

Youth Leadership in a Physical Activity-Based Positive Youth Development Program
for At-Risk Youth

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Abstract

Physical activity-based positive youth development (PA-PYD) programs can serve to empower and alleviate barriers to development for at-risk youth. Youth leaders may play an important role in these programs to foster the development of their younger peers, while mutually benefiting from the program as they foster and apply skills such as leadership, communication, and self-direction. Currently, there is a gap in literature as very few studies have examined youth leadership within PA-PYD programming. Thus, the purpose of the current study was to explore the perspectives and experiences of youth leaders and their fellow program participants in relation to youth leadership within the context of a PA-PYD program for at-risk youth. Data were gathered from 16 youth leaders ($M_{age}= 13.37, SD = 1.36$) and 15 program participants ($M_{age}= 10.53, SD = 1.12$) across four different program locations, using semi-structured, one-on-one interviews. This thesis is composed of two articles. The first article used a deductive-inductive thematic analysis to better understand the experiences that youth leaders had in the program. Three themes were identified: (a) building youth leaders is a process, (b) mentorship is perceived as critical for one's leadership development, (c) trust is important for enhancing youth leader engagement. The second article also used a deductive-inductive thematic analysis to examine how youth leaders perceive the influence they have on younger peers who participate in the physical activity-based youth development program, as well as how these program participants perceive the role and impact of the youth leaders. Five themes emerged from the analysis, which were: (a) learning and building skills, (b) receiving support, (c) enjoyment, (d) relatability, and (e) lack of maturity. This research contributes to current gaps in the literature on youth leadership within physical activity-based youth programming and provides practical recommendations to improve such programming.

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List of Abbreviations

BNT: Basic Psychological Needs Theory

DST: Developmental Systems Theory

GJWHF: Girls Just Wanna Have Fun

PA: Physical Activity

PA-PYD: Physical Activity-based Positive Youth Development

PYD: Positive Youth Development

SDT: Self-Determination Theory

SUPER: Sports United to Promote Education and Recreation

TPSR: Teaching Personal Social Responsibility

Introduction

The field of positive youth development (PYD) has grown tremendously over the past 15 years and is committed to understanding how youth can develop the skills and assets needed to succeed in their lives and become contributing citizens (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004; Damon, 2004; Lerner, 2005). As a result, researchers have written extensively about what PYD is (e.g., Damon, 2004; Danish & Forneris, 2008; Lerner, 2005), ways in which PYD can be fostered (e.g., Berlin, Dworkin, Eames, Menconi, & Perkins, 2007; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Gould & Carson, 2008; Perkins & Noam, 2007) as well as the impact of participation in PYD programming (e.g., Catalano et al., 2004; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2015; Ullrich-French & McDonough, 2013).

Little research – either theoretical or applied – has examined the role or impact of youth leaders within PYD-based programming. Having youth leaders involved in PYD programming involves intentionally placing youth in leadership roles such as facilitating program activities (Hellison, 1995). It could be suggested that given the overall objective of the PYD field, the involvement and development of youth leaders would be encouraged and more abundant. As a result, research designed to understand how PYD programs can foster the development of youth leaders as well as the impact that youth leaders can have in the implementation of PYD programming is warranted. Examination of youth leadership may be a particularly pertinent area of study for programming that focuses on at-risk youth, as these youths often face multiple barriers in achieving optimal development. Moreover, understanding how leadership roles can help empower at-risk youth to become positive contributors to the development of themselves and their younger peers, could highlight ways to improve the development and implementation of PYD programming for at-risk youth (Delp, Brown, & Domenzain, 2005).

Literature Review

Positive Youth Development

PYD is both a field of inquiry and an approach to youth programming that focuses on the development of the life skills, talents, attributes, and potential, of each individual in multiple life domains (Lerner, 2005; Ullrich-French, McDonough, & Smith, 2012). This is in contrast to approaches that are focused strictly on the reduction of negative behaviours, such as inactivity, anti-social behaviour, substance use, and delinquency (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Ullrich-French et al., 2012).

The PYD field emerged from theoretical assumptions that are proposed within developmental systems theory (DST; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Lerner & Castellino, 2002). Developmental systems theory involves taking into account the bi-directional influences of one's surrounding context (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Lerner & Castellino, 2002) and optimal development can occur when the context (e.g., a positive environment involving supporting leaders and structured activities) is aligned with youths' strengths (e.g., building capacity to lead and contribute to others; Lerner, Napolitano, Boyd, Mueller, & Callina, 2014). As such, it is believed that using a PYD approach can help create an environment where positive interactions can occur with mutual benefits to the individual and their environment. Since the current study is focused on understanding how contextual factors that foster youth leadership as well as youth leadership can impact both the leader's development as well as the development of those they lead, a PYD approach is a natural fit for this study.

At-risk youth are often viewed as a population that could benefit from PYD-based programming as these programs are designed to offer an opportunity to experience belonging in a supportive environment, as well as developing a number of skills that will not only help these

youth to overcome barriers, but also to eventually become contributing citizens (Brendtro & Brokenleg, 2012; Madsen, Hicks, & Thompson, 2011; Wright & Li, 2009). At-risk youth are defined as youth who face barriers to development, and who may be at risk of disengagement and negative outcomes such as low rates of physical activity, high rates of obesity, drug and alcohol abuse, poor emotional well-being, negative health outcomes, feelings of fear/lack of safety, high rates of school dropout, low job success, violence, high rates of delinquency, high rates of incarceration, teen pregnancy, and low access to health promotional resources (Brendtro & Brokenleg, 2012; Collingwood, 1997; Goodman, Slap, & Huang, 2003; Kroenke, 2008; Madsen et al., 2011; Ullrich-French et al., 2012; Wright & Li, 2009; Yang, Lynch, Schulenberg, Diez Roux, & Raghunathan, 2008). Although this study will use the term at-risk youth, it should be noted that others have referred to at-risk youth as disaffected youth (Armour, Sandford, & Duncombe, 2013; Wright & Li, 2009), low-income youth (Bruening, Clark, & Mudrick, 2015; Holt, Sehn, Spence, Newton, & Ball, 2012; Ullrich-French & McDonough, 2013), or underserved youth (Forneris, Whitley, & Barker, 2013; Martinek & Hellison, 2016; Walsh, 2008).

Youth Leadership

As mentioned above, youth leadership involves placing youth in leadership roles and providing them the opportunity to facilitate youth activities and programming (Hellison, 1995). Research in the domain of youth leadership in PYD programming is scarce and both research studies as well as applied interventions that involve some form of youth leadership do not tend to be grounded in a consistent or universal set of theoretical frameworks to shape their implementation. As a result, the review of studies discussed in this section are from a variety of fields including college mentoring programs, agricultural education, school-based programming,

leadership in sport, and adult leadership. Research from the field of higher education has found numerous benefits associated with youth being able to take on leadership roles. For example, a comprehensive review examining the benefits of youth leader programming found that post-secondary students who are exposed to and interact with youth leaders who are also post-secondary students develop a stronger sense of community, more confidence to pursue their interests, greater integration into academic life, greater sense of belonging, and a rich network of resources useful for their success (Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, 2008). Moreover, the youth leaders themselves benefited from greater awareness and knowledge of their program, meaningful relationships with peers and staff, enhanced sense of belongingness, greater sense of commitment to tasks, increased confidence to manage groups, as well as the development of life skills such as interpersonal communication, organization, time management, written and verbal communication, and knowledge retention (Hoffman et al., 2008).

In a more recent review, Shook and Keup (2012) outlined a number of developmental benefits for youth leaders such as greater motivation to participate in activities, more meaningful relationships, and an enhanced sense of belongingness for both the youth leaders and the fellow peers with whom these leaders interacted. However, although studies have shown a number of benefits associated with being a youth leader, Hoffman and colleagues (2008) also note that there can be unintended negative consequences due to this leadership role. For example, if a youth leader becomes over-involved it may lead to a decrease in their grades, higher levels of stress, and lack of time available for other commitments.

Fertman and van Linden (1999) assert that developing into a youth leader is a developmental process that occurs over time rather than one that occurs 'overnight' once one assumes the leadership role. They propose a developmental process that is made up of three

stages: awareness, interaction, and mastery. In the first stage, youth do not perceive themselves as ‘leaders’ yet, but are in a phase to develop an awareness of their potential to become leaders. This is often a result of time spent observing and recognizing how people become leaders, the types of people who are typically identified as leaders, and the expectations a leader is to meet. In the second stage, youth begin to expand and build confidence in their potential to become leaders and this is often achieved through interaction with others and trying out new leadership skills. In the third and final stage, individuals master their leadership abilities through continued application and modelling for other youth. The authors assert that through this process youth can develop an array of interpersonal or life skills – particularly, leadership skills, communication skills, decision-making skills, and stress management skills (Fertman & van Linden, 1999; Van Linden & Fertman, 1998). This study was guided by this three-stage development process for examining perspectives and experiences of youth leaders in a physical activity program. Moreover, this heuristic framework will help in not only exploring initial factors that facilitated youth becoming leaders, but also how their interactions with leaders and peers helped facilitate leadership development, and their experiences in applying their newly developed leadership skills.

A second model of youth leadership was proposed by Martinek and Hellison (2009) and is based on the *Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility* (TPSR) model (Hellison, 1995, 2011). More specifically, this model of leadership development was grounded in Martinek & Hellison’s work with at-risk youth in physical education and physical activity contexts. Their model is comprised of four stages. The first stage involves youth learning to take charge of themselves and their own actions. The second stage has youth take on leadership roles and each become aware of their potential, as they help and care for their peers. The third stage extends the

responsibilities of the youth leaders and is designed to enhance their caring toward others and develop life skills such as conflict resolution. The final stage focuses on helping youth develop identities as leaders and transferring the leaderships skills learned to multiple life domains.

Martinek and Hellison (2009) also discuss strategies adult leaders can use to positively influence leadership development throughout the four stages. The first is power sharing, where youth take on developmentally appropriate decision-making power. The second is self-reflection, where youth monitor their actions throughout and try to recognize areas of strength and/or areas that need improvement. The third is relationship development, where youth develop strong, respectful, and trusting relationships with others, particularly adult leaders. The fourth is transfer, where youth learn to transfer the skills they learned to other domains. Finally, the fifth strategy is integration, where each of the preceding processes are co-existing and present throughout the youth's development through the four stages.

Youth leader – adult leader interactions. To our knowledge, there have been no studies that have focused on youth leaders' perceptions of how adult leaders influence their development into leaders, which is another gap that this thesis addressed. Nevertheless, there is relevant literature from which we based this study. First, research has shown that one of the strongest predictors of positive outcomes for youth within PYD programming is their experience of stable, supportive relationships with their program leaders (Vandell, Larson, Mahoney, & Watts, 2015). Moreover, researchers consistently assert that adults leaders are an essential and critical component of successful youth programming as they are the ones who structure the context and interact with the youth (Lerner, 2005; Rhodes, 2004; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2015).

Second, in more recent work within the field of youth physical activity and sport there has been a focus on the impact of coaches using an autonomy-supportive leadership style on

PYD outcomes. Autonomy-supportive coaches are coaches that support an individual's self-sufficiency by providing them choices in activities, presenting opportunities to work independently, giving individualized consideration, and offering constructive feedback that does not control behaviour (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, & Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2009; Isoard-Gauthier, Guillet-Descas, & Lemyre, 2012). This leadership style has been associated with a stronger satisfaction of basic psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, relatedness, and competence), an increase in self-determined motivation, and a decrease in negative outcomes such as burnout (Bartholomew et al., 2009; Isoard-Gauthier et al., 2012). Research has also shown that when adult leaders allow for greater collaboration with youth it can help to strengthen ties between the youth and adults, and subsequent willingness to have youth take on more responsibility within a program (Jones & Perkins, 2006). For example, Jones and Perkins' (2006) work with the Engaging Youth Serving Community Initiative, an organization that hosts youth-led collaboration on projects in several rural communities across the United States, examined youth and adult perceptions of their involvement, and their interactions with one another. Results indicated that in youth-led collaborations, which could be described as an autonomy-supportive approach, both the youth and adults gained more positive perceptions of youth involvement (e.g., taking initiative, commitment, showing interest) and youth-adult interactions (e.g., getting along, mentoring experiences, mutual learning), in comparison to adult-led collaborations (Jones & Perkins, 2005, 2006). Based on these findings it is warranted to further examine the youth leaders' perceptions of how adult leaders may foster their leadership development and whether the use of an autonomy-supportive leadership style helps facilitate leadership development.

Third, within the PYD field the youth's trust in leaders is often seen as a key to the power of these relationships (Halpern, Barker, & Mollard, 2000; Hirsch et al., 2000; Strobel, Kirshner,

O'Donoghue, & Wallin McLaughlin, 2008). However, very little research has examined the concept of trust between adult leaders and youth leaders, or between youth leaders and program participants. One study by Griffith and Larson (2015) examined how a trusting relationship between adult leaders and program participants impacts the participants' experiences in the program. Youth in this qualitative study reported that when they trusted their adult leader they were more likely to: value their adult leader's input and guidance, increase their motivation to participate in the program, use their adult leader as a mentor to approach for advice, use this interaction as a model for building future relationships with other adult leaders, and gain a greater sense of belongingness in the program (Griffith & Larson, 2015). However, to our knowledge, this is the only study that has examined the concept of trust within youth programming and these findings warrant further investigation. Hence, this thesis sought to further examine the role of trust in the development of youth leaders.

Youth leader – program participant interactions. Although there is a prevalence of literature focused on adult-youth relationships in PYD programming (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Lerner, 2005; Rhodes, 2004; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2015), research focused on youth leaders and their relationship with their younger peers they lead is scarce. However, decades of research on peer relationships in general has shown that peers have a strong influence and, as a result, numerous developmental theories highlight the significant role that peers play in the developmental process (Choukas-Bradley, 2015; Hoffman et al., 2008; Price & Weiss, 2011; Prinstein & Dodge, 2008). Moreover, research has shown that students often have more positive perceptions of their relationships with peers than adults, possibly due to relatability and familiarity (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; Mustillo, Dorsey, & Farmer, 2005). Potentially, this could

imply that youth would get along better with youth leaders than adult leaders, as they may find them more approachable due to their proximity in age and similar life experiences.

Research in the area of mentoring has shown that youth leader and program participant interactions in after-school programs can often involve mentorship experiences, where leaders (mentors) facilitate the skill development of youth (mentees) through sustained, high quality relationships (Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe, & Taylor, 2006; Rhodes & DuBois, 2006). Mentoring relationships are usually characterized by providing emotional support to youth (being approachable, handling their problems), guiding youth (through instruction, role modelling), and advocacy (providing opportunities for youth to build skills, access to connections; Mekinda & Hirsch, 2014). These mentoring relationships can adopt different arrangements, such as one-on-one mentoring, group mentoring (one mentor and multiple mentees), collective mentoring (multiple mentors and one mentee), and tri-level mentoring (mentees receive mentorship, and are also mentors to younger youth; Deutsch, 2008; Mekinda & Hirsch, 2014). The research on mentoring has been associated with outcomes for mentees in the dimensions of positive social and emotional development (e.g., expressing emotions, social relationships), and cognitive development (e.g., academic performance, school engagement), and has been conceptually associated with stronger identity development (e.g., positive orientation to the future; DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011; Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006). In addition, effective mentoring has been shown to lead to increased engagement and retention of youth (Mekinda & Hirsch, 2014).

Thus, it appears that the incorporation of youth leaders may be an effective means for fostering PYD outcomes. However, very little, if any, research has examined this relationship within PYD programming. Therefore, more research is needed to understand youth leaders'

perceived contribution to the development of program participants, as well as the program participants' experiences under the guidance of youth leaders. In particular, looking at whether aspects of relatability and/or familiarity play a role. This thesis was designed to contribute to these gaps in the current literature.

Physical Activity-Based Positive Youth Development Programs

It has been recognized that sport and physical activity contexts may provide a great platform for the implementation of PYD programming for and with at-risk youth. As a result, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of physical activity and sport-based youth development (PA-PYD) programs for youth over the past 15 years. In addition, research has shown that when structured appropriately, PA-PYD programs can provide opportunities for interconnectedness in a group environment as well as the development of life skills such as goal setting, respect for others, leadership, time management, responsibility, teamwork, and interpersonal skills that are believed to enable youth to successfully transition into adulthood (Danish, Forneris, Hodge, & Heke, 2004; Danish, Forneris, & Wallace, 2005; Danish, Nellen, & Owens, 1996; Danish & Nellen, 1997; Gould & Carson, 2008; Holt & Neely, 2011; Whitley, Hayden, & Gould, 2016). Moreover, PA-PYD programming relies on adult leaders, often referred to as coaches, to facilitate programming and activities and these coaches have been identified as the primary influencers in a youth's life after the parents (Gould & Carson, 2008; Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, & Jones, 2005). Therefore, these programs may represent an ideal opportunity to provide youth opportunities to take on leadership roles. However, of the numerous PA-PYD programs, only a handful of programs have intentionally incorporated leadership roles for youth.

One such program is the *Sports United to Promote Education and Recreation* (SUPER) program (Danish et al., 2004). The SUPER program integrates the teaching of life skills within sport and is structured to provide youth the opportunity to develop sport or physical activity skills, to learn life skills with life skill-specific activities, and time to integrate the life skill within the sport or physical activity skills being taught. The program consists of 18 different modules and is implemented by older youth leaders (known in SUPER as peer leaders). These peer leaders have typically been university students, ideally from the same or surrounding communities, who teach the program to middle school students living in at-risk communities. The rationale of having university students rather than adult leaders is that they are closer in age and therefore may serve as more effective role models, as well as concrete images of what the at-risk youth themselves can become. Evaluations of SUPER have revealed a number of positive outcomes for the program participants, including increases in prosocial values, confidence for setting goals and problem solving, knowledge of life skills, and positive thinking (Brunelle, Danish, & Forneris, 2007; Goudas, Dermitzaki, Leondari, & Danish, 2006; Kolovelonis, Dimitriou, Goudas, & Gerodimos, 2006; Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish, & Theodorakis, 2005). However, no research was conducted to examine the experiences of the youth leaders or the perceived impact they had on the program.

Another example of PA-PYD programming that has been in existence for decades and continues to be implemented in various places within the United States are programs based on the *Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility* (TPSR) model (Hellison, 1995, 2011). The leadership model developed by Martinek and Hellison (2009) presented above stemmed from many years of involvement in TPSR-based programming, and as a result there are several overlapping features. Programs that use the TPSR model are designed to develop youth into

leaders through the integration of five program components (Hellison, 1995, 2011). The first component is *respecting the rights and feelings of others*, where youth learn the ability to be able to control their own behavior. The second component is *effort and cooperation*, and this is a time when youth practice applying themselves to a particular task. The third component is *self-direction*, where youth learn to set goals and persevere in the pursuit of those goals. The fourth component is *helping others and leadership*, and involves youth developing leadership skills and taking on leadership role where they are responsible for leading a group towards an agreed upon goal. The fifth and final component is *transference*, and focuses on having youth practice the skills they have learned in other life domains to facilitate skill transfer.

