Coaching Life Skills Through Sport

The Honors Program
Senior Capstone Project
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of my senior capstone project is to better understand how a coach's philosophy may affect the transferability of life skills onto their athletes. Effective coaches have been found to look beyond the idea of winning or losing and have a propensity to develop coaching models based off of improving life skills within an athlete. Life skills are defined by the literature as behavioral, cognitive, intrapersonal or interpersonal skills that enable development in an individual and can be transferred to non-sport settings. There is a gap in the literature regarding which contextual factors, such as a coach's years of experience, training facilities, or outside competition, are linked to the characteristics of a coach's ability, as well as a coach's philosophy, in imparting life skills to youth athletes. This study examined the impact of both a coach's perceived role and expectations regarding *how* to effectively coach, and their coaching values/philosophy on influencing the development of life skills within their athletes. This data was collected through semi-constructed interviews with five female coaches and six male coaches, including a corresponding athlete to each coach. It was found through these interviews which life skills are perceived as most impactful to their athletes, both in sport and in life. Specific techniques coaches can use to influence their athletes in sport and beyond are recommended.

INTRODUCTION

The development of life skills within athletes has been a topic of discussion within sports. A coach's ability to instill life skills in athletes, taking them beyond the broader scope of the sport, can extend their influence, resulting in more positive habits and behaviors for adolescence athletes (Trottier & Robitaille, 2014). The central question of this study is to determine how and why some coaches perceive their role to extend beyond the sport itself, and through leadership and stated values build competencies that can impact youth athletes through the development of life skills. This is highly important because little research has been done in this area to show a connection to specific leadership styles, values and tactics in developing life skills in an athlete. In hopes, this will give an explanation of a coach's philosophy and how it connects to the growth of positive habits and behaviors within an athlete.

A combination of content analysis and semi-structured interviews will be used to explore both the coaches' and athletes' perspectives on the impact of sport participation on areas that move beyond the sport itself. Additionally, while observing the impact coaches can have on individuals, leadership tactics and coaching philosophies will be analyzed in this study as a guideline to collect, synthesize and apply information to help coaches improve their personal abilities, expectations, and value statements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sport is predominately an activity that attracts a large number of youth participants that are generally motivated to participated in the sport, creating a viable setting to teach life skills (Camiré, Trudel, Forneris, 2012; Bernard, Trudel, & Camiré, 2013; Trottier & Robitaille, 2014). Research studies have determined athletics as a popular practice that involves numerous internal and external factors that form countless opportunities to foster development in life skills and values for a youth's success in future endeavors (Forneris, Camiré, & Trudel, 2012). Youth sports begins as early four years of age. Adolescences typically marks the end of youth sports which is noted by the age of eighteen, or by the end of the athlete's high school career (Ogden, Carroll, Kit, & Flegal, 2014). There is little known about life skills development through sport. Identifying coaching styles and philosophies that teach the life skills most needed by young athletes can help improve coaching effectiveness for the future of sport and is paramount to this research study (Hardcastle, Tye, Glassey, & Hagger, 2015).

Life skills are defined by many as behavioral, cognitive, and intrapersonal or interpersonal skills that enable development and can be transferred to non-sport settings (Hardcastle et. al, 2015; Camiré et al., 2012; Forneris et al., 2012). Unfortunately, there is a gap in the literature when attempting to identify what factors play a role in positive coaching effects and the development of life skills (Super, Hermens, Verkooijen, & Koelen, 2014; Hardcastle et. al, 2015). Many researchers accept that automatically assuming sports or athletics generate positive outcomes is a complex matter. Determining which coaching philosophies impart life skills is essential to establishing what a positive life skill entails. There is lack of agreement in the research as to which life skills are most often taught, and often depend on the experience of an athlete, which is not always positive (Camiré et al., 2012; Bernard et al., 2013; Trottier & Robitaille, 2014). Alternatively, several research studies have shown that sport is associated with the empowerment of psychological well-being, positive development, and higher academic achievement (Norman, 2012; Walinga, 2012).

Positive coaching practices have been similarly defined by many researchers as an approach to grow athletes through the process of attaining continuous knowledge from a coach that will enhance problem-solving approaches, extend opportunities for an athlete, and improve a youth's well-being well after the coaching has been completed (Coakley, 2011; Denison & Avner, 2011; Passmore & Oades, 2014). Common observations of tactics used in positive coaching mainly stem from the use of an individualized, holistic, and athlete-centered approach (Camiré et. al, 2012; Vella, Oades, & Crowe, 2013; Trottier & Robitaille, 2014). Goal setting and the display of mission statements are also central practices for positive development given the result that athletes are more aware of what is expected of them (Bernard et al., 2013; Fleet, Gould, Griffes, & Laure, 2013). Positive coaching resonates with models of leadership from Kouzes and Posner (2007) as they demonstrate the five practices of exemplary leadership model throughout their book, *The Leadership Challenge*. This model exhibits the application of modeling the way, inspiring a vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart, which summarizes the concepts of positive coaching. Alternatively, negative coaching can consist of common practices such as an authoritarian leadership that are found to often produce undesirable effects such as anxiety, aggression, or stress (Fleet et al., 2013).

The development of life skills through participation in sport can be assessed by examining three objective categories which are critical for evaluating the potential positive outcomes of developing and understanding a coach's personal philosophy. These categories include: (a) understanding a coach's perceived role and expectations, (b) implementing focus on the development of coaching life skills, and (c) potential gender differences in ability.

Understanding a coach's perceived role and expectations

According to recent research on sports development programs, it is suggested that life skills, values, and internal and external factors should be a central focus of a coach's approach towards their athletes on top of other elements of sports (Forneris et al., 2012). Further background regarding this approach involves the importance of youth sports being a voluntary and desired activity in order for this method of coaching to have a positive impact on the athlete. The tactic that promotes and encourages this voluntary behavior includes having external factors, such as parents, family, or friends, that are supportive towards the athlete's endeavors, which leads to the development of positive internal factors, or strong core desires (Forneris et al., 2012). To help further improve an athlete's internal factors, Camiré et al. (2012) and a literature review completed by Ehrenworth, Minor, Federman, Jennings, Messer, and McCloud (2015) indicate that mission statements developed by a coach play an important role in the communication of values and expectations of an athlete. If athletes are aware of the mission statements and a coach's expectations to develop skills effectively, it will further enhance an athlete's perceived positive experiences overall. Camiré et al. (2012) further suggests that model coaches align their philosophies with a written mission statement supporting outside responsibilities, such as academics or other extracurricular activities. A comparative sports psychology study done by Fleet et al. (2013) concurs with this approach and states that athletes must know what is expected of them. In their study, one out of the twelve interviewed coaches categorized as effective, recognized that, if an athlete can understand and follow the mission statement, it will become a part of their character (Fleet et al., 2013). This study further claims that ineffective coaches simply assume that their coaching style is effective, and that is how the athlete internalizes life lessons. More specifically, it was found that athletes drop out of athletics because of authoritarian coaching styles. Furthermore, ineffective coaches can become impatient and are drawn towards a more aggressive style. Fleet et al. (2013) speculate that this authoritarian style of coaching relates to a

lack of confidence in adopting positive strategies, therefore favoring the coaching style coaches themselves were once taught by – although, no findings came to a conclusive result. Lastly, the researchers found that when coaches were not aware of the athlete's interests outside of sport, or failed to align their goals with that of a mission statement, they were not effectively communicating with their athletes, contributing to negative youth athlete development (Fleet et al., 2013).

