CONNECTING TO THE LARGER COMMUNITY AS A STRATEGY TO PROMOTE POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SPORT: AN EXAMINATION OF COACHES' PRACTICES AND PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

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The extent to which young athletes' benefit from sport participation depends on numerous factors including the coach, the environment, and different individuals who are involved in the sport experience. More broadly, sport is one context for development, with family, school and youth programs among the many influential contexts and relationships. The current study considers the manner in which coaches interact with the adults in the different youth-supporting contexts as one factor within the sport environment that impacts the development of youth sport participants. Ten current youth sport coaches were interviewed for the purpose of learning how they connect with the other adults surrounding their athletes, along with their thoughts and attitudes towards those connections with other adults. Five specific questions are addressed pertaining to the construct of connection: (1) With which contexts do coaches most often connect?; (2) What factors facilitate these connections?; (3) What factors inhibit these connections?; (4) What are coach's attitudes and perceptions towards such connections?; and (5) What are the specific ways coaches are fostering connections with their athletes' families, schools and community adults? Content analysis results indicated that youth sport coaches interact with the adults in different contexts, and generally find such interactions valuable. The demands on everyone's time require coaches to be particular in choosing the people and reasons to connect. Contextual factors and perspectives of the individual coaches influence the exact nature of connection for each coach interviewed.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Youth sport providers and advocates claim that children and adolescents experience beneficial development from participating in their programs. However, the actual impact of sport on young athletes' well-being and development is debated (Rehberg, 1969; Shields, Bredemeier & Power, 2001). There is evidence of both positive and negative outcomes associated with sport participation, with characteristics of the sport environment thought to be key mediating factors in the actual outcomes experienced by youth (Theokas, 2009). Weiss and Wiese-Bjornstal (2009) succinctly summarized the ideal characteristics of a sport setting associated with positive development by indicating:

> A caring and mastery-oriented climate, supportive relationships with adults and peers, and opportunities to learn social, emotional, and behavioral skills---these are the nutrients for promoting positive youth development through physical activity. (p. 7)

Sport is considered to be one of many contexts that is influential to youth development. Other often-studied contexts include the family, school, neighborhood, peers and the various in and out of school activities in which youth are involved. There is evidence throughout youth-related literature that collaborative efforts across the different contexts is beneficial to youth development (Durlak et al., 2007). The current study identifies such collaborative efforts as "connection" and presents the construct as a contextual factor to enhance developmental outcomes through youth sports.

Operational Definition of Connection

Connection will be defined as collaborative efforts between individuals from two different youth contexts for the purposes of benefiting youth development. Connection involves the presence of two critical elements. First, connection involves the relationship between two or

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more individuals representing different youth-serving contexts. Examples may include a coach working with a teacher, the leadership of a community arts programs, or a school counselor. The second critical element of connection requires that the efforts of adult leaders must be for the purpose of promoting beneficial outcomes for the youth with whom they work.

Existing literature provides rationale for connection (e.g. Eccles & Gootman, 2002), along with specific examples of programs (e.g. Petitpas, Van Raalte, Cornelius & Presbey, 2004) and interventions (e.g. Coatsworth, Pantin & Szapocznik, 2002) that include multiple contexts, but connection currently lacks a clear definition that can be tested and implemented. Noam's typology of bridging (2003) will guide the investigation of connection in the current study. Connecting to schools, families and other community programs is a key strategy in the Responsive Advocacy for Life and Learning in Youth (RALLY) afterschool program created by Noam and colleagues (Noam & Fiore, 2004). Yet, in the implementation of the RALLY program, Noam observed that afterschool programs experience barriers in planning and communicating with school staff, even when the program was housed within the school building (Noam, 2003). To facilitate connection between the school and afterschool contexts, Noam developed a typology bridging, which outlines different ways in which schools and afterschool programs might connect.

By mutually deciding the extent to which the afterschool program will be connected to the school (type of bridging) and how those connections will be made (domains of bridging), schools and afterschool programs can better support the academic and psychosocial objectives of the school (Noam, 2003). The typology of bridging first describes self-contained afterschool programs, which have no connection to the school. Programs with progressively stronger connections are described as associated programs, coordinated programs, and integrated

programs. Lastly, unified programs, are essentially extensions of the school, as they share objectives, strategies, leadership and resources. Noam identifies interpersonal (e.g., sharing information), curricular (e.g., aligning curriculum between school and afterschool) and systemic (e.g., sharing facilities) as the three domains of bridging (Noam, 2003). The domains of bridging point to how afterschool programs might connect with schools. Because the current study is also concerned with the "how" of connection, the three domains will play a major role in framing the interviews with coaches. The names of the domains will be adapted to words that are more common in applied sport settings. The interpersonal domain will be changed to communication, the curricular domain will be changed to common goals, and the systemic domain will be changed to structure.

Connection in the communication domain includes both formal and informal meetings, phone calls or emails between adult leaders in different contexts. Information might be shared concerning a child's progress, struggles, strengths, weaknesses, relationships, life circumstances or passions. Practitioners may also share expertise, such as current research or strategies they have found effective in achieving positive outcomes. Such information might enable adult leaders to better understand, support, and motivate the children with whom they are working.

Examples of connection in the common goals domain occur when adult leaders in different contexts align their content or objectives. A coach and a math teacher might identify questions the coach could ask during practices to reinforce the math skills the athletes are learning in the classroom, or a parent and a coach might agree on strategies to help an athlete manage their emotions both at home and in the sport context. Creating common goals goes beyond sharing information; it involves collaborative advanced planning to address specific developmental objectives.

Finally, connection in the structure domain refers to elements that are built into the programs, institutions, or systems. A school and community sports program might share facilities or equipment, school staff personnel might be hired to work with both families and schools, or a governing organization (e.g., a school board) might create programs or interventions that engage multiple contexts.   Examples of structural connection can allow more developmental opportunities for youth with more effective use of resources, contribute to the cohesion of the larger environment experienced by youth, as well as facilitate other forms of connection in the communication and common goals domains.

Instances in which coaches connect with another context to support goals that involve both athletic and personal development for their athletes satisfy the operational definition of connection. The personal development of young athletes is the main concern of this study. Enhanced self-concept, strengths of character, and psychological, social and emotional skills learned through sport will benefit an athlete well beyond their competitive athletic career. Goals a coach may have pertaining to athletic development are important because athletic development influences personal development. Greater feelings of competence or ability level in sport is positively associated with personal development (Greenwood & Canters, 2009).   Youth can learn and practice habits and disciplines in their pursuit of sport-specific goals that will also help them achieve more important life goals (Danish, Forneris & Wallace, 2005). Therefore, goals concerning athletic development and personal development are both relevant to the current study.

Significance of the Problem

Sport and recreation programs are available to youth throughout childhood and adolescence because of their potential to promote youth development. Local governments

maintain sport and recreation facilities and provide sport opportunities for youth. The Baltimore

City Department of Recreation and Parks, for example, supports basketball, football, soccer,

track and field, boxing, baseball, softball, and tennis opportunities for youth with the purpose of

"promoting the whole individual" (http://bcrp.baltimorecity.gov). Providing athletic

opportunities for students is a societal norm for schools. Data from the National Federation of

State High School Associations shows there are more than 7.5 million participants involved in

high school sports in the United States. According to their mission statement, high school

athletics "support academic achievement, good citizenship and equitable opportunities"

(www.nfhs.org).   A wide variety of non-profit organizations provide sport opportunities as a

means to meet organizational objectives involving youth development. The YMCA is a

prominent example of a national non-profit organization that uses sport as a vehicle for

development, describing the role of sport as "helping kids value hard work, reach for excellence

and enjoy spirited competition." (www.ymca.net). On the largest scale, The United Nations

views sport as an important tool in achieving its Millennium Development Goals

(www.un.org/sport). Sport-related organizations associated with the United Nations state

objectives ranging from personal development to promoting peace in conflicts and preventing the

spread of HIV/AIDS (www.sportanddev.org).

The effectiveness of sport programs in facilitating positive youth development is of great

consequence to the sport providers and youth participants. Significant resources are required to

create sport and physical activity programs for youth. Public funds are spent through schools

and local governments. Non-profit organizations operate youth sport programs with the money

and resources they work tirelessly to raise. Paid staff hours are dedicated and volunteers are

recruited to work in these programs. There are also significant demands on the time, energy and

resources of the families involved. Most importantly, the long-term overall development of youth sport participants is in part dependent on their athletic involvement and experiences. However, youth do not live in a vacuum. Their development is influenced not only by sport but other individuals and agencies within their environment such as their school, family, and other extracurricular activity involvement. Therefore, identifying and better understanding elements of connection that enhance positive youth outcomes through sport can lead to more effective use of societal resources and can improve the developmental trajectories of youth.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe if and how coaches are connecting to other important developmental settings in the lives of the young athletes they coach. Within this overall purpose, specific sub-questions will explored:

(1) With which, if any, youth contexts (family, school or community adults) involved in their young athlete's lives, do coaches most often connect?;

(2) What factors facilitate these connections?;

(3) What factors inhibit these connections?;

(4) What are coach's attitudes and perceptions towards fostering such connections?; and,

(5) What are the specific ways coaches are fostering connections in the settings in which their young athletes live?

Given, the exploratory nature of this topic, data will be collected through semi-structured interviews with current youth coaches.

The purpose of this study is limited to those questions outlined above and does not consider numerous contextual factors (e.g. competitive level), the perspectives of the other adults, or how connection is experienced by the athletes, all of which will be very important to

understanding connection. Since efforts to connect are carried out by adults, this study focuses on understanding the point of view of youth sport coaches in connecting to other adults. The perspectives of parents, teachers, youth program coordinators and other adults who work with youth are equally as valuable to understanding connection as the perspective of youth sport coaches but will not be examined in this study for logistical reasons. Furthermore, it is important to explore how youth experience connection, and how connection impacts youth outcomes. This study does not seek to evaluate the impact of connection, but it does assume there is positive value in connection. It must be noted that all connection might not have a positive impact on youth developmental outcomes.

Need for the Study

Increased understanding of whether and how youth sport coaches foster connections with other non-sport individuals and agencies influencing their young athletes brings multiple benefits to practitioners and researchers. Data collected from coach interviews can help youth sport coaches and policy makers reflect on whether connection might be a strategy they can implement to better support their athletes' total development. Specific examples of connection given by study participants are anticipated to provide practitioners with insight as to how they might foster connections with other developmental contexts. Results from the study will also contribute to creating a clear definition of connection in the sport context. This will allow researchers to test the construct of connection as an environmental factor to promote youth development through intervention studies.

Expected Results

Parents or other family members are expected to be the most common point of connection for coaches. Coaches must communicate necessary details such as schedules and

team expectations to parents. Parents must register their child to participate and they often attend practices and competitions. With lines of communication already open to an extent, connection with the family context is theoretically more likely than connection with community adults and school personnel.

Methods and strategies of connection are anticipated to depend on many different factors. For example, certain populations are more likely to have greater internet access, coaches in larger youth sport organizations may have access to administrative staff for mailings and each coach will have their own individual preferences. The methods coaches use to build relationships and connect to other contexts are expected to vary greatly.

Perceptions and attitudes towards connection should also vary between coaches. Many will likely think there is value in connection with emphasis on different contexts or strategies. Some coaches will likely consider connection to be beyond their role and spend little, if any, time, discussing the child's more general development. Finally, some coaches may spend little or no time connecting as they feel they are too busy with other tasks or have not considered the value of doing so.

Convenience is likely to be a theme in discussing factors that facilitate or inhibit connection. Youth sport coaches balance their commitment to their athletes with their careers, families, and other interests. Connecting to other contexts takes a great deal of time and energy. Connection will be more evident when there are pre-existing relationships and lines of communication.

Communication will likely be the most common type of connection. Discussing an athlete with a parent or teacher can occur briefly in passing. Creating common goals and sharing resources cannot take place informally, they require much more time and planning.

While these are the investigators best estimate of what is to be found, they also serve a methodological purpose. Listing these beliefs will help the investigator be aware of his own potential biases when posing questions during the interviews and analyzing the data. This will help him adopt a neutral stance when studying this important topic.

Definition of Terms

Connection- Collaborative efforts by the adult leadership of different youth serving contexts for the purpose of supporting beneficial youth outcomes. (Noam, 2003).

> Communication- Type of connection in which adults in different youth-serving contexts share information, ideas or strategies with the purpose of more effectively supporting the youth they serve.

> Common Goals- Type of connection in which objectives, content or curricula are aligned between multiple contexts

> Structure- Type of connection in which practices, mechanisms or systems are imbedded in a program or larger environment to facilitate connection

Environment- The total set of circumstances by which an individual is surrounded, including physical, interpersonal and sociocultural aspects. The environment experienced by an individual is made up of multiple contexts.

Context- Different parts of an individual's environment that influence their development. Contexts considered in the youth development literature include family (e.g. Theokas & Lerner, 2006), school (e.g. Way & Robinson, 2003), neighborhood (e.g. Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000), afterschool programs (e.g. Fusco, 2008), sports (e.g. Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte &

Jones, 2005) and many different non-sport youth programs (e.g. Hansen, Larson & Dworkin, 2003). Sport, family, school, and community adults are the contexts considered in this study.

Sport Context- Youth activities that involve physical activity, recreation and competitive sport. The connection point for the sport context will most likely be coaches.

Family Context- The environment created by individuals who are related to, live with, or are heavily involved in a child's daily home life. The connection point for the family context will most likely be parents and other adults who take responsibility in the day-to-day care of youth athletes.

School Context- The institution responsible for a child's education. The connection point for the school context will likely be teachers, administrators, and school staff who have regular contact with youth athletes.

Community Adult Context- Adults in many different contexts beyond school and family may play a role in a young person's life. Youth have relationships with these other adults through youth programs and activities, religious institutions, and the neighborhoods in which they live.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature review will consist of three sections. The first section, Defining Youth

Development, outlines successful development, youth development theory, and the individual

factors considered in the youth development literature. The second section, Environmental

Factors, reviews the literature on the relationship between youth development and each context

considered in this study; sport, family, school and community. The third section, Connection,

establishes theoretical support for connection as a contextual factor to promote youth

development in the school context.

Defining Youth Development

Successful youth development. To accurately assess if participation in sport is

contributing to the overall development of youth, there must be a clear definition of what youth

development involves. The ultimate objective of youth development is to provide children with

what they need to become successful adults (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003). Though

there is not a single definition of a successful adult, there seems to be some consensus in the

literature about what being a successful adult involves. The Community Action Framework

identifies economic self-sufficiency, healthy relationships, and community contribution as long-

term goals for youth development (Gambone & Connell, 2004). Examples of these goals can be

found in studies that compare factors in childhood and adolescence to outcomes in adulthood.

The presence of activity involvement, such as participating in school clubs, arts programs, sports,

community service and other community youth programs, are of particular interest in these

studies.   Barron, Ewing, and Waddell (2000) and Eccles, Barber, Stone, and Hunt (2003)

established positive associations between activity involvement in adolescence and educational

attainment, wages, and job quality. Civic engagement, conceptualized as voting and

volunteering, is an example of contribution found in Gardner, Roth and Brooks-Gunn's (2008)

longitudinal research linking activity involvement in adolescence to markers of success at the

ages of 20 and 26. Gardner and colleagues found a positive relationship between the amount of

time youth spent in organized youth activities and their civic engagement as young adults.

Masten et al. (2004) included measures of competence in social relationships, romantic

relationships and parenting as age-salient developmental tasks at 30-years-old in their research

tracking individual characteristics that predict resilience from childhood through adulthood.

The National Research Council recently compiled an exhaustive list of the skills,

knowledge and habits (e.g., creativity, knowledge and collaboration)) an individual needs to

become a successful adult in the report entitled *Education for Life and Work: Developing*

Transferrable Knowledge in the 21st Century (National Research Council, 2012). Successful

youth development occurs when an individual integrates such skills, knowledge and habits into

their lives. These individual attributes will be discussed at length later in this section.

Youth development theory. Developmental scientists use developmental systems

theories to explain the complicated path to becoming a successful adult (Lerner, Andersen,

Balsano, Dowling, & Bobek, 2004). Developmental systems theories are centered on the idea

that there are many complex, integrated systems acting simultaneously that influence an

individual's development (Lerner et al., 2004). The mutually influential individual-context

relationship is at the heart of systems theories, in which elements of an individual's environment

contribute to their development, while at the same time, actions of the individual can influence

the same environment that is shaping them (Magnusson & Stattin, 1998). An individual's

immediate environment is made up of different contexts, such as their family, school, neighborhood, social groups, and activities (Lerner, 1991). There are multiple levels that influence both the individual and the contexts (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The individual is shaped by their biology, habits, skills, knowledge, and perceptions, while each context is also shaped by the individuals involved, other contexts, culture, society, and history (Lerner, 2010). With each level and system contributing to the individual-context relationship, no factor can be identified as the sole producer of development, yet every factor must be viewed as important.

Therefore, both individual and environmental factors are measured in discussing developmental trajectories. The Search Institute's Developmental Assets (Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth, 1998) reflect the interconnected nature of individual characteristics, environmental factors, and outcomes. The Developmental Assets Framework identifies 20 internal assets (individual factors) and 20 external assets (environmental factors) that are likely to facilitate healthy youth development. Research within the framework examines the relationship between the presence of the assets and the construct of thriving. Thriving is defined as school success, leadership, valuing diversity, physical health, helping others, delay of gratification and overcoming adversity (Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000). Youth with higher numbers of both internal and external assets score better on measurements of thriving indicators (Scales et al., 2000). Clusters of certain assets predict certain indicators of thriving (Benson, Scales & Syvertsen, 2011). In one such example, Scales, Benson, Roehlkepartain, Sesma, and Dulmen (2006) found a cluster of assets representing connection to community to be an especially strong predictor of school success. The developmental assets and the associated research confirm the complex nature of youth development suggested by developmental systems theories.

Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) provides a different perspective on the individual-context relationship. Self-determination theory identifies competence, autonomy, and relatedness as the three essential nutrients humans need for psychological growth and development. A context will promote development when the needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness are satisfied (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Need satisfaction promotes self-determination, evident when individuals are motivated and regulated by intrinsic factors (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Positive outcomes associated with intrinsically motivated individuals in physical activity contexts include personal development (Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, & Jones, 2005), less performance anxiety (Quested et al., 2011), good sportsmanship (Ryska, 2003), and persistence (Joesaar, Hein, & Haggar, 2011). Especially germane to the present study is Hodge, Danish and Martin's (2013) recent extension of self-determination theory as an explanation of life skill development in sport and physical activity contexts. They contend that the more the basic needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness are met the more life skill development results.

Measures of individual development provide insight into the individual characteristics humans need to successfully navigate their environment. Behaviors and outcomes, such as volunteering or grades, are evidence of positive development. Environmental factors and the extent to which the environment satisfies an individual's psychological needs will shape the development of individual characteristics. Measurements of individual development, need satisfaction, outcomes, behaviors, and environmental factors are all present in youth development literature. They are all needed to paint a complete picture of the complex nature of factors, processes, and outcomes involved in youth development.

Individual Factors in Youth Development

Youth sport providers, school, and youth programs state many different individual characteristics as developmental objectives. Individual characteristics that are prevalent in the literature include self-concept, character, skills, and knowledge. Self-perceptions are well-established to play a role in development. Barber, Eccles and Stone (2001) asked adolescents whether they identified themselves as a "Jock", "Brain", "Princess", "Basket Case" or "Criminal", then compared the identity choices to indicators of youth development and well-being. Adolescents who identified as "Jocks" or "Brains" (Versus X and Y) were most likely to demonstrate indicators of positive mental health (Barber, et al., 2001). The authors explain their findings by suggesting an individual identity influences how youth spend their time. "Jock" and "Brain" were the only identities in the study connected to activities that require initiative (Larson, 2000). Increasing self-esteem is a common objective of youth programs (Kort-Butler & Hagewen, 2011). Individuals with higher self-esteem score better on measures of academic success (Ivcevic, Pallemer, & Brackett, 2010), occupational success (Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge, & Piccolo, 2008), physical health (Scales et al., 2000), happiness (Denny, 2009), and ethical behavior (Ryska, 2003). While self-esteem refers to a general sense of self-worth, self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in a given task (Feltz & Payment, 2005). An individual is more likely to be successful in a task when they believe they can be successful. In a student population that had risk factors for violent behaviors, students who believed they could resolve potentially violent situations through nonviolent methods were significantly less likely to engage in violent behaviors (Farrell, Henry, Schoeny, Bettencourt, & Tolan, 2010). Similarly, young adults were more likely to engage in pro-social behaviors when they felt more efficacious in demonstrating empathy (Caprara, Alessandri, & Eisenberg, 2011). The beliefs

individual's hold about themselves will influence how they engage in their environment and their outcomes.

Teaching or building character is a common objective in many youth programs (Roth, 2004), but character is not always clearly defined. Lumpkin (2011) presents a broad definition, describing character as "distinguishing moral and ethical qualities of an individual". Hardmann, Jones and Jones (2010) define character as habits of perception, cognition, emotion, and action. The inclusion of the word 'action' emphasizes behavior as part of character, which might include how well an individual completes their work, or being fair in dealings with other people. 'Habits' meanwhile, suggests an individual's character is developed and demonstrated over time. Character is included by Lerner et al. (2003) as one of the 5 C's of youth development, along with competence, confidence, connection, and caring. In particular, Lerner and his colleagues defined character as "respect for societal and cultural rules, possession of standards for correct behaviors, a sense of right and wrong (morality), and integrity" (p. 23). From these definitions, character might include a wide range of individual attributes and behaviors, but they all seem to suggest that character refers to the core elements of what we believe and what we do.

The Values in Action (VIA) Project (Park, 2009) argued for character to be measured as an important predictor of success and well-being in schools and in youth programs. The VIA framework places strengths of character into the categories of wisdom and knowledge, courage, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Positive associations were found between the presence of character traits and positive outcomes in youth ages 10-17 who took the VIA Inventory of Strengths for Youth. Perseverance, fairness, love, gratitude, honesty, hope, and perspective were related to academic success; hope, zest, and leadership were negatively associated with depression and anxiety; while persistence, honesty, prudence, and love were related to fewer

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problem behaviors (Park, 2009). This research substantiates the inclusion of character and

values as objectives in developmental settings for youth.

Though not the focus of the current study, developing task-specific skills and knowledge

are often the central concern of educational settings and youth programs. Math, reading, and

computer skills are needed for academic and vocational tasks, while young basketball players

learn the correct technique in shooting a jump shot. Task-specific skills are obviously imperative

for success in a given context, and because competence is an essential psychological need (Deci

& Ryan, 2000) and associated with skill development, learning such skills will also promote

psychological development.

Psychological, social and emotional skills are important to an individual's success in

every context and endeavor. Larson (2000) emphasized the importance of providing youth with

opportunities to build and demonstrate initiative as it is important for success in real world

environments. Initiative is evident when an individual is intrinsically motivated, is engaged in

their environment, and puts forth effort over time towards a goal (Larson, 2000). Resilience

refers to people achieving positive outcomes despite adversity and barriers (Masten &

Coatsworth, 1998). It is an essential individual characteristic for many youth who are faced with

challenges in their environment (Davidson, Schwartz, & Noam, 2008). Hellison (2011) created

the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) framework to teach the construct of

responsibility in physical activity contexts. TPSR progressively teaches responsibility through

the stages of respect, effort, self-direction, helping others, and then transferring responsible

behaviors to non-physical activity contexts. Hellison (2011) suggested responsibility is an

important characteristic for an individual's success and the well-being of society. Geststoddir

and Lerner (2008) suggested self-regulation will benefit youth in their immediate contexts as

well as their further development. This applies to choices youth make, such as joining a school club or doing homework compared to hanging out with friends or watching television, as well as the manner in which youth respond to success, loss, or difficulties (Urban, Lewin-Bizan, & Lerner, 2010).

An individual's self-concept, character, skills and knowledge remain with them as they move in and out of different contexts. These characteristics will contribute to the success and individual experiences in a given context, as well as their ability to benefit from their involvement (Lewan-Bizan, Bizan, & Lerner, 2010). Evidence suggests that sport contributes to positive development when there is evidence that an athlete has enhanced their self-concept, strengthened their character, learned new skills, or increased in knowledge due to their participation. Such examples of personal development have the potential to benefit an athlete well beyond their athletic career and promote long-term positive outcomes in adulthood.

Environmental Factors in Youth Development

A child's environment consists of different contexts, all of which have the potential to influence their development. The current study focuses on how connection between youth sport coaches and the contexts of family, school, and non-sport youth programs might enhance positive effects of youth sport participation or youth development in general. Family, school, and youth programs were identified as the contexts to include in this study because they are likely to have clearly defined adult leaders with whom coaches might connect, stated goals and outcomes they desire for their youth, and human and physical resources committed to achieving their goals.

The sport context. There is strong empirical support for sport as a context to promote youth development. Researchers who advocate for youth sports describe their potential as a

development context. Danish, Petitpas and Hale (1993) claimed that "sport affords us an opportunity to understand ourselves" (p. 356). Sport provides children with an opportunity to explore and establish who they are and who they are meant to be (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001). Danish, Forneris, and Wallace (2005) suggested the individual attributes necessary to succeed in sport are the same attributes necessary to succeed in life. More specifically, sport provides a venue for us to make moral decisions (Arnold, 1992), apply important life skills (e.g. problem solving, communication) (Paparachisis, Goudas, Danish, & Theodorakis, 2005), and develop important relationships (Fraser-Thomas & Cote, 2009).

Empirical evidence supports sport as a context to promote development. In comparing athletes to non-athletes, athletes demonstrated significantly greater self-esteem (Bowker, 2006; Fredericks & Eccles, 2006), and confidence (Linver et al., 2009). Results from different studies using the Youth Experience Scale (YES) 2.0 found sport to promote initiative, physical skills, emotional regulation, social skills and teamwork (Gould, Flett, & Lauer, 2012; Hansen et al., 2003; Larson, Hansen & Moneta, 2006). In qualitative studies, athletes report developing a wide range of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills through their sport experiences. Fraser-Thomas & Cote (2009) interviewed adolescent competitive swimmers. The swimmers reported developing work ethic, discipline, goal-setting skills, time management skills, and resilience, as well as having meaningful relationships with coaches and peers. Former Botswana Olympic athletes felt the efficacy and confidence they gained in sport experiences empowered them to use the platform they gained as Olympians to better their country (Shehu & Moruisi, 2010).

Positive career and educational outcomes can be considered evidence of individual development experienced in sport. Sport participation predicts greater job autonomy, the completion of more post-secondary education by the age of 25 (Eccles et al., 2003), and a greater

likelihood of being enrolled in college at the age of 21 (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Employed male former high school athletes were found to have higher wages and greater educational attainment than employed males who did not participate in high school athletics (Barron, Ewing & Waddell, 2000). Former high school athletes also demonstrate less deviant behavior in young adulthood (Hartmann & Massoglia, 2007). Multiple studies have found a positive association between sport participation and various measures of academic success (e.g., Linver et al., 2009; Whitley, 1999).

While there is increasing evidence that sport can be an important context for positive youth development, there are other scholars who are skeptical of the claimed benefits of sport. In particular, there are questions as to whether claims made by sport advocates have strong enough empirical support (Coakley, 2011; Coalter, 2010). McCormak and Chalip (1988) describe flaws in research designs and warn against attributing development to sport when there are many developmental influences. More specifically, Sage (1998) argued that much of the research connecting sport participation to positive outcomes uses cross-sectional designs, which do not prove sport to be the causal mechanism. Negative outcomes attached to sport participation validates the criticism.   Studies have linked athletic participation to underage alcohol consumption (Eccles & Barber, 1999), higher prevalence of sexual activity (Miller, Sabo, Farrell, Barnes & Melnick, 1999), exposure to negative adult and peer influences (Fraser-Thomas & Cote, 2009; Hansen, et al., 2003), antisocial behaviors (Shields, Bredemeier, Lavoi, & Power, 2005), and lower scores on measures of moral reasoning (Beller & Stoll, 1995; Priest, Krause, & Beach, 1999).

Contextual factors in sport. The significant evidence of positive development affirms sports' immense potential to benefit youth participants. Negative outcomes associated with sport

prove that positive outcomes do not occur automatically with participation.   Actual outcomes are, in fact, heavily dependent on factors within the sport environment.   Sage (1998) noted "the exact effects of sport on attitudes, values, and behaviors (character) depend greatly on the social contextual conditions of the sporting experience" (p. 17).   Characteristics of the coach, the nature of the youth-experienced climate, and a clear focus on development along with strategies to achieve developmental objectives have been established as factors within the sport environment that promote development and positive outcomes (Weiss & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009).

The coach is the pivotal figure in promoting positive development through sport. They influence every aspect of the sport environment. Qualitative studies provide insight into coaching practices that promote youth development. In detailed interviews with high school football coaches who were nominated for the NFL's Coach of the Year Award (given for success on the field and in shaping players lives), Gould, Collins, Lauer, and Chung (2007) identified the common themes of these award winning coaches. These included clearly articulating their philosophy and objectives, establishing and maintaining high expectations, teaching life skills, and establishing supportive relationships with their athletes. Camire, Trudel, and Forneris (2012) added to this research through interviews with coaches nominated for awards by their provincial athletic federations in Ontario and Quebec. Coaches in this study considered their athletes' pre-existing makeup when establishing their philosophies. Features of their philosophies included promoting development beyond sport, having clear strategies to do so and discussing transfer of life skills beyond the playing field.

