CONFLICT MANAGEMENT WITH HIGH SCHOOL SPORT CAPTAINS: A PILOT INTERVENTION

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ABSTRACT

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Sport scholars have explored the idea of learning life skills through sport and the ways in which skills learned through sport can be transferred into other areas of life (Gould & Carson, 2002). Conflict management is a life skill that can be learned in sport and could help individuals in other aspects of their lives. Research has examined how conflict affects sport teams and the ways athletes perceive conflict on their teams (Holt, Knight, & Zukiwski, 2012; Paradis, Carron, & Martin, 2014). Also, sport captains have reported feeling responsible for facilitating relationships on their teams and managing conflict (Voelker, Gould, & Crawford, 2011). With this building body of research, there still has not been a shared or evaluated medium for athletes to explicitly learn about conflict management. This study tested the effectiveness of a conflict management workshop designed for high school sport leaders to learn about conflict and practice applying their conflict management skills. Using a mixed-methods research design, this study measured cognitive and skill-based learning outcomes of the workshop. Results indicated this pilot workshop was effective in increasing cognitive flexibility and certain aspects of problem solving (i.e., a more positive outlook on problems, a rational problem-solving style, and less avoidance of problems). Practical implications include sharing and implementing this workshop with sport stakeholders in order to increase high school student-athletes' knowledge of conflict management and develop conflict management skills that can be used in all aspects of their lives.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

From elementary school gym classes to youth sport teams, organizations have started to emphasize holistic youth development by incorporating life skills development in their programming. Life skills are defined as assets, characteristics, or skills (e.g., goal setting, stress management, effective communication) that are learned in areas like sport and can be transferred into other settings (Gould & Carson, 2002). The sport experience offers an opportunity for young children to learn valuable life skills that they can transfer into other areas of their lives and continue to use as they grow older. Conflict management is a life skill being taught by youth sport organizations and programs. For example, The First Tee is an organization that teaches life skills through golf and lists resolving conflict as a tenet of their program ("Programs: On golf courses," 2020). While organizations sometimes disclose which life skills they aim to teach their members, the medium through which they teach these skills is not always provided.

Looking outside of sport to business, some companies openly offer their employees workshops for skills, like conflict management, to help them succeed in the corporate world. Workshops allow for both experiential learning and individual learning within the same setting which makes them flexible and transferable to many settings, including sport (Brooks-Harris & Stock-Ward, 1999). Providing athletes with a workshop designed specifically for conflict management in sport could help athletes develop this life skill in a relevant context (i.e., in practice, on the field, etc.). The current study, informed by communication theories, behavior change theory, conflict research and a needs assessment of high school sport captains aimed to educate high school team leaders on interpersonal conflict as well as improve their conflict management skills.

Conflict

Conflict is present in any context or type of relationship. There are simple conflicts such as two friends arguing about which movie they want to watch. Conflicts can escalate, for example, to spouses no longer being able to trust each other. Past research provides evidence that conflict occurs within interpersonal relationships at both personal and professional levels (Fitzpatrick & Winke 1979; Frone, 2000). Interpersonal conflict literature and definitions explain that conflict is often associated with disagreements, negative emotions, and interference of goals between interdependent parties (Barki & Hartwick, 2004). More simply stated, interpersonal conflict occurs when at least two parties with a meaningful relationship perceive their own goals or objectives to be unaligned. Groups with more than two people can experience conflict as well and studies show that conflict negatively affects group/team performance (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn et al., 2008).

Conflict resolution practices highlight the key role of communication, with miscommunication having been noted as one of the causes of conflict in relationships (Mellileau, et al., 2013). Communication theories and strategies have emerged in order to manage conflict, such as Face Theory (Goffman, 1967) and Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987). These theories explain the relationship between identity expression, maintenance, and communication. Face theory posits that each individual has created a self-image that they present to the world (i.e., identity) and makes an effort for that image to be liked and respected. Politeness Theory expands on Face Theory by describing how to support the face others put forward through the use of appropriate language. It was shown in personal relationships that being polite was strongly related to being seen as less dominant and being explicit was associated with appearing more argumentative (Dillard et al., 1997). In professional relationships, a study examined computer

mediated communication (i.e., email, text messaging) and found that computer mediated messages are seen as more polite than voice messages (Duthler, 2006). Such examples suggest that politeness can be interpreted differently in various contexts, which could spark conflict if all parties do not perceive reciprocated politeness. Using aspects from both Face Theory and Politeness Theory in conflict management shows promise in helping individuals manage conflict by protecting other's face and paying attention to the language that is used. However, in regard to conflict, these theories have not been implemented into sport research and practice.

Conflict in Sport

Through research that has examined aggression in sport, it was found to be connected to conflict between or within teams. Sport is a context in which aggressive behavior (e.g., yelling, taunting) is encouraged and even rewarded at times (Russell, 1983). This behavior can be classified as either hostile or instrumental aggression. Hostile aggression is an act that is intended to cause physical or psychological harm (e.g., a pitcher intentionally hitting a batter who had a homerun in a previous at bat). Instrumental aggression is an act that is aggressive with the intention of completing a non-aggressive goal (e.g., a football player illegally tackling an opponent with the belief that it will help the team win). Past research has shown that children and adolescents report aggressive behavior to be acceptable in certain situations such as high-level competitions and in older age groups (Conroy et al., 2001). While aggressive behavior remains a topic of interest in sport research, this body of literature has not yet conducted studies to evaluate interpersonal interactions surrounding aggressive behavior in sport (e.g., managing conflict caused by aggressive behavior).

Athletes have reported perceptions of interpersonal conflict occurrences (Wachsmuth et al., 2017). Conflict has been studied in sport teams by examining athletes' perceptions on

conflict (Paradis et al., 2014) and the ways in which it can affect team cohesion (Holt et al., 2012). However, in the sport context, interpersonal conflict situations are not fully explained and strategies for solving conflict are not offered. Knowing how athletes experience conflict and have a role in conflict situations offers the opportunity to provide resources for them to better develop this life skill.

Sport Captains

Captains have reported experiencing conflict on their teams and felt it was their role to assist in managing the situation (Dupuis et al., 2006; Holt et al., 2012; Voelker et al., 2011). Yet while they felt responsible for managing conflict and relationships on their teams, captains often reported feeling weak in their ability to do so and experienced stress within this role (Voelker et al., 2011). Importantly, these studies were conducted with adolescents and young adults. Even adults find leadership to be a challenging role, it is expected that younger individuals in earlier periods of cognitive, social, and emotional development would report stress and inadequacy in a leadership role (Voelker et al., 2011). With adolescence being a key time for development and growth, this age group should continue to be the focus of interventions and education.

A needs assessment study addressed similar questions in an effort to better understand the current status of high school sport and the conflicts seen in this context (Secaras & Erickson, In Progress). Focus group interviews were conducted with sixteen student-athletes that hold leadership roles in their sport in order to (a) understand the current nature of conflict in high school sport from those currently involved, (b) determine specific strategies used by these captains to address conflict, and (c) understand barriers they face when trying to address a conflict situation. Captains reported similar findings to previous research in that they continue to feel responsible for handling conflicts. An issue still remains that high school student-athletes are

often being placed into captaincy roles without much education on leadership skills or life skills, especially conflict management skills (Voelker et al., 2011; Secaras & Erickson, In Progress).These captains also reinforced a need for a workshop tailored to the development of conflict management skills where they could discuss realistic examples of conflict as well as learn tangible strategies and actions plans through which they could address problems on their team (Secaras & Erickson, In Progress). Such a workshop could be useful as they are not given information on this area before entering their captaincy.

Purpose

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to address the need presented by the student-athletes and test the effectiveness of a tailored conflict management workshop for high school team leaders. This study measured effectiveness by evaluating change two concepts: cognitive flexibility and problem-solving. This study aimed to educate high school student-athletes on interpersonal conflict as well as provide an opportunity for student-athletes to practice conflict management skills.

It was hypothesized that upon completion of the workshop, student-athletes would:

- Report higher levels of cognitive flexibility when considering conflict situations.
- Report an improvement in problem solving skills during conflict situations.
- Retain information relevant to taking action in conflict situations that was learned in the workshop.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will first examine conflict literature. Looking at both interpersonal and group conflict research will assist in explaining the way in which conflict relates to sport. Next, conflict will be explored as it has been researched in sport. Most important to this study is the research related to captains in sport and their experience with conflict. Finally, the theoretical backing for the content of the workshop will be described before moving into the theoretical and methodological backing for the intervention design.

Interpersonal Conflict and Definitions

Conflict research extends across a variety of disciplines and ranges from intrapersonal conflict to group conflict. Both social and organizational psychology have attempted to define conflict, but a single universally accepted definition has yet to be agreed upon. Barki and Hartwick (2004) reviewed conflict literature in order to best define the term. In reviewing previous research, these authors noted that most research centered around three fundamental properties of interpersonal conflict: disagreement, interference, and negative emotions. These properties can also be conceptualized as cognitions (disagreements), behaviors (interference), and affect (negative emotions). Following this line of thought, Barki & Hartwick (2004) defined interpersonal conflict as "a dynamic process that occurs between interdependent parties as they experience negative emotional reactions to perceived disagreements and interference with attainment of their goals" (p. 234). This definition is strong in that it underlines interdependence, emotions, and perceptions as key factors to conflict. However, research has expanded upon this definition and included factors that influence conflict situations.

For the purpose of this study, interpersonal conflict will be defined more expansively as according to Wachsmuth et al. (2017): "a situation in which the relationship partners perceive a disagreement about, for example, values, needs, opinions, or objectives that is manifested through negative cognitive, affective, and behavioral reactions. Moreover, interpersonal conflict is influenced by the social and cultural context within which it occurs including individuals' characteristics, personality, age, and gender" (p. 88). Like the original definition from Barki and Hartwick (2004), this definition highlights that at the center of conflict is a perceived disagreement between at least two parties. Furthermore, it reinforces that conflict itself is inherently negative in the thoughts, feelings, and reactions involved. Unlike the original definition, this definition adds the variety of factors that will influence conflict and acknowledges context. The inclusion of internal and external factors is the main reason why this definition was chosen for the use of this study.

Factors Influencing Interpersonal Conflict

Intrapersonal, interpersonal, and external factors will influence conflict to some extent. Each individual has stable and situational personality traits that will affect the ways in which they behave and respond during conflict situations. Wachsmuth and colleagues (2017) identify gender as a stable intrapersonal trait that influences conflict. It has been suggested that when compared to female athletes, male athletes participate in more conflict behaviors and communication (Sullivan, 2004). A less stable or situational intrapersonal trait that could lead to perceived conflict is efficacy beliefs, or beliefs about one's abilities. Jackson et al. (2010) explained how self-efficacy (beliefs about one's own capabilities), others-efficacy (beliefs about partner's ability to perform particular behaviors), and relation-inferred self-efficacy (beliefs on the perspective of our partner views on one's own capabilities) determined the quality of a

coach/athlete relationship. When a coach or athlete had high efficacy beliefs across these three dimensions, it resulted in higher relationship satisfaction and thus less interpersonal conflict. Interpersonal factors also influence conflict. Communication was noted by Wachsmuth and colleagues (2017) as an interpersonal factor that is needed at all moments in a relationship for it to develop. Getting to know other individuals and their goals, hopes, and intentions can help reduce the number of misperceptions that could lead to conflict. Leadership is another interpersonal factor that can lead to conflict. Leaders who abuse their power or use a dominating leadership style often cause more conflict in relationships (Wachsmuth et al., 2017). Lastly, external factors need to be considered when discussing conflict situations. Organizational stressors such as program structure, team management, and administrators can affect relationships and lead to conflict (Fletcher et al., 2012; Hanton et al., 2005). Considering intrapersonal, interpersonal, and external factors help provide a complete understanding of a conflict situation and help all parties involved work toward the best solution.