Trottier & Robitaille (2014) examined the impact of effective coaching philosophies in a qualitative study with twenty-four coaches using a holistic, athlete-centered approach. It was concluded that the coach, who considered the demands of competitive sport and how it affects an athlete in exceeding and pushing themselves further in development, places more importance on both personal and athletic development in order to teach life skills. Studies have shown that by teaching life skills, a coach must adopt a philosophy that emphasizes the development of the person within a specific method (Trottier & Robitaille, 2014). In a similar study, Camiré et al. (2012) found that "well established coaching philosophies that were athlete-centered and geared toward using sport as a tool for development are crucial elements in a coach's repertoire" (p. 256).

Vella et al. (2013) discussed further that a coach's transformational leadership behavior, defined simply as a form of leadership that occurs when leaders widen the interest of those they lead, provides an important foundation for the holistic development of athletes and successful youth sports context and programs. However, to date, none of the current studies referenced could conclusively address which contextual factors, such as administrative policy or parental and peer influences, are linked to a coach's propensity to develop a coaching philosophy or mission statement, or to focus on teaching life skills, in the process of developing their young athletes.

Implementing focus on the development of coaching life skills

A coach can develop life skills in athletes by setting clear and visible values and goals for themselves as a coach, each individual athlete, and the team as a whole (Bernard et al., 2013; Vella et al., 2013; Fleet et al., 2013). Setting goals will create positive development, maturation, and the ability to hold athletes responsible for their actions (Bernard et al., 2013). Promoting goal setting and emphasizing the link between sport and life provides positive development in youth. Athletes can develop goals representing value and direction as a student, a human being, and a competitor, making goal setting an important skill in all aspects of a player's life (Bernard et al., 2013).

According to a parent in Bernard et al. (2013) case study, an approach towards coaching life skills "teaches athletes how it is in real life and how to set and attain goals. Goals make them more mature and be more responsible" (p.196). Fleet et al. (2013) supported this conclusion, emphasizing from their own research that when youth felt that their coach related sport lessons to life, had a good rapport with them, and provided more competition strategies and goal setting, they reported a higher emotional regulation, cognitive skills, feedback, and prosocial norms. A study done by Arnold, Fletcher, and Daniels (2013) for the School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, concluded further that in order to optimize levels of control within athletes, coaches should give more control and discretion to their athletes by setting clear goals and role clarification.

Giving feedback on both an athlete and coach's set goals can enhance collaboration and relationships (Ehrenworth et al., 2015). Vella et al. (2013) research on positive youth development through sports found that high quality coach-athlete relationship behavior results in an increase of an athlete's perceived competence and self-esteem, which can lead to positive developmental outcomes of initiative, goal setting, and identity reflection. Armour, Sandford, and Duncombe (2013) agree that positive relationships are important, and state that a key element in effecting positive behavior is focusing on personal development by promoting positive relationships between athletes. There is, however, a gap in the literature regarding an explanation as to why some coaches follow a desired philosophy to create a strong relationship with their athletes and understand the impact of coaching life skills, while other coaches believe their only responsibility is to develop youth strictly as athletic players.

Potential gender differences in ability

Sport has historically highlighted men's coaching ability and performance above women's potential importance in sport (Norman, 2013). A study conducted by Jennifer Walinga (2012), focused research on women coaches and how athletics is calling for more collaboration, interdependence, and participation from women. Collaborative and interdependent approaches to coaching are seen to come more naturally to women. Walinga (2012) states women leaders are more democratic and participative in their approach than males, who lean towards autocratic, command, and control models of leadership. The qualities highlighted in these studies that contribute to why the representation of women in sport should be developed showcase the reasons why women are perceived as being more effective, and can be a positive figure for athletes.

Women have demonstrated the ability to create collaborative environments, and to cope with the pressured, stressful environment of coaching more effectively than men (Norman, 2013; Walinga, 2012). These types of characteristics in women allow them to be more participative and aware of their athletes and can help influence the development of life skills. Research has summarized that being able to multitask, investing more emotion in their coaching styles, having empathy, and being effective communicators plays an important role in improving the standard of coaching, and reflects the unique assets of women, which in turn are qualities and characteristics that foster the development of life skills (Norman, 2013; Post, 2015). On the contrary, male coaches as compared to female coaches try to control their athletes much more, therefore leading to less cohesion (Walinga, 2012; Post, 2015).

Further, while women tend to have the potential to influence athletes at a more individualistic and in depth level than men that produces greater improvements in an athlete's life, there is a dearth of research that explains why there remains a lack of significant numbers of female coaches in sport (Norman, 2012). Research has also not established in which situations female coaches are more effectively able to apply their leadership strategies and advantages in enhancing the development of life skills towards their athletes (Camiré et al., 2012; Norman, 2013; Post, 2015). The literature suggests further investigation is warranted to determine if there is a gender difference in effective coaching practices, and/or if there is a shared, common approach by female coaches.

In summary, the literature has identified and defined the term "life skills" that result from both specific approaches to coaching and the development of a coaching philosophy. However, which specific coaching behaviors and leadership styles should be implemented into sports practice to further develop life skills of young athletes, and the context by which to enhance such coaching methods, has yet to be fully explored. The literature suggests to follow a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research when examining this topic further, and recommends that future research studies include athletes, coaches, parents, and administrators to gain the full perspective of how life skills are influenced by sport and leadership. More studies are needed in order to develop strategies that coaches can use to develop life skills in sport, including the importance of goal setting and feedback. A large gap was found within the literature in differentiating which contextual factors are linked to the characteristics of a coach's ability and philosophy in teaching

life skills to youth athletes. Further research suggests to it is necessary to provide a stronger relationship between a coach's philosophies and what athletes are truly learning from them. Lastly, it is possible that gender differences play a role in the development of life skills, given that research has found female coaches appear to have the ability to cope under pressure, project strong empathy, and possess different levels of emotional capacity than males. However, further research is needed to determine if women have a common coaching approach that enhances these abilities and teaches life skills. This most significant discovery found through this literature review includes the ideology that a coach's responsibility is more than teaching technical skills, and effective coaches tend to develop their own personal model and philosophies in the transferability of life skills. The gap needing to be filled is why every coach is not emerging off of this positive attitude in developing their athletes to a further extent.

In addition to the literature review, to further explore the relationship between coaching styles, expectations, and a coaching philosophy on the development of life skills of young athletes, a content analysis including a thorough textual examination of past and present coaches' philosophies was conducted. This examination identified common practices, mission statements, and coaching methods of coaches who are known to develop life skills in their athletes. This was further compared to those coaches who do not possess the same reputation for life skill development outcomes. Table 1 exhibits the coaches researched.