Results from evaluations of TPSR-based programming has demonstrated a number of positive outcomes for the youth leaders over the years such as higher self-efficacy, higher self-control, positive attitudes, improved school attendance, improvement in academic performance, and lower dropout rates (Cummings, 1998; Escartí, Gutiérrez, Pascual, & Marín, 2013; Walsh, 2008; Weiss, 2011; Wright, 2012; Wright, Li, Ding, & Pickering, 2010). However, none of these studies examined the contextual factors that facilitated the development of the youth leaders.

A more recent PA-PYD program called *Girls Just Wanna Have Fun* combined the TPSR model and the SUPER program format (Bean, Forneris, & Fortier, 2015). The program focused on enhancing the health and well-being of at-risk female youth by incorporating a variety of physical activities (e.g., volleyball, soccer, yoga, and kickboxing) and a variety of life skills (e.g., goal setting, emotion regulation, confidence). In addition, the program integrated intentional opportunities for the female youth to take on leadership roles such as teaching program components to younger peers. However, the results from the program evaluation only focused on outcomes for the youth leaders themselves, which indicated that when provided intentional

opportunities for leadership youth report a number of PYD outcomes such as increased perceptions of leadership abilities and self-confidence (Bean et al., 2015).

In sum, there are a few PA-PYD programs that have integrated youth leaders or opportunities for youth to take on leadership roles within the program. Moreover, evaluation of these programs does offer initial evidence that providing youth with leadership roles can have several positive benefits for both the youth leaders themselves as well as the participants in the program. However, most these evaluations were quantitative in nature and do not provide an in-depth understanding of youth leadership within the context of PA-PYD programming. Hence, this thesis helps to address this gap in the literature.

Purpose

The purpose of the current study was to explore the perspectives and experiences of youth leaders and their fellow program participants in relation to youth leadership within the context of a PA-PYD program for at-risk youth. From the perspectives of youth leaders, this research aimed to understand what they perceived as facilitating their development as leaders, their experiences interacting with adult leaders as well as the youth program participants, and their perceptions of contribution to the program. From the perspectives of program participants, this study sought to understand their general experiences in the program as well as their perceptions of the youth leaders. Thus, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What contextual factors are perceived by youth as facilitating their development as a leader?
2. How does being a youth leader impact one's own development?
3. How do youth leaders perceive the impact they are having on program participants?

4. How do program participants perceive the youth leader's support in their development?

Methodology

A multiple case study methodology was used in this study to explore the research questions outlined above. A case study has been defined by Berg (2007) as an approach that involves “systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event, or group to permit the researcher to effectively understand how the subject operates or functions” (p. 317). A multiple case study is when a number of cases are studied jointly to explore a phenomenon, group, or condition; these help to generate a greater understanding of a phenomenon across multiple related contexts (Stake, 2005). The cases in this study were four different sites of the same PA-PYD program being implemented within a city in Ontario, Canada. These cases were selected as they represent a PA-PYD program that targets at-risk youth and a main component of the program is the integration of youth leaders. Moreover, these cases align with Roth and Brooks-Gunn's (2003, 2015) criteria for a PYD program: (a) program goals that value and intend to promote PYD, (b) an atmosphere that supports the development of positive relationships with peers and leaders, empowers youth, expectations of positive behaviour, and opportunities for recognition, (c) activities that engage youth in building skills, challenges, and developmental opportunities. Thus, this multiple case study allowed the researchers to identify themes, issues, and specific situations related to youth leadership within a physical-activity based PYD program for at-risk youth.

The paradigm in which this research is grounded is constructivism. Constructivism focuses on how people perceive their worlds as well as construct their own realities based on how they interpret these perceptions (Crotty, 1998). Such realities are formed through a

participant's interactions with the social environment, as well as their understanding and interpretation of historical and cultural norms that are relevant to their situation (Creswell, 2012). Constructivists argue that although a program may be delivered identically to all its participants, each participant will have their own unique experiences. For this study, it was assumed that no one participant would interpret their experiences of the program in the same way. Participants may have had different interpretations of meaning based on their interactions in the program, their differences in upbringing, and cultural backgrounds. As a result, this paradigm calls for a methodology that encourages the use of broad, open-ended questioning, like the case study, in order for participants to construct the meaning of their situation (Creswell, 2012). The specific methods for this research are outlined in the two articles presented below.

Presentation of the Articles

Two articles are presented in this thesis. The first article responds to the first two research questions in that it examined the contextual factors perceived by the youth as facilitating their development as a leader and how being a leader impacts their own development. The second article is focused on the third and fourth research questions as it examined the youth leaders' perceptions of the impact they were having on the younger participants in the program as well as how these program participants perceive the leader's role in supporting their development.

Article 1

**Youth Leaders' Perceptions of Leadership Development in a
Physical Activity-Based Youth Program**

Abstract

Providing meaningful leadership roles to youth may help them to develop a strong set of life skills (e.g., confidence, decision-making, and self-direction) and therefore is an important area of study. However, few physical activity-based youth development programs provide youth with the opportunity to become leaders. In addition, very limited research exists on the processes and outcomes involved in the development of youth leaders within physical activity contexts. The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of youth leaders in a physical activity-based youth development program. Sixteen youth leaders ($M_{age} = 13.37$, $SD = 1.36$) from one such program participated in a one-time semi-structured interview that explored their general program experiences, their perceptions of how adult leaders within the program influenced their development as youth leaders, as well as perceived outcomes associated with the opportunity to be leaders in a physical activity-based youth development program. Three themes emerged from these data: (a) building youth leaders is a process, (b) mentorship is perceived as critical for one's development, and (c) trust is important for enhancing youth leader engagement. These findings brought forth an understanding of the process through which youth can develop into leaders. The youth leaders also believed that they developed several skills due to their roles as leaders. Research and practical implications are discussed.

Youth Perceptions' of Leadership Development in a Physical Activity-Based Youth Program

There is mounting evidence that collaboration with youth by offering them leadership roles, responsibilities, and voice in programming is associated with gains in positive perceptions of youth involvement and youth-adult relationships by both the youth and adults (Jones & Perkins, 2005, 2006; Larson, 2000; Libby, Sedonaen, & Bliss, 2006). Thus, researchers and practitioners have advocated for opportunities for youth to take on meaningful leadership roles within youth programming (Gould, 2016; Martinek & Hellison, 2009; Shanahan, 2015). Physical activity-based contexts are quite common and popular among youth as they can provide opportunities to enhance youth development, such as leadership (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005; Hellison, Martinek, Walsh, & Holt, 2008). However, little research has examined the experiences of youth as well as the impact that they may have when they are intentionally provided the opportunity to be leaders within physical activity-based positive youth development (PA-PYD) programming.

Fertman and van Linden (1999) proposed a developmental process for youth leadership that spans three stages: (a) awareness, (b) interaction, and (c) mastery. In the awareness stage, youth are introduced to a leadership role and begin to generate an idea of what a leader is as well as how to become an effective one. Often this can be done through observation of other leaders to recognize what characterizes effective leadership, and the expectations those leaders face. In the interaction stage, youth start to take on increased responsibility and can begin to experience benefits of being a leader from interacting with others. In the last stage, mastery, youth further apply their newly developed leadership skills and begin to identify as a leader. The skills developed throughout the three stages can include interpersonal or life skills such as communication, decision-making, and stress management (Fertman & van Linden, 1999). Youth

also learn information about what it means to be a leader, and attitudes associated with being a leader (Fertman & van Linden, 1999). To date, there has been little empirical testing of this model, however its intuitive value in understanding youth leadership as a developmental process provides merit for its use as this study's guiding framework.

Another model of youth leadership development was proposed by Martinek and Hellison (2009), based on their work with at-risk youth in physical education and physical activity contexts. The model was based on *Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility* (TPSR) model (Hellison, 1995, 2011), which focuses on developing responsibility for one's self, and caring for others. Their approach to leader development involves four stages. The first stage, *taking responsibility*, has youth learn to take charge of themselves and their own actions. The second stage, *leadership awareness*, has youth take on a leadership role and become aware of their potential, as they help and care for their peers. The third stage, *cross-age leadership*, broadens the youth leaders' responsibilities to manage and look after younger youth, which helps to enhance their caring toward others, and gaining a greater capacity for skills such as conflict resolution. The final stage, *self-actualized leadership*, has youth learning to build an identity around leadership, and to be able to transfer these leadership skills to other life domains.

This model also outlines various strategies that can be used by adult leaders to positive influence the leadership development process. One strategy is power sharing, where adults give youth a developmentally appropriate amount of decision-making power. A second strategy is self-reflection, where youth are asked to monitor their own actions and recognize areas of strength as well as areas of improvement. A third strategy is relationship building, that focuses on helping youth strengthen relationships and develop a sense of respect and trust with others. A fourth strategy is transfer, where youth are encouraged to transfer the skills they learned to other

life domains. A fifth strategy is integration, where the youth work on recognizing how each of the preceding processes can co-exist and enhance their leadership development.

Like Fertman and van Linden's model, few empirical tests have examined the TPSR model in relation to the processes involved in the development of the youth leaders. However, both models propose that leadership is a developmental process that occurs over time, and that youth can progress through these stages while attaining skills for their own advancement (Fertman & van Linden, 1999; Martinek & Hellison, 2009). These models helped guide the researchers in this study as they explored the experiences of youth leaders.

As mentioned above, little research has focused on youth leadership, particularly in the context of physical activity and sport-based programming. As a result, the following sections present related research that has examined factors thought to be important for fostering positive youth development (PYD) outcomes for youth. The process of developing into youth leaders may be influenced by the relationships that youth leaders have with others in programming including both the adult leaders who oversee the implementation of the program, peers who may also be in leadership positions, and younger peers whom they lead.

In regards to the relationship between adult leaders and youth, a consistent finding in the literature has been that the development of strong, supportive relationships with adult leaders is one of the best predictors of PYD outcomes for youth (Hirsch, Deutsch, & DuBois, 2011; Rhodes, 2004; Rhodes, Grossman, & Roffman, 2002; Theokas & Lerner, 2006; Vandell, Larson, Mahoney, & Watts, 2015). Program staff are the "critical ingredient" of sustained, high-quality mentoring relationships, through provision of emotional support (e.g., compassion, caring), guidance (e.g., giving advice, role modelling), and sponsorship/advocacy (e.g., providing connections outside of the program; Grossman et al., 2002; Hirsch et al., 2011; Mekinda &

Hirsch, 2014; Rhodes, 2004). Research has also shown that strong mentoring relationships can be related to PYD outcomes such as improved cognitive development (e.g., academic performance, life skills), social and emotional development (e.g., caring for others), and identity development (e.g., positive future orientation; DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011; Rhodes & DuBois, 2006). However, to date there have been no specific studies that have examined the role of adult leaders in the development of youth leaders in PA-PYD programming.

An important theory that has gained significant interest from researchers who study youth development, particularly within the context of physical activity and sport-based programming – is basic psychological needs theory (BNT; Deci & Ryan, 2002). Basic psychological needs theory is a sub-theory of self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1980) and has been used as a framework for understanding how one's social environment can influence one's development and well-being. This sub-theory posits that in order to attain positive developmental outcomes, one would need to satisfy the needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness – individuals can vary on the extent of satisfaction each need requires to lead to these outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy is a sense of one's volition to act out of their own interests and values, competence is one's perceptions about their abilities to complete and master tasks, and relatedness is a sense of belongingness to others in one's social environment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In physical activity and sport contexts, it has been found that coaches can adopt an autonomy-supportive style in order to support the three basic psychological needs for youth (Adie, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2008, 2012; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). This can involve acknowledging participants' perspectives, providing choices to youth, offering them opportunities to work independently, and providing them feedback on their involvement that is

positive and constructive (Bean, Harlow, & Kendellen, 2017; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). The present study will explore whether youth leaders perceive support for their basic psychological needs as playing a role in their leadership development, as no research to date has explored such a relationship.

Trust is also a concept that has gained some attention in youth programming literature. Trust can be understood as a judgment of confidence that someone else is reliable and has one's best interests in mind (Rotenberg, 2010). In youth programming, the strength of relationships between youth and adults has often been attributed to youth's trust in their leaders (Halpern, Barker, & Mollard, 2000; Hirsch et al., 2000; Strobel, Kirshner, O'Donoghue, & Wallin McLaughlin, 2008), and this trust has been proposed to enhance the influence of the program on PYD outcomes for youth (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). For example, one study conducted by Griffith and Larson (2015) found that program participants who trusted their adult leaders were more likely to follow the instructions of their leaders, engage and retain their participation in programming, approach their adult leaders for guidance, use their relationship with their leader as a model for how they pursue other relationships, and perceive more belongingness in the program. These findings provide initial evidence of the importance that trust may play in youth programming, but more research is necessary on how trust may play a role in the development of youth leaders.

In sum, limited research has been conducted on youth leadership within PA-PYD programming. Thus, a gap exists in the literature on what contextual factors may impact the experiences and development of youth leadership within these programs. Physical activity-based contexts are quite common and popular among youth as they can provide opportunities to enhance youth development (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005; Hellison, Martinek, Walsh,

& Holt, 2008). Hence, research designed to gain an understanding of the experiences of youth leadership in PA-PYD programming is important and may provide practical recommendations for the optimization of youth leadership practices. The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of youth in a PA-PYD program that intentionally incorporates a youth leadership role. More specifically, two research questions were proposed: (a) What contextual factors are perceived by youth as facilitating their development as a leader? and (b) How does being a youth leader impact one's own development?

Methods

The paradigm adopted for this research was the constructivist paradigm (Creswell, 2012; Crotty, 1998). This paradigm acknowledges that one's own reality is a result of one's unique interpretation of his or her interactions in the social environment; thus, multiple realities can exist (Creswell, 2012; Crotty, 1998). The methodology chosen to answer the research questions was a multiple case study (Stake, 2005). A multiple case study explores a phenomenon, population, or condition across several cases in order to gain a greater understanding of what is being explored (Stake, 2005). The paradigm and methodology used within this study are appropriate, as the purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of youth from various sites of the same PA-PYD program. It was presumed that youth would likely interpret their experiences at the different sites in a variety of ways and the goal of the research was to capture these various experiences.

Context

This study was conducted in collaboration with an organization based in Ontario that has numerous sites which offer the same PA-PYD program. This program was selected as it aligns with Roth and Brooks-Gunn's (2003, 2015) criteria for a PYD program in that the program: (a)

emphasizes program goals that value and intend to promote PYD; (b) provides an atmosphere that supports the development of positive relationships with peers and leaders, empowers youth, expectations of positive behaviour, and opportunities for recognition; and (c) offers activities that engage youth in activities that involve building skills, challenges, and developmental opportunities. More specifically, the organization's mission is to provide educational support to at-risk youth to help empower them to achieve their potential. These clubs run after-school, in 2-hour sessions, once per week throughout the school year for a total of 32 weeks. Each session includes a welcome with attendance taken along with physical activities, snack time, literacy activities, time for personal reflection and a debrief session (e.g., recognition of achievements). Each program site has a head coordinator, a school representative, a team of adult leaders (known as adult coaches), and a team of youth leaders (known as junior coaches). The program participants of the programs are known as club members. Mentoring relationships between adult coaches, junior coaches, and club members were present, however they were mostly informal in nature and their arrangements could vary by club.

Participants

Sixteen junior coaches from four different program sites in Ontario participated in this study. The junior coaches ranged in age from 12 to 17 years old (See Tables 1 and 2 for demographic information). Almost all the junior coaches were previous participants of the same program ($n = 14$), while the other two participants were volunteers who had no previous experience with the program. The junior coaches underwent an application process in which they were asked to explain why they should be chosen as a leader (see Appendix A and B). If selected, as all junior coaches were in the present study, they signed an agreement about their responsibilities (see Appendix C), and underwent a training session to familiarize themselves

with a typical day in the program, the importance of their role, and responsibilities and expectations associated with this role.

The 16 consenting junior coaches were recruited to participate in the study using both a purposive sampling method and a convenience sampling method. Purposive sampling is used when the researcher selects cases with a particular purpose in mind (Sparkes & Smith, 2013) and was the primary sampling method used for this study. Given that this research aimed to gain an understanding of the youth leader experience in general, the researcher sought to recruit both male and female junior coaches, who had varying levels of experience as leaders, including those leaders who have participated in the program previously as well as those who were not former club members. The head coordinator of each club was approached for their assistance in selection of participants, to help choose youth leaders whom they felt meet these criteria and could articulate themselves (and their experiences) well. However, convenience sampling was also used when participants were readily available and the researcher faced time-limitations (Bryman, Bell, & Teevan, 2012).

Procedure

Following ethical approval from the University of Ottawa's Office of Research Ethics and Integrity, the data collection process began once consent procedures were completed (Appendix D). Data collection involved having the recruited junior coaches each participate in a one-on-one, face-to-face, semi-structured interview. The interviews were administered during the last three weeks of the program (May 2016), either during program time or during school time throughout participants' lunch breaks. All the interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder. Interviews lasted between 10 to 35 minutes ($M = 24:31$).

Semi-structured interviews. As mentioned above, semi-structured interviews were the

method chosen for this research as this method is appropriate for a multiple case study. Further, this method is consistent with a constructivist paradigm because it allows for the exploration of experiences, beliefs, and motivations of the participants (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008; Ponterotto, 2005). In addition, semi-structured interviews allow a conversation to be guided in pre-determined directions based on areas that the researcher wants to explore, but also provides the researcher some freedom to probe and explore in novel directions that may arise based on the responses of the interviewees (Sparkes & Smith, 2013).

The lead researcher conducted all 16 interviews with the junior coaches and an interview guide was developed prior to the start of the interviews (Appendix E). The interview guide was composed of three sections. The first section sought to gain an understanding of the youth's background and general experiences in the program. The second section explored the youth's development as a leader (e.g., why they decided to become a junior coach, what they like or dislike about the program as a leader, contextual factors that influenced their development as a leader, what they believe they have learned or are currently learning through their leadership experience). The third section explored the youth's perceived contribution and relationships with the younger program participants. This study focused on the data gathered from the first two sections of the interview guide. Probes and follow-up questions were used to explore areas of the junior coaches' experiences further. For instance, to examine support for youth's autonomy, probes included asking junior coaches "Does your leader provide you with choices?" and a follow-up question based on whether they answer "yes" – "What kinds of choices do your leaders provide you?"

Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis, following the guidelines outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006). In the first step, all participants were assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. All interviews were transcribed verbatim upon completion, and any words used as fillers (e.g., 'so', 'like', 'uhm') were removed. During this stage, any initial ideas about these data were taken note of for future reference. Transcripts were imported into the qualitative data analysis software, NVivo 11 (QSR International, 2015), to be coded and managed. The lead researcher, along with a critical friend with knowledge in the field of youth development programming and many years of experience analyzing qualitative data, independently read over three transcripts. After this, they met to discuss their findings and interpretations. This helped to enhance trustworthiness and to provide direction as to which areas to explore for the rest of the analysis.

In the second step, the lead researcher proceeded to read and re-read all the transcripts to further enhance awareness and understanding of the content within the transcripts. During this step, a deductive-inductive analysis was conducted. The deductive analysis involved taking each passage in the transcript that was recognized as related to a theoretical concept identified in the literature review and extracting and coding it under an identifying label. For instance, concepts such as trust and autonomy-support, as well as Fertman and van Linden's stages of leadership development (1999) were used to inform the deductive coding process. An inductive approach was then used to extract and code excerpts that were identified as interesting or significant, but were not related to a previously identified theoretical concept. Multiple extracts from the transcript could be coded under the same or a different label. This procedure continued with each transcript.