Interpersonal Conflict Outcomes

Negative conflict outcomes are often remembered more than positive outcomes. Looking through a sport lens, outcomes from conflicts between athletes and their coaches have led to negative emotions such as worry, confusion, frustration, disappointment, and more. In athletes specifically, conflict with their coaches have caused increased symptoms of athlete burnout, eating disorders, self-esteem disorders, and depression (Wachsmuth et al., 2017). While the feelings associated with conflict may be inherently negative, there can also be positive outcomes from conflict. Through handling conflict adaptively, individuals may be able to approach problems while considering multiple perspectives, thinking of creative solutions, and learning about themselves as individuals (Alper et al., 2000; Baron, 1991). Potential positive outcomes

from conflict situations can be improved training schedules, increased focus or task-clarity, improved self-efficacy with problem solving, and cognitive complexity (Mellalieu et al., 2013). Moreover, research has found addressing task conflicts earlier can help improve team performance (Paradis et al., 2014). The negative affective outcomes from conflict are often unavoidable, but the positive outcomes are more beneficial. Overall, interpersonal conflict literature aims to help explain a concept that is likely inevitable in all meaningful relationships and help those involved work toward more positive outcomes.

Conflict Management Styles and Strategies

Conflict literature from the fields of communication and business has suggested strategies that can both help reduce the occurrence of conflict and resolve a situation once it has occurred. One method that has emerged from communication research is understanding conflict styles. Five different conflict management styles have been identified as competing, cooperating, compromising, collaborating, and avoiding (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). These styles were determined by considering an individual's relative concern for self and concern for others. A person with a high concern for self and low concern for others will use a competitive conflict management style, whereas an individual with low concern for self and high concern for others will use an accommodating style. An individual that is high in both concern for self and others will use a cooperative style, but an individual who is low in concern for self and others will choose an avoiding style. It is also possible to have a moderate concern for self and others, known as a compromising style (See Table 1) Individuals can complete a questionnaire (i.e., Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument) that will rank the five conflict styles from most to least used for that individual. Doing this helps individuals understand their default style and how using that style can impact their actions during conflict situations. It should be noted that there is

no singular style of conflict that will be successful in every situation, rather, an individual should be prepared to use different conflict styles depending on the situation and the other party involved (Kilmann, 2008).

Table 1.

5 Common Conflict Management Strategies

Conflict Management Strategy	Concern for Self	Concern for Other	Other Characteristics
Competing	High	Low	Assertive and uncooperative; dominating
Cooperating	High	High	Assertive and cooperative; integrative
Compromising	Moderate	Moderate	Mid-unassertive and mid-uncooperative; understanding
Accommodating	Low	High	Unassertive and Cooperative; obliging
Avoiding	Low	Low	Unassertive and Uncooperative; dodging

Aside from using a psychometric measurement survey, another strategy is to engage in self-reflection in order to understand one's own perspective on issues, biases, and communication skills with respect to conflict. Interventions in mindfulness and emotional intelligence have been suggested to help individuals improve self-/other-awareness, understanding, and tolerance (Wachsmuth et al., 2017). Research showed that factors of emotional intelligence (e.g., self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, empathy, and motivation) were positively correlated to problem solving skills and bargaining in business managers (Rahim et al., 2002). It has also been shown that understanding the emotional intelligence of another individual can help determine which conflict style to use. Abas et al.

(2010) surveyed employees at a university in Malaysia to determine if their perceptions of their superior's emotional intelligence could predict the conflict style they use with their superior. Findings from this study suggest that higher perceived levels of emotional intelligence in their superior were correlated with employees using compromising and cooperating styles and negatively associated with employees using the competing style. This highlights the role of emotional intelligence in conflict in that individuals with perceived higher levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to listen and work through conflict rather than dominate or avoid the situation.

Lastly, being proactive in relationships is an effective way of reducing the occurrence of conflict. This suggestion is given mostly in group settings, yet the findings found at the group level may be useful at the interpersonal level as well. For both groups and individuals, discussing values toward the beginning of the relationship can help reduce the amount of conflict caused by personal differences that are unlikely to change (Fitzpatrick, 2007). An individual might suppress their own values if they do not align with the dominant values in the group which could lead that individual to feeling dissatisfied thus leading to conflict (Fitzpatrick, 2007). It has also been shown that conflicts can lower a group member's confidence in group trust, respect, and cohesion (Jehn et al., 2008). Setting standards or expectations early in a relationship can help dictate the outcomes for future conflict situations. It is therefore important to act early in a relationship in order to first reduce the occurrence of conflict and also create a culture that promotes collaboration and cooperation during conflict resolution.

Group Conflict

In conflict literature, research has looked at the ways in which conflict manifests in group settings. Jehn et al. (2008) outline three types of conflict present in group settings: task,

relational, and process. Task conflict relates directly to the task trying to be accomplished by the group. Relational conflict is not at all task-related and refers to disagreements between group members on personal issues. Finally, process conflict centers around the logistics of the task such as how the work is delegated and to which group members. These three types of conflict are associated with cohesion, trust, and respect. Conflict in general leads to a decrease in cohesion, trust, and respect in a group which in turn leads to a decrease in performance. It has been shown that groups strong in cohesion, trust, and respect are able to perform better than groups lacking in those qualities. Also, specific to relationship conflict, negative emotions exacerbate the conflict and the subsequent emotional states (Jehn et al., 2008). This means that negative emotions associated with the conflict at hand will increase the effect that conflict has on cohesion, trust, and respect.

Conflict management research has looked into the ways in which a group's style for solving conflict influences group performance. Alper et al. (2000) developed the term "conflict efficacy" to describe a group or team's ability to manage its conflict productively. It has been shown that groups either solve their conflicts cooperatively or competitively. Groups who are cooperative in their conflict management style, meaning they work together to solve group issues, are more effective than groups who compete to solve their issues (Alper et al., 2000).

Conflict in Sport

Conflict has been shown to exist in sport in interpersonal relationships and at the group level. Issues with parents' over- or under-involvement, administrators' unrealistic expectations of coaches, power struggles between teammates or athletes and their coaches, and coaches' over-involvement in their players' lives are just some of the potential conflicts that could occur (Wachsmuth et al., 2017). Conflict in sport is not unique to any one particular relationship and

can be found at most levels (i.e., professional, recreational). One study surveyed coaches, athletes, mangers, and agents involved in the highest level of competitions (European Championships, World Cups, and Olympic Games) and found 75% of these individuals experienced conflict during competition that affected their performance (Mellalieu et al., 2013).

Other studies examined athletes' perception of conflict on their team. Unlike previous studies, these studies sought to better understand the actual features and types of conflicts athletes face as well as the strategies that may be useful in addressing teammate conflict. One study revealed that female collegiate athletes experience both performance and relationship conflict (Holt et al., 2012). Performance conflict was defined as conflict that dealt with practice and competition concerns and playing time. Conflicts in this category were frustration in different skill levels, certain athletes getting more playing time than others, and overall intrateam competition during practice. Relationship conflict was defined as interpersonal disputes or disagreements and conflicting personalities. Based on the response from these female athletes, these researchers concluded that relationship conflict may be more destructive than performance conflict (Holt et al., 2012). The second research question of this study was aimed at finding the current ways this team handled conflict and strategies that were/could be implemented. Responses from athletes showed that there was no singular strategy or series of strategies that guaranteed reduced conflict or complete conflict resolution. Strategies that have shown to be helpful include team building early in the season, addressing conflict early, mediation, and structured team meetings. Though athletes discussed ways in which they approach conflict, specific conflict management strategies or methods used were not present in the data. Additionally, athletes did not explicitly address ways in which they addressed conflict situations; in fact, most athletes reported avoiding conflict situations that they were facing personally (Holt

et al., 2012). These findings suggest the need for more research, dissemination, and application of specific strategies for athletes to use when addressing team and individual conflict.

In addition to reporting types of conflict, research has been conducted to better understand the dimensions of conflict. One study investigated the nature of intrateam conflict by coding athletes' responses for task and relationship conflict. Paradis et al. (2014) interviewed athletes from different sports and results supported the Barki and Hartwick (2004) claim that conflict includes cognitive, behavioral, and affective components. The cognitive component, as discussed with athletes, appeared to be centered around a disagreement, but a disagreement did not fully represent conflict. To multiple athletes there was a clear difference between a disagreement and a conflict. This difference was not explicitly stated but athletes explained how "something else" has to be present in order for the disagreement to escalate into conflict. Affective components of conflict for these athletes included feeling negative emotional states such as frustration, jealousy, anger, irritation, or resentment. Finally, the behavioral components of conflict were described as behaviors that made the conflict worse such as yelling, swearing, and sarcasm (Paradis et al., 2014). This study made a clear link between sport research and conflict management work and offers the opportunity to build on conflict management skills in sport.

The Role of Sport Captains in Conflict

Sport research brings attention to the topic of captains and leadership as a possible factor that affects conflict management. The characteristics of sport captains have been researched (Glenn & Horn, 1993; Moran & Weiss, 2006) to help determine if specific behaviors or personality traits can be tied to sport captains. A study conducted with hockey captains revealed that interpersonal characteristics and experiences are important to captains and distinguish them

from the rest of the team (Dupuis et al.2006). Also, these hockey captains report needing to monitor their verbal behaviors in order to maintain the respect of both the coach and team. These captains also stressed the importance of choosing appropriate times to interact with their teammates (Dupuis et al., 2006). These findings support additional research that captains feel responsible for maintaining relationships on the team and need to set an example for their teammates (Voelker et al., 2011). However, also mentioned by these authors was the notion that though captains feel their role is to facilitate relationships, they feel this is an area in which they are inadequate (Voelker et al., 2011). This gap begs the attention of researchers and practitioners because there are strategies and concepts from multiple disciplines that can help captains feel more comfortable with these relational aspects of their roles. This brief mention of communication in sport literature highlights the idea that these two disciplines are not as separate as they seem to be in the research and that sport behaviors could be improved through integration and application of theories from the field of communication.

Based on this past research, a more recent needs assessment study (Secaras & Erickson, In Progress) was conducted to examine the current nature of conflict in high school sports and inform intervention design with respect to conflict management. A group of current high school student-athlete team leaders from various high schools participated in focus group interviews to provide their perspectives and experiences with conflict in high school sports. This group was asked about what they perceive as current conflicts in their sport experience, what actions they take when addressing conflicts, and what barriers they feel are in place that prevent them from addressing conflict. Captains explained common sources for conflict in their experiences were issues with respect, maturity, entitlement, and social situations. These athletes also discussed that they consider timing, location, and person before addressing conflict situations. Yet, they still

hesitate to address conflict because they are worried about escalating the conflict, being disliked by their teammates, or being the reason a teammate is removed from the team (Secaras & Erickson, In Progress). Finally, these student-athletes mentioned that learning about conflict, specifically working through example conflict scenarios would be beneficial to their roles as captains.

Theoretical Background

Several theoretical frameworks were used in the creation of this intervention. Face and Politeness theories from the communication literature informed the content of the intervention while the COM-B framework from the health behavior change literature informed the activities and design of the intervention.

