

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SPORT: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this paper is to review and evaluate literature pertaining to the concept of positive youth development (PYD) as it relates to youth sport. Having first provided a brief historical snapshot of PYD, positive and negative outcomes associated with sport participation are reviewed. Next, different conceptual and measurement approaches to PYD, and associated sport psychology research, are examined. Finally, suggestions for promoting PYD in terms of youth interactions with coaches, parents, and peers are forwarded by way of conclusion.

KEYWORDS: Positive youth development; Youth sport; Youth development.

DESARROLLO POSITIVO DE LOS JÓVENES A TRAVÉS DEL DEPORTE: UNA REVISIÓN

RESUMEN: El objetivo de este artículo es revisar y evaluar la literatura relativa al concepto del desarrollo positivo en jóvenes (PYD), ya que está relacionada con el deporte juvenil. Tras ofrecer una breve visión histórica de la PYD, se revisan los resultados positivos y negativos asociados con la participación deportiva. Posteriormente, se examinan diferentes enfoques conceptuales y de medida para el análisis del desarrollo positivo en jóvenes y las investigaciones relacionadas con la psicología del deporte. Finalmente, y a modo de conclusión, se aportan sugerencias para fomentar el desarrollo positivo de los jóvenes en lo que se refiere a la interacción de los jóve-

nes con los entrenadores, los padres, y sus iguales.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Desarrollo positivo en jóvenes; Deporte juvenil; Desarrollo de jóvenes.

DESENVOLVIMENTO DOS JOVENS ATRAVÉS DO DESPORTO: UMA REVISÃO

RESUMO: O objetivo deste trabalho é analisar e avaliar a literatura referente ao conceito de desenvolvimento positivo dos jovens (DPJ) no que se refere ao desporto para jovens. Fornecendo inicialmente um breve instantâneo histórico do DPJ, são revistos resultados positivos e negativos associados à participação desportiva. Em seguida, são examinadas diferentes abordagens conceptuais e de avaliação do DPJ, bem como a investigação da psicologia do desporto associada. Finalmente, sugestões para a promoção do DPJ em termos da interação dos jovens com os treinadores, pais e colegas são fornecidas em jeito de conclusão.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Desenvolvimento juvenil positivo; Esporte em jovens; desenvolvimento da jovens.

The concept of Positive Youth Development (PYD) has become a 'hot topic' in developmental and sport psychology in recent years. PYD is a strength-based approach to child and adolescent development based on the assumption that all youth have the potential for positive developmental change (Lerner, Brown, & Kier, 2005). Hence, PYD is way to view development rather than a specific construct, and it is used as an 'umbrella term' referring to ways in which children and adolescents may accrue optimal developmental experiences through their involvement in organized activities. Optimal development can be defined as ways of "enabling individuals to lead a healthy, satisfying, and productive life, as youth and later as adults, because they gain the competence to earn a living, to engage in civic activities, to nurture oth-

ers, and to participate in social relations and cultural activities" (Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pittman, 2004, p. 3).

Many scholars view youth development as a function of interactions between individuals and features of their social contextual environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The dynamics of these relations between individuals and social contexts therefore form the basis of behavior and developmental change (Lerner, 2002). One important idea underpinning PYD is the concept of relative plasticity, which is the potential for systematic change across the lifespan. More specifically, the concept of relative plasticity "legitimizes a proactive search in adolescence for the characteristics of youth and their contexts that, together, can influence the design of policies and programs promoting positive development" (Lerner

& Castellino, 2002, p. 124). Hence, PYD research has generally been concerned with identifying aspects of personal and social interactions within certain contexts with a view of optimizing developmental opportunities.

In recent years the concept of PYD has been used by researchers in the area of developmental sport psychology (Holt, 2008; Weiss, 2008). As such, the purpose of this paper is to review and evaluate literature pertaining to the concept of PYD as it relates to youth sport. We first provide a brief historical perspective, then review outcomes associated with sport participation before going on to discuss and evaluate approaches to PYD from developmental psychology that have been used and adapted in youth sport settings. Finally, we review ways to promote PYD through sport.