Table 1 – Established Coaches Researched

Coach	Experience in Coaching	Sport/Gender
Geno Auriemma	40 years	Basketball/Female
Bill Bowerman	24 years	Track and Field/Male
Pete Caroll	45 years	Football/Male
Tony Dungy	37 years	Football/Male
Phil Jackson	44 years	Basketball/Male
Marta Karolyi	50 years	Gymnastics/Female
Mike Krzyzewski	42 years	Basketball/Male
Gregg Popovich	45 years	Basketball/Male
Pat Summit	38 years	Basketball/Female
John Wooden	29 years	Basketball/Male

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

From this literature review, further research would allow for the opportunity to create full potential and advantage for participation in sports for both athletes and coaches, while looking at how life skills can be improved with effective coaching. To expand this field of research, the questions that are answered throughout this study include:

1.) How can a coach's perceived responsibility of teaching beyond technical skills influence coaches in developing their own personal model and philosophies in the transferability of life skills?
2.) In what contexts can more coaches be persuaded to understand the importance of attaining a certain philosophy in teaching life skills, in addition to having them adapt to that model?
3.) Does gender influence a coach's method of coaching that includes the development of life skills?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A total of 22 participants (11 coaches, 11 athletes) voluntarily agreed to participate in this study. Participants were selected through a convenience sample by personal references, or by recommendations from the personal references. The semi-structured interviews were comprised of five female coaches and six male coaches, ranging in experience from five to twenty-five years of coaching. A corresponding athlete (6 female, 5 male) was chosen by each coach to participate in this study in order to gain a broad view of the coach's ability, as the literature suggests this for a more robust analysis. The athletes ranged in experience with their coach from six months to 12 years. Coaches and athletes were involved in mainly individual sports with a few mentioned team participants in a selection of different youth sports. Tables 2 presents the coaches and athletes interviewed in this study.

Table 2 – Coach and Athlete Participants

Participant ID	Coach Sex	Experience in Coaching	Sport/Gender
Coach #1	Female	11 years	Running (G)
Coach #2	Female	20 years	Gymnastics (G)
Coach #3	Female	4 years	Track and Field (B/G)

Coach #4	Female	14 years	Dance (G)
Coach #5	Female	25 years	Horse Back Riding & Speed Skating (B/G)
Coach #6	Male	30 years	Soccer & Track and Field (B/G)
Coach #7	Male	8 years	Basketball & Track and Field
Coach #8	Male	25 years	Tennis (B/G)
Coach #9	Male	37 years	Track and Field (B/G)
Coach #10	Male	39 years	Track and Field (B/G)
Coach #11	Male	30 years	Field Hockey (G)

Participant ID	Athlete Sex	Experience with the Coach	Corresponding Coach
Athlete #1	Female	2 years	Coach #1
Athlete #2	Female	12 years	Coach #2
Athlete #3	Male	3 years	Coach #3
Athlete #4	Female	6 months	Coach #5
Athlete #5	Male	11 years	Coach #6
Athlete #6	Male	12 years	Coach #7
Athlete #7	Female	4 years	Coach #8
Athlete #8	Male	3 years	Coach #9
Athlete #9	Female	6 years	Coach #10
Athlete #10	Male	3 years	Coach #10
Athlete #11	Female	4 years	Coach #11

Procedure

All participants were interviewed either on the phone or in person with the full conversation tape recorded for the researchers to review for analysis. The interviews with the coaches lasted on average between 30 and 60 minutes which allowed for the participants to offer deep contextual details about their experiences, coaching practices and coaching methods. Male and female coaches were asked similar questions within their experiences, such as why they wanted to be a coach, and how they perceive their athletes. The athlete interviews lasted on average between 20 and 35 minutes and allowed the opportunity to gain a full perspective on the coach's ability. The athletes were asked questions based off of their experience in sports, as well as their expectations and motivation for sport.

Interview Guides

A qualitative approach was used to encourage the interviewees to tell their stories and inspire a conversation with coaches rather than on coaches, comparable to the work of Leanne Norman (2012) and Super et al. (2014). Through these interviews, a grounded theory approach was used

by encoding the coaches' and athletes' responses, and identifying reoccurring themes based on the responses. Table 3 represents sample questions that were asked to each group in order to explore the research questions. The sample questions were adapted mainly from Camiré et al. (2012) and Trottier & Robitaille (2014) in suggestion for further research. More questions were gleaned throughout the interviews from the initial content analysis of secondary research.

Table 3 – Sample Interview Questions

Coaches	Athletes
1. What were your experiences when participating in sport as a youth? 2. What do you think your responsibility is as a coach? 3. How do you perceive your athletes?	1. What do you like most about participating in sports? 2. Does your coach set any expectations for you as an athlete? 3. Did your coach try to motivate you in a specific way? How?

Data Analysis

All 22 interviews were transcribed verbatim resulting in a total of 102 single-spaced pages of text. The transcriptions were read by the first author on several occasions to reveal preliminary themes. Once the data were organized, the second author with extensive experience in qualitative research read and reviewed the content separately to determine other emerging themes. Collectively, both authors determined the most frequently stated and therefor most important themes found throughout the text. Additionally, multiple themes were combined to create a larger, overarching theme relevant to this study. Lastly, quotes were pulled from the collection of transcripts to provide an example for each theme present. Table 4 was created to present the higher-order categories and themes found in this study.

Table 4 – Overarching Themes and Examples

Category	Theme	Quote
1. A coaches relatability	1. Coaches were able to relate to their athlete in some aspect	Our coaches actually participate in every work out with the girls so they are actively coaching and working out and being models and leaders for best
	2. Relatability increases an athletes trust in the training sessions	If I know what I am doing and how it will affect my body, it definitely gives me a little more confidence and a little more...makes the coach seem a little more trustworthy. (Athlete #5)
	3. Communication between a coach and athlete increases with relatability	If you needed to talk to him or about anything, he has that listening ear. You know he is older so he has a lot more advice and he has been through a lot.
	4. A coach's philosophy develops from past experiences from when they were an athlete	My coaching style is kind of a hybrid of all of the coaches I had and as I did some things by trial and error. (Coach #10)
2. A coach and athletes connection	1. An athlete needs the role model of a coach in their life	A lot of them don't really have a positive adult to talk to if that makes since, so you kind of plays both parts there. (Coach #3)
	2. The need for a coach to connect with their athletes is reflective of their core coaching values	People have come to me for a reason and my job is to find out what that reason is and use that as motivation to push those athletes more and more
	3. Athletes appreciate a coach's ability to relate to them on a personal level both inside and outside of the sport, increasing an athletes' motivation towards sport and life	He was kind of like a dad figure, big brother slash, maybe a fun uncle outside of track. (Athlete #10)
3. A coach's belief in their athlete's potential	1. Coaches feel it is their primary role to put athletes in the position to be successful opposed to simply winning or lossing	Yeah we want to win. I don't want to say that is not important at some point, it certainly is a little bit but you want to just be the best that you can be. (Coach #10)
	2. Coaches stress the importance of incremental achievements	I am all about the little wins for the athlete. It is not about winning overall, but if I see an improvement in an athlete that they might even not be extremely
	3. Incremental achievements helps build confidence within an athlete	It's the little details that make up the big picture. You know how you have the mosaic picture that is made up of little tiny pictures? That is what I see a big picture is like. You can't see that big picture unless you put the little details in there and you can't overlook that stuff. It is the little details that make up the big picture. (Coach #1)
	4. A coach's ability to see an athletes potential helps the coach and athlete set goals and expectations	He saw my potential and anytime that I wasn't reaching my potential, he'd call me out on it and it would keep me in check. (Athlete #5)
4. Creating positive environments	1. Coaches have a practical approach to coaching while keeping expectations high, but understand that there are outside factors that may affect performance	I wouldn't make them do the class until they were ready mentally. We would sit down, observe for a little bit until they felt better, or they would go home early. I wouldn't force them to take the class because if they are unhappy doing it, then what's the point? (Coach #4)
	2. Coaches who kept a positive environment had more athletes open to try new experiences	I think the kids are very open to doing new and difficult things. If you approach it in sort of a light and fun way. (Coach #5)
	3. Coaches who encouraged sportsmanship made the athletes feel better about themselves and their participation in sport	Compliment the other player on how well they played, or just socialize that because you never know what type of networking you can get or you never know what type of friendship you can make and again, in my opinion, that is more important than beating somebody in a match. (Coach #3)
	4. A positive environment motivates athletes to continue putting their best effort in	We respected him so much that we wanted to give him nothing more than the best. So we would always be able to muster up whatever energy we had left.