Face and Politeness Theory

Politeness Theory underscores the importance of carefully selecting language when making a face threatening act, which can occur during conflict situations (Hayashi, 1996). Tied into this theory is Goffman's (1967) concept of *face.* Face is the public self-image that we want to be seen by others. In order to maintain this image, we perform in ways that support our idea of face and do not like it when our face gets questioned. Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) expands on the concept of the face and explains ways in which we can behave to save others' face. This theory assumes that our face is on the line every time we interact, therefore creating endless situations where our face can be threatened. "Face-threatening acts" are actions or spoken phrases that challenge another's face. Individuals do not want their face to be threatened because they work hard to maintain the identity they put forward and aspire to perform their identity well. Brown and Levinson (1987) explain positive and negative face wants. Positive face is the desire to have our identity accepted by others while negative face

refers to the desire to be respected by others. This theory suggests five strategies to use when potentially committing a face threatening act: bald on record, positive face redress, negative face redress, off record, and not committing the face-threatening act. For example, each strategy could be used when trying to ask a friend to keep going to the gym. Bald on record is the most direct and explicit strategy and does not attempt to minimize the face threatening act (e.g., Go to the gym!). Positive face redress aims to make the other feel good about themselves (e.g., I know you have been going to the gym and it shows!) Negative face redress aims to lower any imposition that could be made on the other person (e.g., If you're free after work, we can go to the gym together on the way home). A person can choose to go off the record and indirectly reference the request they are trying to make (e.g. Do you know how often your sister goes to the gym? She seems to be really fit.) Finally, the person could decide to never commit the face threatening act and not ask about their gym habits. Each strategy can be effective depending on the context and the individual who is being addressed (Goldsmith & Lamb Normand, 2015).

Another key aspect to Politeness Theory is the acknowledged interaction between Power, Distance, and Rank. These three features of social situations help determine which strategy is best. Power is the degree to which one person can impose plans on the other and attempts to understand who has the most control in the interaction. Distance, in this case, applies to the closeness and social similarity of the individuals involved in the interaction. Finally, rank is the severity of the face-threatening act as determined by culture and society. For example, in a business setting, situations where the social distance was low but rank is high can lead individuals to attend to the other's face needs more (Holmes & Marra, 2004). Transitioning to a high school sport, coaches often have the most power and captains have the next highest leadership role. Distance can relate to team cohesion and amount of similarities on a team. Each

sport, gender, and region can have its own culture that could influence the rank of the face threatening act. It is important to be aware of these factors because they determine the weight, or degree of face threat. Politeness Theory posits that if the weight of the situation is large, it is better to choose a more polite strategy (Goldsmith & Lamb Normand, 2015).

There are important critiques that need to be considered when using Politeness Theory. One major critique of this theory is that it is biased toward Western cultures. Brown and Levinson (1978) acknowledge other cultures in their original paper by explaining “ethos: the affective quality of interaction characteristic of members of a society" (p. 248) and how that determines how individuals will use politeness. Yet, scholars say that this term does not encompass the actuality of other cultures and this original Politeness Theory is not universal (Longcope, 1995). Another critique is that this theory is rigid in its description of politeness and seems like a set of criteria that need to be met in ordered to be considered polite (Al-hindawi & Alkhazaali, 2016). This perspective does not include the notion that politeness cannot always be viewed as an isolated event. Instead, politeness depends on the people involved in the relationship and therefore it is difficult to use an objective line between polite and impolite (Hayashi, 1996). Context does matter and while the party receiving the message may not always interpret it as polite, that does not detract from the fact the sender intended on being polite in that interaction (Burke and Kraut, 2008). The present study will explain the importance of context through its emphasis on perspective taking and considering other perspectives when addressing conflict to help ensure their intended politeness is received by the other person as intended. Politeness Theory still offers a valuable lens for interpersonal interactions by focusing on language choice and maintaining the relationship.

Being polite and considering face when dealing with conflict situations has shown to be successful for business leaders. Holmes and Marra (2004) examined the ways in which influential business leaders manage conflict. They identified four ways in which these leaders managed conflict: conflict avoidance, conflict diversion, conflict resolution using negotiation, and conflict resolution using authority. At the center of these strategies is the desire to "reach a desirable outcome from a task-oriented or transactional perspective, as well as the need to maintain good collegial relations, and to consider people's face needs" (p. 441). An interesting finding was that when there was a contentious issue, but it was not central or serious in terms of meeting objectives, the leader chose to avoid it or divert it, therefore saving the face of others by not committing any face-threatening act (Holmes and Marra, 2004). This study highlights the need for strategic approaches when handling conflict, and also shows the critical position leaders are in during conflict situations in groups. Team captains could be substituted for business leaders in this scenario and the same findings might potentially apply. Captains need to be aware of the social factors of each interaction and the necessity to maintain their face and face of others.

Politeness Theory and Face Theory offers helpful information for those needing to handle difficult situations. Portions of both theories can be tailored to a sport context and useful for helping high school team captains communicate more effectively during conflict situations. Understanding the basic concept of "face" and the fact that every individual wants their face to be respected and accepted can change the language and related conflict management strategies these athletes are using within their teams. In turn, this can potentially help prevent or adaptively resolve conflicts.

COM-B

Using the COM-B framework (Michie et al., 2011), this program will target sources of behavior at the individual and group levels. The COM-B framework states that capability (C), opportunity (O), and motivation (M) are the three main determinants of behavior (B) (Michie et al., 2011). Capability is defined as the individual's psychological and physical ability to complete the desired activity. Opportunity refers to the factors outside the individual that either prompt the behavior or make it possible; this includes both the social and physical opportunities in the environment. Finally, motivation is defined as both automatic (e.g., habits) and reflective (e.g., conscious planning) cognitive processes that direct behavior (Michie et al., 2011).

This program will target each of these sources. Primarily, it will provide student-athletes with skills and strategies to implement when addressing conflict. Education on how to use effective communication skills and efficacy-building strategies on how to use them can help student-athletes feel more psychologically capable of handling conflict. Captains will also be in a low-stakes context where they can learn to assess different opportunities to help manage conflict situations they may come across in their own experiences. Finally, through discussing different examples of handling conflict situations, captains can understand the ways in which their own intrapersonal processes affect their motivation to handle conflict. The lecture and self-reflection sections of the workshop are targeted towards capability and motivation. By learning more about conflict and their own behavior, individuals are increasing their psychological capability, and automatic and reflexive motivation. The discussion and experiential exercises are designed to emphasize opportunity and motivation. Basing the design of the intervention in COM-B framework places the student-athlete captains in a position to change or better their current conflict behaviors and to use their new, or refreshed, knowledge in the future.

Methodological Considerations

Conflict Skills Interventions

As an attempt to improve conflict management skills both in groups and with individuals, organizations have provided conflict management workshops. These workshops are offered internally through organizations or are outsourced to organizations dedicated to improving these conflict skills. It appears that this work has been targeted towards individuals in business and large corporations as a facet of leadership that is essential in the workplace (Holmes & Marra, 2004). The curriculum of these programs is typically not available to the public. Other programs have been designed for children and frame conflict resolution as a life skill that can be learned in their typical schooling curriculum. For example, the Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) program provides critical life skills necessary for building caring communities and establishing constructive relationships (Jones, 2004). The goals of this program are to create a safe and constructive learning environment, enhance students' social and emotional development, and create a constructive conflict community. In essence, this program allows for students to learn strategies to manage conflict and allows for them to be exposed to conflict situations within a school setting. Programs like these continue to be implemented into schools and resources are available for teachers and administrators to help with the delivery of these programs in schools.

A local organization, the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA), offers Captain's Clinics for potential leaders across the state. In these clinics, student-athletes first learn about leadership, then work towards understanding their leadership style, and finally practice handling tough situations. The final workshop for handling tough situations can be further developed in order to fit the current status of high school sport and perspectives of student-athletes as well as offer specific strategies that allow for student-athletes to adapt to all conflict

situations. These programs are open to students who have been recommended by an administrator or coach to have leadership potential. This programming provides an example of the context in which the intervention in this study could take place. With most states having an administrative group that oversees high school athletics, there is the potential to include more workshops in other states that provide the similar programming to its student-athletes. This study helped determine if workshop-style programming is effective for this population.

Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is based in better understanding the services of a particular organization and uses social research methods to systematically investigate the effectiveness of social intervention programs (Rossi et al., 2018). Compared to other research approaches, program evaluation gives priority to practical importance and integrates the current stakeholders in a specific context. With schools, youth sport programs, and other organizations offering youth development programs, it is important to assess these programs for their quality, content, and effectiveness. Though there are many different types of evaluation strategies, all evaluations begin with collecting data from the program with which the evaluation is being conducted. This ensures that the program matches the organization's intentions and goals. While there is yet to be an organization that claims to strictly provide conflict management workshops, organizations like the MHSAA include this topic in their current programming.

To assess program theory and design, a logic model is created by evaluators to help visualize every aspect of the program. This model ensures that there is a logical sequence between the activities of the program and its intended outcomes (Rossi et al., 2018). The logic model below was created for this specific workshop to determine program resources (inputs), what occurred in the program (activities), the product of the program (output), and the effect the

program had on the participants (initial outcomes). For this workshop, an instructor, high school aged participants, and a workshop space was needed. This workshop provided interpersonal conflict management activities that were all grounded in the framework created for this workshop: Perspective, Proactive, and Self-Care. In thinking of conflict through this framework, individuals would be able to acknowledge the three main components of conflict (relational, situational, and emotional. The relational component acknowledges the other individual in the conflict situation and therefore perspective taking is important in any conflict situation. The situational component refers to the notion that the timing, place, and people in any conflict situation can vary, therefore being proactive in relationships and in the instance of conflict allows for potential positive outcomes. The emotional component expresses the inevitable negative feelings that are associated with a conflict situation. Self-care techniques can help individuals manage these negative feelings to ease the internal stress associated with conflict.

Upon completing the activities, the workshop instructor will have shared a new framework for thinking about conflict and the high school student-athletes will have been in a space to practice their new knowledge. Finally, the expected changes that each participant would have experienced would be an increase in cognitive flexibility and problem solving. Also, participants would be able to explain each part of the framework. It is important to note that logic models should illustrate the current program and not an ideal version. This allows for evaluators to analyze where there is breakdown in the program and begin to make changes (Rossi et al., 2018).

Table 2.

Logic Model for Thesis Conflict Management Workshop

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Initial Outcomes
• Workshop instructor • High school sport leaders • Workshop space (classroom/online software)	• Interpersonal conflict management activities framed by perspective, proactive, and self-care 1. Perspective – think about other perspectives (dialogue examples) 2. Be proactive – does not have to be immediate action, but conflicts can worsen overtime (sample conflict situations from start to finish) 3. Self-care – make sure to take care of yourself (example strategies)	• High school leaders attend the workshop about conflict management where the instructor will share a new framework that can be used when addressing conflict • Space for practicing new knowledge	• Explain each aspect of framework: Perspective—ability to take others' perspectives; Proactive – understanding situation, motivation to be proactive; Self-care – knowledge of self-care strategies to help • Overall increase in cognitive flexibility in conflict situations • Overall increase in problem solving ability for conflict situations

Once a program has been established, evaluators can work towards investigating its outcomes and the effect it has on the individuals who received the service. Kraiger et al. (1993) outlined three different categories to measure learning outcomes. With the proposed intervention being education based, it would benefit from being evaluated for specific learning outcomes. The authors explain cognitive, skill-based, and affective learning outcomes. Cognitive outcomes were dissected further into verbal knowledge, knowledge organization, and cognitive strategies. Skill-based outcomes included both technical and motor skill development. Finally, affective outcomes refer to both attitudinal and motivational outcomes (Kraiger et al., 1993). For this particular intervention, cognitive, skill-based, and affective outcomes will be measured through surveys and interviews.

The specific cognitive learning construct used in this study was cognitive flexibility. Cognitive flexibility is "a person's (a) awareness that in any given situation there are options and alternatives available, (b) willingness to be flexible and adapt to the situation, and (c) self-

efficacy in being flexible (Martin & Rubin, 1995). Essentially, cognitive flexibility allows for an individual to make an appropriate choice in how to act in response to a variety of stimuli. Studied in neuroscience, brain imaging technology has shown that different parts of the brain are activated when there shift in cognitive effort which highlights the brain's ability to adapt based on specific tasks (Konishi et al., 1999). This construct has continued to be studied in social settings and tied to various social interactions yet has not been directly measured in conflict research. The current workshop included activities that offered an opportunity for participants to understand different perspectives, work with another to reach a solution, and think of multiple possible outcomes, which all require some degree of cognitive flexibility.