A Brief Historical Perspective

PYD is historically grounded in the positive psychology movement (Snyder & Lopez, 2002). Positive psychology arose in reaction to the ‘deficit-reduction’ approach that dominated the field of psychology in the period following World War II. In the post-war era, psychology researchers and practitioners had focused much of their attentions on ‘repairing’ mental illness – a so-called deficit-reduction approach because it was based on fixing individuals’ deficiencies. Psychologist Martin Seligman, a professor at The University of Pennsylvania, spearheaded the positive psychology approach and argued “psychology is not just about illness or

health; it is also about work, education, love, growth, and play” (Seligman, 2002, p. 4). Positive psychology is less concerned with ‘mending what is broken’ but rather focuses on building strengths and the qualities that help individuals and communities flourish (Snyder & Lopez, 2002). Similarly, proponents of PYD adopt a strength-based approach and regard youth as ‘resources to be developed’ rather than ‘problems to be solved’ (Damon, 2004).

Although the term/concept of PYD has only been used for the past 15 years or so, there has been a long-standing interest in the developmental outcomes associated with participation in organized youth activities. In developmental psychology, concepts associated with PYD predate the coining of the term. For example, King et al. (2005) reviewed concepts used in the adolescent development literature from 1991–2003 to examine the terms that had been used to describe constructs consistent with current concept of PYD. They identified 16 different terms for PYD-related constructs and five (competence, coping, health, resilience, and well-being) were most frequently used. Similar to developmental psychology, there has been a long-standing interest in concepts akin to PYD in the sport psychology literature (see Gould & Carson, 2008; Weiss & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009). For example, in a recent review, Weiss (2008) suggested that much of her own work conducted prior to the emergence of PYD focused on positive development through sport (including the study of

issues such as self-perceptions, motivation, character development, and observational modeling). So, while the nomenclature of PYD is recent, there is a long tradition in the study of PYD-related concepts in both developmental and sport psychology.

It is important to note that developmental psychologists have not explicitly emphasized the physical activity benefits of participation in organized activities. But there is robust evidence demonstrating that sport participation can increase physical activity levels to help combat sedentary behavior (Biddle, Sallis, & Cavill, 1998) and equip youth with the tools required for a lifetime of physical activity involvement (Fox, 2004). These benefits are important set against alarmingly low rates of low of physical activity among children and adolescents (e.g., Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2011). Whereas our review deals with psychosocial issues, the physical activity benefits of sport participation should not be discounted.

Developmental Outcomes Associated With Sport Participation

As researchers in the area of PYD through sport we should be careful to avoid being seen as 'sport evangelists' who view sport as a mechanism that inevitably leads to various forms of development (see Coakley, 2011). In fact, youth sport has been associated with numerous negative outcomes, including (but not limited to) issues associated with adults modeling inappropriate behaviors (Hansen, Larson, &

Dworkin, 2003), the misuse of alcohol (O'Brien, Blackie, & Hunter, 2005), engagement in delinquent behaviours (Begg, Langlely, Moffitt, & Marshall, 1996), and use of performance-enhancing drugs (Siegenthaler & Gonzalez, 1997). Competition with peers for positions on a team can lead to feelings of rivalry (Brustad, Babkes, & Smith, 2001) and impede youth from taking the perspective of others, interfering with moral development (Shields & Bredemeier, 1995). Youth sport participation has also been associated with increased fear and occurrence of injury (DuRant, Pendergrast, Seymore, Gaillard, & Donner, 1991). In fact, based on a review of literature, Morris, Sallybanks, Willis, and Makkai (2003) concluded there is a lack of robust evidence for influence of sport participation on positive development.

On the other hand, of course, youth sport participation has been correlated with numerous positive developmental outcomes. For example, compared to their peers who do not participate in sport, participants have reported higher levels of self-esteem, emotional regulation, problem-solving, goal attainment, and social skills (e.g., Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001; Eccles, Barber, Stone & Hunt, 2003; Richman & Shaffer, 2000). Sport participation has also been linked to a lower likelihood of school dropout, improved grade point averages, and higher rates of college attendance for low achieving and working class males (Eccles et al., 2003; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003). As Larson and Seepersad (2003)

observed, adolescents' experiences in sport stand out from nearly all other activities (including socializing and schoolwork) in providing opportunities for enjoyment while they exert concerted effort toward a goal.

In addition to the psychological, physical, social, and academic benefits described above, youth sport participation is associated with numerous positive health behaviors such as increased fruit and vegetable consumption and trying to lose weight in a healthy manner (Melnick, Miller, Sabo, Farrell, & Barnes, 2001; Pate, Trost, Levin, & Dowda, 2000; Rainey, McKeown, Sargent, & Valios, 1996). Sport participation has also been associated with higher contraceptive use, lower rates of sexual experience, fewer partners, later age of intercourse, and fewer past pregnancies (Sabo, Miller, Farrell, Melnick, & Barnes, 1999).