Coaching behaviors that support athlete psychological needs in accordance with self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) facilitate youth development. Autonomy-supportive coaching behaviors include valuing athlete input, praising athletes for autonomous behaviors,

sharing rationales with athletes, and structuring the environment to allow athletes to make choices (Coatsworth & Conroy, 2009; Mageau and Vallerand 2003). Alvarez, Balaguer, Castillo and Duda (2012) found satisfaction of autonomy to be the strongest predictor of athlete persistence and well-being in adolescent Spanish soccer players. In an experimental setting involving the putting skill in golf, youth who received autonomy-supportive communication demonstrated increased motivation and better performance (Spray, Wang, Biddle & Chatzisarantis, 2006).

Coaches support competence by effectively teaching their athletes the skills they need to be successful in their sport. Athletes are more likely to have a positive experience in sport with greater frequency of coaching behaviors focusing on physical training, technical skills, mental preparation, goal setting, competition strategies, and personal rapport (Baker, Yardley & Cote, 2003). Five of the six behaviors identified relate directly to athlete learning and performance. Junior college baseball teams were more cohesive when their coaches focused on training and instruction (Gardner, Shields, Bredemeier, & Bostrom, 1996). Little League baseball players felt more liked by their coaches and experienced increases in self-esteem when their coaches included instruction in their correction and feedback (Smoll, Smith, Barnett, & Everett, 1993).

An athlete's need for relatedness is satisfied when they feel connected to others within the sport context through positive relationships (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Coaches who establish positive relationships with their athletes promote acquisition of physical skills, acquisition of life skills, and enjoyment (Harrist & Witt, 2012) while reducing antisocial behaviors (Rutten, et al., 2007). Through qualitative interviews with collegiate athletes, Lavoi (2007) identified 19 different factors that influence closeness in coach-athlete relationships. The ability to communicate freely, feeling supported and feeling cared for were factors cited most often by

study participants. MacDonald, Cote, Eys and Deacon (2011) identified peer relationships as the most significant predictor of positive experience in youth sports. They suggested coaches should create opportunities for athletes to build positive relationships.

While the coach remains the central figure in creating the youth-experienced climate (Olympiou, Jowett & Duda, 2008), parents and peers also contribute to the climate experienced by athletes (Pappaioannou, Ampatzoglou, Kalogiannis, & Sagovitz, 2008).   Climates that are caring and have a mastery orientation are most likely to foster positive development (Gould, Flett, & Lauer, 2012). Fry and Gano-Overway (2010) defined an environment as caring when it is perceived to be "interpersonally inviting, safe, supportive, and able to provide the experience of being valued and respected" (p. 296). Sport participants who reported their team to have a caring climate were more likely to report enjoyment, display positive attitudes towards peers and adults, and demonstrate caring behaviors (Fry & Gano-Overway, 2010; Gano-Overway et al., 2009).

Motivational climates are defined as either mastery-oriented or ego-oriented. The difference in the two orientations focuses on the definition of success. In a mastery-oriented motivation climate, also referred to as task-oriented, success is defined by improvement and personal development while an ego-orientation is defined by winning and comparison to others (Boixados Cruz, Torregrosa, & Valiente, 2004).   Ego-oriented climates focus on social comparison and competition. The research reveals that mastery-orientated climates are positively associated with better coach-athlete relationships (Lafreniere, Jowett, Vallerand, & Carbonneau, 2011; Olympiou et al., 2008), athlete satisfaction (Boixados, et al., 2004), prosocial behaviors (Kavussanu, 2006), and persistence in sport (Joesaar, Hein, & Hagaar, 2011; Ntoumanis, Taylor, & Thogersen-Ntoumani, 2012).

Another important contribution of the motivational climate is it's potential to influence an athlete's goal orientation (Gano-Overway & Ewing, 2004; Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2009). Individuals characterized by task-oriented goals define success as improvement and personal development. Athletes who develop task-oriented goals are more likely to connect successes to their effort (Tello, Martinez, Nunez & Calvo 2010), perceive satisfaction of their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Reinboth & Duda, 2006; Wang, Liu, Lochbaum, & Stevenson, 2009), and demonstrate better sportspersonship (Dunn & Dunn, 1999; Stuntz & Weiss, 2003).

Having a clear focus on development was previously noted as an important characteristic of coaches (Gould, Collins, Lauer, & Chung, 2007) and is echoed throughout the literature. Coaches should commit time to creating and refining their personal philosophy in sport (Lumpkin & Cuneen, 2001). Shields, Bredemeier, and Power (2001) suggested coaches should enter the sport context with a "mental model" focused on individual development. Hardmann, Jones, and Jones (2010) urged coaches to establish their purpose, identity, and behaviors in accordance with being a good role model for their athletes. Before entering the sport context, coaches should know what they intend to accomplish and have clear strategies for implementation.

Various life skills programs have been created to provide coaches with clear developmental objectives and implementation strategies. Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish, and Theodorakas (2005) tested the effectiveness of the SUPER (Sports United to Promote Life Skills and Recreation) life skills program in promoting youth development. Youth who participated in SUPER showed greater understanding of important life skills, greater self-belief, and greater improvement in sport skills compared to control groups who practiced sport skills without a life

skills program. The First Tee golf program exemplifies a developmental approach. Program participants are taught practical life skills, nine core values (e.g., honesty, respect, and sportsmanship) and nine healthy habits (e.g., energy, play, and safety), as they learn the game of golf (www.thefirsttee.org). Program participants scored higher on measures of goal-setting, initiative, confidence and regulating emotions than youth in a comparison group (World Golf Foundation, 2010). Interviews with participants of the GOAL life skills program proved that it was successful in teaching the important life skills of goal-setting, problem solving, and seeking social support (Forneris, Danish, & Scott, 2007). Spanish secondary school students who were exposed to the TPSR framework in their physical education classes demonstrated more self-directed behaviors and felt more efficacious in pursuing needed social supports (Escarti, Gutierrez, Pascual, & Marin, 2010).

The family context. The family is the most influential developmental context and has received the most scholarly attention over the years (Magnusson & Stattin, 1998). Many factors of the family are considered in the literature.   Higher socioeconomic status (Zaff, Moore, Papillo, & Williams, 2003), parent education attainment (Andres & Grayson, 2003), two parent households (Carlson & Corcoran, 2001) and presence of extended family (Levitt, 2005) are associated with positive outcomes. Parents promoted positive development by providing support (Amato & Fowler, 2002; Domotrovich & Bierman, 2001), being involved and engaged in their child's life (Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Zaff, Moore, Papillo, & Williams, 2003), maintaining positive beliefs about their child (Fredricks & Eccles, 2002, Simpkins, Fredricks, & Eccles, 2012), using a democratic parenting style (Herman, Dornbusch, Herron & Herting, 1997), modeling positive behaviors (Eriksson, Nordqvist, & Rasmussen, 2008) and providing appropriate structure and discipline (Clark, Novak, & Dupree, 2002). Youth in

families who demonstrated greater cohesion (Fuligni, Eccles, Barber, & Clements, 2001; Gauze, Bukowski, Aquan-Assee, & Sippola, 1996) and engaged in collective activities (Theokas & Lerner, 2006), such as eating dinner together (Fulkerson, et al., 2006), tend to have higher scores on measures of positive development.

The school context. Students spend the majority of their time in school receiving direct instruction from teachers and school staff. Students are obviously influenced by the content they are taught directly, yet the informal relationships and climate they experience are influential in their development as well. When youth perceive a positive school climate, they are significantly more likely to experiences increases in their self-esteem (Way & Robinson, 2003). Caring adults in schools promote student engagement, which contributes to positive academic and developmental outcomes (Sharkey, You, & Schnoebelen, 2008). Positive relationships with kindergarten teachers predicted academic success, fewer problem behaviors, and stronger work habits through eighth grade (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Roeser, Eccles, and Sameroff (2000) showed the satisfaction of middle school students' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness had positive effects on student mental health.

The community context. Youth encounter influential adults through formal and informal settings in their environment. The research focuses on youth programs as developmental contexts, although adults encountered through any medium are considered a community adult. Arts programs have been positively linked to academic outcomes (Eccles & Barber, 1999), the development of initiative (Larson et al., 2006), and increased self-esteem (Fanelli & Klippell, 2001). School sponsored clubs and groups promote pro-social behavior (Linver et al., 2009), political and charitable involvement (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006), and higher grades (Guest & Schneider, 2003). Community service activities are associated with increased

empathy (Lakin & Mahoney, 2006), identity development (Younniss, Mclellan, Su, & Yates, 1999), and social responsibility (Scales, Blyth, Berkas, & Kielsmeier, 2000). Youth who participated in religious groups reported higher rates of opportunities to explore and define their identity (Larson, Hansen, & Moneta, 2006), and pro-social behaviors (Linver et al., 2009; Scales et al., 2000). Mentoring has been associated with many positive outcomes and appears to be a strong protective factor for at-risk youth (Kuperminc, Thomason, Dimeo & Broomfield-Massey, 2011; Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000). Development of social skills and moral reasoning are among the benefits of outdoor adventure programs (Shirilla, 2009; Smith, Strand, & Bunting, 2002).

While certain activities may be fertile ground for certain types of development, all youth programs require certain ingredients to most effectively facilitate youth development. The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine identifies these ingredients in their report entitled *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). The eight factors are physical and psychological safety, appropriate structure, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, positive social norms, support for efficacy and mattering, opportunities for skill building, and integration of family, community, and school efforts. Relationships are consistently highlighted in the literature regarding features of developmental contexts. Adult leaders, their behaviors, and their relationships with the youth participants play an extremely important role in the effectiveness of the programs (Granger, 2010). Supportive peer relationships predict higher self-esteem (Colarossi & Eccles, 2002) and psychological well-being (Buchanan & Bowen, 2008). The amount of time a child spends in an activity impacts development. Children experience more positive outcomes when they attend youth programs with greater frequency (Roth, Malone, & Brooks-Gunn, 2010) and stay involved in programs for

a longer period of time (Gardner, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008). Participating in multiple youth

programs has also been found to be a protective factor. Marijuana use was less prevalent in

adolescents who participated in three activities compared to adolescents who participated in two,

one or zero activities (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). Fauth, Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2007)

suggested two to three activities is ideal, as adolescence involved in more or less activities score

high on measures of delinquency.

In summary, the literature demonstrates that each context has the potential to play an

important role in youth development. Characteristics of the environment within each context are

proven to be mediating factors in the actual development experienced by youth. Factors related

to the quality of the adult leaders in each context seem to be especially salient in predicting

developmental outcomes. Contexts do more than just impact the individuals involved, contexts

influence other contexts (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Witherspoon, Scholtland, Way and

Hughes (2009) measured the quality of relationship adolescents with their family, school, and

neighborhood. Youth who had positive relationships with multiple contexts had better grades

and scored higher on measures of self-esteem. Coaches, teachers, and parents must, of course,

create an environment in their own context that supports youth development, but they should

also consider their relationship with the other important contexts in a child's life.

Connection between Youth Serving Agencies

There is significant suggestion in the literature that connection between youth-serving

contexts can facilitate youth development. Integration of Family, School and Community

Efforts' is identified as one of the eight features of developmental settings in the National

Research Council and Institute of Medicine report entitled *Community Programs to Promote*

Youth Development (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). The report stated "optimal conditions for

development exist when there is cohesion and information flow between systems." (p. 128).

Cohesion and information flow will benefit youth because they will hear consistent messages

and experience consistent expectations across different contexts. Coordinated planning between

families, schools and community programs can decrease overlap and gaps youth may experience

in their environment (Coatsworth & Conroy, 2007). Therefore, connection between youth-

serving contexts can increase access to developmental opportunities.

Various authors have suggested more specific developmental benefits resulting from

greater connection between contexts. James-Burdumy, Dynarski, & Deke (2007) suggested

coordination and information flow between teachers and afterschool providers can improve

academic outcomes. Capella, Frazier, Atkins, Schoenwald, & Glisson (2008) advocated for

integration of mental health professionals into schools to work collaboratively with school staff

towards mental health objectives. According to Reinke, Splett, Robeson, and Offutt (2009),

concurrent application of school-based and family-based behavioral interventions will be more

effective than a single intervention because both contexts influence student behavior. All three

of these articles include coordinated planning (common goals) and ongoing communication

between contexts. Capella and colleagues (2008) is an example of structural connection, as the

mental health professionals are built in to the school context.

Positive relationships are considered a foundational element for connection to occur. In

discussing optimal developmental conditions in school-based athletics, Danish, Forneris, and

Wallace (2005) describe positive relationships between coaches, administrators, teachers and

other school personnel as essential. *The International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching*

dedicated a significant portion of an issue to the importance of the parent-coach relationship in

promoting positive development in young athletes. (2011, Vol. 6, Issue 1). Positive

relationships allow everyone to communicate and support common goals, enhancing athletic and personal development

Empirical evidence for connection is slowly accumulating as well. On a large scale, the Wallace Foundation provided funding to five major American cities, Chicago, Washington D.C., Providence, Boston, and New York City, to create systemic collaboration across multiple systems that influence youth development. Case studies were completed of each city in *Hours of Opportunity: Volume 1* (Boddily et al., 2010). Collaboration occurred when cities included multiple stakeholders in early planning to create common goals and developed systems to share information. The initial objectives measured in this report were to increase access to youth programs and enhance program quality. After three to five years of coordinating efforts, four of the five cities increased the number of youth served in youth programs and had structures in place (e.g., systematic training and evaluation) to improve program quality. These initiatives exemplify structural connection, in which city governments, schools, and non-profit organizations created systems to facilitate communication and common goals across schools and youth programs.

Dodd and Bowen (2011) presented an afterschool program designed to improve student academic outcomes and behavioral outcomes. Key strategies in this intervention program included regularly scheduled meetings and ongoing information flow between teachers, afterschool instructors and families. Both school and afterschool staff received training to more effectively engage families. Participants in the intervention significantly improved their attendance and academic performance, along with behavioral outcomes. Family Unidas, a multilevel intervention with teachers, parents, and peers, worked with Hispanic parents to create culturally relevant parenting strategies to improve student outcomes (Coatsworth, Pantin, &

Szapocznik, 2002). Parents were invited to participate in trainings and support groups to discuss

strategies that might support their childs' education and well-being. Opportunities were then

provided for the parents to practice and apply the strategies they had learned. Post-intervention

evaluations showed parents in the intervention group were more invested in the school and their

children were more likely to reduce problem behaviors than parents in the control group

(Coatsworth et al., 2002). The National Football Foundation's Play It Smart program is a good

example of sport effectively connecting to other contexts. Academic coaches are assigned to

high school football teams. The academic coach works closely with coaches, teachers, and

parents. Program participants have applied the health enhancing behaviors they learned in the

program, improved their academic performance, and become more involved in their

communities. (Petitpas et al., 2004). All three of these interventions establish structures (regular

meetings, shared staff person) to facilitate common goals and communication.

Researchers have recently suggested connection might be an important consideration for

youth sport providers. Coatsworth and Conroy (2006) point out that there is insufficient

evidence in regards to how sport might connect to the other contexts of family, school, and

community. They acknowledge more research is needed to determine how other contexts impact

youth development through sport. Other researchers have echoed their call for greater

connection between sport and other contexts. Hellison (2009) identified collaboration as the

missing element in an article outlining strategies to promote development in underserved youth

through physical opportunities. Strachan, Cote, and Deacon (2009) stated "…more must be done

to integrate family, school and the broader community into building competent athletes, and

more importantly, competent healthy citizens." (p. 90). Connection in the real-world is

influenced by budgets, funders, job descriptions, and egos. Processes can be difficult and fragile.

Clear definitions and frameworks are needed to facilitate connection between sport, families,

schools, youth programs, and communities (Noam & Tillinger, 2004). The current study seeks

to meet this need from the perspective of the sport context through interviews with current youth

sport coaches.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

The current study was designed for the purpose of describing if and how coaches are connecting to other important developmental settings in the lives of the young athletes they coach. Five specific sub questions were addressed:

(1) With which contexts do coaches most often connect?

(2) What factors facilitate these connections?

(3) What factors inhibit these connections?

(4) What are coach's attitudes and perceptions towards such connections?

(5) What are the specific ways coaches are fostering connections with their athletes' families, schools and community adults.

Research Design

Given the exploratory nature of this topic, data was collected through semi-structured interviews with current youth sport coaches. The research design and methods used in this study were based on Rubin and Rubin's (2005) responsive interviewing model. Responsive interviewing utilizes three types of questions; main questions, follow-up questions and probes. Main questions were scripted and inquired into the presence of connection. Follow-up questions were also scripted, but the question asked depended on the coach's answer to the main question. Probing questions were asked to gain depth and detail (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) and were not scripted. A qualitative design was ideal for this study because there is no existing literature that describes in detail how youth sport coaches connect with different youth-supporting contexts with the stated purpose to foster positive youth development. To understand connection in the sport context, the current study sought to discover layers within the construct of connection, and then nuance and subtlety within the layers (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). From the main question of

whether or not connection exists, the follow-up questions explored different layers, then probing questions sought nuance and subtlety. Interviews based on responsive interviewing techniques (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) provided coaches with opportunities to describe aspects of connection that might be missed in closed interviews or quantitative data.

There is little consensus regarding the role of validity in qualitative research (Onzwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Some researchers suggest that validity is dependent on "techniques, methods and/or strategies" (p. 322) implemented in a study, while others argue that validity is solely dependent on how data are interpreted (Cho & Allen, 2006). Still others feel that validity does not fit in qualitative research, but trustworthiness more accurately describes the quality of qualitative designs (Guba, 1981). Both Maxwell's (1992) criteria for validity in qualitative research (Table 3.1) and Guba's (1981) concepts of trustworthiness (Table 3.2) describe considerations that speak to the quality of qualitative research. In looking at these two models, five important questions must be addressed; (1) Does the data accurately reflect the phenomenon being studied? (2) To what extent can the findings be generalized beyond the study participants? (3) Can the study be replicated? (4) How does the researcher's perspective and bias influence the study?, and (5) How does the study relate to existing research and theories?

Table 3.1: Maxwell's Criteria for Validity in Qualitative Research

Descriptive Validity	Factual accuracy of the data collected
Interpretive Validity	How the researcher interprets the data
Theoretical Validity	How the data fits into known or developing theories
Generalizability	The extent to which study results can be applied to other settings

Table 3.1 (cont'd)

Evaluative Validity   The extent to which the researcher applied
personal values and judgments to the data.

Table 3.2: Guba's Model of Trustworthiness

Truth Value   Whether or not the study's finding
are true

Applicability   The extent to which findings can be
applied to other contexts or groups

Consistency   Whether the findings be consistent
were the study replicated

Neutrality   The extent to which findings are the
result of the participants in and
conditions of the research

Multiple strategies were used to address factual accuracy. The study design and methods have a significant impact (Shenton, 2004). For this reason, methods and techniques utilized in this study were adopted from established practices in qualitative research, such as the aforementioned responsive interviewing techniques (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The study design and techniques involved were reviewed by experienced researchers. After the interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed, the strategy of member checking was implemented (Carlson, 2010). Each participant was sent a summary of their interview and was asked to verify that the meaning of their words were accurately summarized into data points. None of the study participants identified a problem in the summary they received.

Detailed background information was collected about each coach, their surrounding environment, and their athletes. This is known as thick or rich description, and will allow

readers to determine the extent to which findings from this study can be applied to their specific research or practice (Shenton, 2004).

To facilitate replication of this study, all methods and techniques involved are described and cited. Furthermore, the author recorded and provided rationale for important choices that were made involving the study design, instrumentation, data collection and data analysis (Krefting, 1991). Yet, it is not expected that findings can be replicated, as each coach interviewed will vary in their background, environment and practices. It is highly unlikely that a different sample of ten coaches would produce similar results.

Researcher bias could play a significant role in this study. To counteract the influence of potential bias on the results it is important for the investigator to recognize his biases and work to control them. The author's interest in connection originated from working closely with young people of diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds in an urban environment as a community youth program coordinator, substitute teacher and coach. Observations include a lack of communication between schools and organizations, where they further did not seek to understand the resources, programming or objectives of the surrounding individuals and institutions. The different youth-serving contexts would even speak negatively about other contexts, at times in front of youth. Parents were often viewed as barriers to accomplishing developmental objectives, and parents often did not make communicating with their child's teachers, coaches, and youth program staff a priority.

Also observed were considerable difficulties and barriers in creating a more connected environment. There were valid reasons why youth-serving contexts were not more connected. Funding was provided for programs and schools based on their ability to produce measurable outcomes, attributable to their work. Significant collaboration produces shared results, which

might weaken the claim of a program or school that their efforts have had a significant positive impact. Reflecting on my own involvement, I desired to receive credit for creating and running effective programs and for having a positive impact on the youth with whom I worked. I sensed that many others teachers, coaches and youth workers had similar ego needs involved in their work. Again, shared efforts lead to shared accomplishments, and shared accomplishments do not satisfy the common human desire for recognition. Connection is made increasingly complex by the fact that each adult will differ in their personality and background, all of whom have many demands on their time and energy. Lastly, adults who work with youth invest a great deal of energy and emotion into the youth they work with and they care deeply about them. Because of this, adults can be justifiably protective of their students, athletes and program participants, and might be slow to allow others to influence their programs and the young people involved. The bias of the author has no doubt influenced the way he has understood the literature and implemented the study. Describing this bias allows the reader to identify author bias in the findings. It also allowed the author to insure that he is aware of his biases which helped him make sure he was not unknowingly letting them influence his collection and interpretation of the findings.

To address the theoretical fit of this study, the definition and discussion of connection was driven by theory and evidence in the existing literature. Key theoretical support was taken from the Bioecological Model of Human Development (Bronfebrenner & Morris, 1998) and the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine's report entitled *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). The Wallace Foundation's report entitled *Hours of Opportunity* (Boddily et al., 2012) and research surrounding the Search Institute's developmental assets model (Benson et al., 2011) provides empirical evidence. The

data collection instrument, the Sport Connection Interview Guide, is organized from Noam's (2003) typology of bridging. Findings were discussed as to how they fit into the existing literature.

Participant Selection

The sample consisted of 10 youth sport coaches who volunteered to participate in the study. Exploring the perspectives and practices of coaches in regards to connection is an ideal starting point because the coach must be involved for connection to occur between sport and other contexts. Exploring connection from the perspectives of the athlete's family, school, other activities, along with how such efforts are experienced by the athlete will be necessary in future studies to gain a more complete understanding of the topic.

To be included in the sample, coaches were required to have at least three years of experience as a head coach, and they must include the personal development of their athletes as part of their coaching philosophy. The experience requirement is important because the process of learning how to coach involves both formal and informal training and occurs over many years (Lemyre, Trudel & Durand-Bush, 2007). In requiring coaches to have at least three years coaching experience, the study participants will have had time to begin establishing and refining practices and philosophies, and therefore, they will be better able to articulate their perspectives and practices regarding connection.

The operational definition of connection used in this study states that connection in sport occurs when a coach makes intentional efforts to work with significant adults in another context with the purpose of supporting the personal or athletic development of an athlete. Considering this definition, connection demands that coaches are concerned with their athletes' development. Without developmental objectives, coaches would have no reason to engage adult leaders in

other contexts. For this reason, coaches must have clearly articulated objectives regarding the personal or athletic development of their athletes to participate in the study.

Sampling Method

Coaches were recruited from youth sport organizations who included athlete personal development in their mission statement, purpose statement or stated objectives. Initial contact was made through an email to the organization. Follow-up phone calls were made one week after the initial email if no response had been received. Coaches who volunteered to participate from qualified youth sport organizations were screened through a brief phone call to ensure they included a focus on athlete personal development.   Coaches were eligible to participate in the research study when they clearly articulated a focus on athlete personal development, along with the strategies they use to achieve their developmental goals. The screening phone call included two questions.

1. What do you personally hope your athletes' gain from participation?
2. What strategies do you use to achieve those goals with your athletes?

Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview guide was used as the instrument for data collection. The Sport Connection Interview Guide (SCIG) (See Appendix A) was created for the purpose of this study. The SCIG was developed with analysis in mind as suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2005). Questions are arranged in sections and subsections in line with research questions of the current study. Each context discussed in the literature review is a main section (family, school and community adults). Subsections are adapted from Noam's (2003) typology of bridging (Common Goals, Communication and Structure). Specific questions within each section were shaped by examples of connection in the literature review. Follow-up questions identified

factors that facilitate or inhibit connection and specific examples of connection in real-world settings.

Two pilot interviews were performed with two youth sport coaches; a school soccer coach and a community boxing coach. Both coaches worked with male and female athletes. The pilot interviews were long and redundant at times. Adjustments were made to the SCIG and interview procedures to increase the flow and reduce the amount of time required. In the first version of the SCIG, the structure, common goals and communication domains were used as the three main sections, with the contexts of family, school and non-sport youth programs as subsections. It appeared to be difficult for the first pilot participant to quickly transition his thoughts between contexts, so the contexts were changed to be the main sections with domains as the subsections. The first pilot participant also discussed other youth sport coaches as individuals with whom he had connected. To include youth sport coaches, the title *non-sport youth program* was changed to *community adult*. Lastly, follow-up questions were originally asked at the end of each sub section, with many responses being the same after each subsection. Interview procedures were adjusted so follow-up questions were asked at the end of each section. During the second pilot interview, the researcher focused on refining follow-up questions and probing questions. The researcher also made the decision to limit follow-up questions during the background section, as it unnecessarily extended the interview.

Consent

Details of the study were presented to all potential participants including the purpose, methods, and the nature of the commitment required to be a participant. They were given as much time as they needed to consider their involvement and ask questions. Coaches who agreed to take part in the study signed a consent form and were given a copy for their records.

Procedures

The researcher and interviewee mutually agreed to a time and place to complete the interview. Interviews took place in a quiet room with no other people present. A digital voice recorder was used to record the interviews. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and included in the final report. The average interview time was approximately 100 minutes.

Data Analysis

Data was coded in accordance with the research questions. Examples of connection, factors that facilitate connection, factors that inhibit connection and attitudes and perceptions regarding connection were each marked with a different color highlighter on a copy of the transcripts. Data was further differentiated by the domain (communication, common goals or structure) and context (family, school, or community adult). Responses to all questions were searched for information that can provide insight into the nuances of connection.

Themes in the data were identified. For example, lack of common vision was a theme as a factor to inhibit connection. Stories, memorable quotes and examples of connection that coaches describe as effective are included in the discussion. Differences regarding the coaches' approaches to connection are also noted. Lastly, findings are interpreted as to how they might contribute to practice and further research. Did you do an triangulation of interviews with other coding it for verification?

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Overview

Based on the results of semi-structured interviews with the 10 participants in this study, youth sport coaches do in fact connect with their athletes' families, school personnel, and community adults. Data will be presented according to the participant, since the meaning of the data is closely connected to the participant's background and context. Each participant's responses will be shared in three subsections in accordance with the SCIG; connection with family, connection with schools, and connection with community adults. A chart of examples is presented for each domain, within each subsection. After the example, the first column will note which domain of connection the example most closely belongs. One consideration in how the coaches connect is their actual means of communication. If this was made clear by the coach in the interview, it will be noted under the column "How". The last column is titled "Purpose", and will categorize why the coach might be connecting according to possible purposes noted or assumed by the author based on what participants directly said or implied. Attitudes and perspectives the interviewees have shared regarding why they connect will be included in subsequent paragraphs. Codes used in the charts are listed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Abbreviations used in tables of participant examples

Domain

Structure (S)	Examples that are planned or built into the environment
Common Goals (G)	Two or more adults create a common goal
Communication (C)	Sharing information in an organic manner

How

Action (Act)	The predominant means of connection is an action
Email (Email)	Information sent via email
Informal (Inf)	Unplanned, usually from an unpredictable opportunity
In-Person (IP)	Face to face with the connecting adult
Paper (Pap)	Letters and flyers mailed or distributed at a team event

Table 4.1 (cont'd)

Phone (Ph)	Conversation on a telephone
Text Message (T)	Text messages using cellular phones
Purpose	
Cohesive Environment (CE)	Increasing understanding and information flow among adults
Line of Communication (LC)	Planned methods to facilitate future communication
Opportunity (OPP)	Efforts to create sport opportunities for youth
Relationship (REL)	Establishing and enhancing relationships with other adults
Strengthen (STR)	Enhancing another adult's ability to foster youth development

P1 Interview Summary

P1 background information. P1 is a middle-aged African American male. P1 coach's multiple sports in four different non-school youth sport programs. Currently, he is coaching girl's lacrosse, ages 11-14; boy's tackle football, ages 5-9; boy's lacrosse, ages 7-8; and duckpin bowling, ages 3-6. The girl's lacrosse team is the focus of this interview, but P1 shared his experiences from all of the sports. The girl's lacrosse team is sponsored by a local non-profit organization, intended to provide girls with the opportunity to play lacrosse who would not otherwise have that opportunity. The objectives of the program include learning sport skills, positive adult relationship, and personal development. The team competes in a competitive travel league. P1 is a teacher and most of the girls who play on the team attend the school where he teaches, though the school does not support the team in any way. The boy's tackle football program and boy's lacrosse program are sponsored through community recreation programs, both with the purpose of providing children with positive and fun sport opportunities. Duckpin bowling is a local program under the umbrella of the national governing body for the sport.

