participants were drawn to the camp with skills and dispositions to improve and excel in the sport (Holt et al., 2008; Jones & Lavallee, 2009). Cognitive capabilities, while discussed (Camiré et al., 2012), did not dictate whether or not participants transferred the identity for success. Consistent with literature from non-sport transfer disciplines, participants were intrinsically motivated (Larson, 2011). Conversely, while most participants were open to learning (Burke & Hutchins, 2007), receptivity varied across participants, as did awareness of the camp goals (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Openness and awareness did not appear to dictate transferability. Finally, this study was unique in identifying

the prior camp experiences, role of parents, and perceived uniqueness of the camp influenced how the camp was perceived and experienced.

The terms “learning” or “learned” and “developing” or “developed” appear throughout the sport-based life skills literature and are used interchangeably when discussing life skills as operationalized psychosocial outcomes. It is the author’s contention that this is problematic as it reduces the role of the individual learner in the process of life skills transfer. As specifically defined in this study, life skills learning was the and development was acquiring *new* knowledge, skills or dispositions and developing was growing *existing* knowledge, skills or dispositions). These are conceptually different processes. Ignoring these processes causes the researcher to focus more on *what* is being learned or developed rather than *how* it is being learned and developed by the individual. While life skill learning or development was not the direct focus of this study and the study did not attempt to differentiate learning from development, they are both important and inherent factors in life skills transfer. The individual athlete learner enters the sport context with existing psychological characteristics and skills that must be acknowledged when studying life skills (Gould & Carson, 2008). For some participants in this study, pre-existing motivational orientations appeared to be enhanced and developed through the camp and influenced how skills and knowledge were transferred from the camp to life domains. While for others, they attributed the camp to being their first experience of independence and “real” personal responsibility and accountability. Research in sport-based life skills development and transfer needs to continue to find innovative ways to first understand what existing characteristics and skills athletes bring to the sport context. Studies should then independently and directly examine how new assets are learned and how existing assets are developed and molded, thus emphasizing and recognizing the fluid and constantly influential in the process of

life skills transfer. Program features that supported previous literature in sport and other learning domains included having a physically and psychologically safe environment, clear structure and explicit learning goals, and skill building opportunities (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002; Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Additionally, experiential learning, over-learning, and active learning all facilitated transfer (Furman & Sibthorp, 2013; Jones & Lavallee, 2009; Jostad et al., 2012). Finally, consequences of learning and successful alumni role models were also found to be helpful in supporting transfer (Gass, 1985; Sibthorp et al., 2011). In addition, the challenging environment, structural repetition of messages, an effective reward system, the nature of the sport, and supportive peers were also found to facilitate the transfer of life skills and the identity for success.

Effective coaching approaches were identified to support and expand on previous literature. Support was provided for clear and consistent rules and quality instruction (Gould & Carson, 2008), as well as discussing how and why life skills were taught and useful examples to promote transfer (Danish et al., 2003). Furthermore, core values were emphasized by the camp director, as were key words or phrases and examples of modeling behaviors (Camiré et al., 2012). To expand on this understand, this study provided a detailed example of how a passionate coach driven by his core values, integrated his personal experiences, stories, examples and metaphors to be a relatable role model. Ultimately, facilitating the transfer of life skills.

Finally, transfer context factors were identified that supported previous research and provided new insight. Successful transfer contexts were described as climates with opportunities to perform and peer support (Allen et al., 2015). Additionally, they provided similar situations and consequences (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). New insight was also provided about the role of

detractors who provided motivation to transfer skills, and environmental triggers which revitalized the transfer of skills.

Building on Allen and colleagues (2014) study on transfer enablers and barriers, this study provided a new and important line of direction for sport psychology researchers. The direct study of transfer contexts is uncharted territory with most studies only having a cursory identification and discussion of the possible transfer contexts, such as the classroom, employment and social relationships (Allen et al., 2014; Jones & Lavallee, 2009; Weiss et al., 2014). In previous discussion of transfer contexts within the sport-based life skills literature, there often appears inherent assumptions and what skills can be further developed and transferred in the classroom (Turnnidge et al., 2014). Often, the classroom is assumed to be an undeniably fertile ground for the seeds of transfer to grow. This is not necessarily true. Martinek and colleagues (2012) recently outlined specific conditions that teachers and administrators should satisfy in classroom settings for skills to be transferred from sport. In the current study, insights were gained about how the individual can perceive the transfer context. Participants made meta-cognitive links of similar environmental factors, working conditions, and motivational climates. While some participants were able to identify links between sport and school, one participant went as far to state that he was unable transfer skills and knowledge from the sport camp because he could not consciously and clearly link the challenging working climate of the camp to the easy, laidback climate of the classroom. Transfer does not occur in a vacuum and transfer contexts and not stable, constant environments. Similar to the way researchers are studying the characteristics of the youth sport context, transfer contexts need to be understood and examined as living, breathing organisms, with no two contexts being the same.

While previous research, in and out of sport, has provided a piecemeal analysis of these key factors influencing transfer, few of the previous studies provided the holistic understanding of sport-based life skills transfer that was provided by this investigation. In an exploratory fashion, this study presented these findings collectively, and was able to highlight the numerous individual and contextual factors that interact to help or hinder the transfer of life skills from the youth sport context to other life domains. Inherent in the discussion of life skills transfer and the interaction of the individual with their learning and transfer contexts is the link to ecological theories of youth development. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems model (1977; 1979) and Lerner's (2006) developmental systems theories assert that positive youth development occurs through the bi-directional relationship between the youth and the contexts he or she interacts with. As a result, both the person and the environment benefit.

Supporting the central interactive developmental premise of a number of youth development theories (Bronfenbrenner 1977; 1979; Lerner, 2006), it was evident that participants were influenced by their learning environment and that in turn influenced how they approached their future environments. For example, campers learned how to deal with adversity in the camp environment, and for many, this served as a catalyst to seek and approach new challenging endeavors, such as serving in the military or competing in endurance sports. Furthermore, the evolution of motivational orientations was noticeable because motivation was influenced by the wrestling camp, and subsequently help to guide former campers in the way they approached and perceived future life experiences. For example, one former camper described the growth of an ego-orientation from the camp director quote that "you can outwork 90% of all American's." This former camper believed that he learned to outwork others to be successful, and subsequently outside the camp discussed how he viewed detractors of his business

aspirations as motivation and someone to outwork to be successful. Another camper also recalled this quote and remembered the remainder of the quote that “you can be in the top 10%.” He discussed having gained a motivation for personal improvement and a desire to help others grow from the camp experience. This suggests that while participants had very similar experiences, the experiences were perceived differently. Thus, when studying life skills transfer, it appears beneficial and necessary to gain an understanding of what the individual athlete brings to the sport context, how they perceive the contextual factors and coaching approaches, and understand these interactions changes over time to influence life skills transfer (Bronfenbrenner 1977; 1979).

Ultimately, the process-oriented study findings emphasize the importance of individual agency and the active role of the individual in the process of life skills transfer. The individual is not disembodied from the youth sport experience and subsequent experiences outside of the camp. In this study, the individual and his psychological make-up and interpretations continually interacted with context to contribute to the psychosocial outcome of life skills transfer. How each participant interpreted the camp structure and coaching approaches and subsequent learning, influenced how he transferred skills and dispositions from the camp to other life domains.

For this reason, the individual is the constant factor and component throughout the heuristic model of the process of life skills transfer. The dualistic idiographic and nomothetic qualitative methodologies used in this study helped to emphasize the continual interaction of individual and context in psychosocial development. The role of key coaching approaches, sport program features and transfer context features in the process of life skills transfer were best understood when viewed through the narrative and identity lens and motivational orientations of the participants in the study. For example, it was interesting that “underdogs”, perceived the

camp structure and coaching approaches were perceived to develop a transferrable ego motivational orientation and elitist mentality. While, for “the perfect targets”, the structure and coaching were perceived to develop a transferrable task-mastery orientation and confidence in helping lead and develop others. As a context for life skill development and transfer, youth sport needs to be understood through the lens of both learners and program coaches/organizer.