Hence, research has shown there are both positive and negative outcomes associated with sport participation, and these equivocal findings help explain why there is a lack of robust evidence for the impact of sport participation on PYD (cf. Morris et al., 2003). As Coakley (2011) argued, "By itself, the act of sport participation among young people leads to no regularly identifiable development outcomes" (p. 309). The point is that merely participating in sport does not necessarily produce positive outcomes; rather, the developmental benefits of sport participation are contingent on social contextual factors. These contingent social contextual factors are largely

based on how coaches, parents, and peers contribute to the ways in which youth sport is delivered and experienced (see Holt, 2008; Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, & Jones, 2005; Weiss, 2008; Weiss & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009).

Approaches to PYD Research

In the following sections we describe different approaches to the study of PYD and review relevant sport-related research. We present three different measurement frameworks that have been put forward to assess and evaluate personal and social benefits associated with participation in organized youth activities. We then go on to describe approaches to assessing the features of programs (i.e., program evaluation frameworks) that promote PYD. Finally, sport-based instructional life skills programs designed to foster PYD-related constructs are reviewed.

Developmental Assets Profile

Benson (1997) and colleagues at the Search Institute in Minneapolis identified 40 developmental assets (which have been referred to as the 'building blocks' of human development) that are considered the qualities and characteristics of programs intended to foster optimal youth development during adolescence. They are separated into two broad categories (internal assets and external assets), and each category is further divided into eight sub-categories. The 20 internal assets reflect an individual's values and beliefs. They include commitment to learning, positive values,

social competencies, and positive identity. The 20 external assets are comprised of aspects of the individual's physical and psychosocial environment and include support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. It is suggested that the more assets individuals possess, the less likely they are to engage in high risk behaviors, and youth who have more developmental assets are more likely to thrive and succeed as young adults.

The original framework of developmental assets was based on research with adolescents. The Search Institute (2011) further identified specific characteristics of the 40 developmental assets that are pertinent during middle childhood (ages 8 to 12 years), grades K – 3 (ages 5 to 9 years), and early childhood (ages 3 to 5 years). The external and internal assets specified for children have an increased emphasis on the role of parents in helping children develop the assets. For example, within positive values, it is suggested that adolescents should accept and take personal responsibility, whereas in childhood parents should encourage children to accept and take responsibility for their actions at school or at home.

Strachan, Côté, and Deakin (2009) used the developmental assets profile to explore personal (internal assets) and contextual (external assets) outcomes associated with youth sport. They found three particular assets (positive identity, empowerment, and support) were important to focus on in youth sport programs to decrease burnout symp-

toms and enhance children's enjoyment. The context of sport was also a setting in which youth could increase their self-esteem and build personal skills, and a supportive environment allowed youth to feel valued within their group, enabling a sense of empowerment. These findings suggested the developmental assets framework is (at least partially) applicable to sport and highlighted the need for sport programmers to consider aspects of both personal development and contextual factors when creating programs to foster PYD.

The 5Cs. The 5Cs of PYD was introduced by developmental psychologist Richard Lerner (e.g., Lerner et al., 2005). The 5Cs are competence, confidence, character, caring/compassion, and connection. Competence represents a positive view of one's actions in domain specific areas. Confidence reflects an internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy, and one's global self-regard. Character refers to an individual's respect for societal and cultural rules. Caring/compassion is a person's sense of sympathy and empathy for others. The last C is connection and describes positive bonds with people and institutions. The 5Cs are therefore essentially measurable constructs that represent the desired outcomes of youth development. When all five Cs are present, a sixth C (contribution) may occur, which enables youth to give back to their community and society.

Zarrett et al. (2008) assessed extracurricular participation profiles of 1,112 US children from grades 5-7.

Youth who were involved in sport plus another type of youth development program had higher positive development scores than sport-only, work, and low-engaged youth. Continuity and intensity of participation were also related to PYD. Youth who participated in sport for two or more years had significantly higher PYD scores than non-participants and youth who participated for a single year. The more time youth spent participating in sport (i.e., intensity) during grade 7, the higher their levels of PYD.