RESULTS

The results are presented in four sections. The first section describes the relatability factor of a coach to their athlete. The second section describes how coaches foster connections with their players. The third section explains a coach's belief on their athlete's potential. The fourth section describes how coaches build a positive environment for their athletes.

Relatability

The results revealed that the coaches who participated in sports as a youth, or had extended experience in the sport were more likely to relate to an athlete, building trust and increased compliance to the coach's philosophy and the training sessions. Eight coaches discussed how they have been able to relate to their athlete in some capacity. The following quotes outline this connection:

> *I am able to relate to them by being able to say, "Hey you know what. I have been in your shoes. I know what it's like to have a four-hour practice and know in the back your head you have all this homework or a big test to study for. But I've been there, I made it through it and it was worth it." (Coach #2)*

> *I have never given an athlete a workout that I have never done myself. When we are doing workouts, I know exactly how you are going to feel in the sixth rep, on the tenth rep, on the twelve rep because I have done the workout myself and I could tell you exactly why we are doing this workout and what you are going to get out of it. (Coach #10)*

These statements reflect how the relatability factor has the potential to increase the trust an athlete has towards training sessions and the coach overall. Athletes respond well to understanding how the coach has had experience in the field and can relate to the feelings a given athlete may be having during training sessions or competition. The athletes have exhibited how this relatability factor affects their mentality when participating in sport. Athletes responded well with the impact of being able to relate to their coach. The following statements describe the attitudes expressed by the athletes:

He has all of these catch phrases and sayings and he was a track athlete himself so he was able to put down a lot of his own personal experiences that really helped you connect and be like, ok he did it. He understands how it works and he's not just making up a story here or some quotes. He actually was an athlete himself. (Athlete #9)

I think it is really cool because she does this herself. She knows it's not easy. Running can hurt, but I definitely trust her workouts and training. … She has done all of this before. When you are tired, she has been like that before too. It's not her just watching someone run. (Athlete #3)

In addition to an increase in trust between a coach and their athletes, communication increases with relatability. This finding was not surprising because it gives a coach and their athlete more to talk about with each other. Additionally, they can compare ideas which gives athletes the opportunity to ask questions. This therefore allows for communication to deepen, forming a stronger connection between a coach and an athlete. The following quotes from three different athletes provide a deeper understand of how this factor affects an athlete:

If you needed to talk to him or about anything, he has that listening ear. You know he is older so he has a lot more advice and he has been through a lot. So just life period. (Athlete #3)

[Coach #10] was able to read people and see what their trigger points were to get the most out of them. It got to the point where you had such a trust factor with him in how he prepared that you didn't want to let him down, never mind yourself for a workout. So, you were working out 100% all the time. He brought that approach and made you focus on your workouts (Athlete #10)

It's nice to have someone that understands because if I'm struggling with something, he can say well next time, you should work on, meeting the girl faster, or positioning your body a certain way, or not focusing on the other team, but focusing on yourself. (Athlete #11)

As these statements illustrate, all of the athletes found that relatability increased trust, communication, and the overall connection between a coach and an athlete. In addition to these findings, the coaches showcased that their past experiences helped influence their philosophy and style of coaching. Despite the variances in experience between coaches, each coach stated how having past experiences in sport developed part of their coaching philosophy and their approach to training with youth athletes. The following quote strongly illustrates this process for one specific coach:

> *I wasn't the top of the class or the best one there. I didn't get every part I auditioned for. But I did still enjoy it. It didn't really affect me. I mean it did because I still carry some things over into what I'm teaching because it's like, how did I feel when this happened? (Coach #4)*

These statements highlight the idea that a majority of coaches choose to become coaches based on their previous experiences in sport, both positive and negative. By asking coaches what their experiences in sport were like and if those experiences made them want to become a coach has revealed how coaches can leverage their abilities. The ability to relate to their athlete enables a coach and their athlete to grow together and use each other's experiences to succeed within sport and beyond.

Connecting

Following the relatability factor, the analysis results revealed the importance to connect with an athlete which fell into three main categories: (a) the need of the youth athlete, (b) the coach's own values and (c) an athlete's perception. A coach takes into consideration the need of the youth athlete to have a significant figure in their life. Coaches believed that connecting to youth athletes was an important part of developing a positive training environment to motivate their athlete and put them in the best position to be successful.

Needs of a Youth Athlete

Coaches exhibited their belief that having a connection with the athlete increased their ability to understand an athlete and individualize training based on the athlete needs. To foster this

development and become an intricate part of an athlete's life, coaches were seen to focus on being a listening ear for their athlete to increase trust and communication. The subsequent quotes outline this belief:

> *A lot of them don't really have a positive adult to talk to if that makes sense, so you kind of plays both parts there. (Coach #3)*

> *The second most important job in my life is either a coach or a minister or someone that has that kind of influence over a young person's life at a very, very important time that kind of models and shapes your character. (Coach #10)*

These statements reflect the perception coaches have on how important it is to have a coach and positive adult figure highly integrated into their lives. This strong reliance on having a coach to go to can influence who that athlete becomes in the future. The following example gives truth to this claim:

> *We are offering them something that is wholesome. Something that will help them. something that will raise their self-esteem. Something that is good for them. Something that will teach them good eating habits, good sleeping habits, good training habits, good living habits. It's not like we are trying to hurt them just for our own selfish needs or anything. (Coach #9)*

Coach's Own Values

Coaches reported that the need to connect with their athletes was reflective of their perceived significance of being on a closer level with their athletes. This correlates to many of the coaches' philosophies and values of building relationships, speaking with their athletes on a daily basis, and the importance of individuality.

> *I try to connect with my people every day and 90% of my coaching was really spent talking to kids. It wasn't just giving the workouts. It was getting to know them as people, getting to understand them. Letting them know that I am there for them, and if they needed to talk to me (Coach #10)*

> *I would talk to them about their regular day, or just create small talk and make sure*
> *that I was building relationships with each of those people and that helped a ton with*
> *retention because I constantly had the same group of kids coming to the program and*
> *some of them did it all four years. (Coach #7)*

Additionally, their coaching values of being able to connect with the athlete correlates to why an athlete continues to come back and training with the coach. Building and keeping a connection was found to hold retention.