In the third step, the transcripts were read once again, and the coded extracts and their respective labels were reviewed, with any missing or extracts coded under two different labels being identified and addressed. During this review process, labels could be grouped together, omitted, and/or renamed to begin the development of potential themes and related subthemes. Given the limited duration of interviews, a content analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was employed to recognize if there was enough content in these data to adequately address the research questions. The results of this content analysis can be found in Table 3 of the labels coded, each grouped under potential subthemes and themes. In this table, all items (labels, subthemes, and themes) are listed along with the number of interviews in which the extracts were drawn from (sources) and the number of extracts that were drawn in total for each item (references). Given the large number of labels created, and the number of passages extracted from across many participants, there was enough content to justify continuing analysis and generating a thematic map.

In the fourth step, potential themes were reviewed in relation to the coded extracts and the overall data to begin generating the thematic map. The quality of the extracts as opposed to the quantity were taken more significantly into account when generating the themes. This was an iterative process in redefining which labels fall under which subthemes and themes, and which themes represent the overall data in relation to the study's research questions. In the fifth step, themes were defined and renamed to illustrate a clear story that describes these data. For instance, the theme that grouped mentorship experiences together was renamed from "receiving mentorship" to "mentorship is perceived as critical in one's leadership development". The final step involved developing the report of findings, selecting compelling extracts to represent each theme and subtheme.

Trustworthiness

To augment the trustworthiness and credibility of the study, the researchers employed several practices. To help limit the effects of the researcher's assumptions in biasing how the data would be received and interpreted, a bracketing interview was performed prior to and post data collection. This bracketing interview helped the lead researcher to be reflexive, bringing awareness to his underlying assumptions, emotions, cognitions, and experiences; and enabled him to understand how his constructed realities can shape his world views (Rolls & Relf, 2006). For instance, the researcher had to bracket experiences of his own time as a youth leader in community programming, to remain mindful of his influence on his interpretations during data collection and analysis.

Prior to data collection, all the club personnel including the participants of the study were ensured confidentiality and encouraged to be as open and honest in their responses. This helped the researcher derive a critical commentary of the participants' experiences, without inhibiting critique. In addition, the researcher used thick description which requires the researcher to provide rich, in-depth descriptions, that demonstrate "the complex specificity and circumstantiality of their data" (Tracy, 2010, p. 843). This way the researcher provided enough detail for these data to speak for themselves, and be subject to interpretation of those who read it, as opposed to the researcher telling others what to think (Tracy, 2010). Furthermore, multivocality was used to allow for more of the participant's point of view to present itself. This involved encouraging the researcher to not allow his own assumptions to drive his interpretations of the participant's realities, nor ignore viewpoints that do not go along with what the researcher or majority believe (Tracy, 2010). To enhance the qualitative credibility of the interviews, member reflections were conducted; this process can help to verify participant's accounts of their

experiences, by offering them an opportunity to review their transcripts and identify if they have any suggestions or changes to what they mentioned (Tracy, 2010). Eight participants agreed to the member reflections, and were sent their transcripts after their interview; none of the participants had any changes to suggest. Finally, as mentioned above, investigator triangulation was practiced as two researchers examined an initial subset of the transcripts for analysis. This practice allowed two different researcher view points to help broaden the scope of analysis, allow different areas of the problem to be explored, and provide an initial plan of how to continue analysis and present the results (Tracy, 2010).

Results

Three themes were identified to categorize the experiences of junior coaches in the program related to leadership development. The three themes are (a) building youth leaders is a process, (b) mentorship is perceived as critical in one's leadership development, and (c) trust is important for enhancing youth leader engagement. Each of the themes are comprised of subthemes which are outlined in detail below.

Building Youth Leaders is a Process

Junior coaches spoke in detail about their experiences surrounding leadership. They described how they learned to be leaders, and how having leadership opportunities facilitated greater confidence, a greater sense of responsibility, and mature attitudes. Most importantly, it was evident that the junior coaches also saw their leadership development as a process. For example, the junior coaches spoke to the factors that allowed them to move from a place of seeing themselves as potential leaders, to becoming confident in their roles as leaders. Nala shared:

I am definitely not as shy as I used to be back then. I am definitely more of a leader now; I can do certain things that maybe back then I wouldn't have wanted to do... I've matured since back then. (Nala)

Three subthemes help to describe the experiences within this theme. These include: (a) developing into leaders started with seeing potential through role models, (b) learning by doing and interacting with others helped youth develop leadership abilities, (c) greater responsibility allowed for opportunities to refine their leadership ability through the development of life skills.

Developing into leaders started with seeing potential through role models. The junior coaches shared that having junior coaches when they were club members provided them with the opportunity to see what being a leader was about, and the potential to become leaders themselves. For example, Faith said: "I learned from experiencing with the other junior coaches when I was in the program helped me. I was learning from them and now I'm doing what they're doing, so I got experience from them, like looking at them" (Faith). It was this role modelling that led Faith to want to become a leader as well. Similarly, Ishvar shared an experience of seeing his own junior coaches being compassionate towards others, and how it influenced him to want to do the same:

When we were just kids, there [were] other junior coaches that we saw them do this [lead activities], and then first we just knew them as friends, they were older than us but still friends. But we see them help us, and help others, and we see them doing good and we want to do something good as well, like give back. (Ishvar)

Learning by doing and interacting with others helped youth develop leadership abilities. Junior coaches in their leadership role helped facilitate activities for the youth at the club. These activities included facilitating physical activity-related games (e.g., "pick-up the

popsicle”, “tic-tac-toe”, “capture the flag”), literacy-related activities (e.g., “word-of-the-day”, reading, journal writing), and helping with snack time. As opposed to being explicitly taught how to be leaders, many of the junior coaches described a development of leadership abilities through their experience of ‘doing’ their role. Nala explained:

At first I can say I was a bit on and off; I didn't really know what to do. I was just sort of following everybody else around here. But after that, with experience, I knew where to be, what to do, how to do it, when to do it and all this stuff. (Nala)

In addition, activities and situations that led to more direct interaction with the youth helped the junior coaches learn. This was the case for Ishvar who stated: “we get to work with others and we get to learn from our mistakes, that helps us.” (Ishvar).

Another junior coach, Isaac, expressed that it was the combination of doing the activities as a leader and the positive interactions with the club members that allowed him to further develop leadership abilities:

Everyone's involvement makes it fun, like the whole club put together, it all has its bits and pieces, like running with the kids, that aspect is fun with them. Having snack with them is fun. The word-of-the-day with them is ‘fun’. It's just the environment is loving and caring and how like no one judges anyone. You just come and spend two hours with us and just you know, have fun. (Isaac)

The junior coaches also expressed that it was this learning by doing that allowed them to start to develop confidence as leaders, as Navya shared: “I became more open hanging out with kids, and I think I became more confident and less nervous.” (Navya).

Greater responsibility allowed for opportunities to refine their leadership ability through the development of life skills. The junior coaches discussed being offered more

opportunities as they developed in their leadership role, moving from small tasks such as handing out snacks, to larger tasks such as supervising club members and leading activities. The junior coaches also spoke at length about the various life skills that they developed from taking on their leadership roles. This junior coach, Simone, outlined team-building and cooperation skills that she learned: "I've learned team-building, teamwork, I've learned to listen to people because they might not have the same ideas, learned to cooperate with people just [be]cause it's such a large a group you have to learn." (Simone). Similarly, Nala said "[I've learned] responsibility, decision making, you have to do a lot of decision making out there, you can't rely on another coach to tell you 'oh there's something happening', you have to see for yourself and act on it right away." (Nala). It also appeared that by demonstrating these life skills, the club members began to approach the junior coaches as people who can help them with their own problems, further reinforcing these leadership roles. For example, Ishvar spoke about being approached by club members who were experiencing conflict with their peers:

If they [the club members] need something they always approach me like 'ooh I have a problem with him or her'. I'm like 'oh' and I just bring the person over, they talk to each other and eventually they say sorry to each other and then they makeup again. (Ishvar)

Another junior coach, Brennon, had a similar experience: "There was one time these kids had a disagreement and I just heard both of their stories why they are fighting and all and basically I managed to solve the problem." (Brennon)

Junior coaches also spoke about how their role and involvement in the club helped them to learn how to regulate their emotions, demonstrate respect, and maintain positive attitudes. Isaac described how he developed a more positive attitude from internalizing positive messages about respect from what he read in the club (e.g., positive signage, coaching guidelines):

The stuff that we read, respect, attitude, it has helped me to maintain that aspect, and the attributes. Before I was just wild, like I didn't care if anyone heard me, yelling and screaming. But now I am more in tune with myself, I know how to handle my emotions, I know how to be respectful at times, and when to be firm. (Isaac)

For Isaac, prior to developing as a leader he would react negatively when frustrated; after internalizing positive social norms of the program, the junior coach developed the capacity to handle his emotions. Learning life skills are not only assets that can be utilized within the program, but can also be applied outside the program, in other contexts. Faith described how she would utilize what they learned in other sports teams that she is a part of:

[Before], in sports teams I would not usually say stuff, but now I would actually say if you're doing it wrong – I would let the person know. From helping with junior coaches, they told me not to be shy and say what you're gonna say. Don't like keep it all in, if you keep it all in you're gonna explode one day and it's all gonna come out at once and you're gonna say it aggressively, so say like what's in your mind and don't take it as aggressive. (Faith)

This quotation reinforces how Faith is now able to express herself, and does not shy away from saying what she feels like saying. This is an example of effective communication, in which the junior coach felt free to express herself when a problem was recognized, as opposed to letting the problem sit and frustration to grow to a breaking point.

Many other junior coaches stated how the program helped them to become “a better person”. Brennon specifically spoke about how he learned skills that can be used in the future:

I like everything a part of it really. I like helping other kids, and problem solv[ing]. It's helpful in the future, especially when you get older and there's things you need to do, it

kind of helps; it's also useful for high school as well... It can help you for some jobs, when it comes to daycare, you need to know how to manage kids. You can't try to tell someone what to do, and you need to know how to make them listen to you. (Brennon)

In this example, Brennon felt that his experiences in the program would help him develop skills with youth that can be used in future school and work-related opportunities. It was evident that junior coaches valued the opportunity to learn in the program to develop skills and experience for their future.

Junior coaches all interpreted individual realities of their experiences, and while some of these interpretations may have been shared, all were subject to individual and contextual differences. As a result, while some junior coaches mentioned development experiences, other junior coaches did not recognize that they had changed or developed in any way during their involvement in the club. Amit claimed, "I never noticed what I've improved on that much." (Amit), while Nala said, "I feel like there's a lot that I have to learn a lot that I have to change about myself before I can call myself a role model." (Nala). Others responded that they did not feel that they have changed, improved, or developed any skills from attending the program or being junior coaches. For many just starting in their roles, they expressed less development or change in themselves than those who had been experienced in the position for more than a year.

Mentorship is Perceived as Critical in One's Leadership Development

Junior coaches reported several experiences centering on mentorship that they perceived to have played a significant role in their process of developing into leaders. While some junior coach reported having primarily one mentor, others discussed having multiple mentors (e.g., their previous junior coach and their present adult coach). However, all junior coaches spoke about how these mentoring relationships were the critical factor that motivated them to continue

to be junior coaches, particularly at the beginning when they were hesitant. For example, Isaac expressed how he received encouragement to continue in the program, even when he felt overburdened:

[My adult coach], she kept on pushing me, she kept on telling me '[junior coach], keep going', even when I would tell her '[adult coach], I'm too tired I don't think I can come' she would always tell me 'no [junior coach] come, we need you [junior coach], come' and I would come. And I feel like she pushed me to become a better person, 'cause like, if she told me just stay home, I would have gone right home and slept. I wouldn't have cared. But she motivates me, and she believes in me, I haven't had anyone that has like believed in me before, so she gives me that. (Isaac)

In this scenario, the adult coach expressed how much the junior coach mattered to the program, demonstrating confidence in and support for the junior coach's efficacy and mattering.

Two subthemes characterized the mentorship experienced by these junior coaches: (a) approachability and guidance and (b) support for autonomy and competence. In other words, the mentorship role of the adult coaches involved providing support for the three basic psychological needs of relatedness, autonomy and competence.

Approachability and guidance. The junior coaches shared various experiences of how their adult coaches were approachable. The following quote represents several of the experiences shared by the junior coaches:

They're really nice and friendly people that you don't even have to think about talking to; there's no restrain or anything and I can't hold anything back, I tell them everything and they understand it. (Simone)

In addition, the junior coaches expressed that they were comfortable seeking guidance from the adult coaches if they found themselves in a situation that they could not manage on their own.

For instance, Brennon said:

If it gets too carried away, I usually get a coach to help solve it. I mean not all the time I can solve it, there's some point that I can't. If they're getting physical I can't – I can't go ahead and grab the other one and stop them, you know? (Brennon)

Emily shared the same sentiment: “The [club members] approach me if someone's being mean to them, like bullying; they approach me about that, and I approach another [adult] coach to ask them what should I do to help them.” (Emily).

It is important to note however, that not everyone received the same mentorship. While the overwhelming majority of junior coaches discussed having positive experiences with their coaches, in some cases, junior coaches did not identify supportive mentoring relationships with certain leaders. Nala said: “I feel like there's a wall between me and them [the adult coaches], and I can't do anything about it.” (Nala). Based on her experience, some coaches may not have been as approachable for her as spoken about in other junior coaches' accounts.

In sum, most of the junior coaches perceived their coaches as positive, friendly, and open. Coaches made themselves available to youth to talk to them about anything, from sharing personal life stories, to issues or conflicts they may be facing in the program or outside of it. It was evident that this approachability motivated the youth to continue as leaders and want to do more.

Support for autonomy and competence. Junior coaches expressed that the adult coaches provided support for their autonomy – one's sense of free will to act out of their own interests and values – and competence – one's perceptions about their abilities. To support their

autonomy, junior coaches discussed being offered choices in making decisions, and opportunities to work independently. For example, Navya spoke about how junior coaches could choose which activities they want to be involved in: "...some of the junior coaches like to run, some of them like to do drama – like me, I like to do drama, so I get to choose [to do that]." (Navya). As well, when asked if the adult coaches let the junior coaches run the activities themselves, Athiya replied:

I can help with my group. If my coach is not there, I can set up the whole line, do popsicle stick stuff, games and stuff, so we can make words, I can make words with my group if coaches aren't here, and if they're here then we all do it together. (Athiya)

However, not all junior coaches experienced the same levels of choice or independence. Some of the junior coaches said that they did not receive choices in activities, that decisions were made at the adult coach level, or that they would rarely work alone. For example, Emily said: "Sometimes they encourage [us] to work independently but that's like very few [instances]." (Emily). Although, at times, the adult coaches' limiting of opportunities to work alone were also perceived as beneficial, such as when the adult coaches favoured more opportunities for teamwork. Emily suggested that while she and her peers had fewer opportunities to work on their own, they would receive encouragement and the opportunity to work collectively as a team, for the benefit of the youth that they lead: "They encourage us to work as a team, so we have to get all the other junior coaches, we have to take care of the kids, we have to be involved with them." (Emily)

Junior coaches found that through positive verbal feedback (e.g., encouragement, motivation, constructive criticism, and praise), their coaches would support their competence. It was not uncommon for the junior coaches to receive positive reinforcement from their coaches

(i.e., “way to go”, “great job”) while completing a task; feedback was framed positively, as Faith said: “They don't try to put you down” (Faith). She also described how feedback was received through debriefing sessions:

At the end of the day, all the kids go home and we have like a coach meeting, but like junior coaches and coaches meeting, saying what we've done good and what we need to work on still, and they tell us ‘you've did this good, you've done this good.’ (Faith).

In this situation, the adult coaches helped junior coaches reflect on what went well and what is to be worked on for the next session. This provides junior coaches support for their competence and an opportunity to reflect on their progress.

Trust is Important for Enhancing Youth Leader Engagement

It was evident that the strength of the relationships that the junior coaches had with their adult coaches and peers (other junior coaches) was based on trust. The following quote summarizes the kind of relationship many junior coaches described having with their adult coaches:

I can go up to any of [the adult coaches] and talk to them about any of my problems.

They're always so involved with my education life, my personal life... I talked to [Adult Coach name] about my home life and my work life, and I can talk to [another Adult Coach name], about my social life and my personal life. (Simone)

This theme is broken into three subthemes that help illuminate the factors that junior coaches perceived as fostering trust, as well as the positive outcomes from establishing a trusting relationship with adult coaches and peers. The three subthemes are: (a) establishing trust through familiarity and social ties, (b) demonstrating personal and social responsibility helped foster trust, and (c) trust led to engagement.

Establishing trust through familiarity and social ties. Familiarity with one another helped to facilitate junior coaches' trust of their adult coaches as well as their fellow junior coaches. For example, Nala claimed that knowing her adult coaches over time helped her develop trust: "Yes, [I trust them] ... I guess it's all the time that we spend together that makes me like I truly know them now after all this time" (Nala). Similarly, Ishvar stated: "Their attitude and what they do basically, like if you've known someone for a while now you can trust them" (Ishvar). In both these examples, trust was established by getting to know their adult coaches over time.

Developing trust between junior coaches involved developing stronger social ties, closeness, and friendships that helped junior coaches know one another. Nala described having trusting relationships with her peers, and how together they trusted another junior coach to handle a situation, because they knew them and understood their abilities:

The junior coaches--we are pretty close-- you can say. We don't feel uncomfortable talking to each other if there's a problem or anything. So when a kid just says "there's a problem here" we'd be like "oh that coach is really good at talking to him about stuff, they're close, so you can just call each other like that. (Nala)

In contrast, not having the opportunity to become familiar and know one another was perceived as inhibiting the establishment of trust, such as Shivani's account:

I'll be honest, I don't know if they'll trust me 'cause half of them I don't know much. I only know a couple [lists the names of his fellow junior coaches]. I can say [they] trust me just not the rest, 'cause I don't know them very well. (Shivani)

Demonstrating personal and social responsibility helped foster trust. Personal responsibility characterizes the actions that people take in order to take charge of themselves and

their behaviour. Junior coaches perceived that their adult coaches trusted them due to their willingness to take on responsibility and to work hard. For instance, Amit said: “we've showed them that we're trustworthy enough to do what we want to do and what they tell us to do” (Amit), while Emily said: “They trust us because we always get our work done” (Emily). Demonstrating that they are competent in fulfilling their roles helped the junior coaches to perceive trust between them and their adult coaches.

Furthermore, it was when the adult coaches demonstrated social responsibility that the junior coaches could trust these adults. More specifically, junior coaches trusted their adult coaches when they saw them being caring and helpful to others. Varun said: “I trust them because how they, because they supervise us...and take care of us. They make sure that no one gets hurt” (Varun). Simone described how her adult coaches' selflessness allowed for trust to be established: “Knowing that they only do this for us; they don't get paid to do this. They take time out of their day to come here to do this. So that's what makes me trust them” (Simone).