Problem solving was the skill-based and affective learning outcome chosen for this study. Similar to cognitive flexibility, problem solving involves thinking of multiple possibilities and anticipating outcomes. This construct is often tied directly to conflict management and has been used as a way to teach conflict management skills (Hill, 1982). Though these concepts have been closely tied, there is not support to show how or if a conflict management workshop can affect problem solving skills. The current workshop offered activities that emphasized problem solving in order to provide participants with a space to practice their skills during a conflict situation.

Interventions are often tested using a traditional pre-/post-test design (TPP). This method allows for the researcher to see the degree of change in the participants who received the intervention and can be compared to the general population. However, this method may be unreliable under some circumstances. First, this method does not always account for an individual's understanding of constructs pertaining to the intervention. This would lead to over- or under-estimation of a participant's current ability, understanding, behavior, etc., at pre-test. Second, including a pre-test allows for the opportunity for participants to report socially

desirable responses and issues with retest effects and test reactivity. Finally, using a pre-/post-test design assumes that all participants have a consistent internal frame of reference for the constructs (Little et al., 2019). This last issue appears to be the largest in that researchers struggle to measure a true degree of change when each participant interprets their degree of change differently.

To solve the issues in a traditional pre-/post-test design, researchers have used a retrospective pre-/post-test (RPP) design to strengthen the validity of these measurements. A retrospective pre-/post-test measures each participant's perceptions for both before and after the intervention during the post-test. The degree of change is seen as more valid since the frame of reference is constant; each individual is forced to think of themselves at a certain point in time. This allows for the degree of change to reflect each individual with a consistent viewpoint. A research study was recently conducted to test the validity of this method. Little and colleagues (2019) used both TPP and RPP measures to assess students' learning mind-sets and math strategies in two different educational training programs. Results showed that mean scores for the pre-test (thoughts, feelings, etc. before completing the program) were substantially higher in the TPP group than the RPP group. This supports the idea that using the TPP design can have participants misestimate their abilities before a program which offers the potential for an inaccurate measure of change. Further, these researchers concluded that the mean levels for students' reports were consistent in 6-month and 12-month follow ups (Little et al., 2019). The consistency in means supports the notion that RPP reflects individual change and offers a better comparison than the TPP design. Finally, these researchers tested the RPP with children as young as nine years old and still found it to accurately measure change (Little et al., 2019). For these reasons, the RPP method was chosen to quantitatively assess the effectiveness of the

conflict management workshop, in addition to qualitative methods. This proposed integration of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis is informed by the established traditions of mixed-methods research designs.

Mixed Methods Research Design

The major strength of mixed methods research is that it integrates qualitative and quantitative data to form a complete understanding of research problems. When using this method, the researcher avoids potential limitations of only using a quantitative or qualitative method such as disregarding personal experience or producing highly subjective results (Creswell, 2015). This study will employ a mixed methods approach to gain a full understanding of the experiences of each participant during the workshop and still assess learning outcomes. The quantitative data serves to assess the change in knowledge, skill, and attitudes about conflict in each individual. The qualitative adds to this data by contributing detailed experiences of the individuals through this process in addition to providing constructive feedback on overall workshop implementation and presentation.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The purpose of this study was to test the effectiveness of a pilot intervention (i.e. conflict management workshop) designed for high school sport team leaders by employing program evaluation methods. Effectiveness was determined by degree of self-reported change in cognitive flexibility and problem-solving ability in conflict situations for each leader that participated in the workshop. A logic model (shown in Table 2 above) was created to outline the services provided by this workshop and to determine the desired outcomes from this workshop. The logic model also helped determine study design and methods for data collection. A convergent parallel mixed methods design (Creswell & Clark, 2011) was used for this study. In this design, qualitative and quantitative data are collected during the same phase of the research process. Each set of data is analyzed separately and then interpreted together to form the results. This design was chosen since it allows for both quantitative and qualitative data to be collected during the same phase of the research process (i.e., immediately after the workshop) and also allows for both types of data to hold the same weight in the analysis.

This study was designed with a pragmatic philosophy. Pragmatic research examines problematic experiences of individuals and attempts to offer practical solutions (James, 1907). This philosophy fits well with the current study because research the aim is to address the difficult and daunting nature of conflict through building conflict management skills. This study is very applied in nature, and research has shown that a pragmatic approach pair well with a mixed-method research design within applied research (Giacobbi et al., 2005).

Recruitment and Participants

The intended participants were student leaders in the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) Student Advisory Council. This group was not able to participate due to schedule obligations. Their supervisor, the director of MHSAA, provided the contact information for an athletic director from a local high school that was interested in this research. Participation was confirmed via email with the athletic director and he provided a list of students from whom he thought were team leaders and would be best suited for this workshop. The initial list contained sixteen names, but only twelve agreed to attend the workshop. This final group of high school student-athletes were all female athletes from various sports. The high school is located in a suburb of Lansing, Michigan with an average enrollment of around 1,000 students. At this school, 11% of students qualify for free lunch and over 85% of the student population is white. Their sport teams compete at the Class A division within the state (determined by enrollment size).

Though twelve-student athletes were present for the workshop, one participant experienced technical issues that prevented her from completing the post-workshop survey and participating in the focus group interview. This group was comprised of one freshman, six sophomores, three juniors, and one senior with the average age being 16 years old. All 11 participants who were able to complete the survey reported being an informal leader on their sport teams, and 7 out of 11 had been named formal team captains.

Procedure

The complete procedure for this study is shown in Figure 1 while Figure 2 reflects the changes made in the procedure throughout the course of this study. There was an original plan to include a second data collection time point to assess if the conflict management skills learned

and practiced in the workshop were present two-weeks later. The follow-up survey yielded only two responses which caused the data to be omitted from the results.

Figure 1.

Initial Procedure Plan

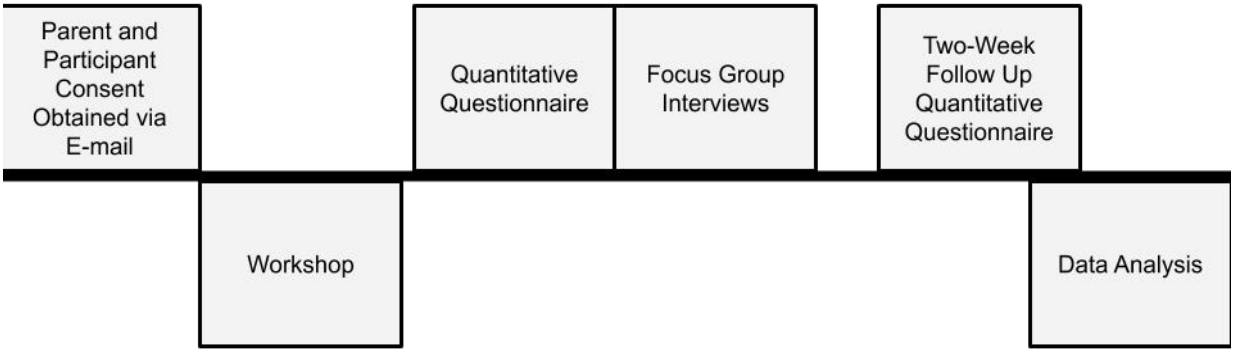
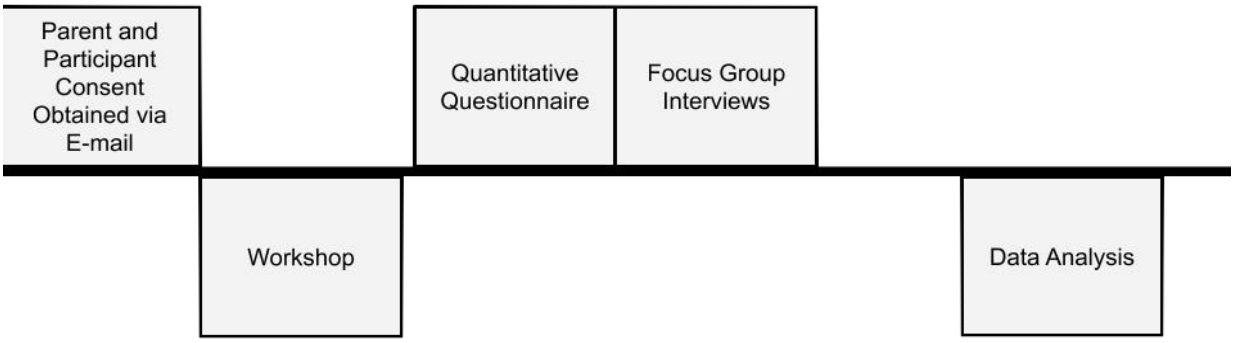


Figure 2.

Final Procedure Plan



As the participants of this study were under the age of 18, parental consent was obtained prior to the day of the workshop and assent was obtained on the day of the workshop. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, and they had the option to withdraw at any point. Participants attended the workshop on their individual computers using Zoom, a video conferencing platform. They were informed ahead of time that the topic of the workshop was conflict management skills. The instructor began with an outline of the workshop (Introduction; seen in Table 3). Next, the instructor shared her computer screen and played videos of conflict situations from television shows, movies, professional sports, and collegiate sports. Following the videos, student-athletes discussed their immediate reactions and thoughts about the videos. After this, the instructor gave a brief lecture on the topic of conflict, highlighting its relational, emotional, and contextual aspects. She also introduced the framework through which one can think about conflict: Proactive, Perspective, and Self-Care. After, student-athletes individually reflected on their past experiences with conflict. This allowed them to become aware of their own attitudes and behaviors toward this topic. The instructor then worked through two exercises that aimed to simulate real life conflict scenarios. The first exercise focused on communication and dialogue. Conflict conversations were presented and problematic language was identified by the instructor. Next, conflict provoking statements were presented, and the group discussed potential appropriate responses. The final exercise challenged the student-athletes to consider multiple perspectives and outcomes. The instructor presented different conflict scenarios for each group to discuss in detail in small groups. The student-athletes reviewed possible approaches and factors to consider when addressing each scenario. After the activities, the instructor shared strategies a team leader could use to ensure self-care when handling conflict. The workshop ended with student-athletes creating an action plan of

how they will address their next conflict situation using the Proactive, Perspective, and Self-Care framework from the workshop. Student-athletes completed data collection measures following the workshop.

As shown in the outline, each activity is targeted toward a specific aspect of COM-B or other research findings. The behavior (B) aspect of the model for this workshop were the conflict management skills used by the participants in their own lives. This was intended to be measured in a two-week follow-up survey with the assumption that these student-athletes will have had a conflict in that time in which they could implement their skills.

Table 3.