Although the 5Cs have been prominent in developmental psychology, researchers have encountered some problems in the adaptation of measures to examine the 5Cs in youth sport. Jones, Dunn, Holt, Sullivan, and Bloom (2011) examined the latent dimensionality and applicability of the 5Cs in a youth sport setting. Two hundred and fifty-eight youth athletes (aged 12 to 16 years, M age = 13.77 years) completed a 30-item instrument of PYD in sport that was adapted from the Phelps et al. (2009) 78-item measure of the 5Cs of PYD. Confirmatory factor analysis failed to support the 5Cs in a youth sport context because there was too much overlap between the five factors. Exploratory factor analysis revealed that the items measured loaded onto two factors. Factor 1 (pro-social values) represented items pertaining to caring/compassion, character, and family connection. Factor 2 (confidence/competence) represented items that were meant to measure the constructs of competence and confi-

dence. While this single study may reflect sample specific characteristics rather than the absence of five distinct constructs of PYD, it suggests that more work is needed when it comes to examining the 5Cs in sport contexts. Similarly, other researchers have also questioned whether there are indeed five unique and identifiable 'Cs' in sport contexts (Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Vella, Oades, & Crowe, 2011).

Domains of learning experiences.

Larson and colleagues' domains of learning experiences has been extensively used to study PYD. Based on focus groups with 55 US adolescents aged 14-18 years, Dworkin, Larson, and Hansen (2003) examined growth experiences through participation in organized activities (including sport), which they defined as "experiences that teach you something or expand you in some way, that give you new skills, new attitudes, or new ways on interacting with others" (p. 20). They identified six domains of learning experiences that were divided into personal and interpersonal development. Personal development described developmental processes that occur within the individual and included three domains: identity work, the development of initiative, and emotional regulation. Interpersonal development described developmental processes that involved developing social connections. It included the domains of teamwork and social skills, positive relationships including acquiring prosocial norms and diverse peer relationships, and the devel-

opment of adult networks and social capital. Findings were used to develop the Youth Experiences Survey (YES), which measured growth experiences in the six domains of learning as well as in the domain of negative experiences. The original YES instrument has since been refined through additional psychometric research to create the YES 2.0 (Hansen & Larson, 2005).

Hansen et al. (2003) used the original version of the YES survey to compare learning experiences reported by youth involved in faith-based and service activities, academic and leadership activities, performance and fine arts activities, community organizations and vocational clubs, and sport. They found sport activities were positively associated with higher rates of self-knowledge, emotional regulation, and physical skills experiences in comparison to other youth activities. However, youth in sport programs also reported more experiences involving negative peer interactions and inappropriate adult behaviors than youth in other organized activities. These findings suggested there are distinct learning experiences related to different youth activities and despite more negative experiences, youth sport is a context for identity work and emotional development.

Larson, Hansen, and Moneta (2006) extended this research when they examined growth experiences in the five different youth activities (using the YES 2.0) and compared them to average growth experiences in school, hanging out with friends and working at a job.

Not surprisingly, higher levels of involvement in youth activities were associated with higher rates of learning experiences. In comparison to other organized activities, youth in sport reported significantly more experiences related to initiative, emotional regulation, and teamwork. Again, sport appeared to provide unique experiences compared to other organized activities.

Recently McDonald, Côté, Eys, and Deakin (in press) examined the factor structure of the YES 2.0 (Hansen & Larson, 2005). The YES 2.0 was designed to measure experiences across several types of organized activity and it was modified by McDonald and colleagues to focus explicitly on developmental experiences in sport. Six hundred and thirty-seven Canadian sport participants aged 9-19 years completed the instrument. However, confirmatory factor analysis did not provide strong support for the YES 2.0. Re-examination of the data using exploratory factor analysis resulted in a modified version of the instrument that focused on five dimensions of youth development (personal and social skills, initiative, goal setting, cognitive skills, and negative experiences). Hence, McDonald and colleagues proposed the YES-Sport as a measure capable of more specifically assessing PYD experiences in sport. This study, similar to Jones et al. (2011) highlighted the importance of considering the unique features of sport contexts that may not be accounted for in more generic measures.

Program evaluation frameworks.

In addition to measuring outcomes or experiences associated with PYD, researchers have examined the characteristics and structure of programs that contribute to PYD. Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins (2002) reviewed 25 US-based programs designed to promote PYD delivered across different contexts (i.e. community, school, family). They found that PYD was fostered when programs strengthened social, emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and moral competencies; built self-efficacy; shaped messages from family and community about clear standards for youth behavior; increased healthy bonding with adults, peers and younger children; expanded opportunities and recognition for youth; provided structure and consistency in program delivery; and intervened with youth for at least nine months or more. These themes are characteristics of high quality PYD programs. Furthermore, Lerner et al. (2005) suggested that youth programs are most likely to promote the 5 Cs when they involve possibilities for sustained adult-youth relationships, youth skill-building activities, and opportunities for youth participation in leadership of community-based activities. As Lerner et al. observed, if young people have mutually beneficial relations with the people and institutions of their social world, they will be able to thrive in adulthood.