Coaching life skills is a critical area of study (e.g., Gould & Carson, 2008; Turnnidge et al., 2014), but to gain the complete understanding of life skills transfer, the learner’s perspective must be considered. How an athlete interprets the learning and development of a life skill will influence how the life skill is transferred, irrespective of how a coach explicitly or implicitly intends to teach and coach a skill for sport and life. **Structure of the youth sport context.**

While support was provided for the notion that transfer resides in and depends on the learner (Bereiter, 1995), this does not imply that ‘what’ is being learned is unimportant. The findings from this study suggest that what is being taught, the applicability of what is being taught, and how it is being taught is of critical importance to life skills transfer. Petitpas and colleagues (2005) emphasized the need to identify internal assets to teach in a life skill program that are applicable to multiple life domains, and the participants in the current study highlighted how the intrapersonal work-ethic based skills and dispositions taught at the camp were highly applicable to many life situations. Sport psychology and youth development recommendations have also indicated an “appropriate” and “safe” environment is necessary to facilitate PYD through sport (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002). The results from this study support this finding in that the camp director and staff demonstrated their care for the athlete. However, the camp also provided a highly challenging situation that pushed young people beyond where they thought they could go.

The environment in this youth sport camp was not only supportive but was reported to be challenging and stressful. It was interesting that many of the transfer examples described by participants were in challenging contexts that offered opportunities to overcome adversity. In fact, one participant went as far to say that “there’s so many ideas that don’t really apply to people unless you’re in that tough situation” (Louie). This not only highlights the importance of the motivational, emotional and social climate in the youth sport learning context (Fry & Gano-Overway, 2010), and the recommendation to make it applicable to the desired transfer contexts (e.g., classroom or workplace), but provides a potential explanation for why participants in this study developed a disposition to approach and seek challenges outside the camp. This link provides further evidence to support the notion that life skills transfer should be viewed as a process of ongoing change for the individual learner, even as they interact with transfer contexts outside of sport (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009).

As an important component of the personal guiding identity for success that was transferred by former campers was the belief in their ability to overcome any task or experience in life. The psychological growth following this difficult experience reflects the development of resilience, which has received significant recent attention in sport psychology literature. As a popular definition of resilience, Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000) defined the construct as a “dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity”(Luthar et al.,2000, p. 543). Fletcher and Sarkar (2012) found that resilience was critical in protecting world class athletes from the stressors they faced in their quest for success. In their grounded theory model, resilience was seen to encapsulate stressors, cognitive appraisal and meta-cognitions, psychological factors (positive personality, motivation, confidence, focus, perceived social support), and facilitative responses (Fletcher and Sarkar, 2012). This process

aligns with the experiences of former campers transferring their identity for success from the intensive wrestling camp. Participants believed that the wrestling camp was one of, if not the most challenging and stressful physical and psychological experience of their lives. When they were presented stressful situations following the camp, they appraised the newly encountered situation by comparing it to the camp, concluding that it was not as stressful as the camp and that they could overcome the challenge, succeed (most of the time) and subsequently continue to grow confidence in the value of the identity for success. These connections provide support for the notion that, under purposefully structured, stressful conditions, resilience can be developed in the youth sport setting, and transferred to other areas of life as a life skill or component of a personal guiding identity for success. While the systematic development of resilience has received little attention as a life skill in the sport psychology literature, it has been an area of interest across youth development research (e.g., Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Within the sport literature, mental toughness has however, been discussed as a life skill that can be developed in sport and transferred across domains (Gould, Carson, & Griffes, 2011). This study provides promising evidence to suggest that protective qualities can be developed in sport and transferred to life domains if the sport context is systematically designed and controlled, and if the individual participants are open and willing to accept the physical and psychological challenges presented.

On one side of the sport-based life skills literature, there is the contention that character or life skills are taught not caught in sport (Hodge, 1989). On the other side is the belief that life skills can implicitly be developed through participation in the sport context (e.g., Holt et al., 2008; Jones & Lavalley, 2009). Turnnidge and colleagues (2014) recently reviewed this discussion through a coaching lens and concluded that both explicit and implicit approaches can

be effective in developing life skills for transfer in young people. For the participants in this study, an intense, repetitive combination of experiential learning and direct teaching of life skills helped to “drill in” the learning, and facilitate the transfer of a personal guiding identity for success. Schön’s (1987) theory of experiential learning has received recent attention in the life skill literature (e.g., Jones & Lavalley, 2009), and with its emphasis on learning via personal experience, provides an important frame of reference for understanding the development and transfer of the personal guiding identity for success. Participants strongly believed that having the experience of applying the knowledge, skills, and dispositions in the camp was pivotal in helping them understand how and when to apply the assets outside of the camp, and ultimately, helping them believe that they actually possess and can use the assets.

While Schön (1987) argues against the direct instruction of knowledge and skills in his theory of experiential learning, the systematic role of instruction by the director and staff at the wrestling camp was viewed as a pivotal component of learning and transfer, alongside experiencing the messages. A number of effective coaching strategies were identified (e.g., stories, metaphors and examples), the most important feature appeared to be the “rote-repetition” of messages through both experience and direct teaching. To have life skills “ingrained” or “instilled” in participants is the goal for many researchers and practitioners in this field, and the wrestling camp provided an example of the value of using both explicit and implicit approaches to teaching transferrable life skills. As a result, it may be beneficial for the study and discussion of approaches to coaching life skills to move away from dichotomizing explicit and implicit learning, and seek to identify and learn from approaches, such as this wrestling camp, that emphasize the integration of direct teaching and experiential learning to “ingrain” life skills and knowledge in young athletes.

Psychological Explanations for Transfer

With its direct and detailed focus on the process of life skills transfer, this study was able to gain initial insight into what former athletes' believed were the psychological processes and explanations that helped or hindered the transfer. Schoenfeld (1999) has argued that the phenomena of transfer disappears when experimenters try to pin it down, while Haskell (1998) has stated that there is neither a short-cut approach to transfer or a step-by-step formula to produce learning transfer. With these complexities in mind, it is not possible to claim that a specific process for life skills transfer was established or outlined from these findings. Rather, this study sought to provide some possible explanations for how this process of life skill transfer from the sport context may occur. Examples of both behavioral (e.g., repetition or associationism) and cognitive (e.g., meta-cognitive, schema focused) approaches to explain the process of transfer (Leberman et al., 2006), were identified in the experiences of the 12 former campers. These explanations confirm the process of internalization and generalization of life skills, as described by Hodge et al., (2012), while extending the understanding of the possible conscious and subconscious processes that move an individual from internalization and generalization.

It appeared the behaviors and the foundation of the identity for success, such as hard work and discipline, were more likely to transfer using the linear, subconscious behavioral repetition. For example, transferring hard work from the camp to a physical construction job. It was notable that transfer schemas were identified by participants where participants made meta-cognitive links between environmental characteristics of adversity, competition or leadership, as well as physiological states and feelings. For example, when they were placed in challenging situations outside of the camp, some former campers made cognitive connections and relived memories of the adverse and challenging camp environment, and subsequently applied the

applicable skills and knowledge. The schema theory (Gagne et al., 1993) therefore appears to be one applicable theory that may help to explain how some athletes psychological process the transfer of life skills. Furthermore, self-efficacy or confidence appears to be a valuable disposition that was developed at the camp and guided the transfer of other knowledge, skills and dispositions following the camp. Inherent in the personal guiding identity for success is the belief that one is able to overcoming any challenge after the camp. Related to this, the camp director believing confidence was similar to a rubber band that continued to expand. Vealey (1988) argued that confidence was a quality that mediated the use of mental skills, and earlier research on the wrestling camp posited that confidence grew as psychological skills were used and applied inside the camp, and continued to grow following the camp (Driska et al., under review). The findings from this study suggest that confidence can also be a crucial mediator for life skills transfer. As participants use and apply skills in different contexts, and have success using the skills, they become more efficacious in their ability to use the skills in multiple domains, and the utility of the skills they possess. It must be noted that this study provided an exploratory glance at these explanations, and much more insight is needed. It is hoped however, that this investigation provides a step forward and a catalyst to the study of how and why individuals move from internalization to generalization of life skills.