Junior coaches also felt the same way about trusting their peers – they had to demonstrate personal responsibility. For instance, Emily articulated: “[The junior coaches] are the ones that work with us, they're the ones who work with me most of the time... For word-of-the-day, we have to trust them to memorize their lines, and they normally do” (Emily). In addition, the junior coaches spoke about how they did not trust other junior coaches who were not responsible. Isaac shared:

I just feel like they don't run with the kids, or they're on their phones. It's just irresponsible, you know what I mean? It's just a lack of trust in case something does happens and they're unaware of it...to the ones that I don't really [trust as much], I trust them in handing out snacks, but I don't really trust them when it comes to running with

the kids because I'm mostly running with the kids and playing with them...when others are around, they will do their job, but if there is no one around they will slack off. (Isaac)

Trust led to engagement. With strong social ties, familiarity with one another, and trusting relationships, junior coaches felt that they were motivated to continue to participate in the program. Nala mentioned: "If I didn't trust them or like them, I would have never wanted to become a junior coach myself." (Nala). In this case, trust helped Nala's decision to become a leader. Without having trust in their coaches, the junior coaches would not have continued in the program, as Athiya shared:

Yeah, if I didn't trust them, and I really didn't know them, I don't think I would have even fit in or anything like that. I would just—because you only do it until grade 6, after that you don't have to do [the program], unless you have opportunity for junior coach. So I would have just stayed in class and going home. (Athiya)

Athiya implied that without having familiarity and trust in the junior coaches, she would have stopped participating in the program after her period as a club member had ended. Again, trust helped facilitate this junior coach's decision to become a leader.

In sum, trust was a key factor in helping youth become leaders. As Brennon explained: "I trusted them and they trusted me to be a junior coach and lead and do all of these things, 'cause if they couldn't trust me they wouldn't let me be a junior coach" (Brennon). For him, trust was the reason that his adult coaches let him be a leader, and gave him responsibilities. Faith described that when junior coaches presented personal and social responsibility, they were provided more opportunities to demonstrate those responsibilities:

They've trusted us with a lot of things, actually. Even though we're still growing up as a teenager; we're still growing, but they still trust us with the younger kids. They know we're responsible, we haven't done anything wrong, so they still have trust in us. (Faith)

Discussion

This purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of youth leadership in a PA-PYD program. Sixteen junior coaches (youth leaders) were interviewed to understand their experiences in the program, their relationships with adult coaches (adult leaders) and fellow junior coaches (peers), and their development as leaders. Three themes were identified that help to understand the junior coaches' perspectives. The first theme, *building youth leaders is a process*, focused on how the junior coaches developed as leaders develop over time, beginning with learning what it means to be a leader by watching others, performing responsibilities of leaders, and gaining a variety of skills as a result. The second theme, *mentorship is perceived as critical in one's leader development*, involved how the support the junior coaches received from their current and past leaders to help motivate them to participate in programming. The third theme, *trust is important for enhancing youth leader engagement*, focused on what processes developed trust (e.g., familiarity, demonstrating personal and social responsibility) and outcomes from that trust (e.g., engagement, enjoyment). These themes helped to understand what influences and support the junior coaches received in their development, and how this development reflects a process that occurs over time.

Overall, the results of this study provide initial support of both Fertman and van Linden's (1999) and Hellison and Martinek's (2009) models of youth leadership development. Fertman and van Linden's (1999) model outlines that youth transition through stages of awareness, interaction, and mastery; while Hellison and Martinek's (2009)'s model has youth transitioning

through stages of taking responsibility, leadership awareness, cross-age leadership, and self-actualized leadership. Similar to the early stages of these models (e.g., stages involving awareness, taking responsibility), the junior coaches in this study identified that it was through observation of their past junior coaches that initiated an awareness of what it means to be a leader and the idea that they too could take on a leadership role. The next stages from these models (e.g., interaction, cross-age leadership), which involve youth fulfilling the duties and responsibilities of their position as a leader, were also evident. Junior coaches discussed how they assisted their adult leaders, led games and activities, and supported club members (program participants), and how they learned to do these things through interacting with others and learning by doing. This finding is supported by research that suggests that leadership can be learned through 'doing' the work, as well as through appropriate interactions and guidance from their leaders (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). In the final stages of the models (e.g., mastery, self-actualized leadership), youth leaders have adopted a formidable skillset, knowledge, and experiences related to leadership (e.g., life skills, physical skills, and literacy skills), as they internalize an identity around being leaders (Martinek & Hellison, 2009; Martinek, Schilling, & Hellison, 2006). In these stages, the focus of development turns inward and reciprocal teaching processes play a large role, in which youth leaders are learning and building assets by teaching others (Martinek & Hellison, 2009; Mosston & Ashworth, 2008). In this study program, the life skills developed by the junior coaches centred around leadership, adopting conflict resolution and problem solving techniques, building confidence, perseverance/working hard, personal responsibility, respect, positive attitude, and positive identity. Smith (2014) found that when teaching others, not only is the content that they are teaching internalized (e.g., running and reading), but also the development of confidence, leadership, role modelling capabilities. In the

program, the junior coaches discussed not only adopting life skills, but also the ability to transfer the skills they learned to other contexts (e.g., at school, at home, with friends). In other research, leadership (and its related skills) have been observed to transfer from sport to other areas of life (Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008; Pierce, Kendellen, Camiré, & Gould, 2016). Therefore, it appears that results of this study provide further support that when youth develop into leaders they also have the capacity to transfer skills they have learned as a leader to other life domains.

The involvement of adult coaches was perceived by the junior coaches as a predominant influence in their development as leaders, particularly with respect to mentorship. Junior coaches described the approaches the adult coaches would use, and these are aligned with Rhodes' (2002, 2005) conceptual model of youth mentoring. First, the adult coaches influenced junior coaches' social-emotional development through the creation of strong, trusting relationships. Second, the adult coaches influenced the cognitive development of the junior coaches by providing opportunities for youth to build skills (e.g., letting them lead word-of-the-day activities) and giving guidance (e.g., providing feedback on their performance). Third, the adult coaches promoted a positive identity surrounding leadership by acting as role models for the junior coaches (e.g., demonstrating positive behaviours, personal and social responsibility; DuBois et al., 2011; Rhodes, 2002, 2005). Moreover, many of the junior coaches agreed that the relationship they have with their adult coaches helped them to continue being leaders. As a result, the findings from this research also support past research that showed trusting relationships with adults is associated with increased motivation and engagement in youth programming (Griffith & Larson, 2015).

In accordance with BNT, the adult coaches used an autonomy-supportive style which helped to provide a motivational climate that supported junior coaches' needs for autonomy,

competence, and relatedness (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000). For example, the adult coaches supported the youth coaches' autonomy by giving them choices to pursue activities out of their own interests (Bean, Harlow, & Forneris, 2017; Bean, Harlow, & Kendellen, 2017; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Junior coaches could choose whether they wanted to be more involved in running or reading activities, and had choices in leading those activities. The adult coaches supported junior coaches' competence by providing them opportunities to build skills (e.g., fulfilling tasks, supervising others) and providing them positive and constructive feedback on their performance (Bean, Harlow, & Kendellen, 2017; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). The junior coaches were also invited to post-program debrief sessions with adult coaches in which they were provided opportunities to reflect on their session, and plan together activities for the next session. Opportunities to reflect have been identified as important for leadership success (Hellison et al., 2000), and they can help facilitate the transfer of life skills (Bean, Kendellen, & Forneris, 2015). Furthermore, collaboration with leaders in activities and planning can help in facilitating youth voice (e.g., expressing themselves, having input valued), which can help motivate youth to further engage in programming (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Hirsch et al., 2000; Mitra, 2006; Ward & Parker, 2013). Finally, the adult coaches supported their junior coaches' need for relatedness by creating and maintaining supportive, trusting relationships (Armour, Sandford, & Duncombe, 2013; Rhodes, Reddy, Roffman, & Grossman, 2005). In sum, these findings suggest that junior coaches' experiences were positively influenced by having adult coaches who supported their psychological needs.

The junior coaches also discussed how they developed relationships with one another and their adult coaches. The results suggest that the strength of these relationships may be attributed to levels of trust in one another. Research has shown that to establish strong mentor-mentee

relationships, trust, respect, and understanding of one another are necessary conditions (Bean, Harlow, & Kendellen, 2017; Rhodes, 2002; Zand et al., 2009). In current study, the junior coaches described how developing a sense of familiarity with their adult coaches helped establish trust. The youth coaches also expressed that trust was fostered when adult coaches demonstrated caring and compassion for others (e.g., social responsibility). These findings support the work of Rotenberg (2010) who asserts that trust can be gained from youth when leaders are honest, can be counted on, and are caring and sensitive to youth's emotions. The junior coaches identified that getting to know the adult coaches, and demonstrating a strong work ethic, helped gain trust from their adult leaders. These findings support the work of Griffith and Larson (2015) who recognized that when adult leaders demonstrate an investment in youth's work as well as confidence in their abilities, youth can become more invested themselves, develop greater confidence, and increased motivation to work.

Trusting relationships with fellow junior coaches were also discussed, in which the same processes of familiarity and demonstrating personal and social responsibility were important. This is aligned with literature that suggests that peers who are able to develop quality relationships and friendships with others, are also likely to respect others, have confidence in their abilities, and have strong social skills (Weiss, Kipp, & Bolter, 2012). Thus, it appears that trusting relationships between adult leaders and youth leaders, as well as between youth leaders themselves, is important in helping youth develop into leaders.

In sum, adult coaches engaging in positive interactions with junior coaches – providing support, opportunities, and engaging in trusting relationships – are direct strategies that helped the junior coaches learn, and motivated them to continue in the program. In addition, the indirect strategy of role modelling may also help as the junior coaches recognized the value of having a

role model (such as their past junior coach and/or their current adult coach). Role modelling is defined by Morgenroth, Ryan, and Peters (2015) as “individuals who influence role aspirants’ achievements, motivation, and goals by acting as behavioural models, representations of the possible, and/or inspirations” (p. 4). The larger mentorship literature suggests that serving as a role model can help youth with identity development, as they watch their mentors and internalize their behaviours (Rhodes, 2005). In the program, by watching adult coaches be respectful, polite, warm, inviting to others, as well as competent in their activities, junior coaches learned and adopted socially-acceptable and positively-regarded behaviours, and identified with being leaders (Rhodes, 2004). Therefore, combining direct and indirect strategies may help junior coaches attain the support they needed to continue in the program and learn what leadership is. It is then through their engagement that they could not only learn *about* leadership – but learn to *be* leaders (Martinek & Hellison, 2009; Martinek et al., 2006).

Some junior coaches did not report the same experiences related to support, trust or development of life skills. This may be due to several reasons. First, many young adolescents may not be able to recognize or be aware of their own development as they are still in the developing stages of their cognitive capacities (Sanders, 2013). Second, individual characteristics may differ from one youth to another. Youth leaders may encounter different developmental pathways, which can slow or speed up their advancement through developmental stages (Martinek & Hellison, 2009). In a multiple case study of youth leadership physical-activity programming by Martinek and colleague (2006), while youth leaders were able to develop leadership skills, some youth leaders did not advance through all stages of leadership development. Third, youth may encounter different social influences that can impact their development of relationships in programming. For instance, youth may encounter negative

relationships with authority figures at home or in school, which can result in a general distrust of adult leaders (Libby et al., 2006). This may inhibit their capacity to maintain strong relationships with adults, and further inhibit the support they receive for their development (VanderVen, 2004). Fourth, the roles that youth leaders are offered can vary in responsibility (e.g., in a supportive and assisting capacity, or in a facilitating and leading capacity). Since leaders' development in this program involved experiences of learning by doing, the roles junior coaches were placed in may have enhanced or limited their development of skills (Shanahan, 2015). Finally, there is no universal support system that youth leaders receive – each have their own experiences of mentorship, trust, and needs support. These processes may have contributed to development and PYD outcomes for some but not all youth leaders. For instance, junior coaches discussed experiences with multiple mentors, which can have disadvantages; the more mentors there are for one mentee, the more limitations that may be faced by the quality of each of these relationships, as each relationship requires time and emotional investment – in comparison to stronger one-on-one relationships (Mekinda & Hirsch, 2014). Conversely, some experiences may involve mentors combining their efforts to enhance the quality of support that they provide to their mentees (Hirsch et al., 2011); thus, these mentees would have a stronger support system.

Practical Recommendations

This study can provide several recommendations for the improvement of youth leadership programming. First, adult leaders were perceived as being a critical factor in the development of youth leaders. However, it cannot be assumed that every adult leader would have skills in fostering mentorship, teaching life skills, or supporting basic needs (Dworkin & Larson, 2007; Halpern, 2006). Therefore, training for adult leaders in utilizing a universal set of approaches could help them to set the processes of mentorship, trust, and basic needs support

underway. To positively influence youth leadership development, Martinek and Hellison (2009) suggest utilizing processes of power sharing, where youth take on developmentally appropriate decision-making power) and self-reflection (where youth monitor their actions throughout and try to recognize areas of strength and/or areas that need improvement). They also emphasize the need for relationships, where youth develop strong, respectful, and trusting relationships with others, particularly adult leaders. Based on the results from this study it is recommended that adult leaders use such strategies. In this study, role modelling was an important way youth leaders learned how to be leaders. Therefore, training on how to be a proper model should also be emphasized. In addition, the results indicate the importance of adult leaders spending time with the youth to enhance a sense of familiarity, show care and concern for others, and demonstrate responsibility, as such behaviors appeared to foster trust between the adult leaders and youth leaders, which was often discussed as important in the youth leaders experience of becoming leaders.

The importance of peer relationships in establishing trust was also recognized in this study. It is recommended to implement activities that help engage youth in activities that are focused on social cohesion (e.g., team building activities, get-togethers, team dinners), which can help develop stronger familiarity and social ties with one another and lead to trust. As well, implementing task cohesion activities within programming (e.g., having youth work on leadership tasks in pairs or groups) can help with demonstrating personal and social responsibility for youth to establish trust with one another.

Strengths and Limitations

This study makes important contributions to the literature on youth leadership in PA-PYD contexts, providing empirical support for the identified notion that youth leadership is a

process (Fertman & van Linden, 1999; Gould, 2016; Martinek & Hellison, 2009). Utilizing a multiple case study methodology helped to enhance the generalizability of the results as they relate to this PA-PYD program, while maintaining richness (Stake, 2005). However, it should be recognized that this was the first study to examine youth leadership development within the context of PA-PYD programming and therefore further research examining the same or similar concepts is needed to strengthen the current empirical findings and related literature. Second, head coordinators of each club were asked to help select participants for the study who would articulate themselves clearly, which helped to provide the study with richer descriptions of experiences. Given that the lead researcher was unfamiliar with the participants, having a direct referral from a coordinator they are familiar with (and may trust), may have helped participants be more willing to speak openly in the interviews (Myers & Newman, 2007). However, this process may also be a limitation as coordinators may have recommended youth for inclusion based on factors such as favouritism, or those who may discuss the club in a more positive light, and refraining from recommending those who might be more critical of the club or program. Time limitations during the short period in which data were collected lead to shortened and sometimes rushed interviews. However, the content analyses demonstrated that there were enough data collected from the interviews to address the research questions and illustrate the experiences of the youth leaders in the PA-PYD program.

Conclusion

This research represents, to our knowledge, the first study that examined perceptions and experiences of youth leadership within a PA-PYD program. The findings suggest that leadership development should be viewed as a process in which adult leaders and older peers can play significant roles. Older peers can serve as role models in which youth see the potential of

becoming a leader whereas adult leaders can play a significant role in supporting leadership development by being approachable, supporting basic psychological needs, and establishing trust.

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Table 1

Overall Demographic Characteristics of the Junior Coaches

Variable	Type	<i>n</i>	%	
Gender	Male	8	50%	
	Female	8	50%	
Language spoken	English	16	100%	
	French	7	44%	
	Tamil	5	31%	
	Other	5	31%	

Variable	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	12 – 17	13.37	1.36
Years of involvement in club	1 – 7	4.25	1.81
Years of involvement as a coach (years)	1 – 3	1.56	0.72

Table 2

Specific Demographic Characteristics of the Junior Coaches

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Grade	Ethnicity and/or Background	Place of Birth	Languages	Years of Involvement in Club	Years of Involvement as Coach
Navya	Female	13	8	Canada, Sri Lanka	Toronto	English, French, Tamil	5	2
Amit	Male	13	7	Bangladesh	Toronto	English, Bengali	3	1
Emily	Female	14	8	Canada, White		English	5	2
Sanjay	Male	12	7	Sri Lanka		English, Tamil	3	1
Ishvar	Male	13	7	Bangladesh		English, Bengali, French, German, Portuguese	5	1
Isaac	Male	17	12	Jamaica	Toronto	English	2	2
Nala	Female	15	9	Somalia		English	7	3
Brennon	Male	12	7	Canada, White	Toronto	English, French	7	1
Noah	Male	13	7	Trinidad, Guyana, Haiti	Toronto	English	3	1
Nadir	Male	13	7	Syria	Syria	Arabic, English	1	1
Savannah	Female	13	8	Ethiopia	Toronto	English, Tigrinya, Ohari	2	2
Shivani	Female	12	7	Sri Lanka	Toronto	English, Tamil, French	6	1
Faith	Female	14	9	Canada, Trinidad	Toronto	English	4	3
Simone	Female	15	9	Nigeria	Nigeria	English, Urba, French	5	1
Varun	Male	12	7	Sri Lanka	Canada	English, Tamil, French	4	1
Athiya	Female	13	8	Sri Lanka	Toronto	English, Tamil, French	6	2

Table 3

Content Analysis of the Junior Coaches' Experiences

Items	Sources	References
Receiving mentorship	16*	150*
Guidance	12	23
Autonomy and competence support	16*	82*
Choices	13	18
No choices	3	3
Confidence in coach	3	4
Feedback	16*	33*
Constructive	7	9
Criticism	1	1
Individualized and group feedback	1	1
Encouragement	7	9
Praise	7	8
No feedback	3	3
Working independently	12	12
Work as a team or in groups	5	8
Approachability and openness	13	28
Role modelling	9	15
Negative experiences	2	3
Positive interactions, trust, and developing relationships	16*	175*
Trust	15*	55*
Trust from adults	10	12
Trust from kids	2	2
Trust in adults	13	18
Trust in each other	12	20
Lack of trust	3	3
Familiarity	12*	50*
Familiarity with adults	9	14
Familiarity with youth and peers	10	21

Friendships	9	15
Relatability	14*	47*
Relatability	9	17
Similarity with adult coaches	12	13
Similarity with kids	5	6
Similarity with one another	8	8
Difficulties	2	3
Outcomes	11*	22*
Enjoyment	8	13
Continued participation	7	9
Respect for adult coaches	1	1
Building Leaders	16*	182*
Facilitating activities	16	32
Learning by doing	8	12
Learning from kids	8	10
Confidence building	10	23
Handling situations	12	21
Responsibility	7	11
Role modelling and positive self-perceptions	14	31
Gaining Skills	15*	30*
Skill building	14	20
Skill Transfer	8	10
Leadership	4	4
Positive attitudes	3	8
Contribution	16*	85*
Helping youth	15	44
Supporting youth	16*	37*
Being approachable and open	8	12
Not approachable	1	1
Caring	5	6
Encouragement	6	8

Guidance	5	6
Mentoring	2	2
Praise	2	2
Relatability	1	1
Teaching youth	4	4
Challenges	13*	27*
Lack of Maturity	9	14
Not aware of development	6	6
Negative Experiences	6	7

*Aggregated sources/or references from sub-label

Article 2

**The Impact of Youth Leaders on Club Members in a
Physical Activity-Based Positive Youth Development Program**

Abstract

Offering leadership opportunities to at-risk youth within the context of physical activity-based programming may help to provide meaningful roles to these youths and empower them to become contributing citizens. Moreover, having youth leaders within youth programming may be advantageous over having only adult leaders, as they are more similar in age, interests and daily experiences as the program participants. The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of youth leaders' influence on program participants' in PA-PYD programming. A multiple case study was conducted at multiple sites of a physical-activity based youth development program. Sixteen youth leaders ($M_{age}= 13.37$, $SD = 1.36$) and 15 program participants ($M_{age}= 10.53$, $SD = 1.12$) each participated in a one-on-one semi-structured interview. Five themes emerged from these data and were labelled: (a) learning and building skills, (b) receiving support, (c) enjoyment, (d) relatability, and (e) lack of maturity. Overall, the program participants shared several ways in which the youth leaders with whom they interacted had a positive impact on both their personal development as well as their experiences in the program. In addition, the youth leaders' perceptions largely aligned with those of the program participants. The results suggest that the positive impact was a result of feeling supported by youth leaders who were relatable due to shared life experiences and interests. In sum, this study provides insight into the value that youth leaders can bring to youth programming.