P1 played many different sports growing up, including baseball, football, badminton, duckpin bowling and basketball. His participation was encouraged by his mother, who felt it

would keep him out of trouble growing up in a rough neighborhood. He briefly played minor league baseball, and he played 15 years of semi-professional football.

His first coaching experience was with his post basketball team while he was in the army. He began coaching youth sports when his children began playing sports, and has been coaching youth for the past 17 years in duckpin bowling, football and lacrosse. He has taken online coaching courses, but the most significant influences on his coaching are his time in the army and his experiences as an athlete. P1 is also a teacher, and feels he brings important skills and perspectives from his education background into coaching. Additionally, he continues to learn through books and YouTube.

P1 has positive relationships with his athletes, and he commits significant time to building those relationships. He hopes his athletes follow the guidance and instruction of the adults in their life, and that they work to get better at whatever they are doing. He shared a personal mantra stating "my rules are parents, school and whatever the sport is, so, if you can't listen to your parents or listen to the adults that's trying to give you instruction, telling you what to do, you can't play. If you can't do well in school…" He feels youth sports are all about learning until high school, and he emphasizes fun, learning and participation on the teams he coaches. He avoids punishment in his coaching, again stressing the importance of teaching.

P1 connection with family. Examples of connection with family shared by P1 are listed in Table 4.2. P1 provided five examples of connection in the structure domain, three examples of connection in the common goals domain, and 15 examples in the communication domain. Most of the examples of connection with families were initiated by the coach, but the parents demonstrated effort to connect as well. The coach used email, text messages and phone calls for many purposes, and he encouraged parents to use text to get a faster response. He feels phone

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calls are the least effective way to connect with parents. Most of his communication with

parents occurred at practices and games through impromptu conversations. Creating a more

cohesive environment between the coach and parent was the most frequent reason for

connection.

Table 4.2: P1 examples of connecting with family

Example	Domain	How	Purpose
Parents must sign league parent policy	S	Pap	CE
Letter of Introduction	S	Pap	CE
Hosts fun event at season's end	S	IP	REL
Parents run concession stand	S	Act	OPP
Tells parents text is fastest	S	Pap	LC
Parents express their goals for child	G	Inf	CE
Parents share what they hope their child will gain	G	Inf	CE
Defines success to parents (commitment and improvement)	G	Inf	CE
Asked divorced parents to better communicate	C	Eml	CE
Confronts parents about negative behavior	C	Inf	CE
Suggests parents enroll child in different sports	C	Inf	STR
Asks parents not to talk about positions with kids	C	Inf	CE
Encouraged parents to keep child on the team	C	Inf	STR
Makes special arrangements for a phone conversation	C	Inf	LC
Mother told coach about behavior concerns	C	Inf	CE
Parents inform coach of medical issues (ADHD, asthma)	C	Inf	CE
Explains training rationale to parent	C	Inf	CE
Shares what sport skills he expects athletes to learn	C	Inf	CE
Parents ask questions, coach shares openly	C	Inf	CE
Emails and texts positive feedback after games	C	T/Eml	CE
Gathers parents after practice for meeting	C	Inf	CE
Provides Rationale to parents for their child's position	C	Inf	CE
Receives permission from parents to engage teachers	C	Inf	CE

Abbreviation Key
Domain: S-Structure; G- Common Goals; C- Communication
Method: Act- Action; Eml- Email; Inf- Informal; IP- In-Person; Pap- Paper; Ph- Phone;
T- Text Message
Purpose: CE- Cohesive Environment; LOC- Line of Communication; OPP- Opportunity;
REL- Relationship; STR- Strengthen

P1 felt that building relationships and communicating with parents is important. He placed great value on the role of parents, stating "they send their best when they send their child to you". Likewise, he suggested parents should respect the fact that the coach is likely committing his or her time on top of having a full time job and a family. Both the coach and parent should keep these perspectives in mind as they interact with each other.

P1 stressed that when coaches have good relationships with parents, the parent and coach can share information regarding their goals, expectations, and the child's progress, which will all benefit the development of the child. It is important to hear the parent's goals for the child, yet P1 felt his goals drive the program, not the parents' goals. He saw value in dealing with problems without the parents to allow parents to enjoy watching their child play.

Teaching at the school where many of his athletes attend allowed him to better connect with the parents of athletes who attend his school because he sees those parents more often. He also cited the ability to text and email as facilitating factors in connecting with parents.

P1 acknowledged that there are some parents who will not like their child's coach, and that will hinder connection. Also, some parents do not have email access, some do not have a phone, or their phone might be turned off, all of which make communication more difficult. Some types of parent involvement can be detrimental to a child's sport experience. Parents might be trying to relive their playing days and become too wound up during competition. Similarly, parents giving their child instructions at home and during competition can hinder athlete development, since their instructions may differ from the coach. Parents complaining from the stands and harsh discipline can harm the benefits young athletes' experience in the sport environment

P1 connection with schools. As can be seen in Table 4.3 a number of P1's connections focused on the school. P1 provided three examples of connection in the structure domain and seven examples of connection in the communication domain with schools. Five of the examples required mutual effort from both the coach and the teacher, four came out of the coach's efforts, and one was initiated by the teacher. Email was the most common way he connected with schools. All but one example was for the purpose of creating a more cohesive environment.

Table 4.3: P1 examples of connecting with school

Examples	Type	How	Purpose
Athletes must maintain academic and behaviors standards	S		CE
Recruits athletes from schools	S		OPP
Teacher provides progress report every two weeks (lacrosse)	S		CE
Initiates progress reports for poor academics (football)	C		CE
Communicates with teachers via email	C	Eml	CE
Visits football players school	C	IP	CE
Met a teacher, which facilitated ongoing communication	C	IP	CE
Regularly communicates with teachers at his school	C		CE
Calls coaches of his students, sometimes during class	C	Ph	CE
Teachers called him, had athlete talk to him during class	C	Ph	CE

P1 felt coaches can have an important influence on athlete's academic progress. He suggested coaches and teachers generally want the same thing for the kids, which lays a good foundation for connection. Because he is a teacher, he can relate to teachers, and they are open to him because he understands their perspective. It is easier for him to connect with the teachers at his own school, and he further benefits from most of his athletes attending his school. Lastly, teachers must be willing to work with the coach. Most communication with schools was through email.

He perceived connection with teachers to be difficult because both teacher and coach have time constraints. Coaches likely have a full time job and their personal life on top of coaching. When athletes attended different schools, it was time consuming to engage each

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school. In some instances, parents do not want the coach involved in this aspect of the athlete's life.

P1 connection with community adults. P1 provided only two example of connection with community adults, one in the structure domain, and the other in the communication domain (See Table 4.4). The first example creates the opportunity for an athlete to have continued development, and the second involves sharing information that strengthens himself and the other coaches.

Table 4.4: P1 examples of connecting with community adults

Examples	Domain	How	Purpose
Sponsors athlete to attend lacrosse camp	S	Act	OPP
Shares plays with other coaches	C		STR

According to P1, it is meaningful to involve the other adults in his athletes' lives, because building a strong community around a child will increase their long-term success. He also felt that an organization's ability to connect is influenced by it's location, funding and available volunteers. The level of a coach's connectedness to the community in general will influence their ability to connect. Regarding other youth sport coaches as a point of connection, he expressed that having an open learning environment between coaches is fun. P1 perceived value in an athlete having a coach for multiple seasons, or in multiple sports. He suggested both parent and child might be more comfortable, and the child will experience consistent expectations.

P2 Interview Summary

P2 background information. P2 is a middle-aged African American male. P2 is a martial arts instructor for students of all ages. His youth athletes range in age from 6-26. They are diverse in their age, socioeconomic background, physical attributes, ability and purpose for involvement. While some of his youth athletes live in a troubled area, he perceives that they all

have strong family support. Some have very high ambitions in the sport as some of them want to compete professionally. One of the athlete's is his son, which contributes to his connection to a local school. His students compete in tournaments throughout the region.

He is a full-time employee of a recreation facility located in a low-income community. In addition to teaching martial arts classes, P2 is the instructor for a recreational, multi-sport program for middle school aged youth and a personal trainer for adults. The recreation facility where P2 is employed full-time is a non-profit organization, funded by grants, contributions and membership fees. The mission of the organization is to develop all aspects of the person, largely based on the idea that physical health is closely linked to overall well-being. The organization serves both youth and adults. The purpose of his martial arts classes are peaceful, and there is a stated class code, known as a Dojo Kun, that establishes this purpose and other important guidelines for the class. The recreation center provides extensive training to their instructors focusing on participant safety, but P1 has also received some training regarding teaching, coaching and working with youth. Most of his training has been on the job, learning as he went in his previous positions where there was not any guidance or support.   P2 also teaches a youth martial arts class in a government-funded recreation facility in a suburban community. He is not aware of a larger mission at this location.

P2 has studied martial arts for the past 26 years, including Tong Soo Do, Jujitsu and Ninjitsu. He is a fourth degree black belt. He enjoyed playing other sports growing up, especially basketball, but did not play competitively. He started participating in martial arts because he was being bullied at school. He attended a class with his brother's friend and then continued his involvement. He already had an interest from seeing martial arts on television. He continues to study and learn different martial arts.

P1 has about 20 years of coaching experience. His coaching career began when he earned his first black belt at the age of 19, as teaching is a mandatory part of advancing as a black belt in martial arts. He started his own class in a housing development in the city where he previously lived. Coaching is a central part of career and he is compensated. He also takes any opportunity to volunteer to provide more children the opportunity to learn.

He hopes his students learn to be humble and respectful through his class, and he teaches these attributes through modeling. Learning martial arts has become a pragmatic skill for him. It has allowed him to make a living. He cites another student who was given special opportunities in the military due to his martial arts training as a practical benefit coming from martial arts training. He hopes his students experience these type of practical benefits. He wants his athletes to do well in school, and he hopes to have a student become a black belt in his system, as he has not yet had one.

P2 connection with family. An inspection of Table 4.5 reveals that P2 provided six examples of connection with families in the structure domain, two examples in the common goals domain, and 21 examples in the communication domain. Most of the examples of connection were initiated by the coach, but the parents initiated or contributed to many of the examples as well. One example was facilitated by an outside organization by hosting a banquet for parents, athletes and coaches. Nearly all of the examples occurred in passing, while the coach and the parent were already at a practice, competition, or event. Creating a more cohesive environment between the coach and parent was the most frequent reason for connection. Building relationships with parents was also a central focus of P2's efforts involving connection.

Table 4.5: P2 examples of connecting with family

Examples	Type	How	Purpose
Introduction packet is given to parents	S	Pap	CE
Banquets at the end of the season	S	IP	REL
Monthly family programs at the center	S	IP	REL
Lunch where his athletes serve the parents	S	IP	REL
Center works with school to connect with parent	S		REL
Monthly parent meeting	S	IP	CE
Tells parents he wants to have a child to earn a black belt	G	Inf	CE
Parents share how they hope their child benefits	G	Inf	CE
Offers to a parent to spend time with his son out of class	C	Inf	STR
Goes out to eat with families after banquets	C	Inf	REL
Shares contact info, encourage parents to call	C	Pap	LC
Encourages parents to share concerns about training	C	Inf	LC
Communicates about logistics at practice	C	Inf	OPP
Requests the parents attend classes	C	Inf	CE
Provides class rules	C	Pap	CE
Informs parents about the dangers of the sport	C	Inf	CE
Parents take sport away as punishment	C	Inf	CE
Asks the parents before trying behavior interventions	C	Inf	CE
Brainstorms with parents to address issues	C	Inf	CE
Parents share happenings and intervention strategies	C	Inf	CE
Changes aspects of training if parents are uncomfortable	C	Inf	CE
Encouraged parent to keep child in class	C	Inf	STR
Parents asked coaches to implement behavior intervention	C	Inf	CE
Gives athletes awards with parents present	C	IP	CE
Gives praise to parents when athletes improve	C	Inf	REL
Give parents accurate feedback on their child's progress	C	Inf	CE
Tells parents their child can teach Martial Arts	C	Inf	STR
Parents will share how child is doing in school	C	Inf	CE
Parents encourage athletes during training	C	Inf	CE

P2 felt it was important to connect with parents, suggesting that everything with a child starts at home. He views parents as the primary stakeholder in child's life and stated they are "rightfully concerned" (15, 39). Being on the same page with parents created a better experience for the athlete, and P2 can be effective as an instructor when parents share information with him. The athletes know when their parents are interested, they are proud to perform in front of their

parents, and may be disappointed if their parents are not there to watch. Parent involvement

makes the activity more valuable to the child. For these reasons, P2 feels having parents at

training sessions is a positive factor.

Parents are generally open to connect with P2. He feels that because parents chose to

have their child involved in the activity, they are willing to work with him. Some parents

become interested in the training and want to participate. This willingness and involvement from

the parents lays the foundation for connection.

Not all parents are interested though, and some do not wish to be involved. Parents often

cite busy work schedules as preventing them from being present at trainings, competitions, and

events. The parent events hosted by the center could be an opportunity to connect with parents,

but P2 has found it difficult to get parents to attend.

P2 connection with school. In regards to connecting with school, P2 provided five

examples in the structure domain and five examples in the communication domain (see Table

4.6). With the exception of the last example in the communication domain, all of the examples

of communication are with the same school located a few blocks from the center, where his son

was also a student at the time of the interview. The majority of the examples resulted from

combined efforts of the coach, organization, and schools.

Table 4.6: P2 examples of connecting with school

Examples	Domain	How	Purpose
Teachers punish students by not allowing them to participate	S		CE
Center created swimming opportunity with school	S		OPP
Center runs credit recovery school for high school students	S		STR
Center staff run programs at the school	S		OPP
P2 taught classes at a school	S		OPP
Talks to school staff about students when he is there	C	Inf	CE
Offered to run programs at a school	C	Inf	OPP
School staff shares progress of athletes with coach	C	Inf	STR

Table 4.6 (cont'd)

Shared strategies with a principal	C	Inf	CE
Drops off flyers for programs at schools	C	IP	OPP

     P2 feels school-based martial arts programs support the participants' academic success because they want to participate and the teachers make participation dependent on classroom behavior. He feels his athletes generally receive the same messages from him as they do from their teachers, which can be more powerful than a single voice.   While the collaboration with a nearby school is still in it's infancy, P2 feels this relationship can be valuable and the center should continue to pursue it.

     P2 has found he is able to connect with teachers and administrators easily when he runs a program in a school. In regards to the neighborhood school with which he shared examples of connection, there are multiple facilitating factors involved in his connection. The proximity of the school allows him to walk there and share information or have conversations. P2 further benefits from the center's efforts to connect to the school. He also is aware of what is happening at the school because his son is student. He plans to continue building that relationship by offering programs, being persistent, and keeping the school informed on programs at the center.

     P2 found connecting with his athletes' schools to be difficult because they attend many different schools. Within schools, he feels some school staff are set in their ways, and are not interested in sharing ideas or working collaboratively. Parents can also prevent him from connecting with schools, as some may not want the coach involved in that aspect of the child's life.

     P2 connection with community adults. An inspection of Table 4.7 shows that P2 provided three examples of connection in the structure domain and three examples of connection

in the communication domain. These examples show the willingness and commitment of the

coach to reach out to others, mostly for the purpose of increasing martial arts opportunity for

youth. Most of the examples involve in-person interaction.

Table 4.7: P2 examples of connecting with community adults

Examples	Domain	How	Purpose
Shares Equipment	S		OPP
Other programs can rent space in center	S		OPP
Does Martial arts demonstrations at community events	S	IP	OPP
Reached out to a wrestling coach	C		CE
Shares information about program at community events	C	IP	OPP
Exchanges ideas with other coaches at the center	C	Inf	STR

According to P2, the center tends to "go with the flow" in regards to connecting with

community adults. If there are opportunities to connect with individuals or organizations, they

are always open, but he does not actively pursue such opportunities. Coaches from other sports

sometimes encourage their athletes to participate in martial arts to strengthen physical or mental

characteristics. In general, he feels that it is good for coaches to talk, collaborate and share.

For connection to occur, P2 suggested it is important for adults to be willing to share and

be willing to put in the effort to approach other adults. Some adults are open to connecting, P2

describes this perspective by stating, "we need all the help we can get". It is difficult to connect

when adults do not think they need outside help and want to deal with everything themselves.

P3 Interview Summary

P3 background information. P3 is a Caucasian female in her early thirties. P3 holds

coaching positions at two locations. She coaches many different sports at a recreation center,

where she also is the director of youth and adult sports programs. The recreation center provides

sport and physical activity programming for children ages 2-14. Learning basic skills is the

central focus. The younger athletes participate because their parents sign them up and they continue to participate because it's fun. She also coaches at a private high school, where she is an assistant girls' soccer coach and an assistant girls' softball coach. The interview focuses on her coaching at the recreation center because that is where she is a head coach, but she also provides examples of connection from experience as a school coach.

The recreation center is under the umbrella of a non-profit organization, serving people of all ages with fitness facilities, exercise classes, youth and adult sports, and other classes and opportunities to promote general well-being. Their mission is to promote holistic well-being in the community, as well as the values of care, respect, responsibility and honesty.

P3 played both softball and field hockey in high school. She went on to play softball all four years in college, and two years of field hockey. She continues to play many recreational sports as an adult. She never had interest in becoming a coach. Her coaching career began when she took a job as an adult league coordinator in an indoor sports facility. In that position, she ended up coaching children and enjoyed it. She has been coaching for 7 years now, coaching is a substantial part of her career and she is compensated. Currently, she coaches girl's high school soccer and softball, as well as youth soccer, softball, baseball, basketball, flag football and gymnastics at the recreation center where she is employed.

Her coaches in high school and college had the strongest influence on her coaching. She appreciated the business-like approach of her high school softball and college field hockey coaches. She tries to emulate the strong relationship skills of her JV softball coach. The center has provided training to protect the safety of participants first and foremost, and further training to promote center and program objectives.

P3 has generally positive relationships with her athletes. The recreation center does not allow coaches and staff to have any contact with athletes outside of the center, which hinders her ability to develop more personal relationships. With her high school teams, there are more opportunities to engage and develop meaningful relationships through social events and higher level conversations since they are older.

Personally, she hopes her athletes always give their full effort, respect everyone involved and apply lessons they learn in sport to the lives. Modeling is a big part of how she promotes these ideals, along with teaching and reinforcement.

P3 connection with family. P3 provided three examples of connection in the structure domain, two examples in the common goals domain, and 10 examples in the communication domain (See Table 4.8). Both the coach and parents initiated connection in different examples. The majority of examples occurred in passing at practices. Creating a more cohesive environment was the most frequent purpose of connection, with multiple examples of one context strengthening another as well.

Table 4.8: P3 examples of connecting with family

Example	Domain	How	Purpose
Center hosts workshops/speakers/presentations for parents	S	IP	STR
Head coach of school team sends out introduction email	S	Eml	CE
Tells parents she is always available via phone or email	S	Inf	LC
Parents express hope their child develops a love of sport	G	Inf	CE
Parents might express goals for their child	G	Inf	CE
Parents watch practice	C	IP	CE
Communicate regarding logistics	C	Eml	OPP
Parents come to center and ask for P3	C	IP	REL/CE
Parents share how they are disciplining child	C	Inf	CE
Regularly shares success and improvement with parents	C	Inf	CE
Discusses other activities and events in child's life	C	Inf	CE
Approaches parents about red flags from talking to athlete	C	Inf	CE
Parents share how much the child enjoys participating	C	Inf	STR
Asks parents to reinforce values or behaviors at home	C	Inf	STR

Table 4.8 (cont'd)

Parent participated with a child who was anxious	C	Inf	STR

P3 sees value in sharing goals and expectations for the athletes with their parents. She feels it is important for young people to have adults in their lives who care about them. Specifically, she said youth may not want to discuss certain topics with their parents, so having other adults in their life who they trust can be an important support, especially with non-traditional families. Coaches can play this role in the lives of their athletes, acting as a supplement to the support and guidance provided by parents.

Having her office in the recreation center facilitated connection with parents. They knew she would be at the center, and they could drop-in when they wanted to talk. Parents' presence at practices and games create numerous opportunities for her to talk to them. She notes that parents often talk about how busy they are. When additionally considering P3's own busy schedule, she finds it difficult to connect with parents. The recreation center has rules in place dictating that staff cannot engage youth and families outside of the center and it's programming. This restriction can also add to the challenge of connecting. To learn about her athletes, she prefers to have conversations with them directly, as opposed to parents.

P3 connection with school. As depicted in Table 4.9, P3 provided three examples of connection with schools in the structure domain and two examples of connection in the communication domain. Three examples were initiated by the center, and two examples involved combined efforts from a school and the center. Creating more opportunities for youth to participate in athletic activities was the most frequent purpose.

Table 4.9: P3 examples of connecting with school

Example	Domain	How	Purpose
Schools rent space in the center	S		OPP
Hosted a kickball league for schools	S		OPP
Center runs non-sport programs in schools	S		STR
Drops off flyers to schools with program information	C	Pa	OPP
Called a principal when a child was at the center during school	C	Ph	CE

P3 feels athletic participation can have a positive impact on academic achievement when grade point average requirements must be met for children to participate. She feels connecting with the schools of her athletes would be difficult because they attend many different schools.

P3 connection with community adults. P3 provided one example of connection in the structural domain with community adults who are involved in her athletes' lives. The example required effort from both the recreation center and other organizations, with the purpose of creating more athletic opportunities for youth. P3 notes that some of the coaches who volunteer at her recreation center also volunteer for another youth sport program where some of her athletes participate.

Table 4.10: P3 examples of connecting with community adults

Example	Domain	How	Purpose
Shares facilities and equipment with other organizations	S		OPP

P3 believes sharing information about a child allows adults to better understand that child. A connected environment could allow multiple adults the opportunity to praise a child when they do something well in any of their contexts. Connecting with the other important adults in her athletes' lives would benefit them, but P3 does not feel she could create this connection. She feels parents would need to be the cog to make this happen. P3 feels

connecting with other adults is difficult because of the demands on everybody's time and energy and the process of establishing lines of communication might be especially difficult.

P4 Interview Summary

   P4 background information. P4 is a middle-aged Caucasian female. She is the head coach of the high school lacrosse team at a private all girl's school in a suburban area, where she is also the athletic director. Her athletes are 15-18 years old. She describes her athletes as over coached as they have been playing since they were young on club teams and they attend many camps. They are detached from their sport experience, as it is what they have always done. She suggests they play out of habit, not personal enjoyment and passion. They are not the most talented and athletic, but they work hard and have high standards for themselves. They are good players, all of them could play in college, and most of them do. Many of them are focused on getting an athletic college scholarship. Ethnically, they are all white, but socioeconomically diverse. About one third have a diagnosed learning issue. Most of them come from two-parent households.

   The school is ethnically diverse, though majority white. It is funded through an endowment and tuition. The school's mission statement is extensive, it focuses on high quality academics and the holistic develop of its' students. Physical development is important and viewed as working in concert with all aspects of development to fulfill the mission. The athletic department's mission statement emphasizes pursuing excellence through sport and developing leadership. The school will provide any training for coaches to develop, but the coaches must pursue it. The league also has a mission statement, which is simply to create a fair platform for competition within it's diverse schools.

P4 comes from an athletic family, she was a three sport athlete in both middle and high school. Her goal was to play field hockey in college but did not make the team, so she joined the lacrosse team. She still enjoys playing recreational sports as an adult. An active childhood predisposed P4 towards coaching, she had good coaches and instructors through summer camp and different sports. She volunteered to coach at a lacrosse camp after college and wanted to continue coaching from the positive experience. She has been a head coach for 24 years, coaching lacrosse at all levels, from recreational to international competition. Currently, she only coaches the high school team. She feels teaching is an important part of coaching. P4 helped develop the original version of the US lacrosse level one coach training.

The foundation of her training is her degree in physical education, where she had many courses on teaching different sports, and two specifically focused on how to coach. Most of her training has been on the job, learning as she goes, and she also attends workshops, presentations and reads books. She watches other coaches' practices at her school and integrates ideas from her observations. She is still committed to learning and believes ongoing learning is important. She has learned from the coaches she had as an athlete, both good and bad. She wishes her coaches were better at maintaining relationship after she moved on and she tries to do this with her athletes.

P4 has strong relationships with her athletes, she cares for them as people and takes time to get to know them. Developing mutual trust is important, and she does this in part by letting the athletes know she trusts them. She has genuine relationships with her former athletes, and she works to stay in touch with them. Facebook helps her to maintain these relationships. Because she is the athletic director, she often sees her athletes around the athletic facilities throughout the school year.

On a personal level, P4 wants her athletes to be good people, love sport and be passionate in what they do. Through playing on her team, she hopes her athletes learn the importance of process, how to push themselves beyond what they think is possible, and to become unafraid to make mistakes. She wants them to live fulfilled lives, and hopes they take care of themselves and take care of others. To accomplish these goals, she tries to discuss and model these ideas.

P4 connection with family. An inspection of Table 4.10 reveals that P4 provided seven examples of connection with families in the structure domain, three examples in the common goals domain, and fourteen examples in the communication domain. The majority of the examples occurred when the coach and parent saw each other before and after practice and around the school's campus. Both the coach and parent initiated conversations and shared information. Creating a more cohesive environment for the athletes was the most common purpose.

Table 4.11: P4 examples of connecting with family

Example	Domain	How	Purpose
Introductory email after tryouts	S	Eml	CE
Parent Orientation	S	IP	CE
Mandatory parent meeting after a practice	S	IP	CE
League hosts speakers and workshops	S	IP	STR
Provides parents with email and phone number	S	Eml	LC
Tells parents not to talk to her after the game	S	IP	LC
Minimal Boosters Program	S		OPP
Shares her goals for her athletes at the meeting	G	IP	CE
Might create a common goal if necessary	G	IP	CE
Parents approach coach to discuss development	G	Inf	CE
Tells parents to have daughter talk to her	C	Inf	CE
Emails information to parents	C	Eml	OPP
Parents ask her not tell athlete they called, she refuses	C	Ph	CE
Speaks to parents often about college and recruiting	C		CE
Discusses requirements to compete at the next level	C		CE
Informs parents about the college process	C		STR
Frequent casual conversations with parents	C	Inf	CE
Parents call when the coach is critical of their child	C	Ph	CE

Table 4.11 (cont'd)

Conversations about small concerns happen in passing	C	Inf	CE
Compliments parents on their child	C	Inf	CE
Contacts parents to discuss injuries	C	Ph, Eml	CE
Tells parents their child is doing well	C	Inf	CE
Contacts parents about discipline	C	Ph, Eml	CE
Admits fault to parents	C		CE

P4 feels parents are important to their child's athletic experience, and are an important part of the larger school community. They obviously care deeply about their daughters, and they may feel more invested because they pay tuition and make sacrifices to do so. There is a limit to how much they should be involved in the team, but it is important that they are included and valued. P4 shares information with parents and wants them to know her goals for the athletes. She also wants parents to know that she takes the time to get to know their daughters. P4 suggests some parents have unrealistic expectations regarding their child's ability in the sport and what the child's role might be on the team. It is important for her manage those expectations to prevent parents from expressing frustrations to their child. When parents do have concerns, P4 has found that simply taking the time to listen to them goes a long way.

P4 is careful in how she interacts with parents. She does not approach parents when other parents are around, because other parents might perceive favoritism. Whether she calls, emails, schedules a meeting or talk to parents when she sees them depends on the topic of the conversation and she uses her judgement in each instance. Some coaches may benefit from training or strategies to navigate relationships with parents, but she feels it comes natural to her.

At the same time, P4 does not feel good relationships with parents are essential. Her primary focus is the athletes, and expresses that even if a coach does everything perfect with parents, it may not be fruitful. She consistently shares her sentiment that parents can be

overinvolved, which prevents the athletes from learning how to have conversations with adults. In response, she feels part of her role is to help parents allow their children to become adults, so most of the time she wants to speak to directly to the athlete about most issues.

Working as an administrator at the school strengthens P4's ability to connect with parents. The support she has from the school plays an important role in maintaining productive relationships with parents, as the school will always involve her if a parent tries to go over her head. Every staff member at the school is an academic advisor to a group of assigned students, P4 included. A few of her advisees play lacrosse, creating more opportunities for connection with the parents of those students. Connection occurs more frequently in season, but she does see parents at various school activities throughout the school year.

P4 cited multiple factors that can facilitate connection between coaches and parents. Connection is more likely when both coach and parent are comfortable with engaging in conversations, including discussions that may involve conflict. Establishing mutual trust also supports connection, and P4 feels the coach should be the leader in this process. P4 builds comfort and trust with the parents by showing the parents she knows their daughter, complementing the athletes to the parents, seeking to understand the ambitions and perspectives of the parents and athletes. Parents contribute to a supportive, connected environment when they come to cheer for and watch their child, in contrast to criticizing and instructing.