Athlete's Perception

Not only did connecting with athletes reflect the coaches' values of building strong relationships with their athletes, but it helped a coach increase motivation within their athlete. This was important to many coaches because it helped build up an athlete's potential, while keeping their athletes wanting to come back for more. This idea provides a challenge to coaches in individualizing the approach towards athletes in order to optimize the connection for them to reach their full potential. The following quotes from coach #10 speak to this belief:

> *The buzz of coaching for me was that each kid was a lock and you are just trying to*
> *pick the lock with a different set of tumblers to unlock their potential and that has*
> *always been the attitude that I have taken with it.*

> *That is another thing a coach has to look at in an athlete. What work load can they*
> *handle? That's coach getting back to that one size doesn't fit all kind of approach to*
> *say, "What does this particular athlete need to maximize their talent?*

> *When you do something, I am all in. I am on the phone with the kids for hours a night.*
> *Whatever it is because you have a bunch of different athletes and you really want to*
> *connect with them mentally to know where they are in life and that's how when you*
> *have to think about all the other factors of life, that's why you have those phone calls*
> *to have that kind of connection.*

Athlete's responded well to having a connection with a coach. Athletes reported their appreciation for their coach's ability to connect with the athlete on a personal level. A strong relationship between a coach and an athlete drove the success of the athlete. The subsequent quotes outline this desire from the athletes:

> *What they say to encourage you makes you want to try harder and inspire you to push yourself and think that you can do it and believe in yourself rather than them forcing you to or just giving up. (Athlete #1)*

As the athlete states, a coach has the ability to motivate an athlete further when there is a strong connection. Having a strong connection with an athlete on a personal level opens up the conversation where an athlete feels as though they can talk to the coach about any outside life factors that may be inhibiting their performance. This allows for a coach to use individualized encouragement techniques to inspire an athlete to keep moving forward towards that potential. The following quote exemplifies the perception that an athlete has about how this factor connects to an athlete's overall performance:

> *Being a coach at that high level is more than X's and O's. It is more than the track, more than the technical work. That was there so we were successful, but beyond that, the relationships really took you forward. (Athlete #10)*

This idea that the relationship between a coach and an athlete enhances an athlete's ability to succeed was not a surprising finding, but it supports a coach's perceived responsibility in developing well-rounded athletes. Therefore, this theme highlights the need for coaches to see what their athlete's full requirements are, which gives the coaches a better sense of how to train their athlete.

Belief in Potential

The third theme that was found was a Coach's belief in their athlete's potential. Coaches are seen to care more about overall success and growth of an athlete rather than winning or losing. A coach's belief in an athlete's potential falls into four categories: (a) putting athletes in the position

to be successful, (b) creating small wins, (c) building confidence within an athlete, and (d) setting goals and expectations.

Putting Athletes in the Position to be Successful

A majority of coaches found that putting athletes in the position to be successful was their primary responsibility. Coaches must express their beliefs regarding an athlete's potential. The idea that a coach must continue to give athletes attention shows that a coach is working in the best interest of the athlete. This position looks beyond the idea of winning or losing in a competition, but rather how motivating an athlete can affect their attitude towards the sport. The following quotes from Coach #9 encompasses the importance of coach to express their beliefs to an athlete on their potential:

> *I can encourage people. I can spot things they do well. Plus, I have all of these stories in the back of my mind of kids that were just like you were at this time and became this, this, this, and this and I share those stories with them. I have a list of success stories that come to mind automatically and I have seen it happen so many times. Kids like the attention. They really like the attention and you have to put them in situations where they can be successful.*

> *When a kid tells me no, I don't even hear it. When a kid tells me he can't, I don't even hear it, because I know and I believe and I have seen it before and I have precedence to go on. I don't have to have a kid stroke me. I am going to keep working and pushing a kid and encouraging a kid whether they say thank you or not.*

Creating Small Wins

For a coach to put their athlete in the best position to be successful, it was found that these coaches created incremental improvements to build up an athlete's motivation to keep moving forward with reaching their potential. The following quote outlines this need:

> *I think that is really important for kids to realize that you are not always going to win and it's not always going to be easy. So, it's more about learning to be dedicated to*

something and being persistent and hopefully see a really positive outcome even if it
isn't right away. (Coach #3)

This desire and belief in an athlete's potential was highlighted by a majority of the coaches, which shows that coaches are not in it for themselves, but instead to use their knowledge to help someone else. With this stance on creating small wins, coaches recognize they cannot want to train harder than the athletes to achieve the athlete's full potential. The athlete must develop self-motivation to train correctly on the developed goals between a coach and athlete:

The only kind of motivation that lasts is self-motivation. I can tell them to do A, B, and
C a million times, but until they internalize it and get that drive and desire themselves,
they are never going to push themselves enough and focus enough to be so successful
to take yourself to that next level. So, my goal as a coach is not to piece those X's and
O's, it's to have them be motivated to push themselves to that next level. (Coach #11)

This desire to direct a coach's attention towards the achievement of an athlete raises the theme of individuality. A coach must find what works for each individual athlete for their potential to be reached. A majority of coaches found that a one-size fits all approach is not effective, nor does it allow an athlete to find their full potential. Instead, both the coaches and athletes acknowledged the significance of training individuals based off of an athlete's needs to maximize their talent. One quote which best speaks to this importance states:

You want to keep getting better every day and to me, every day, it's like building a
brick wall. You build a brick wall one brick at a time and each day is a brick, so you
have to maximize yourself for this particular day. The mindset I would always try to
give my athletes, before you put you head down on the pillow tonight, just ask yourself
one question. What did I do today to be a better athlete? To be a better student? To be
a better friend? To be a better sister or daughter? Whatever and just spend a minute
reflecting on that because that keeps you on track on being able to add the brick to
that wall for that particular day. And each day, it doesn't seem like progress is that
much, but it's incremental. Very incremental, but if you keep at it adding a brick to the

> *wall every day of the course of weeks, months, years, you got a pretty good wall and*
>
> *that is kind of what you're building towards. (Coach #10)*

<u>Building Confidence within an Athlete</u>

These themes were reiterated by the coaches on how their belief in an athlete's potential creates small wins for their athlete, in total, increasing an athlete's confidence in their abilities. Additionally, these themes show that athletes are training at a higher level than they originally thought they ever could through the combination of the coach's abilities, as well as added self-motivation. It was found that coaches that were able to get athletes to believe in themselves just as much as the coach did, that they were more likely to be successful than an athlete with low confidence. The following statements underscore this desired outcome:

> *It is equally important to push and get the most out of athletes as it is to connect with the athletes and get the athletes to believe in themselves and to want to train and to want to be the best. I build passion, I build confidence, and I get athletes to believe in themselves. If you don't believe in yourself, you have no possibility of being successful. (Coach #6)*

> *Making them know that they could train at a far higher level than they ever thought they could train at and after I got them to that point, man the sky was the limit for them. Those girls have all done very, very well in life. (Coach #10)*

This was an interesting, but not surprising statement because the coach exhibits how being successful in sport projects confidence in other areas of an athlete's life.