The Impact of Youth Leaders on Club Members in a Physical-Activity Based
Positive Youth Development Program

Youth programming can be a means to help youth enhance their growth and development and this is typically achieved through the adoption of positive youth development (PYD) approaches (Danish, Forneris, Hodge, & Heke, 2004; Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005; Gould & Carson, 2008; Lerner, 2005; Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, & Jones, 2005). Positive youth development programming primarily focuses on helping youth enhance their well-being and fulfill their potential through the development of life skills. Life skills are positively-regarded assets or developmental competencies (PYD outcomes) that span over behavioural (e.g., effective communication with others), cognitive (e.g., decision-making skills), interpersonal (e.g., being assertive), and/or intrapersonal (e.g., goal-setting) domains (Danish et al., 2004). For a skill to be classified as a ‘life skill’, a person must be able to transfer the life skill to contexts other than where it was learned, in order for them to develop the capacity to handle various life circumstances (Bean, Kendellen, & Forneris, 2015; Gould, Carson, & Blanton, 2013; Pierce, Hodge, Taylor, & Button, 2017).

Positive youth development programming often targets at-risk youth¹, known as youth who face barriers to their development (Keating, Tomishima, Foster, & Alessandri, 2002). The rationale for implementing PYD programs for at-risk youth is that often these youth have less access to health promotional resources which can lead to a variety of negative outcomes such as

¹ The term ‘at-risk youth’ has commonly been used in the literature, however the terms ‘disaffected youth’, ‘disengaged youth’, ‘low-income youth’, and ‘underserved youth’ are also synonymous with this ‘at-risk youth’ and refer to those youth who face barriers to opportunities and their development

disengagement, poor academic performance, low rates of physical activity, high rates of obesity, drug and alcohol abuse, poor emotional well-being, low job success, high rates of teen pregnancy, high rates of delinquency and high rates of incarceration (Brendtro & Brokenleg, 2012; Collingwood, 1997; Goodman, Slap, & Huang, 2003; Kroenke, 2008; Madsen, Hicks, & Thompson, 2011; Ullrich-French, McDonough, & Smith, 2012; Wright & Li, 2009; Yang, Lynch, Schulenberg, Diez Roux, & Raghunathan, 2008). Another advantage of using a PYD approach with this population is that the approach sees these youth as competent and capable of making a contribution, which may help empower them as opposed to marginalizing them (Cutforth & Puckett, 1999; Libby, Sedonaen, & Bliss, 2006).

According to Lerner (2005), PYD programming should involve engagement in activities that have meaningful roles. Providing youth the opportunity to be leaders within programming is one way to provide youth with meaningful roles. However, despite the explosion of PYD programming over the past 15 years, very few programs have intentionally integrated leadership roles for youth. It could be argued that intentionally providing opportunity for youth to become leaders within a youth program would represent the ideal PYD approach. As mentioned above, PYD programs are designed to teach life skills. However, to successfully develop life skills in youth they must be provided the occasion to practice, apply, and transfer the skill to other life domains (Bean, Kendellen, et al., 2015; Gould et al., 2013; Pierce et al., 2017). Having youth take on leadership roles where they are responsible for delivering program activities would allow for application and transfer of the skill. Physical activity programs often offer leadership roles; a select few physical-activity based PYD (PA-PYD) programs that have intentionally integrated leadership roles including Sports United to Promote Education and Recreation (SUPER; Danish et al., 2004), programming based on the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility model

(TPSR; Hellison, 1995, 2011) and Girls Just Wanna Have Fun (GJWHF; Bean, Forneris, & Fortier, 2015). However, no studies to date have examined the perceptions of both the youth leaders themselves as well as the perceptions of the youth they lead regarding impact on programming.

Given the limited research on youth leaders the following sections will present related concepts and frameworks from the literature on mentoring, peer relationships, and adult-youth relationships. More specifically, these concepts and frameworks include relatability, mentorship, and autonomy-support. An abundance of research that has examined peer relationships has shown that peers can have a strong influence on one another (Choukas-Bradley, 2015; Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, 2008; Price & Weiss, 2011; Prinstein & Dodge, 2008). In addition, research has found that peers often have more positive perceptions of their relationships with other peers compared to their relationships with adults, which has been hypothesized to be a result of enhanced relatability and familiarity (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; Mustillo, Dorsey, & Farmer, 2005; Weiss, Kipp, & Bolter, 2012). Within the context of youth programming this could imply that youth may appreciate having an older peer leader rather than an adult leader, as they peers be more approachable due to their proximity in age and similar life experiences. Moreover, Ender and Newton (2000) have suggested that youth leaders may have a higher frequency of contact with their younger peers, which can also lead to increased familiarity and relatability. Therefore, it would be interesting to further understand whether relatability plays a role in younger peers' perceptions of youth leaders, and the impact youth leaders' may have on youth programming.

Mentorship involves the provision of caring, guidance, and opportunities for development (Mekinda & Hirsch, 2014). Rhodes' (2002, 2005) model of youth mentoring identifies three

major positive outcomes for youth who have experienced a form of mentorship. These outcomes include social-emotional development, cognitive development, and identity development. To influence these outcomes, mentoring commonly involves the presence of emotional support and trusting relationships, opportunities to develop life skills, as well as positive role modelling that youth can observe and internalize (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011; Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006). Mentoring has also been identified as having the potential to be a “corrective experience” for youth who have had fractured relationships with adults in their life (Olds, Kitzman, Cole, & Robinson, 1997). Research has shown that when at-risk youth have relationships with mentors who have faced similar life circumstances, this can lead to resilience (Masten & Garmezy, 1985). However, no research to date has examined the perceptions of youth program participants’ experiences of being mentored by older youth and thus exploring these experiences is warranted.

Research has shown that the use of autonomy-supportive coaching in sport can lead to an increase in self-determined motivation (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007), engagement (Almagro, Sáenz-López, & Moreno, 2010), and well-being (Adie, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2012; Reinboth, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2004). Using an autonomy-supportive leadership style involves behaviours such as providing choice to youth, acknowledging participants’ perspectives, providing positive, constructive feedback on performance, and the avoidance of controlling behaviours (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Hence, this leadership style is highly aligned with priorities of PYD programming. However, little research has examined the autonomy-supportive leadership in PA-PYD programming or within youth leadership. Therefore, it is warranted to explore whether youth leaders within a PA-PYD program are using any aspects of an autonomy supportive approach and the perceived impact of such an approach.

In sum, very little, if any, research has examined youth leader perceptions of the impact they have on the younger peers they lead or the younger peers' perceptions of the impact youth leaders may have within the context of PA-PYD programming. However, past research has shown abundant evidence that peers are a strong developmental influence and research from related fields suggests that factors such as relatability, mentorship, and autonomy-supportive leadership could play role in the impact youth leaders can have on younger peers within the context of youth programming. The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of youth leaders' influence on program participants' in PA-PYD programming. Three research questions were proposed to address this purpose. First, how do youth leaders perceive the impact they are having on program participants? Second, how do program participants perceive the youth leader's impact on their development and well-being? Third, do youth leaders' perceptions of their impact converge or diverge with program participants' perceptions?

Methods

This study was guided by a constructivist paradigm, which involves acknowledging that each participant's reality is constructed from their own experiences and their interactions with the environment; thus, multiple realities of phenomena can exist (Creswell, 2012; Crotty, 1998). The reason this paradigm was chosen was because it was assumed that the participants in this study would likely have different perspectives on their experiences of youth leadership, and this paradigm can help in capturing these experiences. As well, a multiple case study methodology was the chosen approach for conducting this study. This involved collection of data from four different program sites who all delivered the same PA-PYD program for at-risk youth (see details below). Multiple case studies are beneficial for the exploration of a phenomenon,

population, or condition, as this requires drawing information across several cases, which can help to provide richer insight into that which is being explored (Stake, 2005).

Context

The context of this study is a PA-PYD program that intentionally incorporates youth leaders. The organization who implemented the program has numerous sites throughout Canada within inner-city schools that have a prevalence of at-risk youth, and has been implementing the PA-PYD program for over 10 years. The program runs for 32 weeks during the school year with each week having one program session that lasts at least 2 hours. The program sessions begin with attendance and welcoming activity, followed by a physical-activity session (e.g., warmup, running laps, capture the flag). After a snack break, the second half of the program session is devoted to literacy activities (e.g., reading challenges, word-of-the-day, library visits), and a journal session (e.g., personal reflection period). Each session then ends with a debrief/shout-out session (e.g., recognition of achievements). A head coordinator manages each club, along with a school representative. A team of adult leaders (referred to as adult coaches), and a team of youth leaders (referred to as junior coaches) are responsible for delivering the program. Program participants in these programs were known as club members. Most of these participants were recommended by principals, teachers, and other adult leaders for selection in the program if they met criteria that deemed them at-risk (Appendix F). In each site, mentoring arrangements between adult coaches, junior coaches, and club members were present, but the nature of these relationships were largely informal and would vary by site. This program was chosen as the context for this study as they utilize youth leaders, and their values and implementation are in line with Roth and Brooks-Gunn's (2003, 2015) criteria for a PYD program: (a) program goals that value and intend to promote PYD; (b) an environment that promotes positive social ties with

peers and their leaders, supports youth self-advocacy, maintains positive behavioural expectations, and provides opportunities for recognition of progress and achievements; (c) provides opportunities for youth to engage meaningfully in activities that promote the development of various skills and assets.

Participants and Selection

Sixteen junior coaches (aged 12 to 17, attending grades 7 to 12) and 15 club members (aged 10 to 12, attending grades 4 to 6) were recruited from four different program sites to participate in this study (see demographic characteristics in Tables 1, 2, and 3). Recruitment involved a combination of a purposive sampling method, and a convenience sampling method. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on characteristics that will best align with the purpose of the study (Sparkes & Smith, 2013). Given the purpose of this study, the researcher looked to select both female and male program participants, who have varying levels of involvement in the club (e.g., length of time in the club as a member), and those who have been led by youth leaders who are also participating in the study. Youth leaders were also selected in a similar fashion. Convenience sampling is used when participants are selected because they are readily available in the event of time-limitations (Bryman, Bell, & Teevan, 2012). The head coordinator also assisted in the selection of these participants.

Interview Protocol

Upon ethics approval from the University of Ottawa's Office of Research Ethics and Integrity, parental consent and youth assent (Appendix G) were collected. Each participant completed a one-on-one, face-to-face, semi-structured interview. The lead researcher conducted all the interviews with junior coaches and club members. Interviews were administered during

the month of May 2016, either during program time, or during school time in the participant's lunch break. All interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the method of data collection as they allow for the exploration of experiences, beliefs, and motivations of the participants (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). They also allowed for the researcher to guide the conversation in the direction that he wanted to explore, but also permitted flexibility to explore in a novel direction based on how the interviewees responded (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, this method aligned with the methodology and paradigm chosen for this study.

Two separate interview guides (Appendix E and H) were developed, one for the junior coaches and one for the club members. For the junior coaches, the interview guide was composed of three sections. The first section gained demographic information and general experiences in the program (e.g., "What is it like to be a part of the club?"), the second section looked at the leader's development (e.g., "Why did you decide to become a junior coach?") and the third section explored their contribution and relationships with others in the program (e.g., "Describe your relationships with your club members", "Do you feel you have influenced the club members?"). Probes and follow-up questions were used to explore areas of the junior coaches' experiences further. For instance, if the junior coach answered yes to the question of whether they are approached by the club members, follow-up questions would delve further into this experience by asking "How do you feel that you have influenced them?", and/or "Can you tell me more about that?". These interviews lasted between 10 to 35 minutes ($M = 24:31$).

In the interview guide for the club members, questions were also split into three sections. The first section gained demographic information and their general experiences in the program (e.g., "Tell me what it's like to be in the [name of the program]?"), the second section explored

how they perceive they've developed in the program (e.g., "Have you learned any skills from being in the club?") and the third section explored their relationships with junior and adult coaches, and what support they perceive from these relationships (e.g., "Do you find your junior coach is supportive?"). Probes and follow-up questions were used to explore areas of club members' experiences further. For instance, if asked about support from the junior coaches, further probes could ask "Is this support different from adult coaches?". These interviews lasted between 10 and 30 minutes ($M = 16:54$).

Data Analysis

Once all the data were gathered, a thematic analysis was conducted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure confidentiality of the participants, all participants were assigned a pseudonym. During step one, the interviews were transcribed verbatim, with the removal of any filler words (e.g., 'so', 'like', 'you know'), and notes written aside of the researchers' initial ideas about the analysis. The transcripts were then imported into NVivo 11 (QSR International, 2015), a qualitative data analysis software, to be coded and managed. At this stage, the lead researcher and a critical friend who had many years of experience with analyzing qualitative data and in the field of youth development, separately read six transcripts (three junior coaches, three club members), and then met to discuss their ideas. This practice helped to enhance the reliability of these data and verify with one another whether similar ideas were emerging. After this, the lead researcher proceeded with steps two to four, first analysing the junior coaches' transcripts, followed by separately analysing the club members' transcripts.

During step two, all transcripts were read through multiple times. The first reading helped to generate an understanding of the general content of the transcripts, while subsequent readings helped to identify any passages that were related to a previously identified theoretical concept

such as mentorship, autonomy-support, and relatability (deductive analysis), or any other novel, interesting, or significant findings (inductive analysis). Tags were created for passages that represented the same idea. For instance, when analyzing deductively, “Autonomy support” was a tag created that was identified prior to analysis, and any passages related to autonomy support were grouped under it. Similarly, when analyzing inductively, the tag “enjoyment” was identified during analysis and passages related to this tag were grouped together. Tags were created separately for junior coaches and club members.

During step 3, tags that were like one another could be grouped under a general category, and multiple similar or related categories could be grouped together to create initial subthemes and themes. Throughout analysis, tags and categories were flexible – they could be modified, omitted, and/or combined – however, effort was made to ensure that passages under one tag could not be grouped into another tag. Due to the limited durations of the interviews, content analyses (Miles & Huberman, 1994) were employed to explore if there were enough data to answer the research questions. NVivo software automatically generated these analyses for each set of participants in Tables 4 and 5, which displayed each item (tags, subthemes, and themes), the number of respective sources (participants) that spoke about the item, and the number of references (coded extracts) for each item. It was clear that with the large number of items across many sources and with many references for each, there was enough content to pursue the rest of the analysis without needing to gather further data.

During step 4, the tags were further reviewed to make sure that themes and tags were aligned and that these could represent the overall data; this involved further modifications. The process of reading passages and adjusting tags continued until all sources were exhausted and

modification of tags had reached a saturation point, where novel ideas were no longer being recognized and further refinement was unnecessary.

During step 5, both sets of transcripts were looked at to identify which themes represent the perceptions of the influence of the junior coaches on the club members. Within each theme, it was explored whether club members' and junior coaches' perceptions aligned or differed. For instance, while the junior coaches and club members both discussed "learning and building skills", they had different perceptions on what these skills are, and how these skills were learned. Once these themes and their characteristics could be recognized, they were renamed if necessary.

During step 6, the themes were then prepared for presentation of results. Relevant quotations were identified that help to best support these themes. These quotations were then presented for each theme and respective subthemes, in which it was discussed what junior coaches perceived, what club members perceived, and how these perceptions aligned or differed.

Establishing Trustworthiness

A variety of practices were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the data. The lead researcher exercised caution in letting his biases influence how data were collected and analyzed by conducting bracketing interviews before and after data collection. Two colleagues of the lead researcher who have knowledge of sport psychology and PYD conducted the bracketing interviews. Bracketing interviews help a researcher gain an awareness of any underlying biases, thoughts, or assumptions he or she may have related to research they are conducting and how these may limit or strengthen his interpretations (Rolls & Relf, 2006). Some of the assumptions that arose in the bracketing interviews for this study were based on the researcher's own experiences of being involved in youth programming for at-risk youth, such as the type of

support they received from their leaders. These experiences were necessary to bracket in order to limit their influence on how the participants' experiences of support were interpreted.

Many studies with community organizations like these can be susceptible to a positivity bias, in which the analysis and findings that are reported tend to have the cases illustrated in a positive light – to please the partnering organization or to refrain from potential judgement (Coakley, 2011). To help derive a critical commentary throughout the study, the organization was informed that while this study will seek to identify the strengths of the club, it will also attempt to identify areas that require improvement. All directors were briefed in advance about the study by both the director and the researcher, and informed that the participating clubs and participants would remain anonymous in any published literature. As well, participants were encouraged to be as honest as possible in their responses. This helped to protect the credibility of the study and its participants.

During data collection, the research employed the practice of multi-vocality, in which the lead researcher actively inhibits their own assumptions from driving interpretations of each participant's view (e.g., not presenting leading questions), and from ignoring any perspectives that do not align with the researcher's assumptions or views (Tracy, 2010). In addition, post data-collection and after transcribing the interviews, member checking was used, which involved having participants review their transcripts and identify if the experiences they presented were accurate to the realities they wanted to present (Tracy, 2010). Eight participants were sent their transcripts directly by email; none of the participants offered any changes or suggestions. Two researchers initially analysed six transcripts, helping to provide a broader scope and different perspectives to the analysis, a practice known as investigator triangulation (Tracy, 2010). Thick description was also used to provide enough detail in the presentation of results to let these data

speak for themselves. Finally, by retrieving data from two samples of participants (junior coaches and club members), the researcher was able to present a crystallized illustration of these data, which identified that there are multiple experiences of youth leadership in this program, as opposed to a singular reality or truth (Tracy, 2010).

Results

The perceptions shared by both the club members and the junior coaches spanned over five themes: (a) learning and building skills, (b) receiving support, (c) enjoyment, (d) relatability, and (e) lack of maturity. Some of the larger themes are comprised of multiple subthemes that are presented below.