P4 identified many factors that can hinder connection between coaches and parents. Rifts can develop in the parent-coach relationship when parents and coaches do not have the same goals for an athlete, if parents do not buy-in to what the coach is trying to accomplish, or if the parent's expectations are not met. Additionally, P4 has found that parents can develop a short-sighted focus in what they want for their child, and they may have an inflated view of their

child's ability. They may complain in the stands or discredit the coach in front of their child. In contrast to the comfort and trust P4 cited as facilitating factors, parents may not engage the coach because they feel the coach is unapproachable, or they may think approaching the coach with a concern may hurt their child's playing time. Coaches may also be hesitant or shy in interacting with parents and try to avoid contact, or they may avoid contact in certain circumstances. Time and busyness are significant barriers for both coaches and parents. In the context of her school, P4 also competes with teachers and schools staff members who are vying for the parents' attention. When she hosts events specifically for parents, she perceives that the ones who are already "on board" attend more frequently. This observation leaves P4 with the ongoing challenge of building relationships with parents who may not be interested.

P4 connection with school. P4 provided nine examples of connection in the structure domain, three examples in the common goals domain, and four examples in the communication domain (See Table 4.11). Connection with school staff most often required combined efforts from the coach and the school. Most of the examples of connection result from P4 being in meetings and seeing teachers on campus as staff members of the school. Creating a more cohesive environment for the athletes was the most common purpose of connection.

Table 4.12: P4 examples of connecting with school

Example	Domain	How	Purpose
Works with school administrator regarding serious problems	S		CE
As AD, is a communication link between teachers and coaches	S		CE
15-minute daily faculty meetings	S	IP	CE
Paid for transportation for other schools	S		OPP
Teacher-Coaches receive PD from school as Teachers	S	IP	STR
As AD, might set-up training event for all coaches	S	IP	STR
School hosts workshops and speakers for parents	S	IP	STR
Coach is also an academic advisor, advises a couple players	S		CE
As AD, speaks at school-wide parents' night	S	IP	CE
Athlete's advisers communicate goals for athletes	G		CE
School staff may express how they hope sport is beneficial	G	Inf	CE

Table 4.12 (cont'd)

Meets with teachers to create common goals	G	IP	CE
Regularly interacts with teachers	C	Inf	CE
Joins meetings regarding athletes in chambers (faculty meetings)	C	Inf	CE
Regularly shares successes and concerns with teachers	C	Inf	CE
Prepares teachers for a conversation with a student-athlete	C		CE

P4 suggests school sports create an atmosphere of pride, which contributes to the overall quality of the school environment. Students benefit from more adults surrounding them and coaches are important members of this team of adults. She sees value in coaches and teachers working together, but she does not feel a need to work with teachers to create or articulate goals, as the goals are understood and are generally the same for all students.

Working at the school facilitates connection between P4 and the teachers. She sees the teachers often, has known many of them for a long time, and they know each other and trust each other. The school is relatively small, allowing the staff to know each other better. There is a 15-minute meeting each day with the staff of the entire school, which is an important opportunity to exchange information with teachers regarding athletes. The extensive mission statement puts everyone on the same page. An additional factor is the extent to which staff respect and value the role of sport and physical education as an integral part of education. Staff who see sport as important to a student's long-term success will be more likely to connect with P4.

P4 indicated that it is difficult for non-teacher coaches to connect because they have other jobs, and they do not have enough time. Maintaining the trust of students is an important consideration, as teachers and coaches must consider what they share with each other so as to respect the confidentiality of the students. P4 perceives that being in a bigger school would make connecting with teachers more difficult.

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P4 connection with community adults. As can be seen in Table 4.13, P4 provided nine examples of connection in the structure domain and three examples in the communication domain. These examples of connection most often required combined efforts from the coach and adults from another organization. The most common means of connection was through events, and creating a more cohesive environment for the athletes was the most common purpose.

Table 4.13: P4 examples of connecting with community adults

Example	Domain	How	Purpose
League runs leadership training	S	IP	CE
Organization and league host workshops/seminars	S	IP	CE
Donates Equipment to other organizations	S		OPP
Interacts with leaders of school-based activities	S		CE
(Table 4.13 Continued)			
Interacts with lacrosse club coaches	S		CE
Fundraises for causes athletes are involved in	S		CE
Creates formal service learning opportunities	S		CE
Website and facebook page	S	Web	LC
Outreach with other youth service organizations	S		CE
Communicates with other activity leaders at the school	C		CE
Uses relationships to identify programs for donations	C		OPP
Shares accomplishments with club coaches	C		CE

P4 feels there is value in connecting with the adults in their athletes lives because it allows her to see the athletes from different angles. A more complete understanding of an athlete will allow her to be more effective in supporting their personal development. At the same time, P4 feels she generally has the same goals for her athletes as the other adults in their lives, and she does not think direct communication is always needed around what they are trying to accomplish. Specific to other coaches as community adults, not all coaches concern themselves with their athletes' development beyond the sport, which limits P4's opportunities for meaningful connection.

Whether or not coaches connect with important adults in their athletes' lives will largely depend on the interest of both parties. Adults are generally wrapped in their own efforts and do not tend to reach out. For connection to occur, the coach and the other adults would have to feel it was important, and they have to be willing to put in the time and effort.

P5 Interview Summary

P5 background information. P5 is a middle-aged Caucasian male. He coaches a middle school girls' soccer team at a public, inner-city school, where he is also a counselor for the middle school grades. His athletes are middle school students, mostly Latina girls, 12-15 years old. Most of his athletes come from lower income families with a mixture of both single and two-parent households. For most of the girls, it is the first time they are playing organized soccer. He also coaches his son's soccer team, an under 12 boys' team, with most of the athletes being either 10 or 11 years old. His son's team is a competitive club team that competes in a metropolitan area travel league. Athletes must tryout to make the team. Seventy-five percent of the players are Caucasian and 25 percent are Hispanic, and they come from mixed socioeconomic backgrounds.

The school where he teaches is 50-50 Caucasian and Hispanic. Ninety-five percent of the students receive free or reduced lunches. There are a few African-American students, but they are from other neighborhoods. The school is in a small, enclosed neighborhood, with only a couple streets leading to the rest of the city. There are a variety of clubs and non-academic activities at the school, but there are currently fewer opportunities due to turnover in school staff. He hopes new staff members will re-establish some extracurricular activities. The mission of the school is to put their students on a path to college readiness as they enter high school.

P5 played mainly soccer until he reached high school, with a few seasons of baseball as well. He played football in high school, but was academically ineligible as a senior. As an adult, P5 has played in soccer and tackle football leagues, but nothing he considers to be highly competitive.

In P5's first teaching position, the school needed a soccer coach. He took that position and since has been coaching for 17 years. In addition to soccer, he has coached his son's baseball and football teams. Coaching has become part of his career because it supports his efforts as an educator. He receives a small stipend for coaching.

In addition to his training as a school counselor, he is certified as a teacher, assistant principal and principal. Due to his background as an educator, he feels he has more tools in working with the kids. He has his US soccer "E" coaching license and is trained in first aid and CPR.

He has a good rapport with his athletes and he treats them as if they are his daughters. He openly talks to them about all aspects of life, including sensitive issues. He strongly encourages them to be modest in their dress and how they carry themselves, and to stay away from boys. He feels he is a father figure to some who do not have a father at home. His boys' team has only played for one season, but he hopes to also have similar relationships.

The school soccer team is made possible by an umbrella organization that provides facilities, transportation, equipment, and uniforms. The school must pay a fee to the organization, but that comes back as the coach's stipend. The mission of the organization is to provide opportunities for the children to play. The organization provides coaches with an online training program. To enhance the experience, the team does minimal fundraising, which has allowed them to go on field trips and buy higher quality uniforms.

Personally, P5 hopes his athletes enjoy playing and demonstrate mutual respect. Good

sportsmanship is important to him, and when his athletes are confronted with conflict during

competition, he encourages them to turn the other cheek. With the boys' team, he places more

emphasis on performance. He hopes all his athletes are successful socially and academically.

To promote these ideals, he is genuine and realistic, stating "he tells it like it is."

P5 connection with family. P5 provided 10 examples of connection in the structure

domain, two examples in the common goals domain, and eight examples in the communication

domain (See Table 4.14). The majority of examples required mutual efforts from the coach and

parents, with many examples also being facilitated by the coach. Most examples of connection

occurred in informal settings. Creating a more cohesive environment was the most common

purpose.

Table 4.14: P5 examples of connecting with family

Example	Domain	How	Purpose
Coaching enables coach to build rapport with parents	S		REL
Teams vs. Parent Game	S	IP	REL
Family Engagement committee at the school	S	IP	REL/CE
Committee and coach promote each other's schedule	S		CE
Provide GED classes for Parents	S	IP	STR
Accomplishments are publicized in the community	S		CE
Parents help drive to make outings possible	S	Act	OPP
Parents bring snacks for after the game	S	Act	STR
Introductory Packet at the beginning of the season	S	Pap	CE
Facebook Page	S	Web	CE
Talks to parents about goals if needed, or in passing	G		CE
Goals are naturally common, parents share goals with him	G		CE
Makes an effort to meet all parents	C	IP	REL
Parents attend games	C	IP	CE
Invites parents to attend games	C		CE
Communicates with parents at every opportunity	C	Inf	CE
Sees parents in the community because he lives there	C	Inf	CE
Sport can be taken away as a punishment	C		CE
Shares information about success, challenge and concerns	C	Inf	CE
Asks parents to fill various needs	C		OPP

P5 feels it is important to connect with parents. His responses focused on building relationships with parents, through which parents are more willing to help with the team and be involved in the school in different ways. He does not feel it is necessary to create common goals with parents because the goals are naturally aligned, nor does he feel it is important to discuss a child's progress with parents when they are doing well. Parents do not always have working phone numbers, and some do not have email, so P5 has found Facebook and home visits to be effective ways to communicate with parents. He feels home visits provide an additional benefit of strengthening his rapport with his athletes.

Multiple factors facilitated connection between P5 and his athletes' families. His roles as a coach and a counselor provide him with more opportunities to interact with parents. He noted that parents appreciate when a coach shares positives about their child with them, so he is intentional about using this strategy. The community engagement group also supports relationships, as they are actively reaching out and building relationships with parents as well. Because the community is small and close knit, P5 can walk around the community and visit his athletes' homes.

The fact that some parents do not have email addresses and their phone numbers regularly change or are disconnected hinder P5's ability to connect with parents. Some of the parents do not speak English well, and the coach does not speak Spanish well. Often times the athletes serve as translators, which limits the ability of the coach and parents to communicate as well. Time is also barrier, as many parents have very busy work schedules and are hard to track down.

P5 connection with school. Table 14.5 shows that P5 provided four examples of connection in the structure domain, two examples in the common goals domain, and seven examples in the communication domain. The coach facilitated most of these examples. Most of the examples naturally resulted from the coach being a staff member at the school. Creating a more cohesive environment was the main focus of the connection.

Table 4.15: P5 examples of connecting with school

Example	Domain	How	Purpose
Umbrella organization provides funding	S		OPP
Teachers know who is on the team and the standards	S		CE
Coach is always present in the school as a counselor	S	IP	CE
School provides first aid and CPR training	S	IP	STR
Shares goals with teachers, but does not seek their goals	G	Inf	CE
Teachers hope students learn commitment	G	Inf	CE
Watches students compete in other sports	C	Inf	CE
Share successes of athletes	C	Inf	CE
Communicates with teachers about concerns	C	Inf	CE
Discusses very good and very bad with teachers	C	Inf	CE
Shares strategies with teachers	C	Inf	STR
Keeps teachers updated on positive things in the kids life	C	Inf	CE
Communicates expectations to other adults in the school	C	Inf	CE

As a coach, P5 feels it is beneficial to work in the school because it allows him to build positive rapport with students in both contexts, which can go a long way in his ability to support the child. His office is located right in the middle of the classroom area, making him accessible to teachers and students. It is easy for him to check on his athletes' academic progress because he creates the students' grade reports at the school as the school counselor. Working with teachers improves the teachers' and P5's effectiveness in supporting academic progress. He feels it benefits the child when adults are on the same page regarding expectations. At the same time, he does not find much value in teachers giving input into the soccer team because he does not perceive they are invested and in touch with what he is doing.

He cited his multiple roles in the school as enhancing his effectiveness. By both working and coaching in the school, P5 has more time to get to know the students than a staff person with only one role. As the guidance counselor, he is aware of students' strengths and challenges in the classroom over multiple school years, in addition to his perspectives as a coach. P5 notes that his deeper understanding of the students from knowing them longer positions him to share valuable insights and strategies with teachers. Even with these facilitating factors, the adults have to put in the effort of reaching out to each other.

P5 still experienced challenges in connecting with school staff, despite the close working relationships. He cites the importance of common expectations multiple times in the interview. He feels it benefits the students when he and the teachers have common expectations, but when they do not, he feels connection is difficult. Specifically, he discussed a staff member who lowered expectations for athletes so they could play, where he seeks to establish higher expectations. Time is a limitation for both the teachers and P5. Teachers have extensive demands on their time, and they often do not want to spend more time at school. When he does not see extra investment from teachers, he is less inclined to work collaboratively with them. Connection is also hindered by the number of students in each class. There is not time to consistently discuss each student, so he normally only discusses individual students with teachers when there is a major problem.

P5 connection with community adults. P5 provided no direct examples of connection with the important adults in his athletes' lives outside of their family and school. He gave one example in the structure domain and three examples in the communication domain that would be connection if they occurred, but he only noted the potential. In his experience, information moves through the community indirectly through his athletes and their parents, but he does not

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engage the adults outside of the school. The team website and facebook page are open to anyone, so other adults in the community could potentially receive information regarding the soccer team from the internet.

Table 4.16: P5 examples of connecting with community adults

Example	Domain	How	Purpose
Website is accessible to all	S	Web	CE
It is possible that parents pass info to other organizations	C	Inf	CE
Girls scouts asked for volunteers once	C	Inf	OPP
Tries to share accomplishments of athletes with others	C	Inf	CE

Despite not engaging the adults from other activities, P5 sees value in doing so because children need positive adults in their lives. He suggests it is good to have more adults involved, and to have more adults aware of the athletes' accomplishments.

The school is located in a small community, which allows for information to travel easily. Because of this dynamic, he thinks the different youth-serving contexts are aware of what is happening with each other. The willingness of adults to engage each other would be an important facilitating factor in establishing connection.

Churches are an important part of many of his athletes' lives, and since it is a bilingual community, the leadership in some churches do not speak English. Language would be a barrier to connecting with churches. If he developed programming with other organizations in the community, another barrier would be sorting out the logistics of staffing, scheduling and insurance, especially if the program used the school's facilities.

P6 Interview Summary

P6 background information. P6 is a Caucasian male in his early thirties. He is the founder and director of a non-profit organization focused on building dedicated lacrosse players in the city. His athletes are from mostly low-income, single parent homes in grades 6-12. They

come from all over the city, with the essential criteria being they are already working hard to improve as a lacrosse player. Program participants are diverse in ability. Some have the potential to play in college, while some are average players on youth and school teams. The coach perceives that the athletes do not always know why they participate, but he thinks part of their motivation involves their enjoyment of the sport and a desire to keep improving. On a deeper level, he feels they participate because it is a safe place where they experience meaningful camaraderie. His relationships are very different depending on the athlete.

P6 started the non-profit organization about five years ago, but he recently quit his teaching job to run the non-profit full-time at the end of last school year. The organization serves as a bridge to provide opportunities that athletes would not otherwise have to pursue their athletic potential. Participants receive high-quality training from P6 and scholarships to attend lacrosse camps, along with other developmental opportunities. The mission of the organization is to walk with athletes through an important development period, using lacrosse as a connecting point. The organization also provides tutoring, mentoring, various learning experiences, and guidance through the college application process. Supports provided for each participant are different, and the definition of success for each athlete varies as well.

P6's father was a college athlete and a college athletic director, providing P6 with many athletic opportunities growing up. After initially playing basketball, football, and lacrosse in high school, he dropped basketball to focus on football and lacrosse. As an eighth grader, P6 decided he wanted to play college lacrosse and he worked hard towards that goal. He played at two top division one lacrosse universities, transferring after his sophomore year. He went on to play four years of professional lacrosse.

From his experience coaching younger lacrosse players when he was in high school, P6 knew he wanted coaching to be part of his future. He has coached for the past 11 years, the past nine of which he has only coached high school-aged athletes. This includes school teams, club teams, and running his own lacrosse camps. In the past, he has also coached football and ice hockey, but he currently only coaches lacrosse.

P6 cites his experiences as a player and the coaches for whom he has played, both good and bad, as the most significant contributing factors to how he coaches. His father's approach to coaching and sports had an important positive impact as he navigated his different sport experiences.   P6 continues to grow as a coach through talking to college coaches and dropping in on youth sport coaches with whom he shares facilities.

His goals for each athlete is different, ranging from staying out of prison to getting into a top college. He wants his athletes to work hard and improve, have good physical conditioning, and develop as leaders. P6 wants his athletes to have a generally positive life, and develop the skills they need to do so through his programs. To promote these ideals, he establishes clear expectations, maintains regular contact, and provides them the steps to progress. He models healthy behaviors by working out and competing with them.

P6 Connection with family. Table 14.17 shows that P6 provided seven examples of connection with families in the structure domain, two examples in the common goals domain, and 11 examples in the communication domain. The coach is the facilitator of most of these examples. He connects consistently using text messages and when he sees parents in-person. Building relationships and creating a cohesive environment are both prominent reasons why the coach and families connect.

Table 4.17: P6 Examples of connecting with family

Example	Domain	How	Purpose
Intake meeting with families, sets goals and guidelines	S	IP	REL/CE
Biannual meetings	S	IP	REL/CE
Regular emails and newsletters	S	Eml/Pap	CE
Facebook Page	S	Web	CE
Umbrella helps families with high school placement	S		OP
Fills gaps that parents cannot, such as access to camps	S		OP
Coach at a camp praised athlete, P6 passed it on to parent	S	Txt	CE
Discusses goals with parents at intake meeting	G	IP	CE
Families may have specific goals, but are usually general	G		CE
Most communication with parents involves transportation	C	Inf	OPP
Sends group texts for meetings	C	Txt	OPP
Asks parents to keep him updated on child	C	Inf	CE
Coach is another voice with parents	C		CE
Parents call to have him yell at their son	C	Ph	CE
Parents discipline kid for behavior with coach	C		CE
Educates parents on NCAA clearinghouse	C		STR
Encourages parents, tells them they are doing a good job	C	Inf	STR
Compliments parents on kids	C	Txt	STR
Informs parents about small concerns	C	Ph/Txt	CE
Unannounced home visits	C	Act	CE

P6 believes connection with parents is beneficial because it creates a closed network, in which the athletes are well-supported and held accountable. All of his interactions with parents have been generally positive. He assumes this is in part because parents must be proactive in their child's life to sign them up for the program. The ways in which he interacts with parents is different depending on the child's age, with younger children requiring more communication. The coach and parent generally see the same concerns, so they do not necessarily need to discuss it. Too much communication can become ineffective because parents will start to tune him out. To this end, P6 described his communication as consistent as opposed to constant. He feels social events to build relationships with families are at times overdone by organizations similar to his, so he keeps them to a minimum. Some conversations and intended supports might be

beneficial to parents and may even be offensive. To prevent himself from overreaching, he tries to stay focused on his mission.

P6 feels having positive relationships with parents facilitates connection, so he invests time into building relationships. Some parents buy-in just with their child being invited to participate. More staff would enable the organization to better connect with parents, and he hopes to become more connected to parents as his organization grows.

Connection is difficult because it is time consuming and he is the only staff person. Not all parents have an email address and phone calls are time consuming, further hindering his ability. Parents also have many demands on their time. He does not have physical space where he could host parents, making it difficult to hold meetings and events. Characteristics of the parent can hinder connection, such as lack of interest, personal struggles that consume their focus, pride and responding defensively when their child is criticized. He provides an additional example of a parent who has not been to college, suggesting it is difficult to connect with them regarding college-related goals for their children. This is an example where he might independently take the lead.

P6 connection with schools. An Inspection of Table 14.18 reveals that P6 provided four examples of connecting with schools in the structure domain and six examples of connecting with schools in the communication domain. There is an even distribution of examples facilitated by the coach, the school staff and their combined efforts. How P6 connected with school staff is not clearly defined in each example, but he does mention that email is the most common method of communication. His efforts to connect with the schools mainly serve the purposes of building relationships and creating a more cohesive environment.

Table 4.18: P6 examples of connecting with school

Example	Domain	How	Purpose
Asks on application for school staff with whom he can connect	S	Pap	CE
Umbrella helps with HS placement and monitors students	S		OP
Donated equipment to a school	S	Act	OP
Informs other coaches and organizations of speakers	S		STR
Scheduled meeting with a high school AD	C	IP	REL/CE
Sometimes a teacher will reach out about a student	C		CE
Pursues relationships with school staff if parents give a name	C		REL/CE
Targets teachers who are investing in an athlete	C		REL/CE
Communicates with school staff when they have a heavy role	C		CE
Exchanged ideas with school staff regarding athletes	C		STR

P6 sees value in inviting the schools into his work with the athlete and parent, as it adds accountability, and athletes can sense the increased support. He hopes to become more engaged in schools as he gets his non-profit more established. Based on his experiences as a teacher, P6 feels connecting is complex and difficult. Generally, he focuses on his work and waits to be invited by school staff into a conversation, because he does not want to communicate that he knows more than them. He does not feel he needs to know about every detail of what happens at school, he feels the daily occurrences will take care of themselves if he stays focused on long-term goals. P6 suggested there might be value in school staff understanding his work, but he perceives many teachers may not care if he takes the time to inform them.

When initially reaching out, P6 has found it helpful to take a supportive approach to the schools by affirming their hard work with the students and letting them know about the supportive role he is playing in the child's life. It is easier to connect when the school is welcoming, and when he has an established relationship with the school. He also perceives that schools that are struggling are more inviting than schools that are doing well. P6 has found connecting with schools to be more productive when they have taken the time to define their relationship.

The demands on the time of the school staff is a significant barrier to connection. Teachers are busy and it is hard for them to hit the brakes for one student, or they may not care. Also, schools have policies regarding confidentiality and may not be able to share information freely. He feels school administrators and teachers will be will to work more closely with him if they see value in his work. Since his organization is still new, he still has to earn that credibility.

P6 connection with community adults. P6 provided four examples of connection in the structure domain, one example in the common goals domain, and six examples in the communication domain (See Table 4.19). Examples of connection were facilitated by the coach and combined efforts of the coach with community adults. Connection most often occurred informally by the coach taking advantage of opportunities to have conversations. Creating a more cohesive environment for the athlete was the central purpose of connection.

Table 4.19: P6 examples of connecting with community adults

Example	Domain	How	Purpose
Another youth sport provider shares field space	S	Act	OPP
Bank offered financial literacy courses	S	Act	STR
Facebook Page	S	Web	CE
Wants to find his 'niche'	S		CE
Adults might share how they hope the athletes will benefit	G	Inf	CE
Met an athlete's mentor, he plans to stay in touch	C	Inf	CE
Met an athlete's employer, developed a relationship	C	Inf	REL/CE
Openly shares information when someone shows interest	C	Inf	CE
Exchanges ideas with staff of facilities partner	C	IP	CE
Tries to stay aware of what other programs are doing	C		STR
Coach has communicated with many other lacrosse programs	C		STR

P6 acknowledged that there are many important people in an athletes' life. Connecting with everyone in this group takes too much time, so he attempts to connect with the people that make sense. Having relationships with community adults can create more accountability for the athlete, and they might do better in other contexts if they know the coach is watching. It is

difficult for P6 to know who the important adults are in the athlete's life, so he depends on the parents to let him know. P6 perceives that most youth practitioners are overworked, underpaid and worn out, which restricts the opportunities he has to connect.

P7 Interview Summary

      P7 background information. P7 is a middle-aged African American male. He is the founder and director of a non-profit organization that uses boxing as a medium to connect with youth, build life skills and provide academic instruction. While he coaches all ages, the non-profit organization serves youth. Most of his youth boxers come from single parent homes and some are assigned through the juvenile justice system. Athletes participate to build confidence, develop discipline, experience camaraderie and stand up to bullies. Many of his athletes lack a male role model and he hopes to provide that support. Each child is different in their background, needs, and ability, so instructors apply different approaches and strategies based on the individual. He has good relationships with his athletes, although he feels it is important that multiple trainers have relationships with the youngsters as different people can play different roles. He provides the good cop, bad cop analogy to illustrate this point.

      Although he trains people of all ages, he focuses on youth. His boxing program has a strong educational focus. A certified teacher runs the academic component, in which each child is assessed and receives individualized support. Children 13 and under must participate in the academic component. Athletes must complete their school work before they train. If an athlete needs extra work in an academic subject, they will be held out of training until they become stronger in that area. The mission of the program focuses on education first and foremost, and seeks to teach life skills through boxing. All staff must have a passion for children.

P7 started boxing at 10 when his friends dared him to go into a neighborhood boxing gym. He impressed the coach and started training. He had successful amateur and professional boxing careers, and has been inducted into the state boxing hall of fame.

Going back to when he was still fighting, he would help out younger boxers in training. He learned from watching coaches and listening carefully, picking up what he could. After his competitive career, he began to train a few boxers in an area gym. He always wanted to have his own gym and he started saving money and buying equipment. As a barber, he met others who helped him start the gym. He has been coaching since the late eighties and he opened his gym in 1996. Coaching is a significant part of his career and he is compensated for his work as a coach. Boxing is the only sport he coaches. P7 is a level 3 certified USA Boxing coach. The certification requires significant study to pass a written test, the certification must be updated every two years.

Personally, he hopes to build well-rounded children who are champions in boxing and in life. He hopes his athletes are self-sufficient and give back to their communities. Also, he hopes they develop heart, hope, decision-making skills, commitment and endurance. The importance of thinking is also emphasized; he stresses you cannot simply accept the information you receive. He wants them to know somebody cares about them with no strings attached. He feels that many kids fear success, and he hopes they become empowered and achieve something. Repetition is important in development. Through repetition, things become normal, so he wants success to become normal for his athletes.

P7 connection with family. P7 provided four examples of connection in the structure domain, one example in the common goals domain, and nine examples in the communication domain (See Table 14.20). The coach was the facilitator in most of the examples. Most of the

examples occurred while the parents were at the gym to drop off or pick up their children. Creating a more cohesive environment for the athlete was the most common purpose of connection.

Table 4.20: P7 examples of connecting with family

Examples	Domain	How	Purpose
Gives parents an introductory brochure and newspaper	S	Pap	CE
Hosts an annual family night event	S	IP	REL
Parents help with fundraising events	S	IP	OPP
Parents trust the activity, that is why they enroll the child	S		CE
Talks about athlete personal development with parents	G	Inf	CE
Explains and maintains the standards of the programs	C		CE
Send flyers home to convey information	C	Pap	OP
Manages parents' expectations	C	Inf	CE
Gives parents advice	C	Inf	STR
Talks to parents about their child's potential	C	Inf	CE
Tells parents about athlete improvement	C	Inf	CE
Asks parents about kids	C	Inf	U
Contacted parent about child with discipline issues	C	Ph	CE
Parents hold participation as consequence	C		CE

P7 feels parents are an important supportive presence at competitions, but generally does not feel they are critical to athlete outcomes. It is great if the parents can help in some way, but if not, they do not need to be involved. According to P7, connection with parents can create more accountability for the athletes. Parents put them in the program because they feel it will benefit their child. The program provides a type of support that parents cannot provide, so parents are comfortable dropping their child off and trusting the process. A beneficial parent-coach relationship involves the parent understanding their role in the program, in which they allow the program to run it's course.

If parents are overinvolved, they can hinder the ability of the program to benefit the athlete. At times, parents have advocated for their child to spend more time training as a boxer

when the program staff felt they needed more time in the academic context. Also, when parents watch their child train, they begin to give input, which can distract from what the coaches are working towards. Unless the parents can support the program in a formal way, P7 feels they become a barrier to their child's progress.

P7 connection with school. P7 provided five examples of connection with schools in the structure domain, one example in the common goals domain, and two examples in the communication domain. The coach, school staff, and organizational structures all played a role in facilitating connection. All connection occurred in-person, either at meetings, events, or while the coach was in a school. Creating a more cohesive environment for the athletes was the most common purpose for connection.

Table 4.21: P7 examples of connecting with school

Examples	Domain	How	Purpose
Receives school records from school for funders	S		OPP
Funders influence academic component	S		OPP
Presents program to students at area schools to recruit	S	IP	OPP
Academic instructor is responsible for connection with school	S		CE
Program supplements what kids are not getting in school	S		CE
Teachers share how they hope the program benefits students	G	Inf	CE
Visits schools, learns about the school, shares his program	C	IP	CE
Teachers tell program about improvement	C	Inf	STR

P7 suggested having relationships with teachers allows him to stay aware of how his athletes are doing in school and work through issues as they arise. The attitude of teachers is very important in regards to connection. Some teachers are open to anything that can help their students, and therefore, are more likely to connect with P7. Other teachers feel insecure when they are approached about further supports for their students because they perceive their efforts are being questioned.