<u>Setting Goals and Expectations</u>

In addition to building confidence within an athlete, the importance of goal-setting stemmed from a coach's belief in the athlete's potential. This idea of using a coach's ability to develop goals towards an athlete's potential was found to give athlete the opportunity to set goals in other areas of their life. Additionally, coaches encouraged their athletes to develop goals outside of sport

because of the increased likelihood of making the athlete feel good about themselves. The following quotes provide an example of this outcome:

> *We have them set more than one because it forces them to think more than "oh I just want to be fast." We have the data and it definitely indicts that their idea of what being a runner is has expanded beyond, I just want to be the fastest. … I want you to think beyond so you can stretch your brain and feel good about other things. (Coach #1)*

> *Let me know what you are striving to achieve in general and I think it is important to set goals in all facets because they are all tied together and if you have a positive mindset and you are achieving goals outside of your athletic career, it could definitely impact your goals in your sport because a lot of wins and momentum in life and the mental aspect of sport can totally inhibit or make success happen. (Coach #7)*

Beyond the conversation of goal-setting which was expected to be spoken about during this study, many of the coaches still hold high standards for their athlete's in order to reach the goals set. Coach #2 and #6 discussed how this standard is set in their practice.

> *I expect them to work hard and I think that they need to put in 100% for me to put in 100%. So, I can only provide to them my knowledge and the equipment to let them become who they want to become, but I can't want it more than they do. I think that I come in everyday and work hard and think of new things and help them progress and if they are going to show up to practice every day and they are going to do what is being asked of them, then they are going to become who they want to be in the sport. So I think it is a balance of pushing them, them respecting me, and them wanting to me here. I think that it is a strong mind and a strong body is what is going to make a good athlete. (Coach #2)*

> *We have goals for almost every training we have with each other. If you're not constantly reaching for a certain objective, you don't have that drive and motivation to perform during every single practice and every time we meet moving forward. (Coach #6)*

Responses to negative coaching

Although there were many positive statements on a coach's belief in the athlete's potential, a few athletes conveyed their negative experiences with other coaches not interviewed within this study. This following quote displays how negative perceptions in an athlete's ability or performance may effect an athlete's mentality towards their ability and the sport:

> *I was standing there, three hurdles away from beating the two time New England champion, and my coach came up to me and said, "[Athlete #10], you really blew that one." So, that is something that stuck with me forever, but that is something that you would never hear from [Coach #10]. (Athlete #10)*

Positive Environments

This leads to the fourth theme that emerged; identified as creating "Positive Environments." A majority of coaches in this study advocated for positive coaching techniques. Coaches described having positive, supporting attitudes themselves, while encouraging their athletes to have that same mindset and work ethic. Coaches were not just positive because it was a part of their philosophy, but because their athletes would be more focused and less distracted by other areas of their life, such as school or home life.

Coaches were seen to have a practical approach to coaching while keeping their expectations high, but understood that outside factors of life could affect the athlete's performance. The following quotes highlights this consideration:

> *Just taking things seriously and not really pushing us to the point where life couldn't be a factor at all. She understood that outside sources were always a factor. But then again, she always was strict with certain things, like not having certain distractions allowed at the gym, like boys. There were rules, but then there were also times that I feel that she realized this is going to be life and when life is so involved with the sport, your kind of have to mix the two sometimes. (Athlete #2)*

I wouldn't make them do the [dance] class until they were ready mentally. We would sit down, observe for a little bit until they felt better, or they would go home early. I wouldn't force them to take the class because if they are unhappy doing it, then what's the point? (Coach #4)

This consideration allowed for a coach to instill an environment that was fun for their athletes where they did not realize how hard they were truly working during training sessions. The statement which best illustrates this fun environment states:

I wanted to something just to get moving and out and be entertained so it wasn't just all track and field so our warm up was some sort of tag or some form of tag that I made up just on the spot or just a more fun way to add an element of entertainment for the kids then we would go off to the events and at the end of the day we would race a different race or distance. (Coach #7)

Sports is their most exciting part of their day, so it is really fun for them and we try to make it fun for them as well, but also get them to work hard. So you know, right after school, they get out and we give them fifteen or so minutes to just run around and be crazy, get changed, get ready, and then we start off the day what we are going to do, what our goal for the day, what the run is going to be, we go through a series of dynamic stretching... incorporate some games where they don't realize they are running where they think they are just playing, but they actually are running hard. (Coach #3)

Interestingly, but not surprisingly, past coaches who established negative environments were found to inhibit the athlete's potential and work ethic. Negative environments have the potential to effect the mentality the athlete has towards the sport and completely drive them away from participating. This following quote displays this connection:

When I was at the camp, they made me feel like it was all my fault. Jen didn't do that. She made me feel like I am just a beginner and I just need more practice. I never really felt like I looked like a fool or doing something wrong. ... Had I had that first initial

lesson with the camp person, I don't know if I would have continued with it, so I really feel like Jen did make a difference. (Athlete #4)

Further, athletes felt better about themselves when a coach left training sessions open to a positive, fun environment. This environment gave athletes a stress release from other areas of their life.

A lot of children walking around feel that their lives are just empty. They have no reason, nothing to look forward to tomorrow other than some of the superficial things, but track and field is a very positive thing, you build relationships, kids make great friends. (Coach #9)

[Coach #9] can always put a smile on your face. When you have attitude from the school or your teachers or anything else there, when you come down to the track, all that will ease your mind because [Coach #9] plus your teammates, they make you laugh. So really school work and teachers and all that left my mind as soon as I hit the track. (Athlete #3)

This positive environment created by the coaches also resulted in increased sportsmanship which made the athletes feel better about themselves overall. The athletes were able to take pride in the positive environment that they were a part of and feel as if they belong to something larger than themselves. The following quotes outline this connection:

"We try to tell them to have pride in Woonsocket and show them what Woonsocket is. That they are respectable kids, great athletes, and they are great sports. Like sportsmanship. That is something we reiterate almost daily. That is the last thing I say before they get off the bus too. Show me how good of a sport you are, encourage other kids, encourage other teams. Just have really good behavior and make yourself proud from being from Woonsocket. I think that has been really important for them to be proud of where they are from." [Coach #3]

Not only did a positive environment increase sportsmanship, but it enabled the coach to hold higher standards for their athletes and realize that they are a part of something larger than themselves.

Athlete #9 explained how she learned good behavior and what it meant for her to hold herself accountable for her actions, to her team, and coach.

> *We had a long talk about how to lose and fail with dignity. You wouldn't succeed with class and how to lose and fail with dignity. He always would teach his athletes how to be proud of our accomplishments without putting our opponents down, but making sure if you do lose, you lose with dignity and respect. (Athlete #9)*

Overarching Themes

Relatability

- Coaches were able to relate to their athlete in some aspect which increased an athletes trust in the training session. This factor also increased communication between a coach and an athlete. Lastly, a coach develops their philosophy based off of their previous experiences in sport.

Connecting

- A majority of coaches found that it was important to be role model to their athletes, which is reflective of the development of a coach's core values. This connection helps athletes appreciate the sport better and allows them to become more motivated to perform well.