Outline of Conflict Management Workshop

Activity	**Description**	**Theoretical Background**
Introduction (5 minutes)	Instructor introduction Workshop expectations • Safe environment • Discussion based, participation and questions are encouraged • Have participants introduce themselves	
Conflict Video Examples and discussion (6 minutes)	• Conflict situations from television, movies, and real-life examples will be shown • Ask what participants noticed about the scenarios shown	Gradual introduction to topic of workshop; priming and using prior knowledge; constructivist approach to learning

Table 3. (cont'd)

Conflict Lecture (3 minutes)	Relational Aspect: • Involves two *interdependent* people who have a meaningful relationship. Think about how arguing with your teammate hurts a lot more than an argument with a referee Contextual Aspect: • There is no singular way to handle conflict, it depends on the person and situation Emotional Aspect: • Negative feelings are associated with conflict, but outcomes can be positive (closer relationships, build trust, more confident in own skills) • Conflict can be made worse when one thinks their identity is being threatened	Capability of COM-B; gain better understanding of new concept; Face/Politeness Theory

Table 3 (cont'd)

Proactive, Perspective and Self-Care (3 minutes)	• Proactive: Doing things at the beginning of a relationship can help prevent future conflict; also address conflict early • Perspective: Need to consider the viewpoint of the other person and the situation • Self-Care: With the negative emotions, we have to make sure that we take care of ourselves too and as team captains we have an outlet	New framework for thinking about conflict specific to this research
Self-Reflection (5 minutes)	Captains will take time to reflect on the strategies they use to address conflict Ask: What was the most resent conflict experience you had? How did you handle it? How did it make you feel? What was the outcome? Is this typically how you handle it? In a perfect world, how would you address an issue on your team?	Increase cognitive understanding (COM-B; psychological capability)
Effective Communication Examples (15 minutes)	Conflict causing statements will be presented. Captains will work to decide which is an appropriate and polite response. It's often that people are on the same page with conflict, but the things said can escalate it. This is why listening is very important.	Understand self/other-image and protecting of self (Face and Politeness Theory)

Table 3. (cont'd)

Conflict Examples (15 minutes)	Conflict situations will be presented to the captains. We will discuss the pros and cons of using different approaches and work towards deciding what is best for the given circumstances. Allow for captains to generate own examples they want to talk through.	Builds Skills, requested by captains (Secaras & Erickson, In Progress; COM-B, focusing on opportunity and motivation)
Self-Care for Leaders (3 minutes)	• Have your go to person • Healthy mind, healthy body • Find a stress relieving hobby that is not related to your sport (reading, art, dancing) • Use your coach as a resource	Self-Care with leaders helps reduce stress and keep them well
Wrap-Up/Action Plan (5 minutes)	The next time you are in a conflict situation, what is one thing that you will take with you for perspective, proactive and self-care?	Behavior change wheel, helps to have an action plan, M in COM-B

Data Collection

All student-athletes were given an online quantitative questionnaire and participated in focus group interviews (via Zoom) immediately after the intervention.

Quantitative

The role of quantitative data in this study was to measure the degree of change in cognitive flexibility and problem-solving ability in conflict situations within each individual based on the intervention. Cognitive flexibility was the chosen construct since it involves

perspective taking and thinking of multiple solutions. It was also chosen since cognitive learning outcomes are measured in training programs (Kraiger et al., 1993). To measure cognitive flexibility, the Cognitive Flexibility Inventory (CFI; Martin & Rubin, 1995) was used. This measure contains 12 items rated on a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*). Total scores are calculated by summing scores from all items. Reverse scoring was used on four of the items. The CFI has been shown to be reliable ($\alpha = .76$) and has been correlated to other, previously validated measures that assess aspects of cognitive flexibility. The CFI was positively correlated to the Communication Flexibility Scale (Martin & Rubin, 1994) which measures behavioral flexibility ($r = .53$, $p < .05$, $\alpha = .71$). The CFI was negatively correlated to the Rigidity of Attitudes Regarding Personal Habits Scale (Meresko et al., 1954) which measures opposition to adapting and intolerance of ambiguity $r = -.16$, $p < .05$, $\alpha = .81$.)

Problem solving relates directly to conflict management. Skill-based outcomes are also measured in training programs (Kraiger, Ford, & Salas, 1993). To measure problem solving, the Social Problem-Solving Inventory-Revised – Short Form (SPSI-R:S; D'Zurilla et al., 2002) was used. This measure contains 25 items and uses 5 subscales: Positive Problem Orientation (PPO), Negative Problem Orientation (NPO); Rational Problem Solving (RPS), Impulsivity/Careless Solving (ICS), and Avoidance Style (AS). Each item is rated on a Likert scale ranging from 0 (*not at all true of me)* to 4 (*extremely true of me*). Total scores for the measure are determined by the sum of all items. Subscales can also be scored by calculating the sum of items for that specific subscale. Internal validity was measured for the SPSI-R:S and demonstrated high internal validity across all subscales (Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$ - .95). Also, this measure has been shown to have high test-retest reliability ($r = .93, .89$) (D'Zurilla et al., 2004). Language from

both the CFI and SPSI-R:S was altered to fit in the context of conflict situation (see Appendix A).

The quantitative questionnaire was completed online and contained both the CFI, SPSI-R:S, and other questions developed to gain feedback for this specific workshop. For the CFI and SPSI-R:S measures, a retrospective post-test method (RPP) was used with each item (see Appendix B and Appendix C). Using RPP allows for a consistent measurement for change since it is all relative to each individual (i.e., intraindividual change: Little et al., 2019). This measure was validated through comparing it to the traditional pre-/post-test design (TPP) with students ranging from the 4th to 10th grade. Results indicated that using the RPP was still sensitive to change in ways that the TPP was not, and that a pre-test is not needed to show change even in youth populations (Little et al., 2019). The questions designed specifically for this study included items such as "This workshop taught me how to consider other perspectives during conflict," and "The activities in this workshop allowed for me to practice my conflict management skills in situations that I experience in the real world." The inclusion of these questions was to provide an opportunity for feedback on the framework developed by the researcher that was used to build this workshop.

Student-athletes were sent a follow-up questionnaire two weeks after the workshop. This questionnaire contained the same workshop specific questionnaire and added open response questions that asked for the participant to describe an opportunity they had to use the conflict management skills discussed in the workshop. This helped measure intermediate outcomes of the intervention and was intended to collect more information on conflict management behavior. It was anticipated that the student-athletes would have had an opportunity to use information they learned in the workshop and apply it to their everyday life during this time frame after the

intervention. If the intervention was effective, it was expected that student-athletes would report increased levels of knowledge, skills, and confidence relating to conflict situations at all time points following the intervention.

Qualitative

The role of qualitative data in this study was to help describe the process-related experience of the captains during the workshop, served as an explanatory check for the quantitative measures, and provided detailed feedback for areas of improvement for the workshop. Focus group interviews were conducted after the student-athletes completed the quantitative surveys, with interviews averaging 24 minutes. Each group contained six team leaders and was led by an adult that was not the primary researcher interviews so that participants did not feel pressured to give socially desirable answers and could be honest in their feedback. While the primary researcher is most familiar with the content of the workshop and the research purpose, the decision to have other adults lead the focus groups was ultimately decided because of the primary researcher's goal to avoid any conflict of interest. Questions for these interviews were divided primarily into three sections: (1) Overall reflections and learning experience, (2) Questions related to the quantitative questionnaires (e.g., What is one new thing you learned today?) and (3) Questions related to improvements for the workshop (e.g., What is one thing that could be improved for next time?) A full interview guide can be seen in Appendix D.

Data Analysis

Quantitative

Both the CFI and SPSI-R:S report total scores were analyzed for degree of change in cognitive flexibility and problem-solving ability for conflict situations. Total scores, and scores

for each subscale in the SPSI-R:S, were entered into a statistical software package (i.e., SPSS) to run analyses. As there are data points for multiple timepoints of each participant: 1. pre-intervention [retrospective], 2. post-intervention, 3. follow up, within-subjects repeated measures ANOVAs were used to assess change across timepoints within each individual. Given the relatively small sample size (and thus low statistical power for the ANOVAs), visual inspection and graphical display of response patterns across individuals was also created to identify any potential trends.

Qualitative

The focus group interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were coded using thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2016) to allow for the participants' experiences to drive the analysis. A mix of deductive and inductive coding was used. This method has shown to be useful in that it allows for codes to be created based on theory, yet also allows for data-driven codes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The first round of coding was deductive, and codes were categorized based on the quantitative outcome measures (i.e., cognitive flexibility and problem solving) or program feedback where relevant. After, a second round of coding was completed using inductive coding. This process allowed for themes to emerge from the raw data while still relating to cognitive flexibility, problem-solving, and workshop feedback.

Integration

Quantitative and qualitative data was integrated as a final step of data analysis as quantitative and qualitative data are holding equal weight in this study design. The qualitative data provided details on the process of the intervention based on the experience of each individual while the quantitative more clearly represented the learning outcomes by each individual. Merging of the data takes place in the results section.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Quantitative

The purpose of quantitative research in this mixed methods design was to provide an objective measure for change of cognitive flexibility and problem-solving skills within each individual as a result of the workshop.

Cognitive Flexibility

Results from the Cognitive Flexibility Inventory (CFI) indicated a significant change in cognitive flexibility from pre-workshop to post-workshop ($t(10) = -2.79$, $p = .02$). Mean scores after the workshop ($M = 58.27$, $SD = 3.93$, $d = 1.14$) were higher than mean scores before the workshop ($M = 45.18$, $SD = 15.77$).

Problem Solving

There was no significant difference in Social Problem-Solving Inventory – Revised: Short Form (SPSI-R:S) total scores ($t(10) = -.890$, $p = .39$, $d = .25$). Mean scores from after the workshop ($M = 42.82$, $SD = 7.153$) were not significantly higher than scores from before the workshop ($M = 39.91$, $SD = 14.67$). Though the overall SPSI-R scores were not significant, there were significant differences within three out of the five subscales for this measure. Positive Problem Orientation (PPO; i.e., seeing a problem as a challenge that can be overcome) scores increased ($t(10) = -3.91$, $p = .003$, $d = .76$). Mean scores on this subscale after the workshop (M=13.91, SD=2.74) were higher than mean scores before the workshop ($M = 11.00$, $SD = 4.67$). In addition to PPO, scores for the subscale Rational Problem Solving (RPS; i.e., thinking through a solution before acting) increased ($t(10) = -6.99$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.34$). Mean scores from after the workshop ($M = 13.09$, $SD = 2.51$) were significantly higher than mean scores before the

workshop (M = 8.64, SD = 3.98). Finally, the subscale scores for Avoidance Style (AS; i.e., not dealing with a problem) significantly decreased ($t(10) = 2.83$, $p = .02$, $d = 52$). Mean scores after the workshop (M = 4.56, SD = 2.51) were lower than mean scores before the workshop (M = 6.09, SD = 3.36). The other two subscales, Negative Problem Orientation ($t(10) = 1.67$, $p = .126$, $d = .27$) and Impulsive/Careless Problem-Solving ($t(10) = .92$, $p = .381$, $d = .48$), had no significant differences in their mean scores.

Correlations for both measure scores are shown in Table 4. The PPO After and RPS After scores are strongly correlated which could explain why both subscales increased after the workshop. These two subscales were not significantly correlated at the first time point. The CFI After scores are negatively correlated with NPO After scores which reaffirms that higher scores or indications of cognitive flexibility and taking perspective are related to less negative thoughts and feelings towards conflict. Similarly, ICS After scores are negatively correlated with CFI after scores which also indicate that when CFI scores increased as a result of the workshop, ICS scores decreased. These correlations support the purpose of this workshop to educate student-athletes on concepts of cognitive flexibility and problem solving in relation to conflict management.

Workshop Specific Questions

The last questions of the quantitative measure were created by the researcher and included to gather feedback specific to the framework of this workshop. For each question, the majority of the group rated the statement "true" (the strongest level of agreement) while the others rated the statement "somewhat true" (the next strongest level of agreement.) The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 4.