P7 connection with community adults. It can be seen from Table 4.22 that P7 provided

eight examples of connection in the structure domain, one example in the common goals domain,

and two examples in the communication domain. Connection resulted from efforts of the coach,

different organizations, and the combined efforts of both. Most examples of connection are in-

person, occurring at planned events and meetings. The most frequent purpose of connection is to

strengthen either P7's program or the other programs with which he is connecting.

Table 4.22: P7 examples of connecting with community adults

Examples	Domain	How	Purpose
World trade Center Institute uses program as a model	S	IP	STR
Local university uses program in a public health course	S	IP	STR
Athletes serve food at a homeless shelter	S	IP	OPP
Provides legal help to community with the Public Defender	S	IP	STR
Advised another youth program of a funding source	S	Inf	STR
Other boxing gyms come to learn training techniques	S	IP	STR
Assists other boxing programs through non-profit details	S		STR
A Funder hosts meetings for the youth programs they fund	S	IP	STR
Coaches in other sports send athletes for development	G	Inf	OPP
Returned athlete to a coach with whom the athlete had fallen out	C	Inf	CE
Worked with multiple partners to get an athlete into college	C		OPP

P7 feels there is value in engaging the different adults who are working with his athletes

and directing programs in his surrounding community. With no specific goal in mind, having

conversations can lead to helping each other or better supporting a child. P7 points out that

many programs receive funding according to the number of children enrolled in their program.

This presents a significant barrier to connection, as programs protect participants to keep

funding.

P8 Interview Summary

P8 background information. P8 is an African American female in her thirties. She was

very active as a child, playing multiple sports for enjoyment, and competitively on her high

school volleyball team. She began coaching out of a desire to do so, and has been coaching for 14 years, mostly at the high school level. Currently, she coaches girls' volleyball and girls' and boys' tennis at the high school level. She does not consider coaching to be part of her career, but she does receive a small stipend for coaching from the school.

P8 has a background in education and formerly worked as a teacher, which helps her work with students and create an environment conducive to learning. She has attended numerous clinics for volleyball and tennis. In addition to the content at clinics, P8 perceives benefits from networking and sharing ideas with the other coaches in attendance. She has experience in leadership training, group development, and processes of evaluation, all of which she feels contribute to her success as a coach.

As a high school coach, P8 works with athletes between the ages of 14 and 18. Her athletes come from families with a variety of characteristics, and they bring different strengths and weaknesses that impact the volleyball team, such as planning, preparation and consistency. The athletes on the volleyball are talented and athletic, whereas the tennis athletes are still developing their skills. Many of the volleyball players are seeking college scholarships, and they will not continue playing in college if they do not receive a scholarship. While her athletes are on her team, she has good relationships, but does not get too close personally. Part of reasoning is to allow her athletes to communicate with each other. She becomes much closer to her athletes once they graduate. She does not interact with her athletes outside of the sport and school. Since the school where she works also has a middle school, she has known some of the parents and athletes since they were in middle school.

The school where she coaches is a private school, started and run by a church. It serves children preschool through grade 12. The school has a variety of extracurricular activities, with

sports being the priority. The school has very strong sports have received national rankings in multiple sports in recent years. Some students choose to attend the school because of the quality of the athletic programs. The school is funded by tuition from the students and an endowment created by the church.

The mission of the school focuses on strong Christian values. Coaches must complete a comprehensive questionnaire as part of their application concerning their religious beliefs, values, and lifestyle choices. They must sign a contract agreeing to conduct themselves in accordance with the values of the school. Desirable characteristics include integrity, discipline, responsibility and self-control.   The school communicates their expectations to the coaches at a training.

P8 wants her athletes to learn the physical and mental skills necessary to be successful in the sport. She emphasizes the importance of the mental toughness in achieving goals, even with difficult circumstances. It is important that her athletes commit to team goals, and they have respect each other as they pursue their goals. She identifies the values of integrity and honesty as part of good character, and states good character means demonstrating these traits all the time, even when it is difficult. To achieve her goals, P8 talks about the desired traits, models through her actions, and incorporates them in the team rules and procedures. In pursuing their goals, she hoped her athletes learned to care for their physical health. She hoped her athletes felt what it was like to experience success. To help her athletes develop, she watches them closely and pulls them aside to talk when she needs to correct them. She does, however, correct her captains in front of the whole team. because she feels public scrutiny is part of being a leader.

P8 connection with family. According to Table 4.23, P8 provided 16 examples of connection with families in the structure domain, nine examples of connection in the common

goals domain and 12 examples of connection in the communication domain. Connection was

often facilitated by both the coach and the school, with a few examples facilitated by the school.

Most of the examples occurred in person, whether planned or informal. The most common

purpose was to create a more cohesive environment, and there were also many examples of

creating lines of communication.

Table 4.23: P8 examples of connecting with family

Examples	Type	How	Purpose
Parent meeting at the beginning of the year	S	IP	CE
Signed parent agreement from the school	S	Pap	CE
Created an official role for a "parent-coach"	S		CE
Periodic Parent planning meetings	S	IP	OPP
Parents help with fundraisers	S	IP	OPP
Parent-athlete game	S	IP	REL
Extravaganza Fundraiser, parents volunteer as monitors	S	IP	OPP
Uses school's messaging system to send messages to parents	S	Ph	LC
Gives out cell phone number and email at initial meeting	S	IP	LC
Instructs parents to call the athletic office for important matters	S	IP	LC
Parents can join the booster club	S		OPP
AD office assistant links coach, school, and parents	S		LC
Parents coordinate an all sports banquet	S	Act	REL
Parents bring snacks, organize who will do it when	S	Act	OPP
Families pay $50 per sport they play	S	Act	OPP
Communicates goals, rules, and expectations in the first meeting	G	IP	CE
Reinforces goals and rules when parents bring up playing time	G		CE
Parents express they want their kid to get a scholarship	G	Inf	CE
Parents discuss child's athletic development	G	Inf	CE
Parents request coach's help in creating routine and discipline	G	Inf	CE
Meets with parents to structure time, create schedule	G	IP	CE
Works with parents and students on future plans, college	G	IP	CE
Parents share goals of confidence, coordination and social skills	G	Inf	CE
Coordinates with parents to communicate cohesive messages	G	Inf	CE
Tells parents after practice what the athlete accomplished	C	Inf	CE
Calls parent or arranges a meeting when there is a concern	C	Ph/IP	CE
Sends flyers home with students to convey information	C	Pap	LC
Calls parent immediately when the school tells her something	C	Ph	CE
Tells parents how proud she is of athletes for all achievements	C	Inf	CE
Parents apologize when they have responded poorly to the coach	C	Inf	REL
Parents inform coach of activities in which athletes participate	C	Inf	CE

Table 4.23 (cont'd)

Informs parents of clinics/camps with school messaging system	C	Ph	OPP
Receives invitations to family events, e.g. birthdays	C		REL
Parents reinforce to their child what the coach is saying	C	Inf	CE
Tennis parents ask for input regarding athletic development	C	Inf	CE
Thanks parents in public, at meetings	C	IP	REL
Says hello when she can	C	IP	REL

P8 feels it is necessary to connect with parents because of how important their child is to them. She feels that communicating with parents is easy, and working with parents can make her job easier. Specifically, parents can be helpful in correcting an athlete's behavior when such measures are necessary. It is important to address concerns immediately, and she recommends always ending conversations with a positive. There is judgement involved in connecting with parents. When significant tension exists between the parent and athlete, it may be better to work through problems with the athlete directly, so as not to increase the tension. Yet in other instances, contacting the parent is the most effective course of action. She finds that parents are more effective as partners with younger athletes, because they have more influence.

P8 focuses on laying a good foundation in her relationships with parents. She creates trust with parents by establishing lines of communication. Open practices and regular meetings allow parents to feel comfortable. She creates opportunities for every parent to be involved around their time and interest, and praises them publicly for however they can help. When dealing with difficult parents, she makes a point to listen more than she talks. When she receives information about different camps, clinics and sport-related opportunities, she shares it with all parents, to avoid the perception of favoritism. Parents will even ask for her input when they see positive changes in their child. In her view, trust and strength of relationship is increased when the coach works with families over multiple years. Her personal confidence from experience

allows her to earn the trust of parents. She finds that it is easier to connect with parents who have experience in the sport, as they have a better understanding of the process.

P8 connection with school. As can be seen in Table 4.24, P8 provided 11 examples of connection with schools in the structure domain, two examples of connection in the common goals domain, and 14 examples of connection in the communication domain. The coach and the school were active partners in connecting, with the majority of examples occurring informally. Most examples of connection between P8 and the school were for the purpose of creating a more cohesive environment.

Table 4.24: P8 examples of connecting with school

Examples	Type	How	Purpose
Athletic department office assistant links the school and coaches	S		LC
Coaches get their CDL license and drive buses to save money	S	Act	OPP
The church owns the buses the athletic teams use	S		OPP
Teams run clinics for younger children in the school	S	Act	STR
Assistant principal helps P8 communicate to students during school	S		LC
Assistant principal informs coach of athlete behavior during school	S		LC
School periodically distributes a student ineligibility list	S		CE
Consequences for problems in school are defined	S		CE
Facilitates leadership workshops at other schools	S	IP	STR
Coach connects school with outside organizations	S		STR
Consults with school regarding their systems and processes	S		OPP
Students share team goals, rules and expectations with teachers	G	Inf	CE
School's coach training emphasizes academics as the priority	G	IP	CE
Goes to teacher if an athlete is not meeting academic requirements	C	Inf	CE
Works with school staff when parents are not helpful	C	Inf	CE/REL
Takes time to meets school front office staff	C	Inf	LC
Attends various school events	C		STR
Agrees with teachers when athletes have trouble in the classroom	C	Inf	CE

Table 4.24 (cont'd)

Prioritizes academics over sport, supports school consequences	C		CE
Talks with teachers about athletes when they stop by practice	C	Inf	CE
School informs coach about problems with students	C	Inf	CE
The school informs the coach when there are problems with athletes	C	Inf	CE
The school expects the coach will take part in disciplinary action	C		CE
Shares successes of athletes through writing for school newsletter	C		STR
Mentions positives about athletes in calls with athletic department	C	Ph	CE
Coach can communicate with athletes through school staff	C		LC

In regards to connecting with teachers, P8 feels it is important to go along with what the teachers think should happen when there is an issue with a student. By supporting teachers, she is better able to work with them when she needs to do so. She expresses that she is uncomfortable driving the team bus, which is something the school requires of a coach to save money on transportation. When she has to drive, she cannot monitor the athletes as well, and it diverts her energy and focus. It is very helpful to her to have school staff watching her athletes during school and giving her information about them, and to be able to get information to her athletes through those same school staff people.

To facilitate connection with teachers, P8 is supportive of their wishes, and responsive when they contact her for any reason. Being present at the school could enhance her ability to connect with school staff. In general, connection is more likely when both coach and teacher value each other's role in the child's life.

P8 indicated that connection can be difficult when there is frustration or tension between the school and coach. She has experienced this due to disagreements about who is responsible for different administrative tasks. Similarly, P8 feels the school places too much value on winning in competition, which can make it difficult to focus on the personal development of

athletes in conversations with school staff. At times, teachers can over step their boundaries with taking away the sport too quickly.

P8 connection with community adults. P8 provided seven examples of connection with community adults in the structure domain, one example of connection in the common goals domain, and five examples of connection in the communication domain (Table 4.25). Both community adults and P8 facilitated connection, with the purposes of raising funds and creating developmental opportunities.

Table 4.25: P8 examples of connecting with community adults

Examples	Type	How	Purpose
Other adults pledge money for the extravaganza	S	Act	OPP
Business sponsors provide what the team otherwise cannot afford	S	Act	OPP
Different partners support athlete development year-round	S	Act	OPP
Connects programs with athletic department to use facilities	S	Act	OPP
Coordinates an event to build confidence in young women	S	Act	CE
Links athletes to professional organizations in which she is involved	S		STR
Brought athletes into her place of work to do internships	S		STR
Communicates expectations to leaders of service-learning activities	G		CE
Discussed scheduling with a theater company for an athlete/actress	C	Phn	OPP
Involves students in different events and service opportunities	C		STR
Service-learning leaders send letters praising the athletes	C	Pap	STR
Tells the students about positive feedback she receives	C	Inf	STR
Talks to probation officers of students in trouble with the law	C	Inf	CE

P8 feels it is beneficial for athletes to be involved in multiple activities, and those other instructors are important to the athletes. The larger the support system, the better it is for the athlete. She notes that the athletes who are involved in a broader range of activities are more well-rounded, and the attributes they bring benefit the whole team.

Her career in combination with the many professional and community organizations in which she is involved gives her different ways she can connect her athletes to the larger community. Her care and passion for developing her athletes is evident to community adults,

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which makes them more interested in working with her. It also helps when parents tell her about the other activities and adults her athletes are involved with. Connection can be difficult with community adults though, as everyone has limited time, they think what they are doing is most important, and they are not always interested in what the young people are doing in other parts of their life.

P9 Interview Summary

P9 background information. P9 is middle-aged Caucasian male. He was active as a child and described sport as important part of his life. He grew up playing Pop Warner football, and played both football and lacrosse in high school. P9 continued playing lacrosse in college at a NCAA Division III university.

P9's degree in college required five years to earn as an engineering major. With being on campus after his playing eligibility was completed, he began coaching as a graduate assistant. He continued coaching as a high school assistant for five years, then a high school head coach for 7 years, and has recently gone back to a high school assistant coach. He has coached 15 years in total. The only sport P9 has coached is lacrosse. He does not perceive coaching to be part of his career, and he is not compensated.

Most of P9's coaching knowledge comes from his experience as a player. He has attended a few lacrosse coaching clinics over the years, otherwise, he has no formal training regarding lacrosse, coaching practices, or youth. Just this past year, the school district he is currently coaching with required him to take 30 hours of online training focused on injury prevention, safety, and age-related considerations.

P9 works with high school varsity athletes. The families are fairly wealthy, have two parents in their homes, and have a stable environment. He describes them as well-adjusted.

Athletes have average ability in the sport and there are no seniors who plan to play in college. They participate for enjoyment and to be part of the team. Some athletes might be pressured to play by their parents. As an assistant with his current team, he has more laidback relationships with the athletes, whereas when he was a head coach, he had to play more of a disciplinary role.

The school serves about 2,000 students. The student body is diverse, there is more diversity on this lacrosse team than previous teams he has coached. The school offers a wide range of sports and physical activities. Most of the funding comes from the county as it is a public school. Individual sport teams can supplement themselves with fundraisers.

The district and school have high standards for athlete sportsmanship, and there are GPA requirements. P9 works to prepare the athletes so they are in a position to win every game. Off the field, he is concerned with students finding the right fit for their post-secondary education. P9 has high expectations of his players outside of sport, and he insists they fulfill all non-sport responsibilities to play. The coach takes away the sport when the standards have not been met. He hopes they learn to do things the right way in the way they play the game and treat others.

P9 connection with family. P9 provided four examples of connection in the structure domain, two examples in the common goals domain, and seven examples in the communication domain (see Table 4.26). There is a unique example where the school places parameters on how coaches and parents can meet. Specifically, they are not allowed to talk before and after competition, and the athletic director must be present for a meeting. P9 and the parents equally initiated connection in the remainder of the examples. He used a variety of methods of communication, stating he does whatever is easiest for the parents. Creating a more cohesive environment was the most common reason for connection.

Table 4.26: P9 examples of connecting with family

Examples	Type	How	Purpose
Athletic director must be present for a coach to meet with a parent	S	IP	REL
Team dinners and meals after games with families	S	IP	REL
Communicates with parents along with school counselor and AD	S		CE
Preseason meeting to communicate expectations	S	IP	CE
Parents express athletic goals	G		CE
Discusses college with parents	G	IP	CE
Athletes must fulfill school and family responsibilities to play	C		CE
Parents can call the coach if an athlete is having a problem	C	Ph	CE
Families follow the teams head coach on twitter	C	SM	CE
Compliments parents on their children	C	Inf	REL
Went to a family's house to discuss an issue with a child	C	IP	CE
Communicates according to parent preferences	C		CE

In general, P9 feels connecting with parents is not beneficial to the athlete, as it does not support personal or athletic development, nor does connection help the team achieve its' goals. He refers to parents as "crazy" in a light-hearted way on multiple occasions. As he explains further, he suggests parents are so intensely involved in their child's immediate success in the sport, they do not consider long-term objectives or the needs of the group. P9 provides two examples that support his perception. On one occasion, he arranged a meeting with an athlete and his parents at their home to discuss a concern. The parents defended their child and did not value the coach's perspective. Additionally, when he has attended team dinners, parents are only interested in talking to him about playing time. In chance meetings with parents, he does see value in praising their child as a good person. He suggests it might be productive to discuss the personal development of an athlete with parents out of season when they are not so focused on the sport. During the season, he feels it is only necessary to talk to parents when there is a problem or concern. In which case he would not bring it up in passing, but find time to call or meet to give the issue appropriate attention. When talking to parents, he feels face to face is best.

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As a coach who does not work at the school during the day, P9 finds it difficult to really understand what is going on in a child's life. There is not enough time in a season just seeing the athletes for practice and competition to focus on their personal development. The differing attitudes and agendas of coaches and parents make connection difficult. Parents can be too focused on the sport to the point where they are willing to compromise standards in other contexts. P9 has experienced this as a barrier, as parents do not hold the athletes accountable to the extent P9 desires.

The coach admitted that his cynical views towards parents and connection is a barrier, and inversely, a more positive view could be a facilitating factor. Also, the coach feels that being in the school during the school day would make connection much more likely.

P9 connection with school. Regarding connection with school staff (Table 4.27), P9 provided three examples in the structure domain, one example in the common goals domain, and 10 examples in the communication domain. He stated in the interview that 90 percent of his communication with school staff is with the guidance counselor to find the best college for the student-athletes. He and the teachers only reach out to each other when there is a problem or concern. When a teacher gives one of his athletes a consequence for their behavior in school, he fully supports the teacher. In the specific example regarding athletes drinking alcoholic beverages at the prom, school staff made the athletes tell the coach about their actions, for which he suspended them for a practice and a game. In both of these examples, the adults involved value the other context, and potentially create a more cohesive environment. When connection occurred, it was initiated by both P9 and school staff. It was usually informal, as they would seek each other out as a reason arose. Email was a common form of communication.

Table 4.27: P9 examples of connecting with school

Examples	Type	How	Purpose
Training is required by the school district	S		CE
Communicates with guidance counselors regarding college choice	S		CE
Talks with the AD regarding logistics, students, or parents	S	Inf	CE
Teachers are aware of team goals through students	G	Inf	CE
Might reach out to college coaches on behalf of his players	C		OPP
Teachers will tell the coach if there is a problem with a student	C	Inf	CE
Always supports the teachers when there is an issue with a student	C		CE
Information is conveyed and received via email with teachers	C	Eml	CE
Shares individual and team positives with the athletic director	C		CE
Will talk to teachers if there is a big problem	C	Inf	CE
Met with a teacher about a senior who stopped doing work	C	IP	CE
Discusses athletes' college search with school counselors	C	Inf	CE
School involved coach when students were caught drinking at prom	C		CE
Gave additionally consequences to students who drank at prom	C		CE

P9 feels that working at the school would facilitate connection with school staff. He further suggests that school or district administrators could facilitate connection. If there were requirements to meet or communicate with teachers, he would do what he had to do to coach. He currently does not connect more with school staff because he does not see much value in doing so.

While expressing that coaches who work at the school are better positioned to connect with school staff, he also acknowledges that there is value in being an outsider. As such, he brings different perspectives because he is not "drinking the cool-aid" at the school. He is supportive of the teachers and school staff because school is the priority, it is more important than sport. He also sees his role in working with teachers as limited because the athletes should take most of the responsibility for navigating their own environment.

P9 connection with community adults. As can be seen in Table 4.28, P9 provided three examples of connecting in the structure domain, one example in the common goals domain, and

10 examples of connection in the communication domain. Except for an isolated example with a

band director, all connection with community adults involved lacrosse coaches. Most of these

examples occurred at lacrosse related events, such as tournaments, matches, or clinics, when P9

happened to see coaches who have a shared interest in an athlete. They mostly discussed the

athletic potential and development of the athletes. There is a theme of P9 expressing support to

his athletes for their involvement in different activities and other lacrosse teams. Although he is

not connecting with another adult, his encouragement could strengthen the other activity as a

positive developmental setting. Beyond chance meetings, P9 will reach out via phone or email

when he needs to contact another coach.

Table 4.28: P9 examples of connecting with community adults

Examples	Type	How	Purpose
Youth lacrosse programs use the facilities of the School	S		OPP
Invites other lacrosse instructors to lead a training session	S	IP	STR
Idea of open house for teachers and extracurricular leaders to meet	S	IP	CE
Will discuss athletic goals with other coaches	G	Inf	CE
Wants athletes to have different coaches for different perspectives	C		STR
Talks to club and college coaches about athletes' potential	C	Inf	OPP
Informs college coaches of athletes who might be a good fit	C	Inf	OPP
Talks to club coaches who coach the same athletes about	C	Inf	CE
Communicates with club coaches via email if he is reaching out	C	Eml	CE
Bumps into club coaches at lacrosse games, talks about athletes	C	Inf	CE
Might mention positives about an athlete to another coach	C	Inf	CE
Exchanges ideas and strategies with other coaches	C	Inf	CE
Talks to band director to work out scheduling	C	Inf	OPP
Talks to community adult at chance meetings at the school	C	Inf	CE

P9 feels he would connect with community adults more frequently if he were in the

school more often, as different community adults may stop by the school at times. He also feels

school leadership could facilitate connection between the different adults in the community by

inviting the various community adults to an event to meet and build relationships.

Connection with community adults is difficult because they are consumed by the activities they lead, and coaches are consumed by their own responsibilities. Reaching out is not on the mind of anyone involved, no one sees value in connection, and there is not enough time to do so.

P9 feels connection between coaches and community adults has the potential to benefit the athletes. He acknowledges that all adults play a valuable role in the lives of the athletes, and it is important to respect their position. Athletes will benefit most from communicating with each adult in their life on their own, as opposed to the different adults communicating with each other when issues, challenges or concerns arise.

P10 Interview Summary

P10 background information. P10 is a middle-aged Asian American male. He was heavily involved in athletics from a young age excelling in both football and soccer growing up. In high school, he played soccer, wrestling and baseball. His father encouraged him to focus on soccer, and he continued to play soccer at an NCAA Division I college. He had a very successful college career, from which he still holds the scoring record at his school.

As a referee, P10 was very involved in soccer in the region where he resides. When his children began playing, he felt the coaching was not good enough. He started as an assistant coach with a boys' club team. Eventually he became the head coach, and until the athletes went on to college. He continued coaching with his daughters' soccer teams. When the head coaching position opened for the high school girls' soccer team, he was encouraged to apply and got the job. P10 has been coaching for a total of 22 years, including 9 years in his current position as the head high school girls coach. P10 does not consider coaching as part of his career and receives a small stipend for coaching. His reason for coaching is to give back to the community. Parent

volunteers coached his teams growing up, which facilitated the opportunities the sport has brought him. He wants to do the same for the athletes he coaches. P10 has earned a "C" level coaching license, and has many licenses as a referee.

The athletes on P10's team range in age from 13 t0 18 years old. Some athletes are very talented, and some just want to be part of the team. Lack of access to high level club soccer due to financial or time constraints is a barrier for certain athletes. For these athletes, the high school team provides an opportunity to play at a higher level and potentially earn recognition from college coaches. He has a close relationship with his athletes, comparing it to a father-daughter relationship. They seek his advice in their personal lives, and he is direct with them when providing input and advice.

The school has about 900 students and offers a wide range of extracurricular opportunities. Academic success is the priority for the athletes at the school. He has to follow guidelines set forth by the National Federation of State High School Associations, and the rules established by his school.

His greatest hope for his athletes is for them to do well in the classroom. He hopes their experience on the soccer team has value for them as they go on to college. P10 is proud when his athletes are successful academically and find a good career path. He uses all of the resources at the school to help his athletes, such as working with guidance counselors and teachers. With the physical demands of the sport, he assumes his athletes experience health benefits. Additionally, he feels his team provides an opportunity to develop interpersonal skills, which he reinforces by talking to his athletes about working with difficult people in the adult world. Throughout a season, he communicates a variety of life lessons. Fostering positive relationships

on the team is important to all of the teams' objectives, and he provides space and opportunities

for strong relationships to develop.

      P10 connection with family. P10 provided 11 examples of connection with family in

the structure domain, six examples of connection in the common goals domain and 10 examples

of connection in the communication domain Table 4.29. Parents initiated connection most often

by supporting the team in different ways through actions. Creating a more cohesive environment

was the most frequent reason for connection.

Table 4.29: P10 examples of connecting with family

Examples	Type	How	Purpose
Booster parents take care of all administrative details	S		OPP
Communicates information in parent meeting after tryouts	S	IP	CE
Allows booster parents take care of details, does not get involved	S		OPP
Booster parents make a contact list for the team	S	Pap	LC
Booster parents have assigned roles	S		OPP
Families help with team events, such as the banquet	S	Act	REL
Parents run concession stand	S	Act	OPP
AD facilitates communication between parents and coach	S		LC
Parent boosters help raise funds	S	Act	OPP
Parents asks coach what their children should work on to improve	G	Inf	CE
Communicates team expectations at initial meeting	G	IP	CE
Communicates goals in the initial team meeting	G	IP	CE
Parents, athlete and coach naturally have similar in sport	G		CE
Parents might express a sport-related goal	G	Inf	CE
Parents see positives in putting their child in a team	G		CE
Parents of incoming freshman contact the coach	C	Ph/Eml	CE
Tells parents that is beneficial to rest, not play year-round	C	Inf	CE
Makes sure he is connected to parents	C		LC
Parents contact him often, phone and email	C	Ph/Eml	LC
Athletes are responsible for communication with parents	C		LC
Parents inform coach when athletes must miss for academics	C		CE
Parents note positive change in their child's energy and attitude	C	Inf	STR
Parents thank coach for giving athlete affirmations	C	Eml	STR
Addresses concerns with social media with student and parent	C		CE
Catches athletes drinking, informs parents if athletes do not	C		LC

P10 perceives limited benefits in connecting with parents. As much as possible, he makes the athletes responsible for receiving and communicating information. For this reason, he does not reach out to the parents too often. He has found that parents often have unrealistic expectations, and it is difficult to adjust parents' expectations once they have made up their mind. Connection can be beneficial in some ways. Booster parents help him a great deal with administrative tasks, allowing him to focus on the athletes. He appreciates the hard work they contribute. It is also beneficial for the parents to understand the teams' goals, so they can support the team in their efforts. When connecting with parents, he does it in person as much as possible because messages can be misinterpreted via email. Communication with parents requires good judgement. Sharing positives with parents about the athletes is beneficial, but coaches should be careful when sharing negatives. Negatives can increase the pressure on athletes and cause them to shut down.

According to P10, attitudes and perceptions of parents can make connecting with them difficult for a coach. Parents may have an inflated view of their child's ability, and may complain about their role on the team or playing time. Parents can hurt their child's sport experience by complaining around the child. To facilitate communication, coaches should establish lines of communication between themselves and their athletes' parents.

P10 connection with school. A scan of Table 4.30 revealed nine examples of connection with schools in the structure domain, one example in the common goals domain, and 14 examples in the communication domain. Connection was initiated by the coach, school staff, and at the organizational level, by the school. The majority of examples served the purpose of creating a more cohesive environment, with multiple examples of the coach and school strengthening each other.

Table 4.30: P10 examples of connecting with school

Examples	Type	How	Purpose
Has easy access to report cards	S		CE
CPR and first aid training with school staff	S	IP	STR
School boosters host "lunch and learn" trainings for all school staff	S	IP	STR
Annual meetings with school administration and all athletic staff	S	IP	CE
School shares it's expectations and rules for sport	S	IP	CE
Athletic director is communication link between coach and school	S		CE
Successes are noted in school newsletter and daily announcements	S		CE
There is support for the team at every level of the school	S		CE
Follows the guidelines set by the school	S		CE
Teachers will share goals for the athletes, focus is on academics	G	Inf	CE
Asks AD to print out midterm reports and report cards for him	C		CE
Tells athletes to skip practice to take care of academics	C		STR
Teacher sends an email to confirm a student stopped by for help	C	Eml	CE
Works with guidance counselors and teachers regarding academics	C	Inf	CE
Puts responsibility on the student, tells them to go see their teacher	C		STR
Follows up with teachers when students had issues to straighten out	C	Inf	CE
Communicates with teachers via email or drops by the classroom	C	Eml	CE/REL
Teachers let the coach know if the student has followed through	C		CE
Sends athletes to teacher to address academics, even during practice	C		STR
Has fun practices with boys' soccer, football, and field hockey	C	Inf	
School staff supports the team by attending the game	C	Inf	STR
School staff compliments the coach on their hard work	C	Inf	STR
May give input to teachers regarding group dynamics or motivation	C	Inf	STR
Stops by the guidance counselor's office	C	IP	CE

P10 feels his athletes should be responsible for their own academic success, so he often gives space for the athletes to navigate their relationships with teachers without his involvement. It is important to support the athletes in school, not only for their academic success, but they feel better coming into practice after a good day in school. The coach and athletes feel encouraged when teachers and school staff support them by attending matches. P10 does not share ideas with teachers, because he views them as the experts in the classroom. In general, P10 feels it benefits students when there is connection between him and their teachers, although it can be stressful for the athletes to have multiple adults tracking their progress. He has not gone so far as

to make common goals with teachers, he feels this would only be necessary if there were significant problems with a student. Overall, he feels it is necessary to have open lines of communication with teachers and school staff.