Belief in Potential

- Coaches feel that it is their primary role to put their athletes in the best position to be successful. The do this by the use of creating small wins, building up confidence, and setting goals and expectations with the athlete.

Positive Environments

- Coaches that have a practical approach towards coaching are better able to keep their expectations high, but also connect with an athlete to communication outside factors

that may affect the athlete's performance. A positive environment also encourages an athlete to try new things, put their full effort into training, and develop sportsmanship and leadership capabilities.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to better understand how a coach's philosophy may affect the transferability of life skills onto their athletes. The findings demonstrate how effective coaches recognized the importance of using their own experiences to relate and connect to their athletes while developing a positive environment to allow their athletes the opportunity to reach their full potential. The literature hinted at each of these themes, but collectively they are what enables a coach the best opportunity to develop an athlete's full potential in both sport and in life in the most effect way. It is important to note that in this study there were no discrepancies in the differences between male and female coaching philosophies. Males and females were seen to have the same ability to instill life skills onto their athletes. Female coaches were found to have the ability to create collaborative environments, and to cope with the pressured, stressful environment of coaching (Norman, 2013; Walinga, 2012), but the females in this study were not found to be any more effective than the males, as the literature suggests.

Coaches worked with youth athletes of varying socioeconomic statuses and adapted their philosophies and strategies to coach life skills that are relevant to the need of their athletes, similar to the findings of Camiré et al. (2012). Furthermore, the coach's overall approach and attitude is affected by distinct contextual factors that influence the overall life skills, defined earlier as behavioral, cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal skills (Hardcastle et. al, 2015; Camiré et al., 2012; Forneris et. al, 2012). The four skills embedded in the life skills definition, behavioral, cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal, are aligned with into the four themes that emerged throughout this study: relatability, connecting, belief in potential, and a positive environment. *Exhibits 1-4* provide a visual representation of the connection between life skills and the four themes.

Relatability and Behavioral Skills

The importance of relatability includes an athlete's ability to build behavioral skills. The findings indicate that a coach's ability to relate to their athlete on a personal level increased trust, communication, and motivation within an athlete. A coach's ability to relate to their athlete helps an athlete gain trust in what the coach is doing, also while improving the overall communication between the coach and the athlete. Previous experiences seem to connect with a coach's perceived importance on keeping practices and the way situations are handled very individualized. Having an individualized approach increases motivation because athletes are given more resources that can be catered to the athletes needs order to be successful. The importance of individualized approach is a common consideration among positive coaching tactics (Camiré et al., 2012; Vella et al., 2013; Trottier & Robitaille, 2014). This is also linked to how many of the coaches were able to adapt to certain stress-levels or injuries that their athletes might have, showing the athlete how to be empathic in specific situations. A coach's empathy towards an athlete during training sessions can connect a coach better to an athlete and allow for changes in training or coaching style from athlete to athlete.

Belief of Potential and Behavioral Skills

With a coach's belief in an athlete's potential, athletes are able to develop behavioral skills. It is clear in this study that coaches who were able to express their opinions about an athlete's potential were able to develop determination, motivation, and confidence within their athletes to strive for the potential the coach had about them. When a coach believes in the potential of an athlete, the athlete is able to create incremental goals with their coach, which may include taking a risk and trusting their coach that the process to reaching their potential will be worthwhile. According to leadership researchers, Kouzes and Posner (2007), creating these small wins include taking that leap of faith and having the will to learn from mistakes while experimenting with what works and what does not work for that particular athlete (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). An athlete will learn what it is like to be confident in their ability while learning the importance of setting goals in all areas of their life.

This belief that coaches have the ability to build behavioral skills within athletes by communicating their potential matches Mike Krzyzewski's coaching philosophy. Krzyzewski

believed that if he sees something and feels strongly about it, he is going to step in and make it happen. An athlete of Krzyzewski, Bobby Hurley, agrees that Krzyzewski did a masterful job at convincing the athletes that they could win a game, which made him even more determined to put full effort into the sport. It is important to note that Hurley went on to be a coach himself (Weiss, 2005). Phil Jackson's philosophy is similar in driving his athletes to find their destiny, but takes the lesser approach of developing an athlete's potential in the way of letting each player discover their destiny moreso on their own (Jackson & Delehanty, 2013).

Positive Environments and All Life Skills

An original contribution of this study lies in the contextual factor of the environment a coach creates for their athletes. Mental models of athletes can be skewed when it is constantly advertised what athletes are receiving from sports in terms of large salaries or benefits, but what is not seen is what the athletes are not getting. Not only can sport grow an athlete's social identity, but also plays a large role in developing the athlete's personal identity (Martin, Balderson, Hawkins, Wilson, & Bruner, 2018). Sport is an escape from life, and a positive environment enhances an athlete's self-worth by increasing sportsmanship, encouraging the athlete to try new things, and holding them to higher expectations (Martin et. al, 2018). An athlete gains a culmination of life skills through the creation of a positive environment, such as stress management, decision making, and responsibility.

Athletes have a stronger ability to act in a way that shows respect towards others, as well as showing respect towards how they treat themselves. Athletes in this study were found to feel more connected to the sport with a positive environment, allowing the athlete to be proud of themselves and gain a sense of dignity. Decision making is a continuation of the learned skill of sportsmanship gained from having a positive environment. This teaches athletes to cognitively think about their actions and decide how certain decision may affect them in the future. Athlete #9 showed an example of this in how she learned how to lose and fail with dignity. This athlete learned the skills from her coach in order to decide how to act in any given situation. Positive environments were found to allow athletes to be held accountable and responsible to not only the way they carry themselves, but also in the way that they can hold meaning to a tangible item beyond themselves, such as their teammates or coach.

Lastly, athletes learn how to time manage, how to goal set, and how to be committed to something with sport. Sport allows for athletes to take a break from outside factors effecting them in other areas of their life. With a positive environment, athletes are working hard, but were found to not realize how hard they truly were working because of the coach's ability to develop practices based around enjoying themselves, rather than pressuring them to perform well. The ability for an athlete to take time out of their day to do something fun puts an athlete in the best position to be successful in other areas of their life if they can release that stress in a positive sports setting. This is connected to developing interpersonal skills. Athletes can learn how to help a teammate if they are found to be having a difficult time in other areas of their life through a positive environment. Sportsmanship and leadership qualities are learned by having the opportunity to take a moment to recognize the other factors going on in a teammate's life (Goldstein & Iso-Ahola, 2006).

Great coaches borrow philosophies and learn from other great leaders that came before them. Coaches were found to develop their philosophies based off of previous experiences or from coaches they have had as an athlete themselves. This quote links to the culmination of this finding of the creation of a positive environment. "I don't treat them all the same, but I treat them all fairly" (Summitt & Jenkins, 2013). Pat Summit borrowed this statement from coach John Wooden which exhibits how effective coaches that develop life skills within their athletes accept that development happens at different speeds, and if this is internalized by athletes, they will foster a greater sense of security within sport (Summitt & Jenkins, 2013).