Learning and Building Skills

The theme learning and building skills was comprised of two subthemes. The first subtheme was literacy and physical activity skills. Club members spoke about the different skills they learned from their junior coaches. Primarily, club members shared that they learned and developed skills in the literacy domain (e.g., reading, vocabulary, spelling), the physical domain (e.g., running, increasing stamina, pacing), and the life skills domain (e.g., respect, teamwork, confidence). Similarly, the junior coaches spoke about how they primarily taught and helped youth develop reading skills and physical activity skills. The second subtheme was life skills. The club members expressed several times the various life skills the junior coaches taught them. However, the junior coaches rarely discussed contributing directly to youths' life skill development. Instead, they shared experiences about engaging in positive behaviours and being a role model for the youth.

Literacy and physical activity skills. Club members shared how their junior coaches taught them literacy skills. Manish, a club member, said: "Like when they [the junior coaches]

do the word-of-the-days, they try to improve your mind. They say definitions and you're supposed to guess or know the word. And we say if we are pretty sure about the word” (Manish).

In this quotation, Manish spoke about how his leaders would teach him and his fellow club members through the ‘word-of-the-day’ activity, which helped them work on their literacy-related skills (e.g., learning definitions). Similar to the previous quotation, another club member, Tashi, learned through the quote-of-the-day activity, in which the junior coaches would act scenarios to help illustrate different uses of words. “They're [the junior coaches] are acting a lot for their quote of the day... the quote-of-the-day is integrity, so they'll act out something that involves integrity and something that's not integrity; like the positive and the negative” (Tashi).

Club members also shared their experiences of learning to be physically active from the junior coaches. As Aishwarya, a club member, expressed: “And when we're doing the run, they're like ‘start slowly, then go faster, don't worry about anything else’” (Aishwarya). Aishwarya spoke about how her coach provided her guidance and instruction during her run.

The club members’ perspectives related to learning physical and literacy skills aligned with the perspectives of the junior coaches. The junior coaches recognized that they helped teach their younger peers both literacy and physical activity skills. This junior coach, Isaac, explained:

We run for our fitness which is about 15 to 25 minutes, every week. And then we do the word-of-the-day challenge, and that is basically to help the kids with their reading and writing. And we do the journals, and we have to write how much times we ran today, and talk specifics about how we felt... [Club member’s name], I've been with him for about 2 years, and at first he didn't know how to spell any of the words, or anything, and then after doing the program and coming every week, he's starting to learn the words and is

doing an amazing job. So basically, just to help the kids be active if they haven't been active and help the kids who are in need. (Isaac)

Another junior coach, Brennon, described how he taught youth to read:

I read with a whole bunch of kids. I remember reading with the younger ones, trying to help them pronounce certain words. If they didn't understand, if they never understand a sentence, after a couple of times I'll ask them some questions about the story to see if they know what the story is about. (Brennon)

Here Brennon described exercising different literary techniques to help club members learn literacy-related skills. Sometimes, teaching also involved junior coaches having to look back on their own experiences to help pass knowledge and skills down to others. Faith related to club members by teaching them in a language they understand – by simplifying words to help with comprehension:

We [the junior coaches and adult coaches] just like teach the same kind of [way], but in different words, 'cause our language – if they don't understand it... ours is more like a kid version of what they're saying. if they don't get it, we'll explain it, 'cause we have a sort of language that kids understand, we understand...we talk in less experienced words, and come up with little words that they know and experience. (Faith)

Life skills. The second subtheme focuses on how club members' learned life skills. From the accounts of club members, the junior coaches taught many life skills to them. The club members shared that the junior coaches incorporated life skill-related words into their word-of-the-day activities, and explained the life skills such as teamwork and confidence. At other times, the junior coaches integrated the teaching of life skills into the physical activity. For example, Aishwarya shared that in developing her ability to run longer distances: “[They taught us] to

never give up and... when I run one of the junior coaches last year they helped persevere me” (Aishwarya). Another club member, Caleb, provided an example of how the junior coaches taught him and the club members how to be honest and respectful: “[They taught us] to be honest, respectful, not treat anybody different[ly], treat everybody the same way you would want to be treated” (Caleb).

While the club members reported experiences around life skill development – particularly being explicitly taught by junior coaches – the junior coaches did not discuss or share experiences around influencing the club members’ life skill development. Although a couple of junior coaches briefly mentioned teaching respect or teamwork, this was not a prominent experience among many coaches. However, junior coaches did describe facilitating activities that integrated life skills. For instance, Emily described how she and her peers invited youth to help facilitate their word-of-the-day skits:

Most of the time we [the junior coaches] trade weeks, so we get them [the club members] to help us too. Sometimes we choose a kid, and they also get to become a junior coach for part of the day. Especially for the skits, me and [other junior coach] bring the kids up to do the skits and help us. So they help us plan the skits and help us make it more interesting for them. So it's not just us planning, they think its funny, we also get them to help us too. (Emily)

In allowing the club members to experience what it is like to be a junior coach of the day, they were helping develop the club members’ planning and leadership skills.

Junior coaches may have also taught life skills in an indirect manner through role modelling life skills. Aishwarya shared: "They're really helpful, ‘cause they're like another coach to us...and they're showing leadership to us and they're inspiring" (Aishwarya).

Receiving Support

Club members spoke about the support they received from their junior coaches. Two subthemes to describe the shared experiences of club members and junior coaches with respect to support include: (a) autonomy and competence support and (b) emotional support and caring.

Autonomy and competence support. Coaches supported their club members' autonomy by allowing them time to work on their journals independently, and providing choice for what games they can play and what books they can read. In addition to choice, the junior coaches also challenged the youth to take on more difficult tasks to help increase their levels of competence. As Aishwarya expressed:

They let us choose what books you want, but if it's too easy, 'cause some of the junior coaches they know me well 'cause of my sisters, so like some of them, if I choose the easy book, they'll say it's too easy for you, you have to read another book so you can get better to improve your reading, and then I get another book. (Aishwarya)

Competence was also supported by providing them positive feedback, such as encouragement (e.g., "keep going" and "don't give up"), and praise (e.g., providing 'shout-outs', recognitions of achievement at the end of the day). Tashi described the feedback that she received: "They're very 'encouragable' ... I don't know how you say that. They're very... if you give up on them they'll still ... they're still behind you and pushing you to go forward and not backing down" (Tashi). From this excerpt, the junior coaches supported the club members even when things got difficult, pushing them to continue and to persevere. In this way, the coaches supported the club members' competence by believing that they still had the ability to perform.

Junior coaches also believed that they engaged with the club members in ways that supported their competence and autonomy. As this junior coach, Shivani, shared:

Some of the kids, even after we practice the words, they have a little bit of trouble spelling the words or writing them down in their journal. [I would help] spell the word out for them. And like say they need help with running like half of them will run a lap and they'll walk the rest. So I run with them sometimes to support them (Shivani).

According to Shivani, for youth with reading difficulties, the coaches would help spell out a word for them, or for youth who need help with running, they would do laps with them – both strategies are used to help improve club members' competencies in these activities.

Along with directly helping them through engagement with them, the junior coaches also gave words of encouragement to the club members to help foster confidence in them. Faith described how she encouraged the club members:

It's mostly at the end but even during the program, even us junior coaches, we encourage the younger kids. Say if they didn't want to run and then you'd be like 'oh you can do it, you can do it' and stuff like that, and they encourage them and help them read, and they start reading a book or something, and we tell them 'oh can you read this, can you read that, and see what that is'. (Faith)

Support for club members' need for autonomy was less prominent in the junior coaches' accounts; while club members mentioned being given choices and some opportunities for independent work. Again, it may be that the junior coaches are more consciously aware of when they are encouraging a club member or engaging in an activity to help the member improve a skill.

Emotional support and caring. Club members found that their junior coaches were compassionate, caring, and had their best interests in mind. Caleb said, "They're caring, they care about everyone in the program, and they want everyone to have a better life." (Caleb). The junior

coaches were commonly characterized as 'kind', 'respectful', 'trustworthy', 'polite', and 'nice'.

The club members found that their coaches approached them when they were sad or down to offer their assistance, and were available to be approached for advice or help solving a problem/issue: "She's very supportive and humorous too. Sometimes when I'm having a problem, she uses humor and makes me laugh. And sometimes I have problems and she's over there like 'I feel you'." (Tashi). Club members also found that junior coaches demonstrated a sense of caring for them: "They [the junior coaches] treated us nice, it's like the same, they could be doing their projects, and they spend time after school helping us learn and stuff" (Caleb). Here Caleb spoke about how junior coaches took time out of their personal lives to help youth, because they cared.

The junior coaches also shared experiences of supporting the club members emotionally, and provide caring to youth. The junior coaches would approach their club members if they noticed that they were feeling sad:

I understand some of the club members. If I ask them, they're not afraid to tell me if there's a problem. If I see someone crying and I ask them 'Hey, what's wrong?'. They're not afraid to tell me there's something wrong because they know that I'm going to do my very best to try and help them (Nala).

Accounts like this illustrate that the junior coaches were available to youth to support them, and utilized their understanding of them to help them with their issues.

In addition, the junior coaches shared how being a role model to the club members was important and being a positive role model is how they could support the overall development of the club members. For instance, this junior coach, Navya, stated: "A role model is when you depend on a person or look up to them; I think that they look up to me like in ways of motivating

them, to come [to me] with their personal problem, to help them” (Navya). From Navya’s perspective, she found that it was important to be modelling positive actions because the youth were always watching and observing her. Similarly, Emily talked about how younger youth would look up to her:

I think it's just nice that someone looks up to you. It's just important. It's just important I guess, for kids to look up to you, to set an example and everything... it's just in the same like big brother-little brother kind of way, you have to be their role model, you have to be their teacher, to teach them what's right, what's wrong, and everything else (Emily).

Here Emily recognized that being a role model was important to set an example for the younger youth who learned from her. Overall, the club members’ and junior coaches’ experiences were aligned in how they described the support that club members received.

Enjoyment

A common motivation for participation in the clubs was enjoyment. Caleb expressed his enjoyment of the program: “This place is like my second home, it's very fun, and people are really caring” (Caleb). What made it fun for many of the club members was the variety of activities that they could engage in, as well as the junior coaches’ involvement with them – who helped make the games more enjoyable. For example, Faisal, a club member, explained: “It seems really fun because they [the junior coaches] play in the tag games...and they also set things up for you too. They do the word definitions... they act in plays--it’s really funny” (Faisal). Here Faisal found that when the coaches engaged in the programming with them, they enjoyed it more; they also appreciated the coaches facilitating fun activities for them. As well, the positivity of the coaches helped make the program more enjoyable. When asked what makes

the program fun, Mason, a club member, said: “The coaches...they always use positive words. They always have a smile on their face... they never, they’re not mean” (Mason).

Similarly, the junior coaches expressed that they enjoyed the program because of their involvement with the club members. Faith described how her relationships with club members made her time in the club more enjoyable:

I like helping the kids out, ‘cause they're cool to hang with, even though you're older than them, they're fun to hang with and you get along with them well; you have a good bond with them, so that's what I like most (Faith).

Here Faith found that helping the youth, hanging out with them, and developing relationships with them, helped create a fun experience.

However, while the junior coaches expressed that they enjoyed the program because of the club members, and the club members spoke about how their coaches made the program fun for them, the junior coaches did not describe experiences of whether they contributed to the youth’s enjoyment, or how they would do so. Based on what was outlined in the previous themes, junior coaches seemed to be more focused on helping youth with their running skills, reading skills, and supporting them emotionally, while less focus was given to providing enjoyment.

Relatability

Club members reported that junior coaches adopted either supportive or assisting roles to the adults, or as facilitators or leaders of programming. Some club members outlined that junior coaches were more helpful than adults, some found they were less helpful, and others found no difference in helpfulness. Some club members found the adult coaches more approachable for guidance or advice, while others found their junior coaches more approachable. Finally,

experiences of trusting relationships also differed – club members could identify trust experiences with junior coaches, adult coaches, or both. While these characteristics demonstrate the diversity between junior and adult coaches in their behaviours and relationships with club members, youth perceived junior coaches to have a distinct advantage of being more relatable.

What made the junior coaches relatable was their similarity and proximity to the experiences of the club members. Junior coaches tended to be younger than the adult coaches (and closer in age to the club members), involved more directly (and more often) with the club members, and shared similar interests to the club members. Faisal spoke about how junior coaches had similar interests to him: “they like the same stuff, they like reading, just like me, they like running, just like me” (Faisal). For another club member, Manish, having a junior coach that was an “older kid” provided him with more common interests to talk about, and in this sense, made the club more fun: “It’s actually pretty fun [having junior coaches] ‘cause sometimes when there’s someone younger than you – they don’t get things that older kids talk about. So, the junior coaches provide some people with conversation... they talk about things that we get” (Manish).

The junior coaches also talked about how they would relate to the club members because a lot of them had once been club members themselves. As junior coaches could relate through similarity in experiences, they were better able to understand the youth. Navya articulated:

They sort of come up to me with their personal problems. Like some of them, they don’t wanna tell their friends, or their [adult] coaches; they usually tell their junior coaches ‘cause junior coaches know what it’s like, and adult coaches been a long time since they felt that, so they go to junior coaches to help them with their personal problems. (Navya)

Navya felt that she could relate better to youth because of her shared experiences, and as a result was approached more often. As well, Emily discussed having similar interests as the club members, again from having close ties with that experience:

A few years ago I was in that program too. I didn't really know how to read that well, I couldn't run that fast or for that long. We also have a lot of the same interests too. Lots of them are bookworms like me. Lots of them are runners like my other friends and stuff... some of them really like drawing, which I also do. So we have stuff to talk about. (Emily)

Therefore, it appears that club members perceived the junior coaches as more relatable and that the junior coaches also recognized this sense of relatability.

Lack of Maturity

There were also some challenges that came with having junior coaches. Club members found that junior coaches may have detracted from the program if they were fooling around, being unsupportive, or disengaged in the activities. These experiences may have led to some distrust of the junior coaches, such as in Tashi's experience:

The junior coaches, some of them aren't really on-task, doing their job, like sometimes they're just fooling around.... They should be like participating in the group. They just sit in the back and chat with their friends and stuff. But sometimes I think they should do something, because it's not really fair – there's other people who want to be junior coaches, who can do a better job. And I'm not saying they're bad, I just think they could just do a bit better" (Tashi).

In this quotation, Tashi recognized that the junior coach's role is to be attentive and involved with the club members, yet some did not act this way. In comparison to the adult coaches, some club members found the junior coaches less trustworthy: "I trust the adult coaches more because

they're adults... the junior coaches I do trust, but they might goof off a little" (Rob). Junior coaches also recognized that they themselves, or their peers, demonstrated apathy toward their role: "some of us coaches – I don't want to name any names – they just sit around and do stuff, they don't actually help" (Amit).

On the other hand, some junior coaches expressed difficulties and frustrations with their roles (or other junior coaches in their roles). A challenge junior coaches spoke about most often was the difficulties with behaviour management of the club members due to their proximity in age. As Navya described: "Sometimes the kids don't really listen to junior coaches...because we're sort of the same age; we're not really bigger. Because we're sort of the same age as them but unlike the [adult] coaches, they're more mature and more adult." (Navya). Nala spoke about how some gap in age is helpful while being very close in age could be a hindrance:

Because I always help the younger ones with the running and reading and really understand them more and I try to be close together with them and really try to help them read, try to help them run a little, encourage them a lot. So I guess when I'm like that they'll see me as that role model. But the older they get the harder it is to impress them.
(Nala)

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of youth leaders' influence on program participants' in PA-PYD programming. More specifically, this research aimed to explore the relationships program participants (club members) had with their youth leaders (junior coaches) and the outcomes of these relationships. In addition, the perceptions of the club members were compared with those from the junior coaches to see whether they aligned and/or

differed. Five themes emerged from these experiences and the following sections will discuss these themes in relation to the current literature.

The first theme, learning and building skills, highlighted that the club members believed they developed literacy skills, physical activity skills and life skills from the junior coaches. However, while the junior coaches believed they had an impact on literacy and physical activity competencies, they shared limited experiences related to explicitly and intentionally incorporating a life skill focus. It seems that the outcomes perceived for the club members by the junior coaches were focused on the explicit content areas of the program (to teach literacy skills and physical activity skills), along with an explicit model of mentorship (to provide help and support to youth). The experiences shared by the club members allude to the idea that the junior coaches integrated opportunities to develop life skills, some of which were implicit (e.g., role modelling life skills) while others were explicit (e.g., providing opportunities to practice leadership and perseverance). These results are supported by past research which has shown that youth athletes perceive they have developed life skills both implicitly, meaning their coaches did not set aside time to teach life skills (Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008; M. I. Jones & Lavalley, 2009) as well as explicitly, when coaches set aside time to teach life skills (Camiré, Forneris, Trudel, & Bernard, 2011; Gould et al., 2013). However, many researchers assert that life skills need to be explicitly taught for them to be able to be developed in youth, and transferred to other contexts (Bean & Forneris, 2016; Camiré et al., 2011; Gould & Carson, 2008). Thus, although youth leaders may be leading structured activities for the development of life skills without such awareness, it is recommended that youth leaders undertake formal training on how to teach life skills to help program participants develop the necessary skills to enable them to succeed outside of the program. For example, programs that help to train sport coaches in PYD approaches

including life skills have shown that such training increased knowledge of life skills, improved understanding of their players, and that they used their training to help players develop life skills (e.g., Falcão, Gordon, & Gilbert, 2012; Harwood, Barker, & Anderson, 2015)..

The second theme, receiving support, focused on how club members perceived autonomy, competence, and emotional support from their junior coaches, both resulting from direct engagement in activities with youth as well as indirect strategies such as role-modelling. The positive contributions that club members experienced as a result of the supportive behavior demonstrated by the junior coaches aligns with Rhodes' (2002, 2005) model of youth mentoring as well as the use of an autonomy-supportive leadership style (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Research has shown a number of positive outcomes related to youth mentoring that were similar to those discussed in this study such as socio-emotional development and cognitive development (DuBois et al., 2011; Rhodes, 2002, 2005). In addition, research has shown that when leaders use an autonomy-supportive approach – which was also evident in this study – a number of positive outcomes can arise such as satisfaction of our basic psychological needs, as well as increases in self-determined motivation (Adie et al., 2012; Bean, Harlow, & Kendellen, 2017). Relatedly, the third theme titled enjoyment, indicated that club members appreciated the involvement of junior coaches as they recognize that it is a volunteer position. Club members discussed at length the junior coaches' willingness interact and engage in activities to help and to support them, which together led to increased enjoyment of the program. Likewise, the junior coaches expressed that being involved with the program participants made the experience of being leaders more fun for them.