Knowing the teachers at the school promotes connection when there is a need to work with them. Arriving at the school before practice has created opportunities for him to build relationships with teachers. He has not experienced barriers in connecting with teachers, they have been responsive and helpful any time he has reached out.

P10 connection with community adults. All of the examples P10 provided regarding connection with community adults were in the communication domain, and were mostly with other coaches in the same sport (See Table 4.31). P10 initiated nearly all of the examples, which were for the purposes of creating a more cohesive environment and strengthening the other contexts.

Table 4.31: P10 examples of connecting with community adults

Examples	Type	How	Purpose
Watches his athletes play other sports	C		STR
Generally aware of the activities in which his athletes are involved	C		STR
Stays on top of students academically even after the season is over	C		STR
Sees other coaches at multiple-sport athlete training opportunities	C	Inf	CE
Information about other activities come through the parents	C		CE
Will talk to club coaches when he sees them	C	Inf	CE
Talks about athletes' sport-related development with club coaches	C	Inf	CE
Informs club coach when athletes miss his practice for school work	C	Ph	CE
Speaks to club coaches, unplanned, at another soccer event	C	Inf	CE

P10 suggests that a successful season includes success in school and other areas of life during the soccer season. Being involved in multiple activities, playing multiple sports, and having the support and input of multiple adults is beneficial to athletes. For productive connection to occur, the adults involved must take a broad perspective of the individual,

considering all of their developmental needs. On occasion, a community adult will invite P10 to be involved in their context in some manner (e.g. to assist with a soccer practice or attend a musical performance.).

More often, connection with community adults is difficult. Everyone is most concerned with their own agenda, and they do not have shared goals and priorities with P10. Coaches are strong-headed, and do not want to exchange ideas or receive advice. Lastly, there are many different adults in his athletes lives, and there is not enough time to connect with everyone.

Summary of Results

The actual results were similar to the anticipated results described in Chapter 1. Parents were the most frequent point of connection, resulting from the necessity of parent involvement and participants' perception of parents as the most important figure in the lives of the athletes. Convenience appeared to be the greatest facilitating factor of connection, with the participating coaches also stressing the importance of existing relationships. Why coaches connected, how coaches connected, and their attitudes towards connection varied. Variations might be attributed to the differences in the participants' views and past experiences, as well as differences in the families, athletes, and contextual factors surrounding the coach's team or program.

Purpose of connection. To meet the criteria for connection, efforts by youth sport coaches and connecting adults had to serve the purpose of facilitating athlete development and well-being. Five distinct categories surfaced of how connecting with other important adults can potentially promote youth development. First, efforts to create or enhance sport opportunities contribute to youth development because without the opportunity to participate, it is impossible for children to experience the potential benefits of sport. Second, positive relationships, with open lines of communication and mutual trust, were viewed as an essential

environmental factors to promote youth development. Third, cohesion in the youth-experienced environment was supported by adults sharing the goals they had in mind for the athletes and information about the athlete's ability, interests and personality. Fourth, participants and connecting adults supported each other and made efforts to strengthen each other's work, which in turn, benefits youth. Lastly, study participants worked directly with the another adult to address a specific developmental objective, such as managing emotions and demonstrating personal responsibility.

   Contexts with which coaches connected. Study participants connected with all three of the contexts considered; family, school and community adults. Table 4.32 below provides an overview of the prominent ways in which each participant connected with each context.

Table 4.32: Summary of Connection with Family, School and Community Adults

	Connection with Family	**Connection with School**	**Connection with Community Adults**
P1	Views parents as central figure in development, dedicates time and energy to sharing information regarding athlete progress in and out of sport.	Receives progress report and often communicates with teachers at his school, connects with other teachers when there are opportunities.	Shares plays with other coaches and connects athletes to additional athletic opportunities.
P2	Builds relationships with parents through natural interactions. Addresses goals and issues at parents' request.	Advertised programs at schools and communicated with school staff when he was teaching a martial arts class in the school.	The center where he works shares space with other organizations and he shares ideas with coaches of different sports.
P3	Mutually exchanges information with parents when natural opportunities arise surrounding training and competition.	Infrequent communication with schools only when there is a need. The center shares facilities with schools.	Shares facilities with outside organizations.

Table 4.32 (cont'd)

P4	With highly involved parents, mainly sets boundaries for parents to be a positive part of the team. The boundaries also allow the athletes to practice personal responsibility.	Long-standing relationships and daily staff meetings allow her to work closely with school staff to support athletes when necessary.	Athletes do service-learning and the team donates used equipment to smaller groups.
P5	Uses multiple roles as coach and school counselor to build strong relationships with families, from which he dynamically supports the athletes.	Shares goals and information with teachers. Working closely with teachers on a daily basis provides opportunities for ongoing communication and collaboration.	No concrete examples, although he tries to share athletes' accomplishments at every opportunity.
P6	Intake meetings are required for athletes to enter the program. He frequently communicates with parents regarding athlete progress and logistics.	He is sensitive to the demands on teachers' time, but will share information when there is an invitation or an opening.	Cited isolated examples of connecting with a mentor and an employer. He shares ideas with other coaches.
P7	Feels parents hinder the learning process and generally does not want them involved.	His academic instructor connects with school staff. The program must coordinate with schools to get data for funding.	Shares ideas and connects families to resources through relationships with multiple organizations and institutions.
P8	Creates space and structures for parents to be very involved with the team. She seeks to create an open environment.	Attends school activities, builds relationships with school staff, maintains communication pertaining to athlete progress and well-being. Works closely with the AD.	The coach is very involved in the surrounding community and she connects her athletes to events and activities.

Table 4.32 (cont'd)

P9	Perceives parent involvement as having a negative impact on athletes and the team and does not want them involved.	Communicates with school staff and teachers when there is a problem	Shares ideas and information with other coaches.
P10	Parents perform key organizational tasks and he maintains open lines of communication, yet he prefers to communicate directly athletes in most instances.	Commits time to building relationships and communicating with school staff, and works closely with the AD.	Communicates with other coaches and remains aware of the activities in which his athletes are involved.

As anticipated, connection with family was significantly more frequent than connection with school and community adults. Study participants' perceptions that parents are essential to their child's development appeared to be the foundation for the frequent connection. Many examples resulted from parents' presence at trainings, competitions, team events and involvement in the registration process. Such naturally occurring interactions do not occur with school staff and community adults. Certain examples of connecting with parents were evident as themes including multiple participants. Meetings, letters and emails at the beginning of the season were used to communicate goals and procedures for the team or program. Study participants and parents consistently exchanged information about the athletes in the naturally occurring interactions. Each of the study participants noted the potential for parents to hinder an athlete's development, and consequently created limits and boundaries.

Connection with school was largely dictated by the study participants' relationship with the school. Those who worked in a school benefitted from established relationships and naturally-occurring interaction to both share information, and at times, work collaboratively. P1,

P4 and P5 worked in their athletes' school. Existing relationships and frequent encounters with all school staff led to combined efforts to support athletes' academic progress and overall well-being. P8, P9 and P10 coached at high schools but did not work at the school. P8 and P10 made occasional intentional efforts to build relationships with school staff. Each of them cited the athletic director as an essential communication link with the school. Connection with teachers most often occurred when there was a concern. In all matters, the school coaches stressed supporting the perspective of the school. Lastly, study participants who did not have a natural connection cited the number of schools their athletes attended as a barrier, noting they would not have time to reach out to all of them. They had isolated instances of connecting with school staff when they had an existing relationship or if they were connected through a parent.

With community adults, study participants consistently expressed that there were too many possible people to consider, and without a clear purpose, connecting with community adults was impractical. The exceptions where study participant did connect with community adults involved other youth sport coaches and creating service learning opportunities. P4, P9 and P10 noted infrequent examples of discussing the athletic development of specific athletes in talking to a coach who also coaches one of their athletes in a different season or sport. The majority of study participants shared general coaching philosophies and ideas when talking to other youth sport coaches. In both cases, conversations were unplanned when study participants bumped into other youth sport coaches at clinics, tournaments or events. To create service learning opportunities, study participants coordinated with adults in the community. P8 provided the strongest such example when we athletes did a community service project. She communicated expectations to the connecting adult in advance, and sought feedback after her athletes completed the project. P6 provided an interesting isolated example, where he developed

a relationship with an athletes' employer, and subsequently worked with the employer over time to increase support and accountability.

Structure, Common Goals and communication served as the three domains of connection. The domains subdivided the SCIG to further differentiate and understand examples of connection. Perspectives and examples demonstrate connection rarely occurs when coaches or potential connecting adults have to go out of their way. Connection either happens naturally in the environment or it is intentionally built-in. Naturally-occurring connection fell into the communication domain, where connecting adults shared information and ideas when they happened to cross paths. Parents and coaches talking after practice or school staff talking during the school day are prevalent in the results. Structures include regularly schedule meetings events, participation requirements, program policies and established lines of communication. To this end, P9 had to complete mandatory training, P1's league required parents to sign a parent policy and P6 required an intake meeting with parents. Study participants perceived little value in creating common goals because most goals are naturally common and understood (e.g. athletes earning good grades in school), and the time it would take to develop common goals for each athlete with the different social agents is too cumbersome. In viewing the results from the perspective of the domains, connection that is perceived as valuable by coaches or sport organizations should be built-in to the environment as structures and strategies

Facilitating factors and barriers to connection. Facilitating factors and barriers are best summarized together because relationships, purpose and convenience surfaced as the significant relevant themes for both sub questions. In all contexts, the presence of existing relationships impacted connection. Study participants cited trust, rapport, liking and time as facilitating factors, and conversely, the absence of each proved to be a barrier. Purpose and

convenience are linked as factors. As noted in the previous section, connection is much more likely when the coach and the connecting adult happen to be in the same place at the same time. When connection was not convenient, study participants felt a clear purpose was necessary. With the demands on their own time, and out of respect for the time of others, study participants did not see value in reaching out for broad, potential benefits of connection. Problems with athletes, such as poor academic performance and negative behaviors, were frequently identified as a purpose to connect.

Perspectives towards connection. The perspectives and attitudes of the study participants are important considerations, as they influence subsequent efforts to connect. While some perspectives are closely linked to individual and contextual factors, certain themes are evident with all of the study participants. In general, study participants saw value in connection, feeling that a cohesive group of adults surrounding a young person will be a benefit to that individual. They felt sharing information across contexts allowed them to better understand athletes and be more effective in supporting development. P7 noted the potential for unexpected results when engaging other adults. Having relationships and building relationships were consistently stressed as essential to meaningful connection.

At the same time, study participants shared limits and warnings pertaining to connection. Because funding is often allocated based on attendance, connecting with other youth programs could cause an organization to lose money. They expressed concern that efforts to connect might be received as offensive by other adults, because they may appear to be suggesting they know better than the adult they are engaging. With this in mind, they preferred to be invited into different spaces as opposed to reaching out. Further, they perceived many of the possible connecting adults lacked interest and willingness to connect, which is certainly discouraging.

When adding the demands on everyone and the number of potential adults with whom they might connect, efforts to connect did not feel like a productive use of time.

Study participants' perception appeared to be a large part of parents being the most prevalent point of connection. They viewed parents as the central actor in a child's development, and saw parents as essential contributors to an athlete benefitting from the sport experience. They also viewed the parents as a negative influence when they were emotionally involved in the outcomes and contradicted the instructions or standards of the coach. For this reason, both the study participants and the organizations under which they coach established policies and boundaries specific to parents.

Schools were fertile ground for connection when certain conditions were in place. Many of the participants saw themselves as having a role in the academic success of their athletes. When they had a natural connection to the school or a relationship with someone in the school, they connected to provide support and accountability. The study participants who worked in the schools perceived their multiple roles as additional opportunities to build relationships with athletes, parents and school staff. School coaches who did not work at the school emphasized the importance of supporting teachers and schools staff at all times to maintain a cohesive environment for the athletes. Coaches who did not work at a school perceived connection as productive only when they were invited into the context in some way, because there were too many schools to engage the school staff of their athletes. The same sentiment was expressed by all participants pertaining to community adults, where there were too many and not enough time to reach out to everyone. Pertaining to the wide-range of potential adults, study participants perceived it most appropriate and productive to wait to be connected by a parent or the athlete.

There were few examples of connection in the common goals domain, and the perspectives of the study participants provide a window as to why. Study participants generally felt that goals were naturally common. They felt all of the adults wanted the athletes to do well, and they had a shared understanding of what that meant. P6 felt this held true even with problem behaviors, noting there was no need to constantly share what athletes were doing wrong, because everyone was likely seeing the same issues.

Highlighted examples. Table 4.33 addresses the purpose of identifying specific examples of connection used by coaches in real-world settings. Many of the examples fit into the broad themes described in Table 4.32. Yet, each participant provided examples that were isolated and did not fit into a larger theme. Examples perceived by the author as especially powerful or instructive may also be included in Table 4.33.

Table 4.33: Highlighted examples of connection

Participant	Examples
P1	1. Received phone calls from teachers to talk to athletes who are misbehaving in school, and has called coaches for the same purpose as a teacher.
	2. Parents operate the concession stand at home games.
	3. Had athletes complete homework at practice before they joined the activities.
P2	1. Organizes a lunch where athletes serve the parents.
	2. After an extensive conversation with a parent, he put the athlete through a physically painful training session as discipline for behavior at school and home.
P3	1. Staff and volunteers are prohibited to have contact with athletes and families outside of center functions.
	2. Center shares facilities with schools for physical education classes and sport in an urban community where facilities are sparse.
	3. The physical location allows parents to walk in and speak with her, they always know where to find her.

Table 4.33 (cont'd)

P4

1. Apologizes to parents when she makes a mistake, creating a standard of integrity in the environment.
2. Refuses to talk to parents who contact her about certain issues, because she feels it is an opportunity for athletes to practice having adult conversations.
3. Does not approach parents in public settings to avoid the perceptions of favoritism by other parents.

P5

1. Unannounced home visits allow him to communicate more effectively with non-English speaking parents, and he also perceives home visits strengthen relationships with parents and students.
2. An intermediary organization operates the league and covers the costs of transportation, uniforms and officials in a school district that would otherwise not have the capacity to provide middle school sports.
3. Team vs. Parent game helps to build relationships with families.
4. Works with the Parent and Community Engagement committee at the school. Through his role as a coach, he is able to bring more parents to the meetings.

P6

1. Developed a relationship with an employer of an athlete, increasing accountability on both ends, and giving the employer a means of addressing problems instead of firing the young person.
2. A parent called him and asked him to yell at her son.
3. Parent intake meeting is a requirement.
4. Intermediary organization connects athletes to schools, and works with parents and schools to track their progress, taking this piece off of P6's plate.

P7

1. Organized expungement assistance, where lawyers were present to counsel community members on getting convictions removed from their criminal record. With his gym being in a high-crime community, this is an important service for some of the families he serves.
2. Participates in an exchange program through the World Trade Center, where youth sport programs that operate in low-income areas from different countries visit his gym to learn and share ideas.
3. Makes a conscious effort to recruit young people who have problem behaviors with the intention to get them hooked on the sport, then remove the sport as a consequence for continued problem behavior.
4. Public health students learn from and contribute to his program.

Table 4.33 (cont'd)

P8 1. All coaches at the school are expected to get a Commercial Driver's License so they can drive their team to competitions, which saves the school money.
2. Built a relationship with an assistant principal, who keeps an eye on her students and serves as an additional communication link.
3. An annual fundraising events where athletes request money from businesses and individuals in the community to complete an extensive set of fitness and skill related challenges. Parents serve as volunteers.
4. At times chooses not to tell parents about problems with an athlete, understanding there is already tension in the household and contacting the parent will only add to the stress.
5. Connects students to internships and learning opportunities in the sciences through the professional organizations in which she is involved.

P9 1. Compliments parents on their children to build relationships.
2. Completes 30 hours of training as a requirement for his school district.
3. AD must be present for the coach to meet with a parent.
4. Talking to parents after a training or competition is prohibited.

P10 1. Easily accesses student academic information due to a relationship with a school counselor.
2. Booster parents take care of most logistical tasks surrounding the team. He can communicate with one parent and tasks are easily taken care of through the organized parents.
3. Parents organize lunch and learn events, open to all adults who work with the students.
4. Tells his athletes to skip practice and take care of academics when needed.

Conclusion

Results reveal that youth sport coaches' efforts to connect are valuable. Numerous examples, and the perceptions of the study participants support the claim that connection among the adults supports youth development through sport. The value of connection, however, is in constant tension with the time and common interest it requires. Results suggest that an

environment where everyone has a common understanding and communicates regularly is

impossible. Study participants considered numerous factors in determining the forms of

connection that are beneficial to their athletes. Connection can be an effective tool to promote

youth development, but it requires that coaches take advantage of naturally occurring

opportunities, and plan for forms of connection they feel are important.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The present study was designed to describe if and how coaches are connecting to other important developmental settings in the lives of the young athletes they coach. Within this overall purpose, specific sub-questions were explored and included: (1) with which, if any, youth contexts (family, school or community adults) involved in their young athlete's lives, do coaches most often connect?; (2) What factors facilitate these connections?; (3) What factors inhibit these connections?; (4) What are coach's attitudes and perceptions towards fostering such connections?; and, (5) What are the specific ways coaches are fostering connections in the settings in which their young athletes live? These results will be discussed by first discussing what was found relative to the purpose of connection. Next, connecting contexts will be discussed followed by a discussion of connection domain. Finally, factors facilitating and inhibiting connection with be identified and discussed, along with strengths and limitations of the present study and future research directions.

Purpose of Connection

Creating Opportunities. Participants connected with other contexts to create or enhance opportunities for youth to participate in sport. Having a child participate in sport can place a strain on a family's money, transportation, and ability to spend time together (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008). For P1, P5 and P8, parent involvement in fundraising was essential for their program to be implemented at it's current capacity and quality. Transportation was a common theme as well. P6 observed that most of his communication with parents involved transportation. P8's school paid for coaches to obtain a Commercial Driver's License, allowing the athletic department to allocate more funding to the athletic teams.

Facilities are another prohibitive expense of youth sport opportunities. Joint use of facilities between school and community athletic programs can keep costs down and create more sport opportunities for youth (Erwin, Beets, Centeio & Morrow Jr., 2014; Howard, Bocarro & Kanters, 2013). P6 was the only participant who was actively involved in these conversations, as he depended on such agreements to hold his practices. P8 and P3 noted their organizations shared facilities with other organizations in the community. There are no examples in the current study where sharing facilities meets the criteria for connection, as both of the collaborating parties do not have a vested interest in common youth. It does, however, require combined efforts of multiple contexts, and should be considered by individuals and organizations in a given community as a strategy to increase developmental opportunities through sport and physical activity.

Relationships. Positive relationships were expected to be a facilitator of connection, but efforts to build relationships also developed as examples of connection. Study participants viewed positive relationships as part of the environment that promotes youth development in the sport context (Danish, et al., 2005).

Participants stressed different strategies to build relationships with adults in other contexts. P8 states that "she makes it her business" to talk to parents after practices. P2 found the time he spent with families traveling, at awards banquets, and eating out after tournaments to be productive relationship-building opportunities. With teachers and community adults, participants engaged in conversations when they crossed paths in school, at events, and around the community. P10 demonstrated intentional effort towards this end by walking through the school when he happened to arrive at practice early. Study participants generally took advantage of naturally occurring opportunities to engage connecting adults.

In these interactions, study participants implemented practices that are generally associated with positive relationships. Study participants shared numerous examples of giving and receiving support, compliments, appreciation, and encouragement. Izuma, Saito, and Sadato, (2008) affirm the power of these "social rewards" in their neuroscience research. Functional magnetic resonance imaging showed social rewards activated the same area in the brain that is activated when receiving material rewards (e.g. money). The receiver of social rewards are more likely to like the giver (Montoya & Insko, 2007), and more likely to reciprocate with helping behaviors (Burger, Erhlichman, Raymond, Ishikawa, & Sandoval, 2006). Helping is especially relevant to connection, as all parties need to give of their time and effort for connection to be possible.

Perspective-taking and empathy also surfaced as themes in fostering positive relationships. Perspective taking positively influences the social bond felt between two people (Galinsky, Ku & Wang, 2005), and reduces preconceived notions that hinder positive relationships (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). In the current study, P6 was hesitant to request teachers' time, understanding the demands of the position as a former teacher. In discussing parents, P8 stated "I always try to take the stance that I listen more than I talk". Implied in their comments, trust and closeness is developed when they listen to and consider the perspective of the other adult. Conversely, rapport can be damaged when the perspective of the other adult is not valued.

All of these interpersonal practices are documented as social skills that contribute to an individual's success in personal and professional contexts (e.g. National Research Council, 2012). While applying effective social behaviors foster positive relationships with other adults, youth sport coaches are also promoting youth development through modeling desirable

behaviors for the athletes (Martin, Ewing & Gould (2014). The same range of social behaviors have been connected to positive youth outcomes within the coach-athlete relationship (Lavoi, 2007), which is established as a contextual factor to promote youth development through sport (Harrist & Witt, 2012). Theoretically, integrating desirable interpersonal habits into the environment promotes youth development through multiple pathways.

Mutual strengthening. Participants shared examples of strengthening or being strengthened by an adult in another context. Contexts have mutually influential relationships, as illustrated by the mesosystem in the Bioecological Model of Human Development (Brofenbrenner and Morris, 1998). Bidirectional contextual influence appears to happen through two mechanisms. Contexts can strengthen each other through direct interaction (e.g. Capella et al, 2008), with support, resources and information. Additionally, individual youth have a significant influence on developmental outcomes in a given context, as their engagement in the context impacts their own outcomes (Lerner, Anderson, Balsano, Dowling & Bobeck, 2003). They further impact the outcomes of others as contributors to the peer environment (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005). Consequently, contexts strengthen each other when youth develop in one context, and bring their new skills into another context. With every context being influential in youth development, strengthening any context can benefit youth (Lerner, 1991).

The parent-sponsored monthly "lunch and learn" discussed by P10 provides an example of a formal training, with the parents strengthening school staff and teachers. The discussions focused on topics that would help all adults at the school work more effectively with the students. Family again was the most common context study participants sought to strengthen. Results indicated broad possibilities. P5's school provided English language classes for parents whose first language was Spanish, as well as GED classes. P7's boxing gym is in a community

with high crime rates, and subsequently, a high prevalence of adults who have unresolved legal issues. He hosts an annual event in which a public defender is available to provide legal advice to his families and other community members.

Active practitioners have extensive, nuanced expertise in working with the young people they serve (Larson, Rickman, Gibbons & Walker, 2009). Participants shared strategies they found to be effective; P8 with parents, P10 with teachers, and P1 with other coaches. Parents obviously have important insights in engaging and directing their children, and study participants valued the insight they received from parents. The adults surrounding a given young person can be a rich source of support and ideas for each other.

Praise and affirmations serve the purpose of strengthening in addition to promoting positive relationships. In multiple examples, parents and teachers noted the athlete had improved in some way outside of sport, and attributed the improvement to the coach. Study participants consistently noted this same strategy. In conversations with parents and other adults, they praised the athletes, and credited their counterpart for the young person's qualities. Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977) provides insight into how individuals can strengthen each other with affirmations. Acknowledging and praising an individual serves as verbal persuasion, which is one input into self-efficacy beliefs. When an individual perceives greater efficacy in a given task, which in this case is contributing to the development of youth, they are more motivated and more effective in that task (Bandura & Locke, 2003). The praise and affirmations described by study participants can strengthen the recipient's self-belief to teach, support and guide (Feltz, Hepler, Roman, & Paiement, 2009; Roehlkepartain, 2003), which can lead to maintenance and enhancement of their roles as caring adults and great parents.

While not an example of connection, participants may have also strengthened other contexts by reinforcing the importance to the athletes. P9 provided an example of adding an athletic suspension to the consequences the school gave his athletes for drinking alcohol at their prom. When parents or teachers informed P1 that his athletes did not complete school assignments, P1 had them bring their homework to the field, and complete their homework before they joined practice. It is reasonable to think that when coaches use the limited time they have with their athletes to stress the importance of another context, that other context might be strengthened as a developmental opportunity for that athlete.

Cohesive environment. Many of the examples the participants provided pointed towards creating a more cohesive environment from the perspective of the youth. In such an environment, a young person would experience similar expectations, hear consistent messages, and understand a consistent definition of success (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). With parents, study participants shared goals, objectives and procedures. All adults involved reciprocally exchanged information regarding the athletes, their progress, successes, and struggles. P6 eluded to such an environment when he identified a "closed network". This type of information helps everyone involved understand the youth, and subsequently, more effectively work with them.

Cohesion is further influenced by multiple systems influencing the coach. Leagues serving as umbrella organizations made efforts to promote a positive competitive environment. Organizational mission statements and objectives, parent agreements, trainings involving multiple contexts, and meetings are prevalent in the results. These elements will be discussed in greater depth in the structure domain section.

Providing accountability and consequences was a common reason for study participants to connect. P1 had multiple athletes sit and watch practice because of their behavior in school or

at home. When parents brought a concern to him, P2 brainstormed with parents as to how they might address it together. In one example, he shared how he put an athlete through a painful physical exercise at the request of her mother for being uncooperative at home. P4 agreed with parents to hold athletes off the team for a week because of concerns at home or at school. P2 and P7 even noted conversations with parents where they get children involved in the sport with the purpose of using it as accountability. They take the activity away if the athlete is not meeting expectations at home or school.

P1 and P6 provided especially unique examples, where they were involved in the immediate discipline of an athlete in another context. P1 described how he has received phone calls from the teachers of his athletes during class when the athlete was misbehaving. In the same way, as a teacher, he has called a student's football coach during class and had the coach talk to the student in that moment. P6 gives an example of parent calling him and telling him to "yell at her son" because the athlete was not responding to her. Coordination and consistent messages contribute to a cohesive environment.

Study participants further described how they are one piece in the cohesive, youth-supporting environment. P7 stated, "…we can be and do what the schools can't do", supporting sport as a context to address specific developmental outcomes (Gould & Carson, 2008). The role of a coach as a positive adult presence (Hardman, Jones & Jones, 2010) was raised by P3 when she described athletes discussing certain topics with her that they might not want to discuss with a parent. P1 furthered the idea that coaches play a role within a larger system when he suggested messages regarding school and household responsibilities were at times more effective coming from him as a coach, even when parents were stressing the same principles. This might be considered a passive form of connection, where a supportive adult (Scales et al., 2006)

understands they play a unique role within a larger system, or makes a choice to step back with the development of the young person in mind.

Direct development. The four purposes described above relied on an additional mechanism to promote youth development. For example, sharing facilities increased access to a sport opportunity, which then creates a developmental opportunity for a child. Similarly, a coach might be more effective in promoting youth development after attending a school-sponsored training. While all of the examples fit into one of the first four purposes, some examples also directly addressed a developmental outcome. Addressing behavior problems, seeking college admission, and creating service learning opportunities were prevalent. Coordinating to address a developmental objective requires creating common goals, which was largely considered unrealistic and unproductive by study participants. Yet, there might be instances where youth sport coaches can work collaboratively around specific developmental objectives.

Contexts

Connecting with family. Parents are the focal point of connection with families, as every example of connection with family involved a parent. Connecting with parents presents complex considerations for youth sport coaches. Parents are essential to youth sports, as they register the athlete, pay participation fees, provide transportation and purchase equipment, along with additional organizational and logistical support depending on the age and contextual factors (Harwood & Knight, 2015). Beyond the essential tasks, parent involvement can have both positive and negative influences on the outcomes youth experience through sport participation (Bremer, 2012). The question is not whether they are involved, but how they should be involved. Results contribute to this important discussion.

Coaches' perceptions of parents was a foundational element of connecting with them. In reflecting on his athletes' personal development, P2 stated "it's the parents, it always starts at home", acknowledging parents' place as the cornerstone in the child's development (Magnusson & Statten, 1998). Considering and appreciating parents' perspectives contributed to connection. P8 made time to talk to parents "because the most precious thing to them is their kids".   In answering the question of why he engages parents, P1 stated "parents send you their best when they send you their child." P4 added the significant financial investment parents make as a reason to give them an audience, suggesting it is unreasonable to think parents can give so much of themselves and their resources and remain emotionally unattached.

Parents further have direct influence on specific factors that are associated with developmental outcomes, including the athlete's self-perceptions (Babkes & Weiss, 1999), goal-orientation (Pappaioannou et al., 2008), and the athlete-perceived motivational climate (Chan, Lonsdale & Fung, 2012). The parent-coach-athlete triangle (Hellstadt, 1987; Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005) illustrates the integral role of parents in youth outcomes, where parents have mutually influential relationships with the coach (Smoll, Cumming & Smith, 2011), the athlete (Bremer, 2012), and consequently, the coach-athlete relationship.