In conclusion, a coach can cultivate what they want to be known for through positive environments. Many of the coaches exhibited how the positive environment that was created for their athletes kept their athlete's wanting to come back for more. The study showed how many of the athletes became coaches themselves. Many of the athletes became coaches because of their previous coach imparting life lessons onto them, circling back to the ability to relate to an athlete with the experiences they have had. By creating this positive environment, coaches are opening an opportunity to give athletes the tools to gain self-respect and eventually give back to the sport that has given them so much, whether it be volunteering, or becoming a coach themselves.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Based off of these findings, specific techniques were developed to improve a coach's effectiveness in imparting life skills onto their athletes that can be used to influence athletes both in sport and in life. These techniques include:

1. *Relate previous experiences in sport to the athlete.*

   A coach should be able to think about their experiences in sport and what made them excited, stressed, happy, etc. and relate it back to the current position their athletes are in.

2. *Develop a coaching philosophy to individualize training and approach.*

   A philosophy should be made off of those experiences that are geared towards individualized training, as this study showed the importance of doing so.

3. *Develop a relationship with the athlete.*

   A positive relationship must be built with the athlete by connecting to them and truly understanding the contextual differences and past experiences each athlete may hold.

4. *Instill confidence within the athlete.*

   A coach must instill confidence onto their athlete by extending their belief of what they think their potential could be.

5. *Have strategies to create a positive training environment.*

   Develop strategies to create a positive environment that correlate to your philosophy. This may include writing down goals with the athletes, using anecdotes or quotes that resonate with the athletes, or playing games with athletes to distract them from other outside factors.

LIMITATIONS

Using a grounded theory approach exposes this study to limitations, including the use of a convenience sample. By means of this type of sample, results are subject to a small n-size, location biases, and self-reported biases. Although generalizations are harder to conclude from this type of sample, convenience sampling allows time for a more, in-depth analysis of the contributing coaches with the use of only 22 participants. This type of sample also allows for an ease in collecting data given the availability of proximity and the ability to attain necessary data quickly. To address the limitation of possible self-reported biases, having a corresponding athlete to the coach will allow for these biases to be more precisely recognized.

FURTHER RESEARCH

From these limitations comes further research which can be conducted to consider and complement the missing research from this study. One further research topic which would be beneficial to learning more about coaching philosophies and how they correlate to teaching athletes life skills is looking at what role parents plays in how a coaching philosophy can affect life skills onto their athletes. This could be done by recreating this study by adding a parent to each athlete to see if there is a correlation. Additionally, this study should be done at a college level to see if the methods and recommendations match at a higher level and beyond youth athletes. Another further study to be done would be looking at why there is a lack of women in the field even with their leadership capabilities. There were no discrepancies in the differences between male and female coaching philosophies in this study, so an addition to the current results, identification should be made as to why there is a lack of female coaches given that males and females have the same ability to instill life skills onto their athletes.

CONCLUSION

This quantitative study offers unique findings and adds to the literature on youth development through sport. Moreover, this study determined that some of the major findings were consistent with the existing literature. The themes and methods surrounding each developed life skill within this study maintained accuracy with the literature reviewed. However, most importantly, the culmination of the themes found makes this study unique and adds to the existing literature. Coaches who devote themselves in coaching beyond the idea of winning or losing can have an influential and long-lasting impact on their athletes' development. When a coach is able to develop life skills within their athletes, they are better able to have influence over who the athlete becomes in the future. With a more complete understanding of these themes, the steps developed throughout this study can be used to ensure that coaches are aware of the ways in which to effectively instill life skills onto their athlete.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Relatability & Behavioral Skills
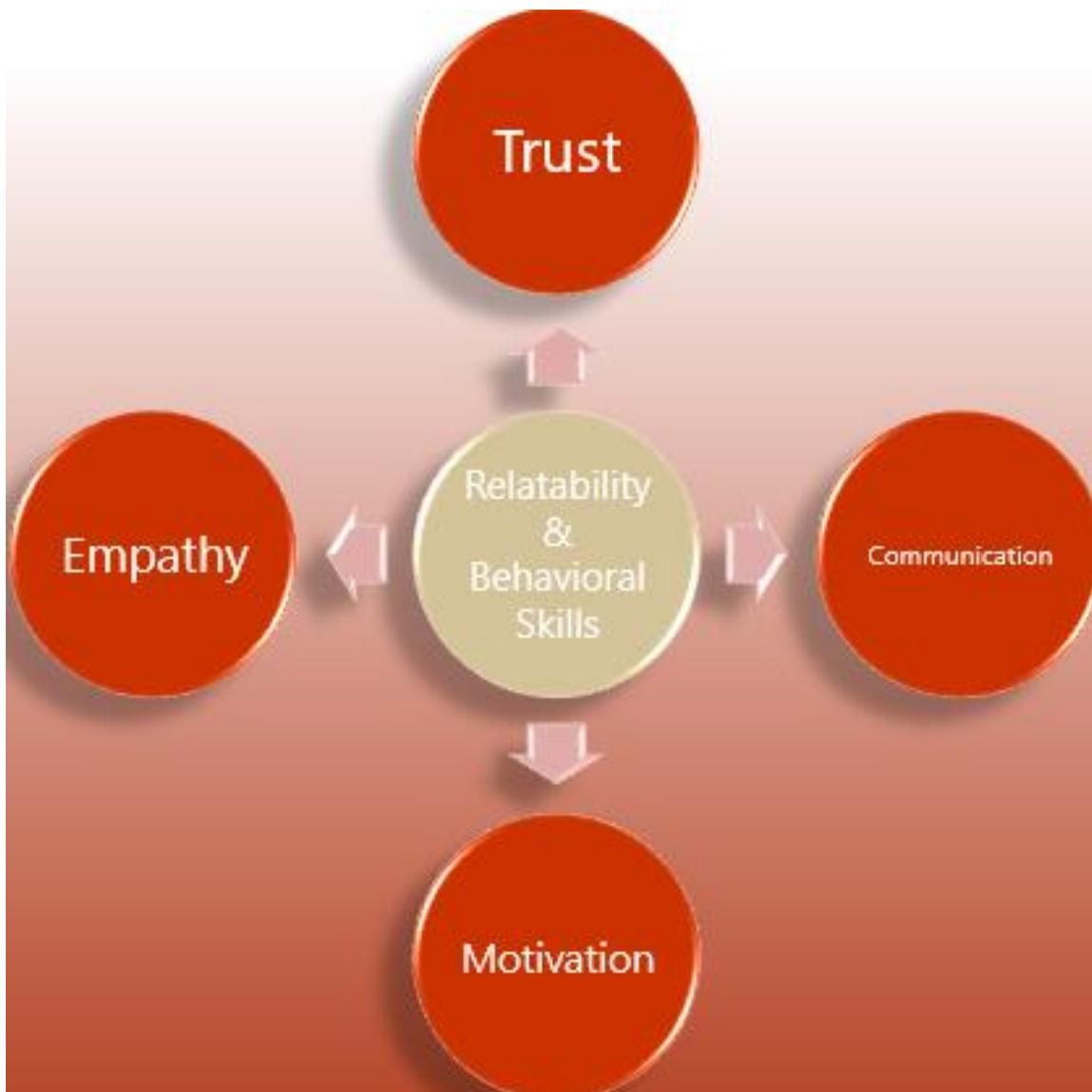
Appendix B: Connecting & Cognitive/Behavioral Skills

Appendix C: Belief in Potential

Appendix D: Positive Environment

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