The majority of research that has been conducted in life skill transfer has sampled athletes recently removed from their sporting experience (e.g., Camiré et al., 2012). Holt and colleagues (2008) appear to have conducted the only study that sampled adults who are a number of years removed from the sport experience. If life skills transfer is an on-going process (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009), it makes sense that sampling procedures continue to target former athletes who are well removed from their sport experience. This study was able to gain insight about

experiences of long-term transfer from participants who attributed psychological change to a youth sport experience up to 30 years ago, and notably, found that life skills transfer was different for participants based on directionality, timing and awareness.

First, for many of the participants, the most effective pathway occurred when they first applied the knowledge and skills to wrestling or other sports outside of the camp, had success applying the skills to sport, and then confidently applied those skills to other life domains away from sport. This makes sense in light of Perkins and Salomon's' (1992) contention that near transfer, in this case from one wrestling mat to another, requires less cognitive awareness and is 'easier' than far transfer. Far transfer from wrestling mat to other life domains which requires cognitive awareness to connect dissimilar situations (Perkins & Salomon, 1992). These finding provides further support for the notion that skill need to be used to be kept, and highlights the non-linear complexity of life skills transfer from sport to life. Far transfer is the goal for life skills transfer from sport, however, it appears valuable to provide multiple opportunities for individuals to use the skills in multiple sport and non-sport domains, to have skills get to their eventual desired domain. In fact, Haskell (1998) states that oftentimes training fails to transfer learning on any significant level, and sometimes produces transfer effects in the undesired domains. For example, participants in this study discussed the transfer of a strong work ethic in the employment domain, having detrimental effects on social relationships. In fact, evidence of far transfer to interpersonal domains such as relationships was less forthcoming from participants, supporting the notion that far transfer is difficult to achieve (Leberman et al., 2006; Perkins & Salomon, 1992). While the transfer of understanding and respecting others, and appreciating diversity were identified as being transferred by some participants, it was obvious that connections between the learning context and social relationships as transfer contexts, were

difficult to make. Through this exploration of the transfer effects of former athletes, it appears that researchers and practitioners in sport should continue to explore this near to far transfer continuum. In particular, there is a need to conceptualize what near and far transfer look like in relation to the life skill phenomenon, further define what near and far domains are realistic and desirable, and identify what are unrealistic or undesirable for the transfer of skills and knowledge from sport.

The timing of transfer has received little attention across all learning disciplines. The reason for this could be because of the importance of the individualized experience following learning. Specifically, it has been agreed that transfer is largely dependent on opportunities to use skills and knowledge (Allen et al., 2015; Burke & Hutchins, 2007), and thus, individuals are presented with opportunities at variable times following a learning experience. A number of the participants in this study discussed that the complete realization of the transferability of the life skills from the wrestling camp did not occur until opportunities to really apply the personal guiding identity for success, were presented in later life (e.g. during the economic recession, gaining a leadership position at work). Interestingly, while the skills were transferred, the conscious link to the camp was not made by all participants. For Joe, the realization of the “root” of his work ethic was through a J Robinson Intensive Wrestling Camp television commercial almost 30 years after the camp. Many researchers have argued that learners need to be aware of their transfer and understand when it is occurring (Gass, 1985; Leberman et al., 2006). However, Joe and others who transferred a strong identity from the camp, claimed to not be aware of the transfer of skills and knowledge because it was “just part of who I am.” Thus, if a guiding identity can be developed and transferred from a sport experience automatically into other domains, it raises the question of how much cognitive awareness the individual needs to have of

precisely what was transferred and how it was transferred. It would make sense that the answer to this question is dependent on the specific skills being transferred and, perhaps, the individual involved. For example, participants in this study discussed the automatic process of behavioral repetition for transferring behaviors such as physically working hard and being disciplined to rise early out of bed, without having to make conscious links to the camp. Again, this provides another reason for researchers in sport psychology to find ways to examine the various psychological explanations for learning transfer (see Leberman et al., 2006, for review).

Psychological and Sociological Implications of the Internal Focus for Success

The internal approach was characterized by the personal guiding identity for success, defined by a strong work ethic and a deep belief in one's ability to use that work ethic to overcome any task or experience in life, and guided by a personal motivational orientation that fueled the quest for success. This approach to success is referenced in research in sport psychology and more pointedly, motivational attribution theory. This theory suggest that attributing successes to effort as an internal, controllable factor can enhance pride and motivation, while alternatively, if one fails, internal attributions may cause an increase in shame (Weinberg & Gould, 2014; Weiner, 1985). It is interesting that examples of attributions for both success and failure were provided with attributions to the internal identity. Success-based stories fueled motivation and the identity for success. When attributions were shared for failure, the focus remained internal but instead of experiencing shame, participants discussed for an increase in personal responsibility and accountability to ultimately work harder next time and achieve success. It was through these examples that evidence was provided for the strength of the identity for success and commitment to working hard.

It was also interesting that individual campers developed, or refined dispositional achievement goal orientations through the camp that they transferred as a key component of their identity later in life. Based on Bourdieu's (1990) definitions of dispositions, Jones & Lavalley (2009) suggested that athletes enter a sport context with certain dispositions that are shaped and molded in the sport environment. It was clear in this study that participants viewed motivation and success through different lens and there were differences in the motivations that were developed and transferred as a result of the camp. Even though the camp director emphasized his focus on an effort-based camp evaluation system and some participants believed they learned and transferred a task-based motivation emphasizing effort and personal improvement, others believed they learned and transferred an outcome-based motivation based on competing and comparison to others (Nicholls, 1984).

While some research has investigated the motivational-climate and its influence on life skill development (Gould et al., 2012), this study was unique in that it explored how individuals develop or transfer dispositional motivational orientations from sport. Motivational orientations emerged as a differentiating component of the transferred personal guiding identity for success across former campers, and were seen to be influential in how success was viewed after the camp experience. Of particular interest, a commitment to understanding others and the development of leadership abilities was described by some participants who aligned with the task orientation. Adversely, a sense of elitism and commitment to outperforming others was described by some who aligned with the ego orientation. Ideally, a high achiever would have high task and high ego orientation and then use them appropriately to achieve success (Harwood, Hardy, & Swain, 2000). In this study, participants developed an ego orientation, coupled with a hard work ethic, and they believed that they were successful and confident using this approach.

It is interesting, but not surprising, that a number of participants developed a belief that hard work breeds success, grounded in the philosophy of meritocracy or a view of “a social world in which rewards go to people who deserve them due to their abilities, qualifications, and recognized achievements” (Coakley, 2015, p. 270). These former campers made inferences to being in an elite social group, where their ability to work hard and overcome obstacles was the reason for their success, and ultimately the reason that they are able to differentiate themselves over others. This discussion is topical, in light of much debate in sport sociology where researchers have discussed whether sport can facilitate personal development and empowerment (Coakley, 2011), and whether it has the potential to influence social change and transformation (Hartman & Kwauk, 2011). While these findings certainly suggest that sport can facilitate long-term psychological change, the sociological implications of these changes provide further insight in the power of the youth sport context, while raising further questions and potential concerns for some.