Numerous examples in the current study fit into the conceptual model of the parent-coach-athlete triangle. P5 was encouraged and motivated when parents attended games, brought snacks and generally contributed to the soccer program. The substantial time and effort he put into building relationships fostered such parent support. The mutual investment in the parent-coach relationships enabled P5 and parents to work closely in supporting the athletes, both academically and personally. P8 and P4 described the negative impact of parents criticizing the coach to an athlete when the parent was displeased with the athlete's playing time. They both

noted this having a negative effect on the coach-athlete relationship, and the athlete's investment in the team.

P9 consistently expressed negative perceptions of parents, often describing them as crazy. An instance earlier in his coaching career where he initiated a meeting with parents because he was concerned about an athlete appeared to be formative to his views. The parents were defensive of the child and angry with P9 for what they perceived as accusations. P7 also had little interest in connecting with parents because he felt the sport experience was most effective when parents stepped back and trusted the process athletes experienced through his program. Study participants further noted parents' inflated view of their child (P1, P4, P8 and P10), too much emphasis on athletic success and college scholarships (P4, P8 and P10), and parents giving incorrect sport instruction to the athlete (P1 and P7) as further reasons to limit parent involvement.

Their views are supported in the literature, where parents detract from the benefits a child might experience through sport participation when they place too much emphasis on winning, are overinvolved emotionally, and hold unreasonable expectations (Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes & Pennisi, 2006). Athletes feel pressure when their parents criticize their efforts, provide sport-related instruction, complain to coaches and officials, and attempt to control aspects of the child's athletic career (Fraser-Thomas & Cote, 2009; Fredricks & Eccles, 2004; Goldstein & Iso-Ahola, 2008; Wuerth, Lee & Alfermann, 2004). Such behaviors reflect increased professionalization in youth sport (Gould, 2009), are detrimental to athletes' enjoyment of the sport (Kanters & Casper, 2008) and the parent-child relationship (Lauer, Gould, Roman & Pierce, 2010).

Results provided a range of ideas and strategies that are intended to promote youth development through connecting with parents. In a review of literature on parent involvement, Bremer (2012) found moderate parent involvement to be connected to positive youth outcomes, Parents demonstrate moderate involvement when they are active in the child's sport experience, yet allow the child autonomy. To facilitate positive coach-parent relationships, Smoll, Cumming, and Smith (2011) promote many of the same strategies as described by the study participants. Parent education, parent meetings, communicating goals, establishing roles, and effectively communicating with parents are common themes.

Initiation of the season or program was a key opportunity for study participants to connect with parents. It should be noted though, that these introductory efforts were all one-way communication in which coaches shared information with parents. P7 suggests that registration in itself is an example of connection. By signing up their child, parents believe the program will be beneficial. His view supports Green and Chalip's (1998) description of parents as consumers when they are choosing sport programs. Initial meetings and events serve as opportunities to begin building relationships (Brustad, 2011) and communicating goals, policies and procedures. Communicating goals and expectations is recommended as part of the initiation and registration processes (AAHPERD, 2013; Cote & Salmela, 1996; Horn, 2011). In the current study, five participants gave parents written information and four participants held a parent meeting. Participants communicated philosophies, goals, expectations and logistical information with these initial interactions.

Going one step further, the registration process provides an opportunity to require parent involvement. P6 required parents to meet with him in their home before the athlete was enrolled in his program, while P4 was the only participant who specified that her parent meeting at the

beginning of the season was mandatory. P1's league and P8's school require parents to read and sign a parent agreement. By doing so, parents acknowledge they understand the philosophy and goals of the league, and they commit to abiding by the stated standards of behavior. The Tenacity tennis program is an example of a sport program focused on youth development that has significant requirements for parent involvement. An in-home visit is required for registration, and the family must commit to their child participating for three years. There are regular in-home visits throughout that time, and parents must attend special events associated with the program (Berlin, Dworkin, Eames, Menconi & Perkins, 2007; Tenacity, 2015). The successful outcomes of *Tenacity* (Berlin et al., 2007) suggest that required parent involvement can contribute to beneficial outcomes through sport. The potential downside of a parent requirement is excluding children whose parents are unable or unwilling to be involved. In the end, this hurts the child, when such students might be in the greatest need of additional supports and developmental opportunities. P8 eludes to this dynamic, stating "…it may be one child's only outlet"

The nature of parent involvement as both detrimental and beneficial to youth athletes' sport experiences was evident as study participants discussed connecting with parents. Much of the connection in the communication domain was specific to parents, as the topics of conversation would not be relevant to the other domains. Study participants coveted information involving athletes' health, personalities, behavior concerns, academic progress, interests and successes in other areas of life. When study participants shared information with parents, it was most likely to be complimenting the child, providing logistical information, or addressing a concern. In qualitative interviews with youth sport parents (Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005), parents identify many of these same themes in their conversations with coaches, and felt that

sharing information enhanced their child's sport experience. In contrast, a lack of communication from coaches can be a stressor to parents (Harwood & Knight, 2009), potentially hindering parent-coach relationships and parental involvement.

Communication with parents regarding athletic development was generally viewed as beneficial. Discussing the athletic and academic requirements athletes need to compete at the college level was one of the few reasons participants scheduled meetings with parents. Study participants shared information with parents about camps, clinics and other teams where the athletes further their training. They did not, however, want parents giving athletes sport instruction. P1 noted the potential for parents to give incorrect or contradictory instruction to the athletes. Parents' having an inflated view of their own competence in the sport (Holt, Tamminen, Black, Sehn & Wall, 2008) may contribute to this dynamic.

P9 points out that parents like to hear positives about their child. It is reasonable to think that compliments are more powerful with parents than other contexts, as parents have the greatest responsibility in the child's development. In qualitative interviews, parents acknowledge that affirmations are helpful to them. (Roehlkepartain, 2003). From personal experience as a school teacher, Bates (2013) cites sharing compliments as an effective strategy to foster positive relationships with parents.

Perceptions of favoritism was identified as a concern. P8 experimented with the formal role of a "parent-coach" in her program where parents would assist with coaching duties for the team. After two years of the position, she planned to discontinue it due to perceptions of favoritism for the parent-coach's child from other athletes and parents. She also made a point of sharing information about camps, clinics and opportunities for athletic development with all parents, as opposed to choosing for whom it might be most relevant. This again was to avoid the

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perception of favoritism. As the athletic director, P4 was present at athletic events year round, and generally active in the life of the school. When she saw her athletes' parents, she did not approach them because of her sensitivity to parent perceptions. She stated, "…if I pursue the conversation, the other parents see, you know, how come (P4)'s not talking to me?". Parents can become disengaged as partners if they perceive favoritism in playing time allotment or other forms of unfair treatment (Trussel & Shaw, 2012; Wiersma & Fifer, 2008).

Study participants felt strongly that it was detrimental to discuss athletes' playing time and role on the team with parents. Playing time is a very important issue to parents (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008), and all five of the participants who coached a competitive team through a season shared examples of parents confronting them about playing time. Similarly, parents shared dissatisfaction regarding their child's role on the team, such as their position, varsity versus JV, or being a captain. P4 summarized the reasons why parents should not be involved in sport and team-related conversations. First, parents do not have the whole picture, as they do not see their children in practice every day, or understand considerations of the team's philosophy, tactics, and group dynamics. Coupled with parents' natural bias favoring their child and the number of parents with divergent opinions, it is not realistic to include parent's perspectives when making sport-related decisions.

Whether or not parents should be present at practice was addressed by multiple participants. P4 felt parents were a distraction at practice, a sentiment echoed in interviews with elite gymnastics coaches (Cote & Salmela, 1996), and expressly told parents they were not invited to watch. P2 however, felt parents were a benefit to have at training sessions as a source of encouragement. P8 communicated to parents that practice is always open, which she viewed as a way to build trust with parents. School district policy dictated the question for P9 and P10.

In the school district where they both coached, parents and coaches are prohibited from speaking to each other after practices and competitions. Additionally, the athletic director is required to be present anytime a coach met with a parent. The presence of such restrictions are evidence of the extent to which youth organizations and coaches are concerned with negative parent behaviors (e.g. Goldstein & Iso-Ahola, 2008; Popke, 2013). Desirable parent involvement at training sessions appear to depend on the context and the preference of individual coaches.

Results from the current study affirm that parents are essential partners. Study participants revealed a combination of proactive strategies to connect with parents, creating space to allow for connection, and placing clear limits to eliminate certain types of connection. Regardless of the approach of an individual coach or program, coaches should embrace interacting with parents as a role within coaching, and dedicate planning and effort to building parents as partners.

Connecting with school. Study participants perceived connecting with schools as beneficial to the athletes, and provided substantive examples to support this view. Specifically, through communication with teachers, participants were aware of what their athletes were doing in school, and were able to provide encouragement, direction and accountability. P9 noted that teachers also perceive coaches as valuable partners. He stated:

> "I found often that the same issue I may have had with a parent or a student, are the same things that the school is having a problem with, but for some reason the school has—believes that the coaching staff has better, may have a better connection, because it's something the kid likes."

Despite the benefits, study participants described connection with schools beyond what was natural and convenient as unrealistic and unproductive. They paint a picture where teachers and other school staff are very busy, as are the youth sport coaches. With the demands on everyone's time, it is difficult for anyone to do more. Even if there was time and a purpose to

connect, participants questioned whether or not school staff would be willing. Lastly, athletes attended many different schools, each with multiple teachers and staff. Participants felt it would be too time consuming to even identify individuals with whom they might connect.

Examples affirmed convenience as the significant factor in connection with the school context. The relationship participants' had with their athletes' schools largely determined the extent of connection. As dual role coaches who serve both as coaches and staff members at their athletes' school, P1, P4 and P5 connected the most with the other adults in the school. P8, P9 and P10 worked in concert with school staff at times as high school coaches whose careers were not connected to the school. P2, P3, P6 and P7 were community coaches who had little contact with their athletes' schools. As former teachers, P6 and P8 demonstrated more interest in connecting with teachers than the other participants in their same category.

Dual-role coaches and schools. The participants who worked at their athletes' schools easily connected with other school staff. They perceived benefits to this connection, and shared examples that were only possible due to their role in the school. P1 received progress reports from the teachers of his athletes, admittedly facilitated by his relationship with those teachers as a co-worker. He also valued the accountability facilitated by the open lines of communication; "…now she has to speak to you, now she has to come to practice, knowing she might not get to practice when she has practice". P5 described coaching as a "spring board to build in a rapport with parents and students". The small middle school section of the school was housed in an isolated wing. By the nature of the configuration, he had constant interaction with his athletes' teachers. In addition to the general interaction she had with school staff, P4 valued daily, school-wide faculty meetings to share information in passing, and took part in meetings pertaining to

specific athletes. She cited good relationships with her coworkers and working at a school that

valued sport as part of the students' education as factors that lead to benefits for her athletes.

> "I think it's just getting to know each other. You know, I mean again, I've been here a
> long time, a lot of the teachers have been here a long time, and its trust, it's trusting in
> what you're saying, it's all of the same things we talked about, about all of these
> relationships. But again, you know, there's a mutual respect here for our coaches and our
> teachers, and our staff"

The meetings, relationships and interactions that come with shared space and time to

build relationships are opportunities unique to dual role coaches. The nuances of school climate

can be difficult to define and measure (Van Houtte & Van Maele, 2011), yet factors such as

mutual trust among staff (Bryk & Schneider, 2003) and staff perceptions of belonging (Bizumic,

Reynolds, Turner, Bromhead & Subasic, 2009) are proven to positively impact student

outcomes. It is reasonable to think that dual role coaches' opportunities for relationships and

cohesion within the school have the potential to benefit athletes.

There is a dissenting body of research, however, that identifies holding multiple positions

as a negative. Being both a teacher and coach creates a conflict (Konukman et al., 2010;

Richards & Templin, 2012), where there is potential for doing one job poorly due to the demands

of the other job. P4 admits the multiple roles of coach and athletic director can present

challenges, stating "…it's hard to administrate over all of the teams, and still want to give 100

percent (as a coach)". A more recent study, however, found that there was not much difference

in the stress experienced by teachers who coach and teachers who do not (Richards, Templin,

Levesque-Bristol & Blankenship, 2014). This suggests that teaching in itself has numerous

stresses, and stress reported by dual-role coaches should not automatically be attributed to the

multiple roles. The body of research involving teacher-role conflict is also limited in that

physical education teachers are the focal point, assuming that the physical education teacher is

the mostly like position to also serve as a coach (Konukman et al., 2010). Different school staff

positions held by coaches in the current study (counselor, athletic director and math teacher)

present a need to study the positives and negatives of coaches serving in various capacities

within a school. Overall, dual role coaches in the current study strongly presented multiple roles

as beneficial, more so than a barrier to performing in their given roles.

School coaches and schools. Coaching a school-sanctioned team allowed P8, P9 and

P10 to connect with school staff, but not to the extent of coaches who also worked at the school.

Their interaction with teachers was primarily limited to addressing issues regarding student

behavior or performance in the classroom. In these instances, they all stressed the importance of

supporting the teacher. This again points to the importance of trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2003)

among professionals in a school. P9 summarized the general sentiment when he said "…The

teacher's always right." P8 digs deeper into the dynamics in the following quote.

> "What I have found is it's best just to go along with whatever the teacher says, and then
> deal with it another day. Because that's what they [school administration] want to see,
> they want to see the continuity between the coaching staff and the teaching staff. The
> athletic office wants that and the teacher wants that, too. Because they sometimes, the
> teachers sometimes feel they don't have a lot of authority, but they find that the coaches
> seem to have much more rule or authority over the students because they want to play,
> and so we have to be a team with the teacher, because this is what they're hoping they get
> from us, and we're not allowing them to participate in sports over achieving
> academically."

While teachers were the focal point of connection, schools house many adults who may

be significantly involved in a young person's development and well-being in different ways.

School counselors support students' in academic, personal and social development (ASCA,

2015). Appropriately, study participants worked with counselors during athletes' college

admissions process, and when they perceived an athlete might be having a personal problem. As

a school counselor, P5 exemplified this role, as he naturally had relationships with coaches,

teachers, administrators and parents. With his access to information about the students and the aforementioned relationships, he was able to tie together supports for students.

Study participant identified athletic directors as a significant facilitator of a cohesive environment to both the school and families (Madzey, 2008). This is reflected in a national survey with school principals, where working with others and working with parents were identified as the two most important characteristics of an athletic director (Stier Jr. & Schneider, 2000). P9 summarized the type of information he exchanges with his athletic director, stating:

> "It could be anything scheduling to players to incidence on the field, or incidence off the field, or, everything related to, it could be anything, could be school, could be discipline, could be parents, could be officials, you know, all those things."

School staff who served in different roles were involved in connection in isolated instances. Principals are an important link in the system (Madzey, 2008), and are acknowledged by study participants in overseeing the vision for the school and the athletic program. P8 described a relationship with a vice principal, who kept her abreast of her athletes' behavior during the school day, and communicated messages to her athletes. She also took the time to get to know the front office staff to facilitate communication with her athletes during the school day. P10 noted the encouragement he felt as a coach, and the support his athletes felt when school staff of any position attended a soccer match. The structures and climate that impact student outcomes are initiated by school leadership (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom 2004), with everyone involved in the school contributing to the student-experienced environment. Results suggest mutual encouragement and cohesion can potentially strengthen the student outcomes from sport participation. Building relationships with school staff, within the limits of everyone's time, should be included in a school coach's strategies to promote positive outcomes for student-athletes.

Community coaches and schools. Community coaches rarely connected with school staff. The infrequent examples of when connection occurred were unintentional, when school staff and community coaches happened to cross paths. Community coaches did, however, perceive value in connecting with school staff. With greater communication, P2 saw advantages to having "pressure from both ends" to increase the accountability for his athletes. P7 recommended having relationships with athletes' schools as a foundation to plan for athlete travel and resolve an issue when they arise (Strachan, Cote & Deakin, 2011). Community coaches' responses to questions involving connection with schools followed the theme of acknowledging potential benefits, while citing complicating factors.

The strongest sentiment pointed to connecting with schools as too daunting of a task. Athletes attend many different schools, and there are multiple adults with whom the coach might connect within those schools. Additionally, there might be privacy issues from the school's perspective, or parents may be uncomfortable with a coach's involvement in certain contexts. Time and energy invested by a coach becomes unproductive if school staff are unwilling or uninterested to connect. Community coaches felt there was not a clear purpose for connection even if they identified a connecting point at the school. Results indicate it is too much time and work to connect with schools in the absence of clear benefits for the athletes.

P6 and P7 added another detracting idea, in that school staff could be put off by such efforts. P6 suggests that it is disrespectful to a teacher's time to constantly ask to discuss the progress of a student, as they have many students and a large workload. He eluded to this multiple times in his interview, saying on one occasion "it's hard to stop and hit the brakes for one student". P7 notes that a teacher might be offended by a coach sharing strategies to support

an athlete, as it might feel implied that the coach knows better. With this in mind, P6 suggests waiting for school staff to reach out, or waiting for parents to make connections.

As programs with an academic component, P6 and P7 both have structures in place to connect with schools. P7 has a certified teacher on staff who works with schools and P6 works with an intermediary organization to place students and monitor their academic progress. There is precedent for structures connecting the school and sport context. Sport programs that incorporate an academic component have the potential to improve academic performance (Berlin et al., 2007; Petitpas et al., 2004). Working closely with schools is essential to effectiveness of such programs. P6 and P7 noted the need to report academic data to funders made coordinating with schools as mandatory for the success of their programs. The intermediary organization for P6 and dedicated academic staff person for P7 provided academic support for the athletes, while allowing them to maintain focus on other components of the program.

Working within the systems and relationships that are already in place appears to encompass most of what is realistic in connecting with schools. Study participants noted occasions where parents invited them to specifically become involved in an athlete's academic progress. Otherwise, reaching out to schools independently was perceived as intrusive to both the schools and the families. P6 gives insight into staying within his role, using judgement, and trusting others within the system when he discusses working with parents on the college admissions process.

> "I have a mom right now whose son's going to be senior, and she said thanks for your help, because I have no idea what to do. Which is great, I like hearing that, because then it makes me feel like, alright, well let me take the reigns. And there's other parents that say, you know, we got this, and that's a great sign for me, I don't need to help—as I say in all of these, I don't have one specific plan for a kid. So if a parent says look, he's on his path, and we can do this. He's got a great counselor at school, or a mentor, whatever, fine. You know, so that works out fine for me."

Connecting with community adults. The problem of time and energy is exacerbated when considering community adults. Study participants generally did not see a clear purpose or benefits to connecting, especially when considering the time and energy it would require. The number of adults with whom a coach might connect presents a major barrier. P10 describes this challenge when only considering other coaches in the same sport. "You got 13-year-old, 14, 15, 16, so you got all the sudden the girls, you got six coaches, right. And if they're playing a top team, then it's six coaches, but if they're playing one team lower, now all of the sudden, six became 12." When considering all of the community adults with whom a coach might connect, there would be a large number of people with all of his or her athletes. To this end, both P6 and P9 used the phrase "not enough hours".

The next barrier is the interest and willingness of the community adults. Participants noted that people are "wrapped up in their own thing" (P4), and "everybody thinks their time is important, and what they're doing is most important" (P8). These statements may carry a hint of criticism, but they seem more founded in understanding of how much work everyone has with only their own responsibilities. P2 elaborated on the issue of willingness:

> "Well it depends on the individual, because the individual person may say, ok, let me just deal with this myself. And you know, I don't think we need any outside help yet. And then there are some that'll say yeah, we need all the help we can get, you know, with all the information that may help this child, you know, to progress. Again, it depends on the person, if they want that help"

Despite the challenges, connection with community adults can be worthwhile. "…Knowing kids from all angles" supports P4 in effectively working with her athletes, which comes from knowing what they're involved in beyond sport and talking to the other people in their lives. P8 perceived the learning her athletes brought from other activities made them better

volleyball players. Study Participants consistently saw value in their athletes' involvement in diverse activities and having a large support system. The benefits were not enough for the participants to seek connection, but they were open and willing when opportunities for connection presented themselves.

To connect with community adults, participants needed a catalyst. The circumstance under which connection with community adults is most feasible is when parents are driving the connection. P2, P3, P4 and P6 all identified parents as the essential "cog" or "facilitator". Harwood and Knight (2015) acknowledged parents' role as coordinator in identifying relationships with the significant others involved in the sport environment as a competency of expert sport parents. Healthy relationships allow parents to diffuse tensions and problems, and contribute to a sport environment where youth can experience positive outcomes. Participants also cited intermediary organizations, school staff and the athletes themselves as cogs in connecting them to other adults. Study participant did not want to be connected to everyone, but meeting "someone who's really invested in that child's life." (P6,) was viewed as beneficial. P6 provided such an example in connecting with the employer of an athlete, whom he met when he stopped by the athlete's place of work. Through their subsequent communications, they increased the support and accountability for that athlete.

Connecting with coaches in the same sport was the most prevalent form of connection with community adults, noted by P4, P6, P8, P9 and P10. They conversed when they crossed paths at clinics and tournaments, talking mostly about the athletic development of mutual athletes. P4 shared a hypothetical conversation with another coach: "this summer while this kids playing, she really needs to get a left hand, or she really needs to do this. Or in reverse they may say, are you guys going to teach them a zone defense." Mills, Butt, Maynard and Harwood

(2015) identify coordination and consistent vision among coaches within a single sport organization as beneficial to athletes. While such coordination might be beneficial across organizations and stakeholders (O'Connor, 2011), evidence in the current study suggests it is unrealistic.

There is a stronger argument to connect with other youth sport coaches for the purpose of mutual strengthening, in the same way professionals in any field might share experiences, tricks of the trade, and expertise. P7 shared three concrete examples where he strengthened other boxing programs.

> "Yeah, sparring sessions. Other gyms come here to learn our technique. So it's like, when they come here, we help them out, we help them get ready for fights, we teach them different techniques, and different ways of doing things. And also too, another gym wanted to get their 501(c)3, and they got their 501(c)3, so we helped keep them organized, and their (inaudible) status, and I got the accountant to help set them straight, so they're straight. And another gym was here, they wanted to see how we run a board meeting, and they came here, and just observed while we had our board meeting. So I'm always out there trying to help, you know."

P7 also provides a good quote to introduce the idea of peer learning communities. From his desire to help other coaches and help kids, he stated "…because for me, I like giving out information freely. I have in mind that, man I don't want to die with all this information man, and I ain't say enough about it". A coach's philosophy and practices are influenced by the various coaches they encounter. This starts with their coaches as an athlete, and continues with peer coaches (Wilson, Bloom & Harvey, 2010). Winchester, Culver & Camire (2011) further suggest a more experienced mentor coach is a valuable resource for a younger coach. Strategies to promote positive development through sport are among the considerations coaches glean from each other (Camire, et al., 2012).

Multiple study participants connected with community adults for the purpose of creating service-learning experiences for their athletes. There is evidence that service-learning is an especially rich context youth development (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Henness, Ball & Moncheski, 2013; Larson, Hansen & Moneta, 2006). Actively contributing to society allows youth to explore where they fit in and develop a sense of purpose (Malin, Reilly, Quinn & Moran, 2013). Planning is required with an adult in the community, who then lead the athletes in a developmental experience. In the current study, athletes served a meal to their parents (P2), ran sport clinics for younger children (P4), and volunteered at a soup kitchen (P7).

Connection Domains

Within each domain, participants shared substantive examples of connection. Efforts towards one of the purposes can be addressed in multiple domains. Cohesion was promoted through preseason meetings (structure), determining what an athlete has to do to get to the college of their choice (common goals), and informally sharing information (communication). One of the domains can also be more relevant to a specific purpose. Creating common goals is most relevant to fostering cohesion, where most connection to create sport opportunities best fits in the structure domain. The domains provide another window through which to view connection.

Structure Domain. Results suggest the structure domain should be the focal point of connection. Study participants consistently perceived examples of connection in the structure domain as being effective and productive. P9 provided a matter of fact point of view when discussing connection with schools.

> "Well, if it probably came from the principal, or the athletic director, or superintendent. You know, it's like, I took 30 hours of instruction. Why? Because I had to, because they mandated it. Now, if they said hey, we're going to have an open house for spring sports,

and all the teachers, and all the things, here's what Jimmy's involved with, you got to talk to each one. You know what, I would probably do it. It would be 33 hours of instruction. You know what I mean. That's what I think would need to have happen."

In more general terms, study participants made numerous references to this dynamic. Practitioners have full schedules, and many responsibilities to fulfill. Stopping to reach out to someone on behalf of one young person is unlikely to happen if it is not planned in some form.

Findings involving the structure domain provided a wide range of potential applications to increase connection between sport and other contexts. Participants spoke positively about the meetings, events, and standard forms of communication they had with the different contexts. Structures utilized by coaches are one piece in multiple levels of structure that influence youth sport. The philosophy and behaviors of the coach strongly influence development experienced by athletes (e.g. Baker, Yardley & Cote, 2003; Camire, et al., 2012). Youth sport coaches are influenced by the sponsoring organization for whom they coach (Domingues, Cavichiolli & Concalves, 2014). Sport governing bodies, government policy, and other large, umbrella organizations influence sponsoring organizations and coaches (Norris, 2010; Rynne & Mallett, 2012). This holds true for connection, where the multiple levels of influence affected how study participants connected with other contexts.

Participant-led connection. Numerous examples of structure created by study participants have been discussed in previous sections. Meetings and events built into the calendar, lines of communication, and mechanisms to foster vision are structures that study participants valued. Parent meetings at the beginning of the season allowed participants to communicate goals, expectations, and establish lines of communication. Events, such as social events, parent-athlete competitions and award banquets, provided opportunities for parents and coaches to build relationships and share information. Receiving weekly progress reports from

teachers (P1), email groups (P4), phone messaging systems (P8) and social media (P6) are examples of established lines of communication. These examples are in the structure domain because they are planned or scheduled opportunities to interact or communicate. Related, but not a concrete structure, are instances where participants shared with parents how best to contact them. P1 tells the parents to feel free to contact him via email, phone or text, and adds text will be fastest. Placing boundaries on communication is an additional part of this, evident in P4 telling parents not to talk to her immediately after a game.

Organization-led connection. Organizations facilitated connection by building common vision, goals and strategies across contexts. Sponsoring organizations have an important opportunity and responsibility to promote long-term athletic and personal development in their athletes (Fletcher, Hanton, Mellalieu & Neil, 2012). Results from the current study indicate sponsoring organizations have opportunities to facilitate connection as a strategy to do so. P4, P5, P8, P9 and P10 coached for school-sponsored sports. P1, P2, P3, P6 and P7 coached under a non-profit organization. Mills, et al., (2014) outline the optimal organizational environment for athletic and personal development from interviews with head youth academy coaches of professional English soccer clubs. In the resulting framework, the mission, purpose and values are the foundation of the club. The mission is realized through the 'psychosocial architecture', described as the interrelated systems of people and procedures that create the climate and culture. Dynamic relationships between key stakeholders, including coaches, staff, athletes and parents, contribute to the psychosocial architecture. Conversely, the absence of vision, procedures and processes can be detrimental to a youth sport organization (Chalip & Scott, 2005).

As an athletic director and coach, P4 provides a thorough perspective of how the sponsoring organization can develop a climate to facilitate development. Her school and athletic

department both have clear, written mission statements that are frequently referred to with parents and among school staff. A meeting is held to communicate the mission to coaches, and the school also pays for additional training opportunities. The athletic department hosts a parent meeting to convey the departments' goals, philosophies and policies to the parents. Then as a coach, she has her own parent meeting and guidelines for parent involvement throughout the season. Structures within the school and her team promote ongoing communication with parents, teachers and coaches.

Results suggest there are many opportunities for sponsoring organizations to facilitate connection. P3's center hosted different speakers and workshops for athletes and families. Access to the school's phone messaging system, even though she was not a teacher, allowed P8 to communicate with parents. In P1's league, it was mandatory that all parents agree to and sign a parent policy, outlining behavior that is beneficial to the sport experience of the youth. Events hosted by organizations facilitated connection between the coach and other contexts. Five of the organizations or schools hosted events which allowed participants to connect with parents or teachers. Getting the important people in a child's life in the same room is beneficial, in the way they naturally share information, ideas and concerns. P6 warned of overusing this strategy, suggesting too many social events become less meaningful and burdensome on everyone's time.

Umbrella organizations have a broader influence on the youth sport landscape. Umbrella organizations identified in the current study include governing bodies for a sport (e.g. USA Boxing), national sport or recreation organization (e.g. Boys and Girls Clubs), a school board, or a league under which the athletes compete. P4's interscholastic athletic league provides training for coaches, parents, and the athletes. P8's school was founded and is directed by a church,

which provided vision and resources. District-wide policies were influential in P9 and P10's ability to connect.

The majority of study participants mentioned a governing body of sport in the interviews. The United States Tennis Association (USTA) demonstrates the potential for a governing body to facilitate connection with the Ten and Under Tennis initiative. They adapted the goals, equipment and competitive rules to the developmental needs of younger children (United States Tennis Association, 2015). Efforts to market the new vision and implementation to parents, coaches and administrators are a substantial part of the initiative. On a larger scale, the Canadian government launched the Canadian Sport For Life initiative (http://canadiansportforlife.ca) to enhance sport opportunities and experiences for all Canadians. There has been resistance and barriers in implementing vision and standards on such a large scale, but increases in common language, collaboration and distributable resources can be observed throughout the country (Norris, 2010).