Similarly, the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002) suggested eight features of devel-

opmental contexts that are linked to PYD: (a) safe and health-promoting facilities, (b) clear and consistent rules and expectations, (c) warm, supportive relationships, (d) opportunities for meaningful inclusion and belonging, (e) positive social norms, (f) support for efficacy and autonomy, (g) opportunities for skill building, (h) coordination among family, school, and community efforts. These features are gaining increasing support in youth sport research. Côté, Strachan, and Fraser-Thomas (2008) provided sport-specific examples of these eight features. More recently, Strachan, Côté, and Deakin (2011) qualitatively examined features of sport programs that may promote PYD via interviews and observations with five elite sport coaches. Their findings supported the program characteristics for PYD, and amalgamating their work with previous research, they suggested that three key elements for PYD must be present in sport programs: An appropriate training environment, provision of opportunities for physical, personal, and social development, and presence of supportive interactions.

Sport-based Life Skills Programs

There are other lines of research in sport psychology that fit under the umbrella of PYD but predate the use of the term in the area. Primarily this research has been labeled 'life skills.' From this perspective, life skills are defined as the skills that are required to deal with the demands and challenges of everyday life (Hodge & Danish, 1999).

They can be physical, behavioural, or cognitive, and may be transferable to other life domains (Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish, & Theodorakis, 2005).

Sport-based life skills programs include, for example, Danish's (2002) Sports United to Promote Education and Recreation program. Workshops (often delivered after school) are taught like sport clinics and include sport-specific skills as well as more general life skills. Another sport-based program is the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility model (Hellison, 2003). This model was developed to instruct teachers and coaches how to teach individual responsibility through sport and other types of physical activities. Similar types of sport-based life skills intervention programs have been developed for football and golf (see Petitpas et al., 2005).

Such programs are important and there is some promising evidence concerning participation retention (Hellison & Wright, 2003), and improving participants' goal setting, problem-solving, and knowledge of life skills (Papacharisis et al., 2005). Furthermore, Weiss (2008) reported preliminary evidence from a longitudinal study of the The First Tee (life skills) golf program. Findings showed that over 90% of youth reported transfer of life skills learned in golf to other domains such as school and home life. In particular, skills relating to dealing with anger and resolving conflict appeared to be important lessons learned. Continued research is required to further demonstrate efficacy and

effectiveness of such instructional life skills programs (Holt & Jones, 2008).

Ways to Promote PYD Through Sport: Creating Appropriate Contexts

By creating appropriate social contexts we may be able to capitalize on the notion of relative plasticity and seek to influence the design of policies and programs promoting positive development (Lerner & Castellino, 2002). Given that PYD through sport is contingent upon the way sport is delivered and experienced through participants' interactions with coaches, parents, and peers, we conclude by offering some evidence-based suggestions for promoting PYD.

Coaches. Researchers have suggested that the personal characteristics and skills of coaches are 'essential ingredients' of PYD sport programs (Vella et al., 2011). In fact, Côté and Gilbert (2009) defined coaching effectiveness as "the consistent application of integrated professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge to improve athletes' competence, confidence, connection, and character" (p. 316). Coaches who have clear cut philosophies to promote PYD prioritize the personal development of their athletes before competitive success (Gould, Chung, Smith, & White, 2006; Gould, Collins, Lauer, & Chung 2007). Coaches can also implement specific strategies to foster life skills that will be useful within and beyond the context of sport (Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008). Furthermore, coaches can create a social environment that focuses on the mastery of skills and

self-improvement in a manner that supports the autonomy of young athletes. For example, coaches can allow children to make choices and share in decision making responsibilities (see Horn, 2008). Furthermore, research shows that coaches who provide performance-contingent technical feedback and praise and engage in few punishment-oriented behaviors have athletes who report high levels of self-esteem, competence, enjoyment, and are more likely to continue participating in sport (see Smoll & Smith, 2002).