The psychological changes in the former athletes in this study emphasized a personal empowerment model, where sport was used as a tool to develop a meritocratic mindset in participants, and guide them to approach the social world with the belief that they deserve and achieve success because of their work ethic. Without a doubt, the participants believed that they benefited from, and valued the personal empowerment and identity transferred from the camp experience. However, they did identify downsides or pitfalls to this approach. Pointedly, these negative outcomes were related to the social interactions and relationships that were inversely impacted by the commitment to the work-ethic based identity. Examples were provided of sacrificing social relationships and ignoring family and friends in the quest for professional success.

The findings from this study provide further evidence to support the notion that sport can help to facilitate positive youth development, and move beyond a deficit-based model of youth development (Larson, 2000). Sport has been viewed by some as facilitating the process of differential association, where youth are provided an avenue to stay out of trouble and decrease interaction with delinquent others (Weinberg & Gould, 2014). In this study, the participants' reflected on personal empowerment and the transfer of a pro-social identity rather than gaining transferable skills and knowledge to help participants avoid or dissociate from delinquency. Alternatively, some sport-based youth development researchers have explored moral behavior and development of young people through sport (e.g., Shields & Bredemeier, 2005). The participants in this study did not directly discuss what is right and what is wrong, the development of these morals, and its transfer from the wrestling camp, rather focused more on their internal psychological development that put them in a position to be successful in sport and life.

These findings aligned with the development of both personal and social responsibility. This is relevant, considering Hellison's (2003; 2011) TPSR model has been adopted and effectively applied in the sport setting. There was evidence that the camp sends two messages. First, that campers gain a belief that individual success and achievement gained through hard work. Second, that campers gain a greater understanding of helping others, respecting others and appreciating individuals from diverse backgrounds. It was interesting that participants were mixed in what they personally took from the camp. For some participants, this social responsibility was a valuable long-term outcome from the camp. Conversely, for others, the inherent importance of winning in sport and the promotion of internally-based formula for

success, guided a focus on personal responsibility that outweighed the focus on these social factors.

Notably, this study showed that the focus on personal responsibility clearly aligns with the inherent goals and quest for success in sport. Through the combination of experiential learning and direct teaching participants developed an internally-focused identity of work ethic, confidence, the ability to overcome obstacles and motivation to succeed in the individual, combat sport of wrestling. They then transferred that same identity to other areas of life, with the result being a continued focus on being a personally responsible and empowered contributor to society. This does not necessarily mean that the same combination of coaching approaches would facilitate social responsibility. Holt and colleagues (2008) have shown that the social interactions were the most important youth sport experiences in transferring interpersonal skills to other life domains, but no other research has explored how interpersonal and an enhanced social understanding are developed and transferred as life skills from the general sport context. As is highlighted through Hellison's (2003; 2011) TPSR hierarchy, there is increased complexity when attempting to teach and transfer social responsibility. The structure and coaching approaches in the sport context do appear to have the ability to facilitate personal and social responsibilities. For researchers and practitioners, however, this will not happen automatically. There is a need to understand precisely which approaches and messages influence which developmental outcome. Embedded within ecological developmental models is the critical influence of socio-cultural environments and perspectives (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1979; Lerner et al., 2006). As highlighted in the heuristic model for life skills transfer, the socio-cultural context is hypothesized to influence what, how and why life skills transfer occurs. There are a number of important points to raise about the influence of society and culture throughout the

process of transferring life skills from the wrestling camp to life domains for the 12 participants in this study, as well as its importance in the future study of life skills transfer.

The socio-cultural context of the sport of wrestling did appear to influence what was being taught in the wrestling camp and how it was being learned and transfer by the youth campers. The personal responsibility focus was a key feature of the coaching approach to facilitate life skills transfer, and was intricately embedded and integrated into the youth sport wrestling camp. The head coach and participants believed that the personal guiding identity for success were an ideal fit for the nature of wrestling, and it was this collectively representation that was transferred. Participants viewed life as a challenge to overcome and the identity would produce this success. Within the United States culture, the promotion of individualism through the camp appeared to match society's view on independence and personal responsibility being the key to success (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), and appeared to be something that was easy and appropriate for youth participants to "buy in" to. Furthermore, the sport of wrestling is known as sport for "warriors" and an individual sport that tests psychological and physical abilities. Aligning with this narrative, some participants went as far to describe their developmental journey through the lens of being a "warrior". It was interesting that seven of the 12 participants sought military careers and experiences following the wrestling camp, and that these participants could clearly identify the link between the developed skills at the camp and their usefulness and transferability to personal success in the military. The formula of an individual sport, in an individualistic society, with a promotion of an internal formula for success therefore appeared critical in facilitating the transfer of life skills for the participants involved in this study.

These findings highlight how sport can act as a socio-cultural vehicle that reflects and reinforces the way society is structured and functions. Specifically, the functionalist theory states

that all social worlds are structured around shared values (Coakley, 2015). Through this youth sport experience, young wrestlers were exposed to a worldview where personal responsibility was seen to be the key to society functioning effectively, fueled by the meritocratic belief that if one works hard, they will be successful in life. It was through a values-based coaching approach, alignment with wrestling as an individualistic sport, and a curriculum based on personal responsibility that this youth sport experience helped participants gain a view and perspective of the social world and a formula to apply to that world.

Again, this approach appears to be especially salient in the United States socio-cultural environment. This is evident through links to the sociological theories and concepts of the protestant work ethic, muscular Christianity, and the American Dream. The protestant ethic emphasizes hard work, thrift, frugality and efficiency in one's personal effort, and is ultimately viewed as the process to achieve eternal salvation (Weber, 1905). Sociologists have considered the protestant ethic to be a cultural force that has historically influenced a wide realm of social behaviors and institutions, and became a dominant social and cultural force that shaped American values and the nations institutions (Overman, 2011). In particular, the protestant ethic values link directly to the spirit of capitalism (Weber, 1905) and has been emphasized as a duty which benefits both the individual and society as a whole. Of particular interest, it has been argued the this work ethic also directly aligns with the spirit of sport (Overman, 2011). This notion is supported by the findings from this study. Youth sport participants believed that they transfer a personal guiding identity for success that emphasized an unshakeable belief that their hard work ethic will guide them to success in sport and life. This provides evidence for the contention that an "American youth sport ethic" exists, aligned with the influential protestant

ethic, which continues to inculcate the traditional values of work ethic and achievement as the predominant developmental focus (Overman, 2011).

The transferred personal guiding identity for success in this study was further defined by consistent links between the physical and psychological ability to overcome challenges, thus aligning with the values of muscular Christianity. Muscular Christianity emphasizes the goal of maintaining a vigorous condition of the body to contribute to good health, good morals, and right feelings in religious matters (Websters Dictionary, 1913), and is used as a tool in “values-centered” youth sport (Kidd, 2006). While it was not the purpose of this study to evaluate the sociological and religious focus on the wrestling camp, the participants in this study discussed their transferred muscular Christian values and how they learned morals of personal responsibility through the vigorous physical challenge of the camp. A small number of participants explicitly identified and recalled the discussion of religion at the camp and how the camp confirmed and reinforced Christian beliefs. Overall, it appeared that linking life skill development to religious beliefs can help to facilitate the transfer of skills from sport to life, because sport can provide a context where traditional values of conditioning the body and it’s link to positive moral behaviors can be experientially developed or reinforced.