Correlation Table for All Quantitative Variables

Variable	*n*	*M*	*SD*	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.
1. CFI_Total	11	45.18	15.77	-													
2. CFI_After_Total	11	58.27	3.93	.177	-												
3. SPSI_Total	11	39.91	14.67	.788**	-.274	-											
4. SPSI_After_Total	11	42.82	7.15	.152	-.561	.710*	-										
5. PPO_Total	11	11.00	4.67	.846**	.376	.664*	.198	-									
6. PPO_After_Total	11	13.91	2.74	.668**	.505	.535	.249	.908**	-								
7. NPO_Total	11	7.91	4.87	.370	-.668*	.791**	.807**	.123	.014	-							
8. NPO_After_Total	11	5.82	3.79	-.515	-.749**	.001	.541	-.616*	-.580	.563	-						
9. RPS_Total	11	8.64	3.98	.652**	.090	.711*	.475	.818**	.823**	.313	.369	-					
10. RPS_After_Total	11	13.09	2.51	.487	.292	.565	.453	.726*	.875**	.132	-.387	.885**	-				
11. ICS_Total	11	6.27	3.61	.382	.528	.671*	.564	.095	.023	.639*	.231	.209	.229	-			
12. ICS_After_Total	11	5.45	2.42	-.230	-.676*	.328	.479**	-.212	-.144	.496	.500	.195	.206	.579	-		
13. AS_Total	11	6.09	3.36	.545	-.290	.734*	.488	.261	.055	.777**	.237	.107	-.025	.550	.154	-	
14. AS_After_Total	11	4.55	2.51	.217	-.657	.557	.587	-.017	-.240	.825**	.570	-.058	-.279	.447	.367	.849**	-

Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 5.

Workshop Specific Questionnaire Responses

Item	"Very True" Response
This workshop improved my knowledge of conflict.	11 / 11
This workshop improved my self-confidence in handling conflict situations.	10 / 11
After this workshop, I think about conflict in a different way.	9 / 11
The activities in this workshop allowed for me to practice my conflict management skills in situations that I experience in the real world.	7 / 11
This workshop taught me how to consider other perspectives during conflict.	10 / 11
After this workshop, I will be more proactive about conflicts.	10 / 11
This workshop prepared me with skills to help take care of myself during conflict.	9 / 11

Qualitative

As part of the mixed methods design, qualitative data was analyzed next. The coding process revealed four larger themes: Reflections and Experiences, Learning, Skills, and Workshop Improvements. Within each of these emerged three to four subthemes. Table 6 shows the qualitative results from the coding process.

Reflections and Experiences

The first part of the focus group interviews was to collect general feedback from the participants and attempt to better understand their individual experiences during the workshop. Participants mentioned ideas related to the subthemes of design, activities, and environment.

Design

Their comments about the design of the workshop included liking the structure of the workshop which started with a brief lecture portion before moving into activities. Athlete A explained:

> "I just liked how in general it wasn't just all lecture or all doing on your own. I liked how it was a mixture of both. And as it went on, you felt like more comfortable to share and like it was like a safe space to say what you felt and contribute to the conversation."

Comments with regard to design also included liking the balance between large and small group activities. Athlete B explained, "I liked going into the small groups because you got to make your own problem and then you got to figure out how to solve that problem. I thought it was a cool exercise." Adding on to this, Athlete C said, "Yeah, that's what I would've said too is the small groups because you would make your own and then we came together and got to see everyone else's perspective on it. Not just the people in our group."

Activities

Ideas that centered around the activities related to both the type and content of the activity. The participants enjoyed how the activities broke down the content into manageable pieces. Athlete B explained:

> "I liked it because it broke it down in three different categories and then she gave us an example, like the videos really helped me visualize what she was trying to explain even though she did a good job explaining it."

Social Environment

Finally, certain comments were made about the social environment of the workshop, saying that participants liked the fact that they knew the other members of the workshop and it was nice having a group that consisted of members from sports different from their own. Athlete E highlighted:

> "Yeah, I thought it was good to hear other people's perspectives. Not even just in your own sport, but other sports I don't play. I only played two sports. I don't really know what

goes on and other sports and stuff. So it's good to know like it's not just my sport, that's happening in, it does happen in all other sports too."

Multiple athletes commented that they felt comfortable in the space and explained how that level of comfort could change depending on the composition of the group. Athlete A added:

> "I think it would be a little bit harder if it was with people from different schools because I don't know if people would feel as comfortable sharing their personal scenarios or things that they think, you know, like compared to being with people that you kind of know or have the same similar experiences because you go to the same school, you kind of know how sports go that school and it… I don't know. I feel like it'd be kind of hard to put yourself out there if you didn't know who the person was or what their background was or that kind of thing."

Learning

The sub-thematic structure within the learning theme emerged with the idea that this workshop was designed to implement a new framework of thinking and each component of the framework could be new to the participants. When coding the raw data, the subthemes of proactive, perspective, self-care, and approaching conflict emerged. These themes were truly participant generated; participants recalled information from each component without being prompted.

Perspective

Student-athletes resonated with the idea that everyone has a unique point of view and set of experiences. For example, when discussing perspective taking, Athlete I explained:

> “I just kinda, I like the reminder to just remember that you don't necessarily know everything that's going on with somebody. So just, not to really jump to conclusions and just help them out if they're having a problem in the best way that you can.”

Athlete K added, “I really liked how it just gave me a reminder to always be putting myself in other people's shoes with their conflicts and also to have an open mind when you go into anything.”

Proactive

Student-athletes acknowledged the value in acting early and deescalating problems. When discussing being proactive, Athlete J said, “Yeah, I hadn't really thought about being proactive. Like normally you just think about a situation and then how to solve it. But I hadn't really thought about how to prevent a situation from happening I guess.” Similarly, Athlete D added:

> “Mine would probably just be definitely knowing even if this issue, like the situation could be small, but it still could be causing just amount as drama between the people. Like you don't really know what's going on. So making sure they know that you're there to talk to help them out would be a big one.”

Self-Care

Student-athletes appreciated the inclusion of self-care and thought it was important to incorporate in their own lives. In describing self-care, Athlete I explained:

> “I hadn't really ever focused on the self-care aspect because if you're having a bad day and like the way you handle other people's situations probably isn't going to be the best. So I guess I've never really focused on the way that a leader should take care of themselves as well.”

Approaching Conflict

Lastly, though specific approaches were not directly stated in the conflict framework, student-athletes noted that they learned different ways to approach problems as team leaders. Athlete C said:

> "I also liked being able to do, as a leader, involving yourself in other people's situations. Cause a lot of times when you think about conflict you think about your own. But if you're a captain or a leader on the team, obviously people are going to look to you to help with that stuff."

Skills

This theme emerged as athletes began to discuss the activities in more detail and explain which aspects of the workshop they will take with them into their own lives. Skills identified by the athletes in this group were intervening, using purposeful practice, and taking thoughtful action.

Intervening

Athletes mentioned that in this workshop, they were able to get more comfortable with the concept of intervening during a conflict situation. Athlete H explained:

> "I feel with especially just stepping up and maybe if a teammate won't do it or just someone who usually does it, we'll do it now, like we all have the ability to do that. Or if we are a team leader, we just know how to handle situations better."

Along with intervention, this group discussed how they could involve their coaches when conflict seemed difficult to handle. Athlete A mentioned:

> "I think that it's something that we could definitely implement into different sports at our school and stuff and just kind of focusing on the relationship aspect, like being able to

talk to your coach and trust them that whatever you tell them is confidential and that they'll help you and that they're on your side and it's not you against the coach or the team against the coach and stuff like that."

Purposeful Practice

The theme of purposeful practice emerged from comments centering around the specific content of each activity and how specific skills were practiced. Athlete F explained her takeaway as, "I think for me, I'd probably focus on the choice of words that you use. So it's not just blaming the other person and it's just kind of like trying to figure it out together, if that makes sense." Similarly, athletes expressed feeling confident going forward since they intentionally spent time practicing conflict management skills. Athlete A said:

> "I thought that it helped with confidence because you always can think in your head like what you would do or what you would say about a situation. But then actually saying it out loud and talking it through with people made it more real and made it seem like, okay yeah I could do this if this really were to happen and I have strategies that I could use and that kind of thing."

Taking Thoughtful Action

These team leaders also mentioned concepts that spoke to rational thought process surrounding their actions. It appeared that athletes learned or practiced this skill throughout the workshop. Athlete D said:

> "I guess I thought it was cool. Like I've never really thought of when I'm solving a problem, I never really thought about steps or what way to take to solve an issue. I thought it was really put in perspective of like what you should do and how you should solve the issue."

Workshop Improvements

The final questions were dedicated to getting critical feedback that could enhance this workshop for future sessions. The feedback given from these student-athletes centered around more realistic example scenarios, “captain” skills, and internal conflict.

Realistic Scenarios

Multiple athletes commented on the examples that were included in the activities and lecture. There were no specific comments made about each portion or specific examples. The overall sense was that there could have been more details in each scenario so that the student-athletes had more direction when working through their plans of action. For example, Athlete B said, “She made the examples of the issues and making those more relatable to us and being in high school and high school sports I think would be better for us to connect to.” Athlete C agreed and said:

> “Yeah. And I think it was just kind of what we said before how it wasn't a specific, so it was kinda hard to just come up with a situation and then act it out versus if we had a specific situation it would would've been more helpful.”

“Captain” Skills

It was also mentioned that while it was helpful to specifically practice conflict situations, there are general leadership skills that could make handling conflict situations easier. For example, Athlete A explained how developing trust as a leader affects conflict situations:

> “I feel maybe she could kind of touch on this or something. But with trust, because I know that being a leader, your teammates come to you with conflict or problems because they trust you and when is it okay to, you know, to talk to your coach about it and, or report it or something like that but still being trusted and when is, where is that line that

you still want to be someone that they can come to and they, you don't want them to think like, Oh she's just going to go tell everyone or like, you know, tell the coach so I don't want to tell her. But still being there for them and knowing where that kind of like crosses over I guess. I don't know. It's kinda hard to explain but yeah."

Another skill mentioned by Athlete D was avoiding taking sides during conflict. She explained:

"My group, just like at one little thing, my group talks about making sure the team, like sometimes girls get the way, they feel like they have to pick sides. I don't know why, but it's like, Oh, like I need to defend one person. I need to be disagreeing with the other and it makes it this huge thing. And just knowing, trying to figure out, how you can prevent that from making it way bigger."

Internal Conflict

Finally, athletes mentioned wanting to have more conversations or information on individual conflict or internal conflict, especially for those athletes who play individual sports.

Integration

After analyzing both the quantitative and qualitative data separately, the results from each section were taken together to create a comprehensive analysis. Table 7 illustrates the findings from this research with both quantitative and qualitative support. The first finding was an increase in cognitive flexibility. Student-athletes described the ways in which they learned and were reminded of perspective taking which directly relates to the concept of cognitive flexibility. Next, there was no change in total problem-solving ability as determined by the SPSI-R, however, findings for the subscales of the SPSI-R show some significant change in different areas of problem solving. Positive problem orientation (PPO) and Rational Problem Solving

(RPS) scores both increased, meaning that student-athletes do not feel threatened by conflicts and give deliberate thought to their plans to solve them. Also, Avoidance Style (AS) scores decreased, showing that as a result of this workshop, these student-athletes are less likely to avoid future conflicts. These results are supported by student-athletes commenting on how this workshop allowed them to think through problems with others and saw value in addressing problems early and often. The lack of change in scores of the other two subscales (NPO and ICS) could relate to the critique that examples given in the workshop were not realistic for this group and the notion that student-athletes felt it difficult to connect with examples without a personal connection.

Table 6.