Intermediary organizations also serve essential functions to strengthen youth sport opportunities (Wicks, Beedy, Spangler & Perkins, 2007). P5's school is able to have sport teams because a regional non-profit provides all of the equipment, officials, uniforms, and transportation for middle schools in the school district. The intermediary organization provides access to online training for coaches, and an overarching mission statement for all of the participating schools. P6 works with a partner organization that helps families with school placement in a complicated education landscape that includes public schools, charter schools, and private schools who have varying criteria for acceptance and financial aid. The organization allows his program to fulfill the part of it's mission involving athlete academic achievement while he focuses on building the sport-related aspects. Further, the intermediary serves as a line

of communication between coaches, schools and parents. Both of these intermediary organizations contribute to providing the sport opportunity, increasing cohesion, and strengthening the sport context.

Common goals domain. Developing common goals was largely considered unproductive by study participants. P8 states "I'm not a parent, I don't have any kids, but most of the time the parents are in line with what I'm thinking too". This quote reflects the sentiment that most of the participants shared at some point, that common goals are unnecessary because the goals are naturally common. Everyone involved is investing time and energy into young people with the hope they do well academically, make good choices, and are generally successful in the endeavors of their choice.

Time and interest were again major barriers to creating common goals. Goal setting requires individual attention to athletes, each with multiple adults in their life with whom to potentially discuss goals. P9 notes "there's just not enough time in the day to focus on 30 individuals". Further, the practitioners in different contexts are not always going to be interested in discussing goals, they are "all wrapped up in their own thing" (P4). P10 describes how some other coaches might invite discussion and input, but many will communicate "do not touch". The study participants themselves were not very open to including others in creating goals. With teachers, P5's approach was "I basically tell them, like what our goals are, but I don't ask for input". Results seem to indicate that it is not worth a coach's time to create goals with adults in other contexts. It is beneficial when goals are generally aligned, but developing common goals is too time consuming and not of interest to study participants.

Results did provide occasional examples of creating common goals. Connecting around the college admissions process was the most prevalent example in the common goals domain.

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P4, P6, P8, P9 and P10 cited examples met and planned with both parents and school staff for this purpose. P2 implemented redirection strategies into training when parents shared goals with him involving an athlete's behavior or self-control outside of sport. P4 said it was very infrequent, but maybe once per year a parent will request a meeting in which they identify a common goal and strategies to achieve the goal. In both of these instances, P2 and P4 coordinated actions to address the goal with the parents. P6 discussed goals with parents in intake meetings, but he acknowledges that it is mostly him stating the goals that he has, and parents rarely contribute to creating goals. The one on one meeting format at least provided the space for parents to discuss goals with P6 if they desired to do so.

Sharing goals and objectives was more frequent. Participants shared the goals they had for their athletes in the introductory packets and meetings they had with parents, as well as in ongoing conversations as they saw each other. Sharing goals went in both directions, as parents would also share goals with the participants. Parents expressed to P1 that they hoped their children would whine less, demonstrate more toughness and lose weight. P5 and P6 admitted that when they shared their goals with teachers and parents respectively, they were not interested in hearing the goals of the other adults had. Organizational mission and vision statements serve the purpose of sharing goals as well. Whether or not simply sharing goals is beneficial remains a question, but theoretically, it is an example of information flow as part of a cohesive environment (Larson, Eccles & Gootman, 2004).

The possibility of common goals should not be dismissed altogether. An athlete's goals impact the development and success they experience through sport (Cetinkalp, 2012; Conroy, Kaye & Coatsworth, 2006; Dunn & Dunn, 1999; Greenwood & Canters, 2009; Kavussanu, 2006), and multiple social agents in the sport environment impact the goals of the athletes

(Papaioannou, Ampatzoglou, Kalogiannis & Sagovits, 2008). The youth-experienced environment can be weakened by simply operating on assumptions (Chappell, 2006), and goal ambiguity can hinder youth development in the sport context (Schmidt & Deshon, 2010). Therefore, it is potentially productive for coaches to address goals in conversations with all of the social agents surrounding an athlete. Further, youth programs and youth sport programs that involve goal-setting have been proven to promote youth development (Forneris, Danish & Scott, 2007; Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish & Theodorakis, 2005). If meeting individually to create goals is unrealistic, providing the space and structure for youth to develop goals is a strategy for youth sport coaches to consider. Providing space for youth athletes to create their own goals is supported by youth agency and initiative literature (Larson, 2000; Walker & Larson, 2006). As sport-specific frameworks that emphasize youth autonomy Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility model (Hellison & Walsh, 2002) are promoting associated with positive youth outcomes in empirical research. P4, P6, P8 and P10 all stressed the benefits of athletes communicating to the supporting adults as a means of promoting youth responsibility. Communicating goals is another such opportunity, and doubles as a way for the supportive adults surrounding an athlete to be informed of the goals.

Communication domain. Connection in the communication domain was perceived as valuable to the study participants. Through the wide-ranging exchanges they had with connecting adults, study participants built relationships, learned about their athletes, created accountability, and increased the cohesion in the overall youth supporting environment. The majority of connection in the communication domain resulted from interactions that are intrinsic to the environment. Study participants and other adults shared information when they crossed paths at practices and competitions, events, group meetings, chance meetings in the broader

community, and in and around the schools. As noted frequently throughout this chapter, study participants perceived communication that was not naturally-occurring as unrealistic with the demands on everyone's time. There is evidence in the literature that informal or organic communication is preferred at times by both parents and professionals (Mallett, Trudel, Lyle & Rynne, 2009; Roehlkepartain, 2003; Wilson, Bloom & Harvey, 2010). Taking advantage of opportunities for communication as they arise might be the most realistic and most effective way for coaches to exchange information with the other important adults surrounding an athlete.

The content study participant's valued has been addressed in previous sections. Praise and encouragement are a consistent point of emphasis. P4 and P6 praised parents and teachers when there was noticeable positive progress in his athletes, while P2 and P7 noted receiving the same type of praise. Sharing information about the athletes, sharing goals, and sharing problems to mutually hold an athlete accountable contributed to a cohesive environment. The conversations that took place at practices, competitions, meetings and events enhanced the trust and rapport among stakeholders. Again, study participants valued the organic nature of conversations, and did not describe entering conversations with premeditated topics they wanted to address. They perceived the aforementioned types of communication as valuable upon reflection.

It is clear that not all information is necessary and beneficial. Information study participants coveted and shared was specific to contextual factors and preferences. P6 advocated for figuring out who the most important people in the lives of his athletes, and having an awareness of who needs to know what information. Specifically, in reference to hearing about daily problems at school, he stated "I don't want to be like the dean of students." P8 described the potential harm when there is tension between the athlete and the child. "…because a lot of

arguing at home, a lot of problems at home. And you add another person coming in, giving some more, you know bad or negative information, it just makes everything in the house accelerated" P1 shared a variation of the same idea. He did not share every problem with parents, because he wanted them to enjoy watching the sport. No one in the system has the time to communicate everything, and all information does not need to be shared.

Not communicating with other adults proved to be one of the most clear cut strategies study participants implemented to promote youth development. Participants saw value in allowing the student to communicate with different adults, whereas they would not have to if the coach was actively communicating. P9 stated:

> "You usually try and have the kid do it, you know, part of their growing up and managing people's expectations. Let them, you try and let them do it, I do, it's like, hey you, this is your situation, you go work it out…"

P4 demanded that her athletes come to her if they had concerns with playing time or the team, and refused to discuss such matters with parents. She also noted conflict as opportunities for athletes to practice having adult conversations. With problems in school, P10 has his athletes work it out with the teacher, only following up with teachers later to ensure the problem is resolved. To communicate with parents, P10 gives information to his team captains, who then communicate to the rest of the team. Each player is individually responsible to communicate team information to their parents. Study participants viewed these instances as opportunities to practice interpersonal skills and responsibility, which they noted as abilities that will be required of the athletes as adults.

The relationship between the communication and structure domains should be noted. Many of the examples in the structure domain facilitated communication. Study participants' resistance to more communication was the amount of time it required. Websites, social media,

email groups, printed information, group texts and communicating through others saved time. Social events provided opportunities for communication, and policies shaped how study participants could communicate. Communication with other contexts appears to be a combination of building opportunities into the environment, and taking advantage of opportunities as they arise.

Method of Connection

The mode of communication a coach uses to communicate with other adults can impact the effectiveness of the message. Media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986) suggests that face-to-face communication is the richest form of communication because messages come with tone, facial expressions and body language, as well as instantaneous feedback from the receiver. While phone calls have less richness in the absence of facial expressions and body language, it is still a richer form of communication than written forms that lack tone of voice. Decreased richness leads to uncertainty and equivocation in the message, and when there is potential for misunderstanding in the message, richer forms of communication should be used. More recent theories, such as media synchronicity theory (Dennis, Fuller & Valacich, 2008), suggest there is not necessarily a best of form of communication, but communication will be more effective when it fits with the context and the individuals involved in the communication. P4 addressed different forms of communication being more or less appropriate in different instances.

> I prefer not to text. I mean I would say email and face to face might be even, it just depends. If it's something casual and simple, an email will suffice. Something that's really a legitimate concern, email will make you crazy, that's wrong, its go on and on and on. So it will be a phone call or face to face. And again, that casual conversation is always face to face. Unless it is, drop a quick email, because there's a great something. But text, mm-mm.

Study participants echoed similar themes in how they connected with the other important adults. Since the majority of connection resulted from the convenience of being in the same place at the same time, in-person communication was common in connection with all contexts. While they did not go out of their way, participants took advantage of the "rich" (Daft & Lengel, 1986) opportunities to have face to face conversations with important adults. P4 also elaborated on the advantages of in-person communication:

> "Talking to me is the best way of all, that's the best to communicate, to actually, face to face to talk to somebody, because there can't--they don't have to interpret it. You know, an email, text, can be interpreted anyway. Voicemail, your tone. But when you have to is and talk to somebody, and they can read your body language and all those things"

Multiple participants noted they talked to parents in-person when there was a problem, indicating a need for higher quality communication in certain instances. "Stopping by" was another method of in-person communication. For P5, stopping by families' homes was the only way for him to get in touch with parents, and perceived further benefits in developing closeness between him and the families. Parents stopped at the recreation center to communicate with P3, which she felt was an easy way for parents to get in touch with her.

Social media. The use of social media has grown steadily in recent years. Seventy-six percent of adults who use the internet are active on a social media website, compared to eight percent in 2005 (www.pewinternet.org). Many schools, school boards, businesses and non-profit organizations are active on social media. Despite its prevalence, none of the participants in the current study used social media as a central means of communication with other contexts. P5 and P6 both use Facebook as a supplemental form of connection and communication. P3 and P9 worked with coaches who communicated with parents via twitter, but neither of them used it themselves. A few study participants expressed a preference against social media. It can be assumed that many individuals with whom the participants are communicating might also have a

negative perception of it. More specifically, some people choose not to use social media because they do not trust other users or they want to maintain a certain level of privacy (Turan, Tinmaz & Goktas, 2013). There are also risks involved in using social media. One instance of poor judgement or a post taken out of context can reflect poorly on an organization or ruin a career. (Ashley, 2014).

Text messaging. The speed and ease of text messaging was utilized to connect with parents, but not other contexts. P6 advocates for text messaging as a way to save time, stating "…and for calling, 25 sets of families is pretty tough, too. I found that to be a challenge. I used to do phone calls, but text has been really helpful". P1 and P8 use text messaging when it is the parent's preferred method of communication. In contrast, P4 prefers more formal methods of communication with parents, but she finds text messaging the best way to communicate with her athletes. There does not seem to be any existing research on youth sport coaches communicating via text message. Pakter and Chen (2013) found anecdotal evidence that text messages saved teachers time in communicating with parents while increasing student engagement and achievement. Youth sport coaches might consider how text messaging can enhance communication with parents.

Written information. Written information was shared through email and paper. Email provides a fast and easy way to get messages out to a large group, but not everyone uses it and has access. Multiple participants found it best to use when connecting with teachers, presumably because teachers have easy access to email in their classroom. Meanwhile, P3, P4, P8, P9 and P10 used email to communicate with parents. P4 is the only participant who shared a reason for using email besides ease, stating that she will use email if she wants to create a paper trail. P5,

P7 and P8 distributed paper flyers to parents through their athletes because it was an easy and fast form of communication for them.

Facilitating and Inhibiting Factors of Connection

Relationships, convenience and purpose proved to be strong themes as factors study participants identified as promoting or preventing connection. Relationships are evident as a facilitating factor with all contexts, and have been extensively discussed in this chapter. Relationships serve as an ongoing facilitator of communication and connection (Coatsworth, et al., 2002). Responses suggest that "Trust" (P4) and "Rapport" (P5) lead to parent involvement and a positive experience for the athletes. Every participant who connected with teachers had an existing relationship with them. With community adults, P4 acknowledged connection might occur "if there's a relationship", implying there would not be connection without a relationship. Evidence suggests the time and energy youth sport coaches spend building relationships is a worthwhile investment.

Purpose was most often discussed as a barrier to connection, with participant's specifically identifying the absence of a clear reason to connect and a lack of interest from other adults as prohibitive factors. Results demonstrated that connection did occur when there was a common purpose, such as college admission or addressing a concern. High-quality youth sport organizations have vision that is communicated to all social agents, with practices and a culture that support the vision (Fletcher et al., 2012; Mills, et al., 2014). Connection to promote positive developmental outcomes could result from more individuals in the system having a common purpose in mind.

Study participants rarely connected beyond what was convenient for themselves or the other parties involved. The term "convenience" has been used throughout this paper, but in

reflection, productivity more accurately describes the conditions under which study participants connected. They consistently demonstrated the willingness to expend time and energy when they perceived a clear, positive outcome. So convenience was in fact a facilitating factor, but study participants noted additional complex considerations. Specifically, how productive connection might be in relation to the time and energy it would require. This same idea was presented by Little (1990) in discussing weekly meetings as a strategy for teacher development and support. Teachers fully agreed there were benefits in the weekly peer learning and support sessions. They generally felt, however, that students benefitted more when they spent that time working on lesson plans and content.

Study Strengths and Limitations

This study had a number of strengths and limitations. Relative to limitations, the current study only included the perspectives of 10 youth sport coaches. Other coaches may provide different perspectives. Additionally, with only 3 female coaches and 2 individual sport coaches, both groups are underrepresented in the sample. The investigator was also not able to observe the coaches to link their self-reported behaviors with actual connection behaviors. Nor was it possible to interview individuals from other contexts to determine how these coaches' connection actions were perceived. Whether or not connection was effective in promoting youth development was only addressed through the perspectives of study participants. Therefore, there is no evidence of connection benefitting youth athletes. Social desirability could have played a role in the responses. The interview questions intrinsically noted the potential for connection to benefit athletes, and study participants may have exaggerated their perspectives and practices involving connection.

While this study had limitations it also had a number of strengths. These included being guided by a theoretical framework of connection. The interview format also allowed the investigator to capture the thoughts of the coaches from their perspectives. Recruitment letters for study participants were sent to a diverse group of organizations and schools. Consequently, the sample of participants included a wide range of contexts, perspectives and experiences. Nine of the study participants had coached for at least 10 years, providing a rich foundation from which they could share ideas and experiences. Results from the study are applicable for current youth sport coaches and administrators, as the responses came from coaches in real-world settings. Extensive background information is provided for each coach, further facilitating practitioners in considering potential applications.

Future Directions

The current study explores the potential to enhance sport and physical activity as a context for enhancing youth development through connection with the multiple influential social agents surrounding the athletes' sport involvement. This initial study sought the practices and perspectives of youth sport coaches. Understanding the perspectives of all of the involved parties contributes to the understanding of a construct. The current study cites literature that presents perspectives of athletes (Ede, Kamphoff, Mackey & Armentrout, 2012; Fraser-Thomas & Cote, 2009), parents (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008), sport administrators (Judge & Judge, 2009), teachers (Little, 1990), and coaches (Sousa, Smith & Cruz, 2008). Future research should also include the different social agents' perspectives of connecting with coaches.

Study participants provided numerous examples of connection and it is reasonable to believe that not all examples of connection will have the same impact on youth development. The broad range of results included coordinated efforts with multiple organizations, carefully

designed policies and procedures, and simply greeting parents after a training session. The

different forms of connection should be examined as to their relationship with youth

development.

Clearly defining the characteristics of quality, effective connections will be an important

task of future studies. As an example, autonomy-supportive coaching behaviors are associated

with positive youth outcomes (Alvarez et al., 2012; Coatsworth & Conroy, 2009). Mageau and

Vallerand (2003) clearly define coaching behaviors that support athlete-autonomy as (1)

providing opportunities for athletes to make choices and take initiative; (2) sharing their rationale

with athletes; (3) acknowledging athletes' feelings and perspectives, and (4) providing

competence-related feedback. Existing relationships where there is mutual trust, common vision

among the social agents, and structures to facilitate connection are major themes in the current

study and may serve as a foundation to define quality within the construct of connection.

Greater frequency of connection may also be a salient factor. P4's high valuation of daily

meetings with school staff serves as anecdotal evidence. Especially with parents, study

participants sought multiple opportunities to connect, and they generally took advantage of

chances that arose. Each connection provides more opportunities to share information and more

opportunities to build and strengthen relationships. With this in mind, more frequent connection

might enhance the impact of each, individual interaction.

Constructs in the sport domain that are established to have a relationship with positive

youth development, such as motivational climate (e.g. Reinboth & Duda, 2004), goal-orientation

(e.g. Kavussanu, 2006), self-determination theory (e.g. Coatsworth & Conroy, 2009) and

coaching behaviors (e.g. Baker, Yardley & Cote, 2003), have been tested with the consideration

of multiple contextual factors. For example, characteristics of the athletes may impact the

extent to which different connection strategies are effective. P6 noted a greater need to communicate with parents of middle school-age athletes compared to high school-age athletes, suggesting effective connection may look different with athletes of different ages. Baker, Yardley & Cote (2003) found differences in the effects of coaching behaviors between team sport and individual sport athletes. Training youth sport coaches (e.g. Coatsworth and Conroy, 2006) can increase behaviors that promote youth development. Connection behaviors and strategies that are proven to be beneficial to youth athletes should be incorporated into training and educational opportunities for youth sport coaches.

Conclusions

The current study contributes to the existing literature of sport and physical activity as contexts for personal development by presenting the construct of connection. Where previous research has considered the influence of different social agents on youth development in the sport context, connection identifies specific and intentional actions of the different social agents with the explicit purpose of promoting youth development. This initial study provides evidence that coaches do in fact connect, and they perceive connection as beneficial to youth athletes. While the effectiveness of connection was not measured in this study, it appears the efforts of youth sport coaches make to connect are fruitful.

Many of the examples of connection in the current study involved sharing small nuggets of information, such as an upcoming birthday party, a success in school, or a challenge an athlete was facing. It is difficult to quantify or measure the impact of sharing information, yet study participants perceived it as valuable to the overall youth experienced environment. The underlying principle that greater coordination and cohesion in an individual's environment is beneficial (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000) is summarized by P1.

"I think that if you build a community around a sport, and around the child, the success of the child will be that much greater. So if you have myself as the lacrosse coach, slash also their teacher, I'm going to teach them the sport, but also academically, they should excel, and then I can build that cohesion with their parents. And that can also help them excel. And then that's going to help that child build academics, build athleticism and build the courage to go out and be able to do both successfully without any backlash, from anyone because they're getting support in all different ways."

P3 adds to the benefits of a generally cohesive environment, noting the importance of sharing small bits of information.

"Oh yeah, absolutely, because I think the more connected you can be with the other adults in a child's life, the clearer the picture becomes. And you can surface, and see trends, or see repeated behaviors that might not necessarily spark something if it's just you, so I can absolutely see some benefit in it. And also, from the kids' perspective, knowing that if something happens, you're going to have to answer to them, and them, and them and them. Or if you have a great accomplishment, you're going to be able to share that with them, and them, and them, and them and them. I think that's pretty powerful."

This again describes the benefits of a cohesive environment, where students experience consistent expectations across contexts.

The ideal cohesive environment, with communication and coordination across multiple contexts, has numerous challenges in the real world. There is not enough time for everyone to build relationships and communicate with each other. The challenge is made greater by the various personalities, priorities and agendas of the different stakeholders. P4 stressed this point when she said "You may do everything perfectly, and still everything sucks". The challenges of time and uncertainty are significant. Youth sport coaches should consider what is possible and productive and possible in their environment.

Effective connection requires forethought and planning from youth sport coaches. The efficacy of the structure domain, supported both by study participants' perspectives and examples, demonstrates the need to be intentional. Further, the time a coach has available to

connect demands that they use discretion in choosing the reasons and with whom they connect.

To this end, P6 deemed it necessary to "pinpoint" the right people. Youth sport coaches who are

effective in promoting youth development are intentional about the strategies they implement

(Gould, et al., 2007), and the ability to express strategies in greater detail is evidence of expertise

in youth practitioners (Larson, et al., 2005). Youth sport coaches who are committed to the

personal development of athletes should consider how they connect with other influential adults

among the strategies they implement to promote developmental outcomes.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SPORT CONNECTION INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction spoken to the coach

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, you can choose to stop at any time, and you can choose to not answer any question. This interview will take approximately 1 hour. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of how coaches connect with their athletes' families, schools and the other activities with the intention of promoting athlete personal development.

It is not expected that you would connect in every manner explored in this interview, it is understood that connection requires significant time and effort from a coach, and involves navigating complex environments and relationships. If you answer a question with "No, I see no value in that; or "that would be impossible, there is not enough time", that is also very valuable to my research.

Through this interview, I hope to gain a realistic understanding of connection from your perspective as an experienced coach.

Demographic and Background Questions

I will begin by asking you questions about your background, your team and your athletes. By providing a detailed description of your coaching background, approach and environment, readers will be better able to understand and apply your responses regarding how you connect with the other important adults in your athletes' lives.

Section I: Subject Background

What is your background as a participant in athletics?

How did you begin coaching?

How long have you been coaching?

What sport(s) do you coach?

Is coaching part of your career?

Are you compensated for coaching?

What training do you have that is relevant to coaching?

- General Coach Training?
- Sport-specific training?
- Training as an educator?
- Training to work with youth?

Section II: Athlete Background

What is the age range of your athletes?

What background information is important to know about your athletes?

How would you describe the ability of your athletes?

Why do your athletes participate? For enjoyment? Social purposes? To become elite?

Describe your relationship with your athletes.

- How long have you known your athletes?
- Do you feel you have a close personal relationship with your athletes?
- Do the interact at all with your athletes away from the sport?

Section III: Organization Background

What population(s) does your organization serve?

Is there programming beyond youth sports? If so, what are the other programs?

How is your organization funded?

What is the mission statement or objectives of your league or organization?

Is there a specific purpose/objectives are tied to sport opportunities?

How do you implement the purpose/objectives?

- Structure of the league/competitive format?
- Specific strategies you apply during training and competition?
- Connected programming or incentives?

Are you trained by your organization?

Section IV: Personal Philosophy

What goals do you have for your athletes?
- On the field?
- Off the field?

What strategies do you use to achieve these goals?

What benefits do you hope your athletes experience from playing on your team/participating in your program?

- Physically?

- Psychologically?
- Socially?

What strategies do you use to achieve these benefits?

Connection

The remainder of the questions will explore how you interact with the contexts that play an important role in your athlete's development. We will discuss each context independently. The first section will explore how you interact with your athletes' families; the second section will explore how you interact with your athletes schools, and the third section will explore how you interact with the other activities and programs in which your athletes are involved.

The sheet in front of you describes three ways different contexts can be connected according to my reading on the topic.

Family

Describe your interactions with your athletes families.

Structure

Are there any structures built into your program to facilitate family engagement?

Are there established methods to receive information from parents?

Are there established methods to convey information to parents?

Are there positions within your organization that have family engagement included in their responsibilities?

Does your organization make any efforts to train or strengthen the families of your athletes?

Are there other organizations that work with both your organization and the families of your athletes?

Common Goals

Do you communicate your goals to the families of your athletes?

Have any family members told you about goals, athletic or otherwise, they have for your athletes?

Do you speak to family members to establish common goals?

Have family members expressed what they hope their child gets out of playing on your team?

Communication

Do you share successes with your athletes' families?
- About their athletic progress?
- About their academic progress?
- About their personal or social progress?

Do you share concerns with your athletes families?

- About their athletic progress?
- About their academic progress?
- About their personal or social progress?

Do you ever talk to parents about other activities in which your athletes are involved?

Do you communicate with parents for any reason not mentioned?

How do you communicate? In person? Phone? Email? Text? Social Media?

Follow-up questions

School

The next section explores how you connect with the teachers and school staff of your athletes

Do you interact with the teachers and school staff of your athletes?

Structure

Are there established methods to receive information from schools?

Are there established methods to convey information to schools?

Do you have formal arrangements to share physical resources with schools, such as equipment or transportation?

Are there other organizations that work with both your organization and your athletes' schools?

Do you share funding with schools?

Do you have combined training events with schools?

Does your organization make any efforts to train or strengthen your athletes' schools?

Do you share leadership or staff with schools?

Common Goals

Do you communicate your goals to the teachers or school staff of your athletes?

Have any teachers or school staff told you about goals they have for your athletes?

Do you speak to teachers or school staff to establish common goals?

Have teachers or school staff expressed what they hope their student gets out of playing on your team?

Communication

Do you share successes with your athletes' teachers?

- Athletic progress?
- Academic progress?
- Personal or social progress?

Do you share concerns with your athletes' teachers?

- Athletic progress?
- Academic progress?
- Personal or social progress?

Do you share experiences, strategies or expertise?

Do you communicate with schools for any reason not mentioned?

How do you communicate? In person? Phone? Email? Text? Social Media?

Follow-up questions

Community Adults

The final section explores how you interact with the other activities and programs in which your athletes are involved,

Are you aware of the other activities and programs in which your athletes are involved?

Do you interact with the other activities and programs in which your athletes are involved?

Structure

Are there any structures built into your program to facilitate engagement with other youth programs?

Are there established methods to receive information from other youth programs?

Are there established methods to convey information to other youth programs?

Do you have formal arrangements to share resources with non-sport youth programs, such as equipment, facilities or transportation, with other organizations in which your athletes are engaged?

Do you share funding with other youth programs?

Do you have combined training events?

Does your organization make any efforts to train or strengthen non-sport youth programs?

Do you share leadership or staff with non-sport youth programs?

Are there other organizations that work with both your organization and other organizations that serve your athletes?

Common Goals

Do you communicate your goals to adults from other activities?

Have any adults from other activities in which your athletes' are involved told you about goals they have for your athletes?

Have adults from other activities in which your athletes' are involved expressed what they hope the child gets out of playing on your team?

Do you speak to adults from other activities to establish common goals?

Communication

Do you share successes?

- Athletic progress?
- Academic progress?
- Personal or social progress?

Do you share concerns?

- Athletic progress?
- Academic progress?
- Personal or social progress?

Do you share experiences, strategies or expertise?

Do you communicate with non-school youth programs for any reason not mentioned?

How do you communicate? In person? Phone? Email? Text? Social Media?

Do you know of other coaches or organizations who utilize communication with families, schools or other programs to more effectively achieve their objectives?

Follow-Up Questions

Any closing thoughts on these ideas of connection and engagement?

APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

MICHIGAN STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

Initial IRB Application Determination *Exempt*

May 8, 2013

To: Daniel Gould
        Rm 210 IM Sports Circle

Re: **IRB# x13-417e** Category: Exempt 2
        Approval Date: May 8, 2013

Title: Do Youth Sport Coaches Connect Their Youth Development Efforts to the larger
Community

The Institutional Review Board has completed their review of your project. I am pleased to advise
you that **your project has been deemed as exempt** in accordance with federal regulations.

The IRB has found that your research project meets the criteria for exempt status and the criteria for
the protection of human subjects in exempt research. **Under our exempt policy the Principal
Investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of human subjects** in this project as
outlined in the assurance letter and exempt educational material. The IRB office has received your
signed assurance for exempt research. A copy of this signed agreement is appended for your
information and records.

Renewals: Exempt protocols do <u>not</u> need to be renewed. If the project is completed, please submit an
Application for Permanent Closure.

Revisions: Exempt protocols do <u>not</u> require revisions. However, if changes are made to a protocol
that may no longer meet the exempt criteria, a new initial application will be required.

Problems: If issues should arise during the conduct of the research, such as unanticipated problems,
adverse events, or any problem that may increase the risk to the human subjects and change the
category of review, notify the IRB office promptly. Any complaints from participants regarding the
risk and benefits of the project must be reported to the IRB.

Follow-up: If your exempt project is not completed and closed after <u>three years</u>, the IRB office will
contact you regarding the status of the project and to verify that no changes have occurred that may
affect exempt status.

Please use the IRB number listed above on any forms submitted which relate to this project, or on any
correspondence with the IRB office.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 517-355-2180 or
via email at IRB@msu.edu. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Ashir Kumar

Ashir Kumar, M.D.
BIRB Chair

c: Jeffrey Dugan

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