The American Dream exists as “a hopeful vision of boundless opportunities for individuals to succeed economically and live a happy life based on consumption” (Coakley, 2015, p. 270). Coakley (2015) states that with the American Dream and Meritocracy work together to create a belief that opportunities exist and success is achieved only when people have the ability and the work ethic to be successful. It therefore makes sense that sport, with its inherent competition, and promotion of a developmental focus on working hard and having confidence to overcome challenges, can create a transferrable mindset that guides individuals to

“identify winners like them as deserving individuals who have outperformed others in a natural process of individual competition and achievement” (Coakley, 2015, p. 270). It is not often that critical sociological perspectives are integrated with sport psychology research related to the psychological development of athletes. Ultimately, while not the purpose of the study, the findings can be perceived as an example of the effectiveness of using the sport of wrestling in US culture to promote values of hard work and attributions for success. It is not the purpose of this discussion to take a socio-political stance on the role of sport in society, however, these issues must be considered as sport continues to be used as a vehicle to guide the development of personal identities. As sport permeates US society (Danish et al., 1994) and is used and promoted as an excellent environment for PYD (e.g., Petitpas et al., 2005), researchers should continue to consider how the development and transfer of life skills from sport may guide or mold views of society and perceptions of motivation and success in society.

Implications for Promoting Life Skill Development through Sport

The intensive wrestling camp, which served as the context for this study, was a very unique youth sport environment that helped to facilitate life skill development and transfer. With the focus on the individual journey of psychology change, it is not the goal of this section to promote a replication of this camp environment to facilitate life skill transfer. There were, however, a number of insights gained from the former participants of this camp that help to provide implications for facilitating the process of life skills transfer from sport to other life domains. First, the individual learner or athlete is a critical variable in any quest to teach life skills through sport. In this study, the camp director discussed the need for individual to first know themselves before they can change. This is important for coaches and practitioners to understand when trying to teach transferrable life skills. Assessments rather than assumptions

should be made to understand individual learners in the sport context. However, it appears that this is seldom done. One exception is the high school leadership program implemented by Gould and his colleagues (e.g., Gould & Voelker, 2010), where their captains training program begins by getting the athletes to understand themselves.

Second, there has been much recent discussion on the values of explicit versus implicit teaching of life skills through sport (Turnnidge et al., 2014). From the perspectives of the participants in this study, the combined approach of the direct teaching of a set of skills with opportunities to use and apply the skills in the sport context was an effective approach. This facilitated a continual repetition of messages which helped learning get “drilled in.” Coaches should continually seek to find ways to teach life skills through repetition and a combination of direct and experiential techniques. Additionally, the value of adversity and challenging situations should be considered. Bell, Hardy and Beatie (2013) and Collins and MacNamara (2012) have promoted the use of structured challenges for athletic talent development, and it appears that the use of sport-based adversity that is connected to life’s challenges can be a powerful way to teach transferrable life skills. Participants believed that they transferred an ability to overcome any challenge in life, because they had the wrestling camp to reflect on as a benchmark for their ability to overcome adversity. Great caution must be taken with the use of adversity, with this coach employing experience and numerous strategies to ensure the adversity was reasonable for youth athletes. Providing too much adversity could lead to motivation failures, low confidence and burnout.

Third, the literature in coaching life skills has consistently recommended the teaching young people skills and internal assets that are applicable for other areas of life (e.g., Danish et al., 2004; Petitpas et al., 2005). The findings from this investigation support this notion, but

provide interesting insight into the interrelatedness of skills and learning a collective set of skills and dispositions. By learning a set of skills that were based around work ethic and overcoming adversity, the participants developed a guiding identity for success. Coaches and practitioners should seek to collectively package the life skills that they teach as an identity or mindset that athletes can use in sport and in other life domains. If coaches can guide the development of a set of skills and emphasize the growth of a formula or identity for success, it appears that participants are able to “buy in” to the change and transfer it to multiple domains.

Fourth, when deciding on and defining the life skills that are being taught and developed in a youth sport program, coaches and practitioners need to link these to the overall desired outcomes for the youth participants. Specifically, if personal responsibility and personal empowerment is the goal, internal skills and attributions (e.g., discipline, dedication) should be promoted. If social responsibility is the goal, interpersonal skills and a social understanding (e.g., communication, understanding diversity) should be promoted. Alongside this, coaches and practitioners should consider and be aware of the sociological implications for what they are teaching. For example, teaching a “hard work always breeds success” mindset may promote a stronger transferrable belief in “meritocracy” and the “American Dream.”

Finally, life skills transfer is a long-term process. While transfer may be more simple immediately after a sport experience, this study provided evidence to suggest that transferrable skills may be dormant in some individuals and they require opportunities to use and apply skills. Attempting to link similar environmental conditions (e.g., adversity) in life domains outside of sport back to sport domains, may help former athletes to transfer life skills. A number of coaching approaches appeared to help participants link environments in this study. For example, the camp director provided stories of him living the messages, as well as detailed stories,

metaphors, and had counselors share life stories that highlighted how the camp context relates to other life domains. On a more interesting note, former campers described environmental triggers (e.g., TV commercial, listening to audio tapes, hearing others discuss the camp) helped them become aware that the camp was responsible for their personal guiding identity for success, and for some, refreshed and strengthened the transfer of the identity. Boosters or triggers could be used by sport programs to help former participants remember the role of the sport in their development, and hopefully revitalize the transfer of skills or knowledge from sport.

Methodological Insights

This study used a phenomenographic research approach to understand how former athletes of a wrestling camp experienced life skills transfer. In using this approach, the study was designed and conducted following the guidelines of methodology coherence (Holt & Tamminen, 2010; Mayan, 2009; Morse, 1999). This study used a non-dualistic ontological perspective, with the view that there is not a real, objective world and there is not a real, subjective world (Barnard et al., 1999). To understand the complex process of life skills transfer, it was necessary to utilize the existing, general truths about transfer, alongside the subjective, unique experiences of former athletes living the transfer. The previous research in life skills and learning transfer was used in this study to provide a valuable objective framework to understand the key factors that influence life skills transfer (e.g., individual psychological characteristics, sport program features, etc.). Then, individual perceptions and experiences were used to provide valuable subjective insight into how the process of life skills transfer was experienced by former athletes. Qualitative research in sport psychology should continue to seek methodological coherence. The phenomenographic approach, with its focus on identifying similarities and differences in

teaching and learning experiences appears to be a useful approach to achieve this goal (Barnard, et al.1999; Ornek, 2008).

The study of athletes' perceptions of life skills development and life skills transfer in sport is still in its infancy. As a result, most studies have used retrospective interviews to understand if, what, and how life skills have been developed and transferred. One of the major inherent assumptions with this line of research is the belief that life skill development and transfer is occurring and that the athletes can explain and describe it. This study was not free of those guiding assumptions. To attempt to address this issue, this study obtained letters from former campers or their parents that indicated the wrestling camp was the reason for life skill development and transfer. This provided a self-selected sample of former athletes who believed they had experienced life skills transfer and had begun to describe it in their letters. This study used a unique approach that moved away from "selecting from the parishioners and adopting a slightly more neutral stance", to moving "directly to the choir" (A. Smith, personal communication, February 12, 2015). Thus, the assumptions with this sampling approach are that participants have accurately assessed and translated their experiences of psychological change, and that these changes conceptually align with the study of life skills transfer. Furthermore, this sampling approach assumes that the participants were honest and truthful in their reflections and perceived change.

As this study was conducted with assistance from J Robinson and his camp staff. This approach was effective as it provided an opportunity to talk to the "choir" and gain detailed insight of individual developmental experiences. However, it is possible that individuals participated because they were aware that J Robinson provided their letter to the researcher, and thus viewed the process in a more positive light and provided certain responses to help the camp.

To address this potential sampling bias, the interview guide discussed life skills transfer in a balanced way, and probed for both positive and negative experiences and outcomes.

Furthermore, the focus of the study has remained on the phenomenon of life skills transfer and not the intensive camp and its effectiveness. Future research in life skills transfer should continue to seek innovative ways to identify and sample participants, and understand the associated assumptions with each approach.