The fourth theme, relatability, reinforced how similarity in interests and experiences helped to foster relationships between the club members and the junior coaches. Many of the

junior coaches were previous participants at the club, hence, the junior coaches were well known by many of the club members and they could easily relate with the life experiences of the club members. As well, both the club members and junior coaches expressed that relatability was enhanced as they shared common interests which has been supported by previous research (DuBois et al., 2011; Grossman & Bulle, 2006). One might assume that closeness in age would also result in greater relatability. However, in this study it appears that this may not be the case and that there may be an ideal age differential. For example, the club members and junior coaches recognized that being relatively close in age helped in sharing similar life experiences and interests. However, being too close in age was a hindrance to the relationship as older club members appeared to be more respectful of the adult coaches compared to junior coaches very close in age. Therefore, the findings from this study support the research which has shown that youth can better relate to peers compared to adult leaders who may be farther removed from the program participants' experiences or may not have the same interests to be able to relate (K. R. Jones, 2006); As well, research has shown that youth tend to respond enthusiastically to modelling from peers as opposed to adults (Duncomb as cited in Shanahan, 2015). From these findings, it is recommended that pairing youth leaders with younger program participants can maximize relatability through shared experiences and interests. However, since proximity in age was recognized in this study to be a double-edged sword, care should be taken to ensure that some form of age differential is present, so that program participants feel that they have a leader that they can look up to, and is not in the same life stage.

In the final theme, lack of maturity, club members discussed how immature and uninvolved junior coaches led to program disruptions. The junior coaches also cited their frustrations with their peers who showed lack of responsibility (e.g., fooling around, not assisting

with tasks), feeling that this made it more difficult to garner the attention and respect of the club members. Youth find that aversive behaviour from peers can be challenging to deal with (Dworkin & Larson, 2007). A reason these challenges may arise is because young adolescents are in a stage of development where their interpersonal skills may be limited, particularly in understanding other's points of view and coordinating with them which, in turn, can result in misunderstanding and conflict (Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005). Therefore, a barrier for many youth may be their lack of competency in a leadership role as a result of their infancy in leadership development. This finding also demonstrates the need for more formalized training for youth leaders for them to gain a working knowledge of how to be leaders and how to have a positive influence in their role. For instance, the 4-H youth teaching youth model has an explicit "Experience" component, which has youth leaders undergo training and practice with an adult staff prior to working with younger youth. Training in this program concerns strategies for youth management, answering difficult questions, and interacting with specific age groups or developmental stages (Shanahan, 2015).

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

A strength of this study was the triangulation of youth leadership experiences through utilization of two different perspectives (youth leaders and program participants), across four different cases. This enabled the researcher to capture a broad set of experiences and this was reflected in the participants' accounts (Stake, 2005). As many of the club members participating in the program were young adolescents who were still developing their language and conversational skills, limitations were faced in the potential for them to provide rich data from interviews alone (Eder & Fingerson, 2001). To help avoid this limitation, youth under the age of 10 were excluded from selection for the interviews, in favour of older youth, who may be more

articulate. However, as a result of this exclusion, a meaningful portion of program participants' experiences may have been disregarded. To remediate this, future studies with a similar cohort could include utilizing multiple methods (e.g., photovoice, focus groups) to capture a broader and deeper range of the children's experiences (Darbyshire, MacDougall, & Schiller, 2005). In addition, this study relied on the perceived accounts of both the program participants and youth leaders. Future research would benefit from integrating observational methods, and/or quantitative self-report surveys, as other ways to triangulate the data collected, particularly given that the youth would likely discuss positive experiences in more detail compared to negative experiences. As the data collection period was short, and held during the busy time of year as participants were preparing for the end year event, this led to shortened, limited interviews. However, after conducting content analyses, it was evident that there were enough data collected from the interviews to address the research questions be able to present an in-depth picture of the experiences of program participants and youth leaders in this PA-PYD program.

Conclusion

Overall, this study helped to provide a greater understanding of how the impacts of youth leadership are perceived and experienced within a PA-PYD program. There appear to be several perceived benefits that result from creating meaningful leadership roles for youth in physical-activity based programming. These benefits include the development of skills, the experience of feeling supported, and the development of relationships, which led to enhanced enjoyment. Therefore, it is highly recommended that those working in the field of youth programming for at-risk youth begin to create meaningful leadership opportunities in programming that also integrates formal training on PYD approaches. Such opportunities and the associated training

would help further empower at-risk youth and provide them with the necessary skills to succeed in their future.

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Table 1

Overall Demographics of the Junior Coaches and Club Members

		Junior Coaches		Club Members	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Male	8	50%	8	53%
	Female	8	50%	7	47%
Languages spoken	English	16	100%	15	100%
	French	7	44%	5	33%
	Tamil	5	31%	5	33%
	Other	5	31%	4	27%

		Junior Coaches			Club Members		
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Age		13.37	1.36	12 – 17	10.53	1.12	9 – 12
Grade level		-	-	7 – 12	-	-	3 – 6
Years of Involvement in Club		4.25	1.81	1 – 7	2.90	1.44	1 – 5
Years of Involvement as a Coach		1.56	0.72	1 – 3	-	-	-

Table 2

Specific Demographics of the Junior Coaches

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Grade	Ethnicity and/or Background	Place of Birth	Languages	Years of Involvement in Club	Years of Involvement as Coach
Navya	Female	13	8	Canada, Sri Lanka	Toronto	English, French, Tamil	5	2
Amit	Male	13	7	Bangladesh	Toronto	English, Bengali	3	1
Emily	Female	14	8	Canada, White		English	5	2
Sanjay	Male	12	7	Sri Lanka		English, Tamil	3	1
Ishvar	Male	13	7	Bangladesh		English, Bengali, French, German, Portuguese	5	1
Isaac	Male	17	12	Jamaica	Toronto	English	2	2
Nala	Female	15	9	Somalia		English	7	3
Brennon	Male	12	7	Canada, White	Toronto	English, French	7	1
Noah	Male	13	7	Trinidad, Guyana, Haiti	Toronto	English	3	1
Nadir	Male	13	7	Syria	Syria	Arabic, English	1	1
Savannah	Female	13	8	Ethiopia	Toronto	English, Tigrinya, Ohari	2	2
Shivani	Female	12	7	Sri Lanka	Toronto	English, Tamil, French	6	1
Faith	Female	14	9	Canada, Trinidad	Toronto	English	4	3
Simone	Female	15	9	Nigeria	Nigeria	English, Urba, French	5	1
Varun	Male	12	7	Sri Lanka	Canada	English, Tamil, French	4	1
Athiya	Female	13	8	Sri Lanka	Toronto	English, Tamil, French	6	2

Table 3

Specific Demographics of the Club Members

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Grade	Ethnicity and/or Background	Place of Birth	Languages	Years in Club	# of Junior Coaches*
Hasan	Male	10	4	Canada, Palestine		English	1	
Jude	Male	9	3	Canada, Saint Lucia		English	2	8
Gregory	Male	12	6	Canada, Philippines	Canada,	English, Filipino	5	5 - 6
Isaiah	Male	9	4	Jamaica	Scarborough	English	1	6 - 7
Tashi	Female	12	6	India, Tibet	India	English, Tibetan, Chinese	3	15
Caleb	Male	11	6	Uganda		English, French	4	
Mason	Male	11	5	Ethiopia	Toronto	English	3	2
Ginni	Female	11	5	Nepal	Nepal	Nepali	1	6
Rishita	Female	12	6	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	English, Tamil	4	4
Rob	Male	11	5	Caucasian/White	Toronto	English, French	5	
Anjali	Female	9	4	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	Tamil	2.5	3
Aishwarya	Female	11	6	Sri Lanka	Toronto	Tamil	3	2 - 3
Basma	Female	9	4	Canada, Pakistan	Canada	English, French	2	
Priyanka	Female	10	5	Sri Lanka	Germany	Tamil, English, French	2	10
Manish	Male	11	6	Sri Lanka		Tamil, English, French	5	3-4
Faisal	Male	10	4	Canada, Palestine		English	1	

Table 4

Content Analysis of the Junior Coaches' Experiences

Items	Sources	References
Receiving mentorship	16*	150*
Guidance	12	23
Autonomy and competence support	16*	82*
Choices	13	18
No choices	3	3
Confidence in coach	3	4
Feedback	16*	33*
Constructive	7	9
Criticism	1	1
Individualized and group feedback	1	1
Encouragement	7	9
Praise	7	8
No feedback	3	3
Working independently	12	12
Work as a team or in groups	5	8
Approachability and openness	13	28
Role modelling	9	15
Negative experiences	2	3
Positive interactions, trust, and developing relationships	16*	175*
Trust	15*	55*
Trust from adults	10	12
Trust from kids	2	2
Trust in adults	13	18
Trust in each other	12	20
Lack of trust	3	3
Familiarity	12*	50*
Familiarity with adults	9	14

Familiarity with youth and peers	10	21
Friendships	9	15
Relatability	14*	47*
Relatability	9	17
Similarity with adult coaches	12	13
Similarity with kids	5	6
Similarity with one another	8	8
Difficulties	2	3
Outcomes	11*	22*
Enjoyment	8	13
Continued participation	7	9
Respect for adult coaches	1	1
Building Leaders	16*	182*
Facilitating activities	16	32
Learning by doing	8	12
Learning from kids	8	10
Confidence building	10	23
Handling situations	12	21
Responsibility	7	11
Role modelling and positive self-perceptions	14	31
Gaining Skills	15*	30*
Skill building	14	20
Skill Transfer	8	10
Leadership	4	4
Positive attitudes	3	8
Contribution	16*	85*
Helping youth	15	44
Supporting youth	16*	37*
Being approachable and open	8	12
Not approachable	1	1
Caring	5	6

Encouragement	6	8
Guidance	5	6
Mentoring	2	2
Praise	2	2
Relatability	1	1
Teaching youth	4	4
Challenges	13*	27*
Lack of Maturity	9	14
Not aware of development	6	6
Negative Experiences	6	7

*Aggregated sources/or references from sub-labels

Table 5

Content Analysis of the Club Members' Experiences

Codes for Club Members Experiences	Sources	References
Building Skills	14*	86*
Learn from Junior Coaches	10	14
Skill building - Attitude, behaviour, social skills	8	14
Skill building - Life Skills	6	10
Skill building - Physical	13	25
Skill building - Reading	12	23
Outcomes	15*	40*
Enjoyment	12	23
Activities	9	16
Engagement	1	1
Challenges	13*	39*
Negative Experiences	8	15
Immaturity of Junior Coaches	7	15
Non-understanding	3	5
Not learn from Junior Coaches	4	4
Relationships and Trust	15*	111*
Adults vs Junior coaches (Different roles)	8	11
No difference in roles	4	5
Junior Coaches	14*	78*
Attitudes About Junior Coaches	8	20
Competent	2	2
Enforcing Rules	1	1
Ensure Safety	3	3
Familiarity	5	5
Helping Youth	7	12

Relatability and Understanding	6	7
Similarity	7	8
Friendships	10	17
Support	15*	87*
Autonomy and Competence Support	12*	48*
Choices and Opportunities	7	7
Encouragement	11	24
Feedback	5	10
Working Independently	5	7
Emotional Support	13*	39*
Emotional Support	6	8
Approachability of Adult Coaches	5	7
Approachability of Junior Coaches	8	11
Attitudes about Adult Coaches	6	13

*Aggregated sources/or references from sub-labels

General Discussion

The general purpose of this thesis was to understand the experiences of youth leadership in a PA-PYD program. This was accomplished by interviewing both youth leaders (junior coaches) and program participants (club members) who are involved in multiple sites of a PA-PYD program. From the two articles presented, the overall results indicated that youth leaders learned how to become leaders from observing past youth leaders, receiving positive mentorship from their current adult leaders and learning by ‘doing’ (e.g., fulfilling tasks, and interacting with youth). In turn, these youth leaders can develop several life skills. Furthermore, the youth leaders were perceived by program participants as positively influencing their lives. More specifically, the program participants in this study reported that they learned literacy, physical activity, and life skills from their junior coaches, and found these leaders to be positive mentors who were supportive and relatable. However, it should also be noted that not all participants in the study had the same experiences. Some of the youth leaders expressed that they did not experience the same levels of support and trust with adults as they sought to develop their leadership abilities. As well, a few of the youth leaders and program participants expressed that some youth leaders lacked maturity and were not effective at leading activities or supporting their development. The following discussion will delve into these results in more detail, relate the findings to the literature, and provide recommendations for both research and applied work in PA-PYD programming.

The first aim of this study was to understand what contextual factors were perceived by youth leaders (the junior coaches) in facilitating their leadership development. In line with much of the current literature on youth-adult relationships (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005; Petitpas et al., 2005; Rhodes, 2004; Rhodes & Roffman, 2003), the youth leaders found positive

mentoring experiences to be critical in their development. This finding is supported by research that has focused on mentoring and found that mentoring experiences can lead to several PYD outcomes (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; DuBois et al., 2011; Rhodes, 2002, 2005). More specifically, the junior coaches in this research reported that having adult coaches who were approachable and supportive were key factors in having a positive mentoring experience. It also appears that the support that the youth were provided by the adult leaders is consistent with much of research related to basic psychological needs support and, in particular, autonomy-supportive leadership (Adie, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2008, 2012; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Moreover, it appears that youth leaders' perceptions of needs support they received from their adult leaders may have contributed to their continued engagement as leaders in the program, which also supports findings from the literature (Adie et al., 2012; Almagro, Sáenz-López, & Moreno, 2010).

Another factor that was perceived by the junior coaches as playing a role in their leadership development was trust. Trust was discussed as both a process and an outcome; in the program, the junior coaches perceived that by demonstrating personal and social responsibility, they gained the trust of the adult leaders. This also held true for junior coaches placing trust in their fellow peers who were also junior coaches. The junior coaches reported that they did not trust other junior coaches who did not show responsibility and respect. This is in line with literature on trust suggesting that trust can be gained with those who are honest, reliable, and caring (Rotenberg, 2010); and can grow over time with familiarity (Griffith & Larson, 2015). Just as with mentorship and basic psychological needs support, trust also seemed to positively influence the junior coaches' level of engagement which is similar to the findings from Griffith and Larson (2015) in their study with leaders of youth programming.

The second research question aimed to understand how being a youth leader influenced the youth's own development. To understand this, the first study was guided by two developmental frameworks on youth leadership, one by Fertman and van Linden's (1999) model and the other by Martinek and Hellison's (2009). According to both models, youth leadership is a process that occurs over time, and the findings from this study further support this notion. The development described by the junior coaches aligned with the stages outlined in both leadership models, with many describing how they first learned how to be leaders through observing other junior coaches, and gaining an understanding of what leadership is as well as the potential to become a leader. The junior coaches then described experiences of trial and error – performing tasks and trying new things – and slowly took on more leadership duties such as caring for others, handling situations, and facilitating activities. Martinek and Hellison describe the process as having youth not only perform leadership, but also become leaders themselves. This was observed from the junior coaches' experiences, who felt they developed a variety of life skills that support leadership development such as decision-making, problem solving techniques, and confidence. Moreover, while the life skills learned are commonly reported outcomes from sport-based PYD programming (Holt et al., 2017), the added value of youth leadership programming is that skills in leadership are identified as some of the most transferrable skills beyond sport (Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008).

The third and fourth research questions examining the impact that youth leadership had on the program participants, were explored in the second study. This second study built off the findings of the first study – utilizing the youth leaders' experiences to help interpret the experiences of the program participants, with respect to the impact of youth leadership programming. These results indicated that the junior coaches engaged in constructive

interactions with club members, and found that they could positively influence the club members. Primarily, the junior coaches described experiences teaching skills (e.g., teaching them spelling, word-of-the-day skits), engaging directly with club members in program activities (e.g., running with them, helping with journal activity), and providing support in the form of positive feedback and emotional support (e.g., being approachable to youth). The club members' experiences, in turn, aligned with those of the junior coaches – they developed literacy, physical activity and life skills, were engaged in the activities, and received encouragement and emotional support.

From these two studies a progression can be observed in which youth leaders who experienced mentorship, trust, and support for their basic psychological needs from their leaders, were able to develop skills as leaders by fulfilling tasks and interacting with others (e.g., confidence, decision-making, positive attitude); and in turn provide similar mentorship, teaching, and support experiences to the younger youth that they led, which represents what Deutsch (2008) referred to as a tri-level mentoring arrangement. Similar benefits also return to the youth leaders themselves in their cross-age leadership interactions, as they gain life skills working with youth (e.g., conflict resolution, caring, compassion); an example of reciprocal learning (Martinek, Schilling, & Hellison, 2006; Mawer, 2014; Murdock & Lee, 2001). Therefore, it appears that having youth take on meaningful roles that help them to develop leadership skills and make significant positive contributions to their at-risk peers may help to empower them and potentially alleviate barriers typically experienced by at-risk youth, as suggested in the literature (Libby, Sedonaen, & Bliss, 2006; Martinek & Hellison, 2009).

Although both studies recognized some advantages of having youth leaders – such as perceptions of program participants that youth leaders are more relatable compared to adult

leaders – some disadvantages were also apparent. Youth leaders are young, and many in the beginning stages of their leadership development; for this reason, not all youth would have the capacity to work effectively with peers and younger youth, and might be prone to apathetic, aversive, or disruptive behaviour. However, these disadvantages can be mediated with changes to program structure and formal training opportunities for adult and youth leaders which are discussed below.

Practical and Academic Implications

This research has several implications. These two studies bring to light the value of incorporating youth leadership into PA-PYD programming. By having youth take on meaningful roles in these activities, they can develop a broad set of skills that not only enhance their engagement within programming, but as they identify as leaders they may also become interested to be leaders in other contexts. Results from this study also suggest that a tri-level format of mentoring (Deutsch, 2008) may be ideal so that youth leaders have adult leaders who can support and mentor them, and the youth have the opportunity to practice and refine their leadership skills with younger peers. Therefore, organizations involved in developing and delivering PA-PYD programming should strongly consider implementing a tri-level mentoring system within the programs they offer. However, it is insufficient to implement such systems without some form of training, as this research indicated that not all adult leaders or youth leaders are engaging in effective mentoring or leadership practices. Hence, training should be offered to both adult leaders and youth leaders. Furthermore, this research highlighted that important topics to be included in such training would be positive mentoring practices of mentorship; how to establish and encourage trusting relationships that youth leaders have with adults and peers; and supporting the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Academic implications can also come from this research. First, this study provided empirical support for the idea that youth leadership is a process, and that youth progress through different development stages, from an awareness of leadership to a mastery and identity as a leader (Martinek & Hellison, 2009; Van Linden & Fertman, 1998). Second, this research brought an understanding of which processes are involved in developing youth-adult relationships, particularly when both parties also have a stake in the outcomes attained by program participants (DuBois et al., 2011). Third, while research in youth-adult relationships is plentiful, research on youth leader-program participant relationships are minimal; this study helps to provide insight on the processes and outcomes associated with cross-age leadership for both the leaders and the youth. As well, little research has looked at relatability as a factor, and these studies helped to recognize the advantage of relatability in these relationships. Fourth, as PYD literature has suffered from taking on an evangelist approach to the presentation of results in a positive light (Coakley, 2011), this study attempted to report both the positive outcomes and the challenges associated with youth leadership. Fifth, as youth leadership research has been minimal in the context of PA-PYD programming, this study provides an important contribution to this gap, which is needed given the popularity and prevalence of these programs (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005).