Whereas it is clear that coaches play a vital role in the promotion of PYD through sport, Cushion, Armour, and Jones (2003) cautioned that PYD-related goals may be somewhat 'divorced' from the reality of coaching. Some coaches may think that being partially responsible for PYD is yet another thing to add to their list of responsibilities. We should also remember that youth sport coaches are often committed volunteers with relatively little training, and the majority of that training is focused on technical skill development.

Parents. Parents also play an important role in shaping their children's experiences in sport and the developmental outcomes they may accrue (Fredrick & Eccles, 2004). Children report enhanced sport enjoyment when they perceive their parents are positively involved and satisfied with their sport participation (e.g., McCarthy & Jones, 2007; Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986). Grolnick (2003) showed that ways through which parents create an emotional climate within the

family context (i.e., autonomy-support versus control, structure, and involvement) influence a child's well-being and intrinsic motivation to engage in various behaviors, thus contributing to PYD.

Autonomy-support versus control refers to the degree to which the environment allows children to feel that they initiate their actions rather than feeling coerced to act in a certain manner (Grolnick, 2003). Autonomy-supportive parents provide children with the options to choose, solve problems on their own, involve children in decision making, and exert minimal pressure to act in a certain way. Structure is the extent to which parents provide clear and consistent guidelines, expectations, and rules for their children's behaviors so that they can act in self-determined ways. Involvement is the extent to which a parent takes an active part in their children's lives. More involvement is generally better when parents provide children with resources and support that facilitate a sense of autonomy. In sport, autonomy supportive types of parenting have been associated with open communication between parents and their children and parents being able to 'read' their children's mood (Holt, Tamminen, Black, Mandigo, & Fox, 2009). Such parenting styles have also been associated with children's reports of adaptive perfectionist tendencies (Sapieja, Dunn, & Holt, 2011) and high levels of mastery orientation and satisfaction with sport participation (Juntumaa, Keskivaara, & Punamäki, 2005).

Peers. Through interactions with their

peers youth acquire a range of skills, attitudes, and behaviors that influence their development (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006). Young athletes who reported high quality sport friendships rated sport enjoyment and commitment higher than those with lower quality friendships (Weiss & Smith, 2002). Other research has shown that positive perceptions of multiple social relationships predicted higher enjoyment and perceived competence (Ullrich-French & Smith, 2006), and young athletes with adaptive peer relationships have a range of positive motivational responses (Smith, Ullrich-French, Walker, & Hurley, 2006).

Holt, Black, Tamminen, Mandigo, and Fox (2008) examined peer relationships among members of adolescent girls soccer teams over a season using a hierarchical framework (Rubin et al., 2006). They found that at the interaction level players integrated new members into the team and learned to interact with different types of people. At the relationship level players learned about managing peer conflict. At the group level a structure of leadership emerged and players learned to work together. These aspects of peer relations have consistently been cited as some of the important 'life lessons' individuals gain through their participation in sport. In particular, learning about teamwork and how to deal with 'different types' of people is a benefit of sport participation reported by adolescents (Holt et al., 2008) and young adults (Holt, Tamminen, Tink, & Black, 2009). These

skills appear to have a fairly clear transfer into other areas of life in that individuals are able to better deal with peers in group projects at school or other people in the workplace as a consequence of their involvement in sport. It may be that youth are producers of their own social experiences (Larson, 2000) and that being involved in sport allows them to explore and demonstrate social skills. In other words, these social skills may be learned fairly 'naturally' in sport settings as a result of the social interactions that are required to participate and work together to achieve personal and team goals (Holt & Jones, 2008).

CONCLUSION

Sport participation has been associated with positive and negative outcomes, hence the promotion of PYD through sport is contingent upon the way it is delivered and experienced. Various frameworks of PYD from developmental psychology have been adopted in the sport psychology literature with varying degrees of success. Some of the key issues that require consideration are the roles of coaches, parents, and peers in creating a social context in sport settings that provides ideal conditions for the promotion of PYD. As Weiss and Wiese-Bjornstal (2009) concluded "A caring and mastery-oriented climate, supportive relationships with adults and peers, and opportunities to learn social, emotional, and behavioral life skills—these are the nutrients for promoting positive youth development through physical activity" (p. 7). Furthermore, we

should look to surround children with multiple contexts in which they may experience PYD – in sport, school physical education lessons, intramurals, and instructional program (see Holt, Sehn, Spence, Newton, & Ball, 2012). Surrounding children with a range of well-designed sport and physical activity contexts, and supporting them through appropriate policies may help create conditions that enable them to thrive, to lead healthy and satisfying lives, and to engage in their community in meaningful ways as adults.

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