Participants in this study described themselves through different narrative lens, including the underdog, the perfect target, and the warrior. These narrative lenses appeared to help participants frame their learning and experiences, and were valuable ways to help guide the data analysis process. The storied self or narrative, “helps people define what is salient about their lives, what differentiates them from others, and how they might make choices” (Heilman, 2005, p. 125), and this was particularly evident in the cases of former athletes reflecting on their transfer of life skills from sport. While this is not a common approach in research investigating life skill development in sport, the use of narrative theory and research approach appears to be insightful opportunity for future research in life skill transfer. Narrative theory challenges the notion that there is a “natural and obvious separation of self and society” (McGannon & Spense, 2010, p. 8), and that the self and identity are shaped by specific socio-cultural contexts (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000). Thus, this approach aligns well with the interactive focus of life skills transfer. Of particular interest, Carless and Douglas (2013) have recently examined how sport culture guides professional athletes’ narratives. They found that athletes shape their narrative to live the part of athlete, resist the part of athlete, or “act” the part of athlete. Carless and Douglas’ (2013) findings support the findings from this study in that, athletes in the sport context perceive different meaning from the sport experience and that translates to a different approach to life

outside of sport (e.g., an elitist mentality versus a leadership mentality). Research in life skill transfer should therefore continue to seek new ways to understand how individuals experience life skills transfer. It appears that the use of narrative theory and methods could be one of these useful approaches.

Based on the findings from this study, and with this insight gained from previous studies, it is also important to provide a list of practical recommendations for youth sport coaches and administrators to help to facilitate athletes' development and transfer of life skills from sport to other life domains. Following the practical recommendation, a series of guiding questions for coaches are provided.

Practical recommendations for coaches.

1. Coaches should be aware of their own personal philosophy and coaching philosophy, related to what factors contribute to success in sport and life. The life skills that coaches' promote should be relatable and valued by the coach/es promoting them.
2. Coaches should identify specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions that contribute to success in sport and life, as well as identifying a holistic picture or vision of what they believe is an identity for success in sport and life.
3. Coaches need to understand that individual athletes enter a sport program with an existing psychological makeup and previous life experiences that will influence how their sport program and coaching will be experienced and interpreted.
4. Coaches should seek to have their program structured to intentionally teach transferrable life skills, and have athletes experience using and applying the assets in the sport context.

5. Athletes need to be able to connect their learning in sport and its applicability in other life domains. There needs to be environmental similarities and athletes need to have opportunities to use the skills in other life domains.
6. Confidence is critical for athletes to transfer assets from sport to life.
7. To help the transfer of life skills from sport to life domains, athletes benefit from making connections between what they learned in the sport environment and what they are experiencing in the transfer environments outside of sport.

Guiding questions for coaches.

You are a coach who wants to have a long-term positive impact on your athletes' lives.

Envision your current athletes in thirty years from now.

1. Identify the specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions that you believe help these former athletes achieve success in life outside of sport.
2. Do you believe that success in life results from one taking a personal responsibility and individualistic focus? Or from taking a social responsibility and collectivist focus? Or a combination of both?
3. Describe in detail the personal identity and personal philosophy that helps your former athlete be successful in life outside of sport.

Now bring yourself back to your current program and coaching approach, today. Use the previously identified specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions that you believe help athletes achieve success in life outside of sport,

1. What exercises and coaching activities can you use to get to know each of your athletes individually at the onset of the youth sport program? Seek to understand:

- a. Activities and interests outside of sport: Identify life domains that athletes may be able to transfer assets
 - b. Motivation: Identify whether athletes are motivated to learn, and whether they are motivated by personal improvement, outcomes, or a combination of both.
2. How can you explicitly coach the knowledge, skills and dispositions to help your athletes' produce success in sport?
3. How can you explicitly coach the knowledge, skills and dispositions to help your athletes' produce success in sport?
 - a. What specific coaching approaches can you use to teach these assets?
 - b. What rules and regulations can you have in your program to teach these assets?
 - c. Is your sport an individual or team sport? How does the nature of your sport influence the assets that you are trying to coach? (E.g., If it is an individual sport? Can you realistically coach teamwork?)
4. Where are the best life domains (e.g., school, work) for your athletes to use and transfer the assets you are coaching?
 - a. What connections to these life domains can you make when you are coaching in sport?
 - b. When can you make these connections?
5. What opportunities can you provide your athletes to use these assets in sport?
 - a. What opportunities can you provide your athletes to use these assets in relevant life domains outside of sport?

- b. How can you send former athletes reminders or boosters of the life skills you attempted to coach and how you coached them?
- c. How can you promote reflective discussion on their life skill development in your former athletes, to facilitate transfer?

Limitations and Future Research

No research study goes without its limitations. Inherent in the design of this study was the assumption that there are a general set factors that influence the process of life skills transfer from sport to other life domains (e.g., individual, program design, coaching strategies, transfer context strategies). With a paucity of research in sport-based life skills transfer, there is not an abundance of evidence to confirm that these factors undeniably contribute to the transfer process, and thus, risks were involved in focuses on these factors in the interview and analysis process. However, through the integration of research from other learning transfer disciplines, there was sufficient evidence to suggest that these general categories are in-fact influential, and thus were used as guiding categories for the open-coding analysis. While the safest option for this study would been to merely confirm the factors involved in the process of life skills transfer, this study sought to push the boundaries and, accepting the assumptions mentioned above, sought detailed insight into the intricate details of each factor (e.g., what psychological characteristics influence transfer) and their role in the continuous interactive process of transferring life skills from sport.

In this study, findings were triangulated in order to support these core dimensions or categories involved in life skills transfer (e.g., Knowledge, Behaviors, and Intrapersonal Skills). As a result, across the 12 in-depth interviews with former campers and the in-depth interview with the camp director, there are an abundance of thoughts and experiences that have been left out of the data analysis process. Thus, there is a great deal of detail about what was transferred

and how it transferred that was not completely presented in this analysis. Given this limitation of the study, future research could be conducted to further code and analyze the data to explore dynamics around the nature of specific transferred knowledge, skills, and dispositions. For example, each of the 13 intrapersonal skills could be analyzed further to identify similarities and differences across participants. Furthermore, a limitation to this study and to all researchers investigating life skill transfer, that operational definitions are lacking in this research area. The term 'life skills' has been clearly defined (e.g. Gould & Carson, 2008). However, the specific skills (e.g., behavioral, intrapersonal, cognitive, interpersonal), dispositions, and the concept of transfer have been discussed, but not explicitly defined. These terms were operationally defined in this study, but without clear and consistent definitions across studies investigating life skills in sport, research will not advance as productively as possible. This issue needs to be addressed.

It is vital to note that this study was not an evaluation of the J Robinson Intensive Wrestling Camp, and did not seek to identify the effectiveness of this camp in teaching transferrable life skills. Rather, using a phenomenographic approach, this study centered on the phenomenon of life skills transfer (Marton, 1981; 1986). The wrestling camp provided a context that participants believed played an influential role in helping or hindering the occurrence of this phenomenon. Alongside this, it is also vital to note that this study is not attempting to claim that all campers from the intensive camp will, or have experienced life skills transfer. The sample in this study were self-selected based on the belief that they did experience psychological change or life skills transfer as a result of participation in the wrestling camp. Again, this focus was on this sample because of their perceived experience with the life skills transfer phenomenon. This sample was selected to provide the most detailed insight about the life skills phenomenon and was designed to generalize to all former campers or youth sport participants. Thus, it can be

considering a limitation that the participants, for the most part, had positive experiences of life skills transfer. As a result, important individual or contextual factors may not have been discussed in this study that hinder one's ability to transfer knowledge, skills and dispositions from sport to other life domains. While future research is needed to extend the knowledge base on what, how and why life skills transfer occurs for those who believe it happened, research would also benefit from exploring perceptions and experiences of those who believe that life skills transferred failed, or did not occurred as a result of a sport experience.