Qualitative Themes

Deductive Coding Themes	Inductive Coding Themes
Reflections and Experiences Qualitative Themes	Design (i.e., grouping, outline, structure) Activities (i.e., type, content) Environment (i.e., people, comfort level)
Learning	Proactive Perspective Self-Care Plan of Attack (i.e., asking coach, potential options)
Skills	Intervene/ Ask for help Purposeful Practice Thoughtful Action
Workshop Improvements	Specific Scenarios "Captain" Skills Individual/Internal Conflict

Table 7.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Integration

Result	Quantitative	Qualitative Theme	Qualitative Data Match
Student-athletes think more creatively about conflict and consider multiple perspectives.	CFI scores increased	Learning (perspective)	"I never really thought about how many different like solutions there can be and different methods of dealing with different things that come up within your team." Athlete A
No change in problem solving	No significant change in SPSI-R:S total scores	Workshop Improvements (specific scenarios)	"She made the examples of the issues and making those more relatable to us and being in high school and high school sports I think would be better for us to connect to." Athlete B
Student-athletes now view problems in a positive way and think through their solutions.	SPSI-R:S subscale scores increased for rational problem solving and positive problem orientation	Skills (purposeful practice)	"I've never really thought of when I'm solving a problem I never really thought about steps or what way to take to solve an issue." Athlete D
Student-Athletes are less likely to avoid future conflicts	SPSI-R:S subscale scores decreased for avoidance style	Learning (proactive)	"I think that when you go onto a problem, now, you can step back and think about what we learned today and just think about how you should feel, what they're feeling too and not just say, Oh like just push it off till later. Really solve that problem as much as you can right then or say, can we talk about this later?" Athlete I
Student athletes did not perceive change in their impulsivity or negative views on problems.	No significant change in SPSI-R:S subscale scores for impulsivity/carelessness style or negative problem orientation	Workshop Improvements (specific scenarios)	"I think they definitely helped, generally, but it's also hard because when it's just a simulation or situation, like it's pretty black and white. But then in person you have people's feelings to deal with and you know them as a person. So I feel like that's hard." Athlete C

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to test and evaluate a newly developed conflict management workshop for high school student-athletes. Effectiveness for the workshop was determined based on levels of change in each individual's cognitive flexibility and problem-solving skills, as well as feedback given during interviews. Results from this research expand upon previous research and knowledge of conflict management, while adding new insight specific to the sport context. This discussion section will first present the findings and connections to past research and continue to discuss the practical implications, strengths and limitations, and future directions.

Connections to Previous Research

Results from this project indicate a change in levels of cognitive flexibility and problem solving. Improved scores from the CFI and SPSI-R:S measures, in addition to the reflections from the participants, provide evidence that this workshop specifically influenced the thought process of each student-athlete when handling a conflict. This also supports earlier work that suggests learning outcomes are multidimensional and various constructs can be measured to assess learning (Kraiger et al.,1993).

Cognitive flexibility scores increased after the workshop. In the interviews, student-athletes explained perspective taking in their own words and discussed its importance. Perspective taking is a part of being cognitively flexible and athletes have shown to have higher levels of cognitive flexibility than non-athletes (Scharfen & Memmert, 2019). Similarly, problem solving scores improved. After the workshop, this group reported being less likely to avoid conflicts in the future and added that being proactive is something they can try with their

conflicts. This shows improvement from past research in which athletes have expressed avoiding conflicts and did not provide concrete strategies they used to solve their problems (Holt et al., 2012).

The overall workshop provided more insight into how high school student-athletes perceive conflict and the ways in which they work through conflict situation. Earlier work conducted by Paradis and colleagues (2014) found that athletes perceive conflict to have cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. Those athletes explained how conflict evoked negative emotions and often contained yelling or other threatening behaviors. The current group of athletes expressed similar thoughts in the focus group interviews. Most notable was the affective component; student-athletes expressed that practicing sample scenarios was helpful but not realistic since no real emotions were involved. This suggests that the emotional component of conflict holds a lot of weight to this age group and should not be overlooked. It has also been noted that relational conflict is more difficult to deal with than task conflict (Holt et al., 2012), especially on female teams. Recognizing the critical role that emotions play in conflict can help coaches, parents, and other sport stakeholders work with their athletes through conflict.

The notion that student-athletes wanted more experience with intervening in conflict relates to the politeness aspect involved with conflict. As noted in Politeness Theory (Brown and Levinson, 1987), the use of different strategies can help an individual be more polite which is helpful during conflict situations. This workshop attempted to emphasize good communication and introduce all the strategies in the dialogue activity. Communication is something to which all individuals should pay attention since it has a huge role in all relationships. This activity showed to be somewhat effective as student-athletes were able to identify problematic language and understand perspective taking. However, there appears to be more work needed in this area for

student-athletes to feel more comfortable when stepping into real-life conflict situations. The inclusion of communication theory did not appear to deter from sport related-conflict management content of the activity, nor did it seem incomprehensible for the high school student-athletes. Incorporating theories from other disciplines into sport could continue to be useful for the development of life skills.

Also, when looking in ways to improve this workshop, it was noted that other "captain skills" (i.e., trust) could help in handling conflict and even in preventing it. Past research has noted that dealing with others is a difficult aspect of being a captain, and it is the role of a captain to develop relationships with teammates (Voelker et al., 2011). As this group was comprised of both formal and informal team leaders, it makes sense that this group would want more instruction and guidance for these leadership skills. Constructs like trust are mentioned in the workshop since they relate to conflict, but they require additional training and practice that extend beyond the scope of conflict management. In the larger context of leader development, conflict management can be developed later and does not need to be emphasized from the start. Conflict management is a specific skill that leaders can develop, but other skills and characteristics should be developed first since they can minimize the potential for conflict.

With workshops being provided for athletes on a variety of topics, it is important that research continues to include evaluation measures. Past research has descriptively analyzed conflict in the sport setting (Mellileau et al., 2013; Paradis et al., 2014; Holt et al., 2012) but there has been little work that is specifically aimed towards interventions and evaluations. The current research aimed to contribute intervention work to the topic of conflict in sport while adding theories from disciplines outside of sport psychology, which is typically the main source for this line of research. Including theory from communication builds to both the previous

research in conflict in sport and also communication, as communication studies have not exclusively researched sport settings.

Unique to this research was also the framework used during the workshop. The Perspective, Proactive, and Self-Care conflict framework is a combination of past research from sport, communication, organizational psychology, and leadership literature. Perspective and Proactive pieces were taken from past research that highlighted how positive conflict outcomes are often the product of individuals taking perspective and also how leaders use a variety of strategies to manage conflict (Baron, 1991; Holmes & Marra, 2004). Self-care was taken from to idea that leaders should be in their best mindset in order to best handle situations. Organizational sport psychology research emphasized the need for self-compassion and overall well-being in order to perform at an individual's best level. Also, interventions aimed toward reducing stress, managing situations that have already occurred, and promoting reflection have been conducted in organizational settings (Neil et al., 2017). The elements within this framework had been explained in their respective disciplines but never combined. This framework is useful in that is allows for individuals to handle every conflict situation they face since the framework focuses on thought process rather than outcome.

Methodological Reflections

With the overall purpose of this study being to test the effectiveness of a workshop, it made sense to follow a program evaluation approach in both designing the workshop and for data collection. This workshop was designed from scratch and used research from multiple disciplines. In order to ensure quality of the workshop, a logic model, a tool used often in program evaluation (Rossi et al., 2018), was created. This chart outlined the activities of the workshop and its intended outcomes for the short-term. Other program evaluation logic models

include short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. It was originally planned to have a two-week follow up questionnaire sent out to add an additional point of data collection. The questionnaire was sent out but only received two complete responses. Because of the limited number of complete responses, the follow-up questionnaire data was excluded from this study and therefore intermediate outcomes were not determined. Even though intermediate and long-term outcomes were not used for this study, it was still extremely helpful to develop the logic model. It helped structure the activities for the workshop and determine which constructs should be measured as well as how data should be collected. Also, now being at the end of the project, this model allows for a logical way to improve the workshop and pinpoint where there could be a disconnect between any of the inputs, activities or outputs that did not lead to the intended outcomes. Upon initial thought, most of the intended outcomes were met for this project, aside from an overall change in problem solving (see Table 8). However, since there were significant changes in subscale scores, this suggests a possible editing of the activities or outputs to explain how those facets specifically allow for more positive thoughts about conflicts, rational problem solving in conflict situations, and less avoiding of conflicts. A logic model provides more structure than a traditional outline and I would recommend this approach for those looking to create new programs or workshops.

This workshop was designed to be given in-person. The activities were planned to be completed in small groups where discussion could easily occur and ideas could be shared. However, this workshop was transitioned to an online format (Sun & Chen, 2016) to follow guidelines set in place during the COVID-19 global pandemic. It was important to keep the workshop design as similar as possible so that purpose and intended outcomes would not change. Zoom was the chosen format for the online workshop and the original activities were kept and

accomplished with the software's various interactive features. Video examples were shown by sharing the instructor's screen; small groups were created using the breakout room feature. The focus group interviews were also completed using the breakout room feature which allowed the instructor to remain out of the discussion. This overall process was completely manageable. This successful online transition provides potential future avenues for more online workshops catered to leader and student-athlete development.

Table 8.

Logic Model with Successful Outcomes in Bold

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Initial Outcomes
• Workshop instructor • High school sport leaders • Workshop space (classroom/online software)	• Interpersonal conflict management activities framed by perspective, proactive, and self-care 4. Perspective – think about other perspectives (dialogue examples) 5. Be proactive – doesn't have to be immediate action, but conflicts can worsen overtime (sample conflict situations from start to finish) 6. Self-care – make sure to take care of yourself (example strategies)	• High school leaders attend the workshop about conflict management where the instructor will share a new framework that can be used when addressing conflict. • Space for practicing new knowledge	• **Explain each aspect of framework: Perspective—ability to take others' perspectives; Proactive – understanding situation, motivation to be proactive; Self-care – knowledge of self-care strategies to help** • **Overall increase in cognitive flexibility in conflict situations** • Overall increase in problem solving ability for conflict situations

Practical Implications

This workshop introduced a new framework through which student-athlete team leaders can begin to think about conflict. With this framework in mind, student-athletes can implement tools from this workshop and their own experience to manage conflicts in their sport experiences.

For Student-Athlete Leaders

In general, workshops are useful for student-athletes to learn various skills and develop as individuals. Working on skills as a team or with familiar faces can facilitate learning and make the overall experience more enjoyable. Student-athletes can look to teammates but also other athletes in their schools to help in conflict situations and discuss potential solutions.

Specific to this workshop, student-athletes can begin to use the Perspective, Proactive, and Self-Care framework to think through conflict situations. This framework allows for student-athletes to handle conflict in ways in which they are comfortable while still considering all the necessary factors (e.g., perspective, timing, place). From this workshop, student-athletes should understand that there is no singular way to handle conflict. Rather, one acts in accordance with all the factors at play for the given situation (i.e., person, place, type of conflict). This workshop did not emphasize a particular strategy or give student-athletes a step-by-step guide for handling conflict. It introduced a new line of thinking that prepares individuals to act accordingly in all conflict situations by understanding perspective, being proactive, and practicing self-care.

For High School Sport Stakeholders

For those involved in high school sport, it is important to understand the issues high school student-athletes face and various ways in which to support athletes. Schools and sport organizations can continue to offer workshops for their student-athletes to improve their life skills and support their development. This could be done in a similar way to the current workshop with student-athletes from different sports, or they could be done within sport teams. Based on this study, conflict management is an area in which student-athletes could use more practice and something they find useful. Sport stakeholders can take the current outline (see Table 3) and run this workshop with their athletes. It would be helpful to find sample conflicts

that are relevant to that specific group of athletes, or even have the athletes generate their own list of conflicts they have seen in the media. While coaches and administrators can be the ones leading this workshop, it is important to note that student-athletes might respond better to someone with less power or someone who is not directly involved in their sport experience. Past research shows that athletes are able to handle their own conflicts and discuss issues with their coaches or administrators only when necessary (Secaras & Erickson, In Progress). Coaches, administrators, and even parents need to understand their roles in conflict situations that concern their athletes. It could be beneficial for these stakeholders to reflect on their own conflict management skills so that they are prepared to support athletes through conflict situations and intervene when needed.

Strengths

The process of this project required much of thought and careful decision making from the beginning. This workshop was designed based on past research conducted by the main researcher (Secaras & Erickson, In Progress). This was done so that the content of the workshop matched the audience and would be as useful as it could be for that specific group. The results from the first study indicated that high school student-athletes think about a variety of factors when addressing conflict situations. Those student-athletes also explained reasons as to why they might hesitate in a conflict situation. With all this in mind, the content of the workshop was designed to match this complex thought process and address those hesitations. Challenging participants to perspective take and think proactively fit for this age group and, as seen in the qualitative results, resonated with the group. The role play activity, though critiqued the most, has been utilized in other workshops with this age group and therefore is familiar.