Strengths and Limitations

This research was not without its limitations. As this thesis was conducted with one organization, caution must be taken in generalizing the findings to other contexts. However, as this was a multiple case study, some variability is still present in these data; participants were recruited across multiple clubs within the organization, each club having its own unique culture

and variations to their program rules and roles for youth leaders (Stake, 2005). This helped to broaden the generalizability of what may have otherwise been a limited case.

This study provided an in-depth look at youth leadership experiences from two different perspectives (the youth leaders and program participants), a practice of triangulation which helps to bring a broader scope to the experiences being studied (Tracy, 2010). However, program participants who were aged below 10 years old were not included in the study, as they were favoured for older youth who may have been better able to articulate their experiences. Although this practice may recruit youth who may have been more proficient at articulating their experiences – and thus, gain richer data (Docherty & Sandelowski, 1999; Hill, 1997) – it also may limit the scope of the program participants' experiences. Ideally, future studies can alleviate this limitation by incorporating multiple methods of data collection, beyond semi-structured interviews, that can be used with younger populations (e.g., observation, focus groups; photovoice; Darbyshire et al., 2005; Kirk, 2007).

The head coordinators of each club were involved in the selection of the participants to be involved in these studies. Coordinators may have recommended youth for inclusion based on factors such as favouritism, or those who may discuss the club in a more positive light. Although head coordinators were asked to identify youth who they may felt would articulate themselves clearly despite their experiences, it should be acknowledged as a limitation.

The study was also limited by time. The data were collected during the final month of regular programming. Although this was the ideal time to collect data to answer the research questions, it was also a very busy time of the year for the program, as many of the youth were in preparation for the final event held in June. At some points, the interviewer and the interviewees were urged to speed up the interviews and some of the interviews were cut short by the club

staff. This compelled the interviewer to ask questions quickly, and for respondents to respond quickly, which could have led to less detail provided in the interviews. However, in almost all interviews conducted, every question on the interview guide was answered, and opportunities for probing and follow-up questions still arose.

Finally, as the researchers and program staff are in authority positions over the youth, there is a possible power disparity; some youth may have felt they needed to refrain from socially unacceptable answers, to avoid consequences such as being judged, or fear of punishment (Kirk, 2007). Therefore, participants may have felt compelled (consciously or unconsciously) to answer in a way that they felt the interviewer would want to hear, resulting in a response bias (Nederhof, 1985). However, participants were ensured that their answers would be anonymous and only to be shared with the researchers.

Future Research

There are several future directions for research in the fields of youth leadership and youth development. First, as this study looked at processes and outcomes from a qualitative approach, quantitative work could be done to help triangulate these findings, and provide more generalizability to the research. Particularly, quantitative work could look at processes of mentorship, trust, and basic psychological needs in youth leader-adult and youth-leader-program participant relationships, and their interrelationships. Second, more direct comparisons between youth leaders and adult leaders could be looked at in terms of their impact on the program participants' development. Studies could explore how the processes mentioned above (as well as relatability, familiarity) are associated with PYD outcomes for program participants, and whether they differ based on the relationships. Third, the adult leaders in this study were not interviewed. However, as they were recognized as a critical influence for youth leaders, gaining their

perspectives could have important implications. As well, just as the program participants received mutual benefits in their development from teaching youth (reciprocal teaching), it could also be looked at whether adults receive mutual benefits from mentoring youth leaders. Fourth, while it is recommended to provide formal training for youth leaders, it is also important to recognize that many of the leaders in this study learned through other means (e.g., observation, doing, and interacting). Research is needed to explore how formal training in combination with other ways of learning can optimize the learning experiences of youth leaders as well as the impact these youth leaders have on the development of younger program participants. Finally, longitudinal studies looking at progression of leaders over time and beyond their time in the program can provide more insight on what processes are involved throughout these experiences, and whether the developmental outcomes such as life skills are sustainable and transferrable to other contexts.

Conclusion

Youth leadership in PA-PYD programming may provide meaningful roles for youth and was perceived as making a positive contribution to both the development of the youth leaders as well as to the experiences of younger program participants. This thesis also provided additional empirical support with regards to youth leadership development as a process, which can start long before youth are placed into formal leadership roles. In addition, contextual factors such as effective mentorship, support for basic psychological needs (e.g., autonomy, competence, relatedness) and trust are important for enhancing the leadership development of youth. This in turn helps the youth leaders make a positive contribution to the lives of program participants. Important practical recommendations were made based on the results of this research such as incorporating a tri-level mentoring model with formalized training for adult and youth leaders. It

is hoped that such recommendations will lead to enhanced PA-PYD programming that allow more at-risk youth to thrive in their own lives and to make positive contributions to the lives of others.

Statement of Contribution

Majidullah Shaikh was responsible for all aspects of the research including communicating with the organization, collecting data, analyzing data, and writing the thesis. Corliss Bean was involved in analyzing an initial subset of data to provide credibility to the study through investigator triangulation; she was then involved in a consulting role during the writing phase of the thesis. Tanya Forneris was also involved in an advisory role as my supervisor throughout the thesis process.

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Appendix A: Junior Coach Application Process

Junior Coaches are volunteers ages 11-16 (grade 7-10). Students interested in becoming a Junior Coach must complete all pages of the Junior Coach's application and agreement and return to onsite Club Director(s).

Once the application process is completed, each Junior Coach is to receive a Junior Coaches' Handbook, which outlines their roles and responsibilities, as well as the Junior Coach code of conduct.

The roles and responsibilities for Junior Coaches are the following:

What is required?

Commit 2 hours once a week from September to December and/or January to early June

Submit a completed a volunteer application form and Junior Coach's agreement signed by both volunteer and parent/guardian

Responsibilities:

As a Junior Coach for the Running & Reading Club:

I will supervise the children and ensure a safe environment for them

I will encourage the children to participate actively in all aspects of the Running & Reading Club

I will participate with the children in running and other fitness activities, games and reading activities

I will help with the set-up and clean-up of games and reading activities

I will prepare and help to distribute snacks during the program

I will help to be responsible for a smaller group of 6-10 students

I will help students to record fitness and reading accomplishments in their journals

I will read with children one-on-one, listening and encouraging them

I will help to accompany and supervise children at special events (i.e 5K End of the Year Run).

I will verbally recognize participants for their good efforts and accomplishments

The following is the Junior Coach code of conduct:

Junior Coaches must always be a positive role model for the children demonstrating maturity, care and always lead by example.

Junior Coaches must avoid socializing with my peers who may also be volunteering during the program, giving my full attention to the children.

Junior Coaches will assist with other tasks as requested by the club director(s) and other supervising volunteers, and will respect and listen to the director and other coaches in the program.

Junior Coaches are to respect the personal space of each club participant

*If a Junior Coach fails to set a positive example for club participants and fails to fulfill their responsibilities after three warnings from club directors, they run the risk of being released from the program as a volunteer. This decision will be up to the discretion of the club directors.

Appendix B: Junior Coach Application Form

JUNIOR COACH VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

PERSONAL INFORMATION

(PLEASE PRINT)

NAME:

GENDER: MALE FEMALE

DATE OF BIRTH / / **AGE:**

DAY / MTH / YEAR

PHONE: HOME ()

CELL ()

HOME ADDRESS:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

WHICH CLUB LOCATION WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER?

HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT [Name of the program]?

TELL US ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN BRING TO THIS POSITION

Why should you be chosen to be a [name of the program] Junior Coach? (Please provide a 200 word answer in the space below).

Appendix C: Junior Coaches Agreement

(Name of program) volunteers or coaches play a very important role in the (name of program). (Name of program) depends on volunteers who are enthusiastic, passionate, mature and responsible, and your help will make a great impact on the students in the program.

What is required of you?

- Commit 2 hours once a week from September to December and/or January to early June
- Submit a completed a volunteer application form and junior coaches agreement signed by both volunteer and parent/guardian

Responsibilities:

As a Junior Coach for the (name of program):

- I will be a positive role model for the children demonstrating maturity, care and always lead by example
- I will refrain from socializing with my peers who may also be volunteering during the program, giving my full attention to the children
- I will supervise the children and ensure a safe environment for them
- I will encourage the children to participate actively in all aspects of the (name of program)
- I will participate with the children in running and other fitness activities, games and reading activities
- I will help with the set-up and clean-up of games and reading activities
- I will prepare and help to distribute snacks during the program
- I will help to be responsible for a smaller group of 6-10 students
- I will help students to record fitness and reading accomplishments in their journals
- I will read with children one-on-one, listening and encouraging them
- I will help to accompany and supervise children at special events (i.e. 5K End of the Year Run).
- I will assist with other tasks as requested by the Club Director(s) and will respect and listen to the director and other coaches in the program
- I will verbally recognize participants for their good efforts and accomplishments

I understand all the responsibilities listed above and will fulfill each of them to the best of my ability. **If I fail to set a positive example for club participants and fail to fulfill my responsibilities after three warnings from the Club Director(s), I recognize that I run the risk of being released from the program as a volunteer.**

Name: _____ School: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parental Consent: I am aware that my child is required to submit a volunteer application form along with this form, and is required to disclose personal information.

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D: Participant Consent Form



Université d'Ottawa
Faculté des sciences
de la santé
Cabinet du doyen

University of Ottawa
Faculty of Health
Sciences
Office of the Dean

TITLE: Positive youth development through youth programming: Examining and understanding program quality

Principal Investigator: Dr. Tanya Forneris, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa

Co-Investigator: Corliss Bean, PhD Candidate (Sport Psychology), University of Ottawa

Co-Investigator: Dr. Martin Camiré, University of Ottawa

Co-Investigator: Dr. Michelle Fortier, University of Ottawa

Co-Investigator: Dr. Jessica Fraser-Thomas, York University

Funding: Funding for this project was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine the quality of youth programs. We want to know whether there are specific ways that leaders of programs can improve programs to help youth, like you, succeed in the future.

Participation: There are two copies of this form: one of which is for you to keep for your reference and one for you to return to us. If you agree to participate in this research you will be asked to complete up to five questionnaires about your participation in the (name of program). The questionnaires will ask questions about the types of skills being taught in the program as well as the type of support you receive from the program leaders or coaches and your overall well-being.

Risks: I do not anticipate any negative effects during or following participation in this project. However, it may be **possible** that you have had negative experiences in the program. If this occurs we will ask you if you want to further discuss these concerns with someone other than the researcher. If you want to speak with someone, we will provide you with options (e.g., anonymous kids help line, camp director, parents, peer) and will help support you by helping you connect with who you would like to discuss these concerns with.

Benefits: Participation in this project will help contribute to scientific knowledge. In particular, this project will help us better understand how program quality can make a difference in the development of youth.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: Your confidentiality will be protected. The questionnaires will be completed using pen and paper; however, your name is not required. This consent form will be placed in a locked filing cabinet within a locked office and filed separately from the questionnaires. At the end of the project, the data

will be kept secure for a period of five years, after which all of the data will be destroyed.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal: Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the project at any time without penalty. Also, your decision to participate or not will not impact your access or involvement to (name of the program) in any way. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you will also be given the opportunity to withdraw your data, which means you can choose to remove your responses from the study and your responses will be destroyed.

If you have any questions regarding this research project you can contact me by phone at 613-562-5800 ext. 4280 or by e-mail at tanya.fomeris@uottawa.ca.

For any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this project, you can contact the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity at the University of Ottawa in person at 550 rue Cumberland, Room 154, Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5, by phone (613) 562-5387 or by email ethics@uottawa.ca

Consent:

I have read this consent form and I understand the procedures of this research project. Also, I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. My signature indicates my consent to participate.

I agree to participate in this project

Name

Signature

Date

Signature of researcher

Appendix E: Interview Guide for Junior Coaches

Demographics

1. Gain information on age, school grade, gender/sex, ethnicity/cultural background, languages spoken, length of time at the club, other programs/clubs?
2. Tell me about yourself?

Experience and Development

3. How did you first get involved with the club?
4. Describe the activities you've been involved in at the club
5. Tell me a little about your experiences becoming a junior coach
 - Why did you decide to become a junior coach?
 - How did you become a junior coach?
6. What is the role of a junior coach?
7. Describe your experience as a junior coach in the club
8. What do you believe helped you learn how to become a junior coach?
9. What do you like/not like about being a junior coach?
10. Do you feel good/confident as a junior coach?
11. Do you perceive that you've changed since becoming a junior coach? In what ways?
12. Do you think you'll use what you learned or developed here outside of the program?
(e.g., school, home, with friends, other clubs)
13. Life skills are regarded as assets that help you succeed in life (e.g., responsibility, communication, decision-making, teamwork, etc.)
 - a. Do you believe that being a junior coach helps you develop any of these?

Leader development

14. Tell me about your experiences with adult leaders in general
15. What has been your experience with the adult coaches in [name of the program]
16. In what ways did the adult coaches of the program help you or not help you in becoming a leader?

Probe for aspects of autonomy-supportive environment:

- a. Do the adult coaches provide you with choices (e.g., in running activities)
 - b. Do you receive any feedback from your coaches? What kind of feedback (e.g., praise, encouragement, technical instruction, criticism, etc.)?
 - c. Do adult coaches encourage you to work independently?
17. Do you trust the adult coaches? What made you trust them?
 18. Do you find that the adult coaches trust you?
 19. Do you trust the other junior coaches? What made you trust them?
 20. Do you find that the other junior coaches trust you?
 21. Did this trust help in becoming a junior coach? (either as a club member or a coach)
 22. Do you find similarities between yourself and your adult coaches?
 23. Do you find similarities between yourself and other junior coaches?
 24. Do you find your adult leaders are approachable?

Interactions with Club Members

25. Tell me about the relationships you have with the club members
26. How do you feel about these relationships?
27. In what ways have your relationships with the club members influenced you becoming a junior coach?
28. Do you think you have influenced (helped) the club members? How or why not?

29. Are you able to relate to your club members? In what ways?
30. Do the club members approach you? (e.g., personal or social concerns, for conversation, to ask questions, for advice, etc.)
31. Do you feel that they perceive you as a leader? Why or why not?
32. What is your definition of a role model?
33. Do you see yourself as a role model? Why or why not?
34. Do you think they see you as a role model? Why or why not?
35. Is there anything else you would like to say or add?

Appendix F: At-Risk Youth Selection Process

The organization targets schools where there is a high percentage of poverty. In some schools where there is a clear delineation between children who are poor and those who are not, teachers encourage students who they know would benefit from the program. In these schools, if parents attend the welcoming barbecue at the beginning of the year, or attend the meet the teacher night (often they don't), the teachers hand out pamphlets to the parent telling them about the program and encouraging them to register their son/daughter when the permission form comes home. Program enrollment is 60 children plus a wait list.

In some schools the teachers identify 2- 3 children in their classroom who they believe would benefit the most/need the program the most and encouraged these children to attend. In some schools, all children are given the opportunity to register, but the school administration tells them that there are limited spaces. The teachers will choose those children whom they believe need the program the most, but others are on the waiting list. In some schools, all children can take a form when the program is announced and the school indicates it will be first come, first serve.

We give the principals a check list (below) to consider when selecting children for the program. So, if a child needs mentorship, he could be selected for the program even though he/she is not poor. If a child needs help with literacy, he or she could qualify, even if they are not poor, if a child is marginalized and the school feels they need to be part of a team, they could choose that student etc. Although those challenges (need for mentorship, belonging, literacy support often are present with children living in poverty, that is not always the case and children who would benefit from the program but do not live in poverty, are certainly not excluded.

We do not know the students, the school does. So, they choose, decide how to select students, or distribute the permission forms. Because the impact of our program is comprehensive, there are many students who would benefit even if they are not living in poverty. HOWEVER, we do not offer the program to schools where poverty is not an issue. We work with school boards and then reach out to schools that have been identified as having high percentages of students living below the poverty line.

Selection Checklist:

- Family lives below the LICO (Low Income Cut Off)
- Child has limited opportunity/no opportunity for engagement in physical activity/sport
- Child has delays in gross motor skills due to limited opportunity for physical activity or has a great aptitude for sport, but no opportunity for engagement due to financial limitations
- Child has delays in literacy
- Child has significant stressors in his/her life
- Child has need for mentors/role models in his /her life
- Child needs opportunity for social interaction with peers/adults
- Students from grade 1 to 6

Appendix G: Youth Assent Form

TITLE: Positive youth development through youth programming: Examining and understanding program quality

There are two copies of this form, one of which is for the participant to keep. This form may have some words that you do not know. Please ask the researcher or your leaders to explain any words that you do not know.

What is this study about? The purpose of this study is to evaluate program quality across a number of different youth programs. Additionally, this study aims to examine whether there are particular key strategies that may be important for fostering life skills.

What happens to me if I choose to be in this study? If you are in this study, the program you participate in may be observed to assess program quality during. The observations will focus only on the coach and will not be used outside of the research lab. You will also be asked to complete five different questionnaires about your involvement in (name of the program). The questionnaires will take about 25 minutes to complete in total.

Participation is voluntary which means you can stop at any time that you want and you do not have to answer any question you do not want to. If you choose to stop completing the questionnaires, you can also choose to remove your responses from the study and your responses will be destroyed.

Will you tell anyone what I say? We will not tell anyone the answers you give us. We will not share your answers with your parents, teachers, friends, or anyone else. Also, when talking about or writing about this research, we will never use your name.

Questions?

If you have any questions about being in this study, you, or your parent, can contact me at 613-562-5800 ext 4280 or tanya.fornieris@uottawa.ca.

For any questions about this project, you can contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, 550 Cumberland, Room 159, Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5, (613)-562-5387 or ethics@uottawa.ca

Consent: I have read this form and I understand the information about this study. I am willing to be in this study.

Youth name printed Youth signature Date

Signature of person conducting informed consent Date



Université d'Ottawa
 Faculté des sciences
 de la santé
 Cabinet du doyen
 University of Ottawa
 Faculty of Health
 Sciences
 Office of the Dean

Appendix H: Interview Guide for Club Members

1. Gain information on age, school grade, gender/sex, ethnicity, languages spoken, length of involvement, other programs/clubs, # of junior coaches they've had over the years, current junior coach
2. Describe the activities you've been involved in at the club
3. What do you like about your program?
 - If they say 'its fun' – what makes it fun?
4. Is there anything you don't like about your program?
5. Did you know anybody coming into the program? Do you have friends now?
6. Do you think you've changed since being in the program?
7. What have you learned in the program?
8. Do you think you've learned skills in the program? (e.g., physical, social, mental skills examples)
9. Do you like your coaches? What do you like about them?

Ensure specification of which leaders (junior coaches vs adult coaches)
10. Is there anything you dislike about your coaches?
11. What is it like having junior coaches? Are they different from adult coaches? How?
12. Do you find junior coach is supportive? In what ways? Is this different from adult coaches?
13. Do you trust your junior coach? What made you trust them? Is this different from adult coaches?
14. Do you feel like your junior coach understands you? In what ways? Is this different from adult coaches?

15. Do you think you are similar to your junior coach (or they are similar to you)? In what ways?
16. Do you think you are similar to your adult coach? In what ways?
17. Do you find your junior coaches approachable or easy to talk to? Is this different from adult coaches?
18. Have you learned anything from your junior coaches? Like what?
19. Do the coaches give you choices? Allow you to work independently? Give you feedback?
20. What do your friends think about your coaches?
21. Do you think you'll become a junior coach? Why or why not?
22. Is there anything else you would like to say or add?