It is important to address issues of the generalizability and transferability of findings. The participants in this study transferred an internal identity for success from a camp that used an individual sport to promote transferrable life skills. It is important to caution that individual and team sports may provide variable frameworks and contexts for transferring life skills. Holt and colleagues (2008) discussed the transfer of social skills from a team-based soccer youth experience and this study discussed the transfer of intrapersonal skills and dispositions from an individual-based wrestling youth experience, Caution should therefore be taken in generalizing these findings to other sports, aside from wrestling, and other youth sport camps that do not have the same systematic design and coaching approaches. There should also be caution in the generalizability across genders. As highlighted earlier in the discussion, the interaction of a promoted internal guiding identity for success, philosophical alignment with muscular Christian focus, an individual sport, within an individualistic culture, appeared to facilitate life skills transfer for the 12 male participants. With this strong socio-cultural influence and gender-based ideals, the author posits that the developmental experience could be vastly different for young females. It is necessary that future research considers the sociocultural context youth sport programs exist in and create, and examine life skill transfer with the understanding the particular

sport and society culture, and participant gender may influence if, how and why skills, knowledge and dispositions may transfer from sport to life domains.

For this reason, it is the researcher's belief that this study raised more questions than it provided answers. The process of life skills transfer is very complex and individualized and as noted by researchers who study transfer, the phenomenon is often difficult to pin point and study (Schoenfeld, 1999). The current study, while highlighting the process of life skills transfer, should be viewed as the first of hopefully many studies that explicitly and directly explore life skills transfer as a phenomenon. This study was only able to provide a cursory glance at the possible psychological explanations for transfer (Leberman et al., 2006) as they related to life skills. In fact, using the phenomenographic approach guiding by an individual's experiences, this study was limited in its ability to gain in-depth understanding of the detailed specifics of psychological processes for change. Each possible explanation (e.g. Shema theory or Cognitive Apprenticeships) are worthy of being phenomenon themselves, and the broader focus on the holistic process of life skills transfer negated the detailed analysis of each explanation. Future research should continue to explore these explanations, in particular, the Schema theory, which appeared relevant and applicable to athletes who make cognitive connections to their various environments to facilitate transfer. Furthermore, the directionality, timing and awareness of transfer were discussed in this study (Leberman et al., 2006; Perkins & Salomon, 1992), and shed new light on sport psychology literature, related to how life skills are actually transferred. Again, this study only provided initial insight into these transfer dimensions, with their continued study being imperative to dissect the complexity of life skills transfer.

The interview and analytical process of creating narrative stories for the individual participants provided interesting insight into how one views themselves and an experience from

a number of years ago. As noted previously, participants viewed themselves through a specific narrative lens that guided their view of life skills transfer and identity development (Heilman, 2005). While these narrative lenses provided interesting insight into how the individuals perceived the role of the camp in their lives, it is possible that perceptions may have been subject to attributional bias. For example, participants who have achieved success in life, and may have inaccurately attributed success to the camp because that was the context of conversation in the interview. While interview questions probed about other developmental experiences, this limitation must be recognized. Additionally, some participants went to the camp around 30 years ago. Thus, the possibility of memory recall issues must be recognized. The researcher attempted to elicit memories by sending the letter prior to the interview, but there is a possibility that participants were not accurate in the memories of the camp and the effect that it had.

Finally, while sport psychology and sport sociology are sometimes viewed as competing and contrasting areas of study in sport research, this study highlighted the importance of the interdisciplinary implications for life skill transfer research. If research in this domain is going to continue to examine the interaction between an individual, their learning context and the transfer contexts, both psychological and sociological theoretical considerations are needed. This study pointed to the link between the development of a psychological personal guiding identity for success and its fit for some participants with the sociological ideals of meritocracy. While researchers such as Jay Coakley (2011; 2015) have been challenged the role of sport for youth development and its role in society, an understanding and consideration of these opinions strengthens sport psychology research. These connections should be continued to be considered and possibly directly studied in future research in life skill development and transfer.

Conclusion

There is a growing body of evidence that sport can develop beneficial skills and behaviors for young people to use in multiple life domains (Gould & Westfall, 2013), but few studies have examined how and why this long-term psychological change occurs (Camiré, 2014). This study found that participants learned and developed knowledge, behaviors, skills and dispositions from an intensive wrestling camp. Participants then transferred these assets to other life domains collectively as a personal guiding identity for success. The transfer of this identity was influenced by individual psychological and autobiographical factors (e.g., openness to learning), program features and coaching approaches (e.g., experiential learning), and transfer context factors (e.g., opportunities to use skills). Possible explanations for the transfer of life skills were identified (e.g., meta-cognitive schema) and the transfer differed in directionality, timing and awareness. The process of life skills transfer is an individualized and participants varied in the way they remembered their experiences and used their identity for success in life outside the camp. There is no specific recipe to make life skills transfer happen for athletes, and in fact, transfer does not always occur as intended (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009). This study was able to scratch the surface to understand what the holistic, long-term process of life skill transfer looks like for former athletes. The process is complex. The insight gained from this study can provide a catalyst for the continued study of the factors and processes that influence life skills transfer. Ultimately, this can help researchers and practitioner use sport to positively influence participants in the long-term.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Consent Form

Former Youth Athletes Perceptions and Experiences after an Intensive Sport Camp
Research Participant Information and Participant Assent Form
Michigan State University
Department of Kinesiology

You are being asked to participate in a research project that explores former athletes' perceptions and experiences of the J Robinson intensive wrestling camp. Specifically, the study seeks to understand the experiences of those who attended the camp. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the research study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

The study is being conducted by Scott Pierce, under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Gould at Michigan State University. The purpose of the research study is to investigate the experiences of former camp participants since the camp, and the potential impact the camp has had on his/her life. You were selected as a participant in this study because you attended the wrestling camp and sent J Robinson a letter indicating that the camp had a positive influence on your life. From this study, the researchers hope to learn more about whether former campers believe they learned skills and knowledge from the camp, and if so, how they use this knowledge in their lives. Your participation in this study will involve participation in an in-depth interview.

If you agree to be in this study you will be asked to participate in one in-person or skype interview which will take approximately one hour. This will be conducted at a time most convenient for you. We will ask you a few questions about your memories of the camp and how the camp has influenced you in your life since the camp.

Your participation in this research study may contribute valuable feedback about the long-term impact of the wrestling camp. This research study also may provide valuable information to coaches, parents, and athletes about how to develop psychological skills in youth athletes for both sport and other areas of life.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

The data for this project will be kept confidential. The interview will be tape recorded for accuracy. Once all the interviews have been transcribed the tape recordings will be erased. The only access to the tape recorded interviews will be the Researchers and Research Staff involved in the study and the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program (MSU HRPP) at Michigan State University. The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings and presented to the J Robinson camp staff. The identities of all research participants will remain anonymous to everyone outside of the researchers and MSU HRPP.

Participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to say no to participating in the

study. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

Your participation in this research study would be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions concerning your participation in this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury please contact the principal investigator, Dr. Dan Gould at (drgould@msu.edu; IM Circle, Room 210, 308 W. Circle, East Lansing, MI 48824-1049; 517-432-0175) or Scott Pierce (pierce79@msu.edu; IM Circle, Room 209, 308 W. Circle, East Lansing, MI 48824-1049; 517-348-4440).

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at Olds Hall, 408 West Circle Dr Rm 207, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

DOCUMENTATION OF CONSENT.

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to allow you to participate in this research study.