The inclusion of multiple disciplines and a novel framework are also strengths of this study. Communication as a discipline offers many different theories that help explain interpersonal interactions, and for this particular study, Politeness Theory best illustrated ways to be successful in conflict management. The language and communication styles used in a conflict situation can make a difference in how the interaction ends and with this key factor in mind, the perspective, proactive, and self-care framework was created. As mentioned earlier, this framework, guided by communication practices and theory, prepares individuals for all types of conflict situations and helps facilitate positive outcomes by highlighting a need for self-care.

Another strength of this workshop was its flexible design. This workshop was transitioned to an online format to follow guidelines set in place during the COVID-19 global pandemic. When transitioning into an online format, it was important to keep the integrity of the workshop and keep the activities as similar as possible to the in-person style. This was accomplished by using various features on the online program, such as breakout rooms and screensharing, for every activity. Based on the feedback from this workshop, the activities were still effective and fulfilled their purpose. The online format of this workshop offers more benefits than costs. In the brief duration of the workshop (60 minutes), participants still reported a change in cognitive flexibility and aspects of problem solving. The success of this workshop in the online format shows promise for future dissemination and deliverance of effective conflict management skill-building for high school student athletes.

Limitations

This study was limited through results being based on only one implementation of the workshop. Results indicate a range from small to large degree of change based on the effect size, but these results could be strengthened with feedback from multiple workshops. Also, in terms of

study design, this degree of change was experienced only in the experimental group. This study did not have a control or comparison group to determine differences in that way which limits this study compared to a standardized randomized control trial. This study intended on using data from a follow up survey to provide more evidence for a degree of change. The follow-up survey yielded only two responses therefore that data was omitted from the research and is another limitation to this study. Because of the lack of responses, the study could not determine intermediate-term outcomes from the workshop which would have helped fully understand its degree of change.

Finally, there are limitations to this study centering around the participant group. The group was comprised of all female student-athletes. Understanding that males and females have shown to handle conflicts differently (Sullivan, 2004), even in a sport setting, it would be beneficial to run this workshop with male student-athletes to have a more complete understanding of the effects of this workshop. In addition, with this group attending the same high school, this sample is part of a population with similar socioeconomic status and location. Conflicts that occur within an area can stem from differences in race, ethnicity, wealth, and other social identities. Having a sample that share similar characteristics could affect thoughts, behaviors, and feelings about conflict and their conflict management skills.

Future Directions

This workshop built upon previous work with leadership development and conflict management skills. These two areas continue to overlap as conflict exists in all settings and is especially useful for leaders. In order to best develop conflict management skills amongst leaders, future research should continue to provide content in workshops that is relevant and

relatable for the audience. Content should include cognitive, behavioral, and affective components to get a complete view of conflict.

In addition, workshops can be strengthened by examining the ways in which they are implemented into the appropriate contexts. Relevant to this study, it would be helpful to have information that could explain the best ways to introduce this workshop into the high school sport setting. For example, having a better understanding of scheduling, resources available, etc. Also, since this workshop has already been outlined and has complete resources, future research could look toward designing a training program for coaches or sport administrators so that they are able to conduct the workshop. This would allow for the content of this workshop to reach more high school sport leaders and also prepare coaches and administrators to handle conflict in their own contexts.

Future research could expand on this current project by focusing on implementing this workshop, or others that have been designed, into the appropriate contexts. Future studies could also look to long-term effects of workshops on athletes to see what information was retained.

Finally, future sport research can begin to implement survey measures and theories from other domains to collect data on various constructs. For example, with this study, using Politeness Theory from communication research to guide some of the workshop activities and measuring cognitive flexibility, a construct often related to neuroscience, allowed for a nuanced view of conflict management that is specific to student athletes. By including other measures into sport research, each study gains depth and rigor. This could be especially useful for examining life skills in sport and constructs in youth development.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Quantitative Measure Edits

Cognitive Flexibility Measure:

1. I can communicate an idea **about conflict** in many different ways.
2. I avoid new and unusual **conflict** situations. (R)
3. I feel like I never get to make decisions **as a captain**. (R)
4. I can find workable solutions to seemingly unsolvable **conflicts**.
5. I seldom have choices when deciding how to behave **as a captain**. (R)
6. **As a captain**, I am willing to work at creative solutions to problems.
7. In any given **conflict** situation, I am able to act appropriately.
8. My behavior **during a conflict situation** is a result of conscious decisions that I make.
9. I have many possible ways of behaving in any given **conflict** situation.
10. I have difficulty using my knowledge **learned from this workshop** in real life situations. (R)
11. I am willing to listen and consider alternatives for handling a **conflict**.
12. **After this workshop**, I have the self-confidence necessary to try different ways of behaving **in a conflict situation**.

Problem solving measure:

1. I feel threatened and afraid when I have an important **conflict** to solve.
2. When making decisions **about a conflict situation**, I do not evaluate all of my options carefully enough.
3. I feel nervous and unsure of myself when I have an important decision to make **about a conflict I am having**
4. When my first efforts to **resolve a conflict** fail, I know if I persist and do not give up too easily, I will be able to eventually find a good solution.
5. When I have a **conflict**, I try to see it as a challenge, or opportunity to benefit in some positive way from having the problem
6. I wait to see if a **conflict** will resolve itself first, before trying to solve it myself.
7. When my first efforts to solve a **conflict** fail, I get very frustrated.
8. When I am faced with a difficult **conflict**, I doubt that I will be able to solve it on my own no matter how hard I try
9. Whenever I have a **conflict**, I believe it can be solved.
10. I go out of my way to avoid having to deal with **conflicts** in my life
11. Difficult **conflicts** make me very upset
12. When I have a decision to make **in a conflict situation**, I try to predict the positive and the negative consequences of each option
13. When **conflicts** occur in my life, I like to deal with them as soon as possible
14. When I am trying to solve a **conflict**, I go with the first good idea that comes to mind
15. When I am faced with a difficult **conflict**, I believe that I will be able to solve it on my own if I try hard enough
16. When I have a **conflict** to solve, one of the first things I do is get as many facts about the **conflict** as possible
17. When a **conflict** occurs in my life, I put off trying to solve it for as long as possible
18. I spend more time avoiding my **conflicts** than solving them

19. Before I try to **resolve a conflict**, I set a specific goal so that I know exactly what I have to accomplish
20. When I have a decision to make **about a conflict situation**, I do not take the time to consider the pros and cons of each option
21. After carrying out a solution to a **conflict**, I try to evaluate as carefully as possible how much the situation has changed for the better
22. I put off solving **conflicts** until it is too late to do anything about them
23. When I am trying to solve a **conflict**, I think of as many options as possible until I cannot come up with any more ideas
24. When making decisions **about a conflict**, I go with my "gut feeling" without thinking too much about the consequences of each option
25. I am too impulsive when it comes to making decisions

Note. The bold text indicates changes that have been made to fit the conflict management context.

APPENDIX B: Retrospective Post-Test for Cognitive Flexibility

The following pages will have questions that have you evaluate your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors about conflict. Please read the directions carefully and try to answer all the questions.

The following statements deal with your beliefs and feelings about your own behavior. Read each statement and respond by clicking the circle that best represents your agreement with each statement.

BEFORE the workshop							**AFTER** the workshop					
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree		strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	I can communicate an idea about conflict in many different ways.	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	I avoid new and unusual conflict situations.	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	I feel like I never get to make decisions as a team leader.	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	I can find workable solutions to seemingly unsolvable conflicts.	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	I seldom have choices when deciding how to behave as a team leader.	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	As a team leader, I am willing to work at creative solutions to problems.	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	In any given conflict situation, I am able to act appropriately.	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	My behavior during a conflict situation is a result of conscious decisions that I make.	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	I have many possible ways of behaving in any given conflict situation.	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	I have difficulty using my knowledge learned from this workshop in real life situations.	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	I am willing to listen and consider alternatives for handling a conflict.	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	I have the self-confidence necessary to try different ways of behaving in a conflict situation.	○	○	○	○	○	○

APPENDIX C: Retrospective Post-Test for Problem Solving

Please read each statement carefully and click one of the circles below that best shows how much the statement is true of you.

BEFORE the workshop						**AFTER** the workshop				
Not at all true of me	Slightly true of me	Moderately true of me	Very true of me	Extremely true of me		Not at all true of me	Slightly true of me	Moderately true of me	Very true of me	Extremely true of me
O	O	O	O	O	I feel threatened and afraid when I have an important conflict to solve.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	When making decisions about a conflict situation, I do not evaluate all of my options carefully enough.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	I feel nervous and unsure of myself when I have an important decision to make about a conflict I am having.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	When my first efforts to resolve a conflict fail, I know if I persist and do not give up too easily, I will be able to eventually find a good solution.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	When I have a conflict, I try to see it as a challenge, or opportunity to benefit in some positive way from having the problem,	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	I wait to see if a conflict will resolve itself first, before trying to solve it myself.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	When my first efforts to solve a conflict fail, I get very frustrated.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	When I am faced with a difficult conflict, I doubt that I will be able to solve it on my own no matter how hard I try.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	Whenever I have a conflict, I believe it can be solved.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	I go out of my way to avoid having to deal with conflicts in my life.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	Difficult conflicts make me very upset.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	When I have a decision to make in a conflict situation, I try to predict the positive and the negative consequences of each option.	O	O	O	O	O

Please read each statement carefully and click one of the circles below that best shows how much the statement is true of you.

BEFORE the workshop						**AFTER** the workshop				
Not at all true of me	Slightly true of me	Moderately true of me	Very true of me	Extremely true of me		Not at all true of me	Slightly true of me	Moderately true of me	Very true of me	Extremely true of me
O	O	O	O	O	When conflicts occur in my life, I like to deal with them as soon as possible.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	When I am trying to solve a conflict, I go with the first good idea that comes to mind.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	When I am faced with a difficult conflict, I believe that I will be able to solve it on my own if I try hard enough.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	When I have a conflict to solve, one of the first things I do is get as many facts about the conflict as possible.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	When a conflict occurs in my life, I put off trying to solve it for as long as possible.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	I spend more time avoiding my conflicts than solving them.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	Before I try to resolve a conflict, I set a specific goal so that I know exactly what I have to accomplish.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	When I have a decision to make about a conflict situation, I do not take the time to consider the pros and cons of each option.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	After carrying out a solution to a conflict, I try to evaluate as carefully as possible how much the situation has changed for the better.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	I put off solving conflicts until it is too late to do anything about them.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	When I am trying to solve a conflict, I think of as many options as possible until I cannot come up with any more ideas.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	When making decisions about a conflict, I go with my "gut feeling" without thinking too much about the consequences of each option.	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	I am too impulsive when it comes to making decisions.	O	O	O	O	O

APPENDIX D: Focus Group Interview Guide

(1) Overall Reflections and Experiences

- Tell me about your experience in this workshop today.
- What parts/elements (if any) did you most enjoy?
- What parts/elements (if any) did you least enjoy?

(2) Quality Check for Quantitative Data:

Knowledge:

- Can you tell me about the new knowledge you gained (or not) from the workshop today?
- Are there topics you felt were not included in the workshop but should have been?

Skills:

- How did the workshop activities help (or not help) your problem-solving skills?
- Can you share any new strategies or plans you might use going forward in conflict situations?

Motivation:

- Do you think it is important to handle conflict on teams? Even if it's not directly related to the sport?

(3) Workshop Improvements:

- What activities specifically, if anything, did you find useful about this workshop?
- What activities could be improved?
- Any other comments/suggestions?

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