Signature

Date

You agree to be audio-taped for this research project. ☐ YES ☐ NO

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

Appendix B. Information Letter

Dear _____,

My name is Scott Pierce. I am a doctoral student at Michigan State University and am conducting my dissertation research project on the J Robinson Intensive Wrestling Camp. I have received your contact information from the J Robinson camp staff, and am hoping that you may be interested in helping out with the research project.

Specifically, you were selected as a participant in this study because you attended the wrestling camp and sent J Robinson a letter indicating that the camp had a positive influence on your life

The purpose of the research study is to investigate the experiences of former camp participants since the camp, and the potential impact the camp has had on their lives. From this study, we hope to learn more about whether former campers believe they learned skills and knowledge from the camp, and if so, how they use this knowledge in their lives.

Your participation in this study will involve participation in in-depth interview. If you agree to be in this study you will be asked to participate in one on in-person or skype interview which will take approximately one hour. This will be conducted at a time most convenient for you. We will ask you a few questions about your memories of the camp and how the camp has influenced you in your life since the camp.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please feel free to respond to this email or call me (517-348-4440). I will then seek to set up a time for the interview.

Thank you for your time, I look forward to hearing from you.

Scott Pierce, MS.
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Appendix C. Former Camper Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Letter reflection

1. Having reviewed the letter that you sent to J Robinson, what memories does it evoke?
What thoughts, feelings, and emotions does it evoke?
2. Why did you choose to write the letter to J Robinson?

Intensive Wrestling Camp Reflection

Grand Tour Question: Think back to the J Robinson wrestling camps that you attended and describe the wrestling camp experience.

1. Do you think the camp impacted you as a wrestler/athlete? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. Did you go to other wrestling camps? Did they influence you?
3. Do you think the J Rob camp experience has impacted your life since? If so, how? If not, why not?
4. What other life events, experiences and activities have impacted your life? Have they impacted your life in the same way the J Rob camp has? Why or why not?
5. How are these events similar or different to the wrestling camp? Why do you think the camp had such an influence versus other events in your life?

Life Skill Learning and Transfer

If learning from the camp has been identified by the participant:

Grand Tour Question: What assets and/or characteristics do you remember learning from the camp that have helped you in your life since the camp?

(For each asset/characteristic (e.g., discipline), the researcher will ask the following series of questions that address the process life skill learning and transfer):

1. Please define the asset/characteristic?
2. Do you believe that you had the asset/characteristic prior to camp?
3. How did you learn the asset/characteristic at the camp?
4. How do/have you used the asset/characteristic after the camp?
5. Is the asset/characteristic important in your life today? If yes, why?
6. What program features and coaching factors helped you use the asset/characteristic in your life since the camp?
7. How did you know when to use the asset/characteristic in your life since the camp?
8. How did you know how to use the asset/characteristic in your life since the camp?
9. Are there any personal characteristics that have helped you use the asset/characteristic in your life since the camp? If so, what and why do you think this is?
10. Are there any life events that have helped you used the asset/characteristic in your life since the camp? If so, what and why do you think this is?
11. How long did it take you to use the asset/characteristic outside of the camp? Why do you think this is?
12. In what life domains (e.g., work, family) have you used the asset/characteristic? What things in that domain has helped/not help you use asset/characteristic

Complete Learning Reflections

Grand Tour Question: This study is interested in learning if and how the J Rob camp might have taught participants or provided experiences that were used later in their lives. Did you learn anything in the camp that stayed with you and was used in the years after camp?

1. How would you describe yourself as a “learner” prior to the camp?
2. How would you describe yourself as a “learner” now?

- a. If there was a difference between the description of yourself as a “learner”, what caused this difference? What role did the camp play in this difference?
3. What do you remember most about the camp environment? What impact has that had on your life?
4. What do you remember most about the camp director? What impact has your interactions with him had on your life?
5. What is the most important things, if any, that you learned from the camp that you use in your life today?
6. The camp claims to teach the J7 (hard work, dedication, discipline, sacrifice, accountability, responsibility, and service). Are these assets and characteristics that you have used in any areas of your life since the camp? What and how?

Cross-Examination

We have talked a lot about the positive influence of the camp on your life, however, now I want to ask you some questions from a different perspective. There are some researchers and critics who suggest that sport doesn't always have the positive effect on people, and might argue that the J Rob camp couldn't have this influence that you have suggested. How would you respond to this?

1. What impact have other life events, including sports participation had on you, in relation to these assets/characteristics? Have other life events had the same impact as the J Rob camp? Are there any other life events that have taught you similar skills or lessons? Why/why not?
2. What program features and coaching factors that did not help you in your life since the camp?

3. Was there anything you learned in the J Rob camp that did not work as you had planned or lead to negative results?
4. Are there any personal characteristics that have not helped you in your life since the camp? If so, what and why do you think this is?
5. Are there any life events since camp that have not helped you in your life since the camp? If so, what and why do you think this is?
6. What assets/characteristics learned from the camp have you not used or are not applicable to your life today? Why do you think this is?
7. From your perspective, what would you be like if you did not attend the J Rob camp?
Would you be the same person with the same approach to life? Why or why not?

Transfer Effects

I am interested in learning how things learned in the J Rob camp might transfer beyond the camp and help athletes in other aspects of their lives. Given that you have indicated such transfer has taken place, do you have any thoughts on how this has occurred?

1. Why did you think you remember certain things taught in camp and not others?
2. Did you first apply things learned in wrestling and then in other aspects of life, or were you able to apply them straight to other areas of life?
3. Did the camp lessons help you right away or did they only emerge later in life when something triggered them?
4. What events or thoughts caused you to transfer these things later in life?
5. Do you think that you were always aware of the transfer or did it happen subconsciously/without you being aware of it?

Wrap-Up

1. Thank you for your participation in the interview. Is this anything that we didn't discuss in relation to your J Robinson wrestling camp experiences and the influence it has had on you as a person?
2. Please feel free to contact me (provide details) with any additional thoughts that you have. In the case, that I have some follow-up questions for you, would it be okay for me to contact you again?

Appendix D. Follow Up Letter

Dear _____,

Thank you for your participation in the research interview about the J Robinson Intensive Wrestling Camp. Your contribution is greatly appreciated and will contribute to enhancing our understanding of the long-term impact of the camp on former participants.

If you have anything else to add to our original discussion, please feel free to respond with this information by email, or call to continue the conversation.

Again, thank you for your time and participation.

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Appendix E. Camp Director Interview Guide.

Interview Guide

Our initial studies were designed to examine the short-term effects of the camp, specifically focused on the changes the campers experienced as a result of a 14 day camp. This next study is designed to examine any long-term effects of the camp and if changes resulted in former campers. The following questions seek to gain your perspective of how and why youths may change as a result of the camp.

1. Describe the main goals of the camp.
 - a. What are the short-term and long-term athletic and personal development goals for the campers?
 - b. Describe the focus on developing skills (e.g., J7) and the focus of changing lives (“It’ll change your life I guarantee it”).
(Goal is to identify his view of difference between skills, dispositions, behaviors and identity transformation)
2. Do you believe the camp has long term effects on the youth participants? If so, what are these effects? Why?
3. Describe the camp 15 years ago (1999-2000). How have the design and coaching approaches changed and evolved to the point it is today. (Guide discussion through time)
4. What are the teaching strategies that you and your staff use to help facilitate these long-term psychological changes in young people?
5. What psychological characteristics of the youth participants do you believe influence any long-term psychological changes in young people resulting from the camp experience? What characteristics of youth do help to facilitate changes, and what do not?
6. What factors outside the camp help influence these long-term psychological changes in young people? What factors outside of the camp do help to facilitate changes, and what do not?
7. If the ISYS was able to conduct future research at the JRIC, what questions would you want answered? What information would be most useful for JRIC?

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