

How do Novice Parasport Coaches Develop Their Knowledge?
A Look at the Experiences of Para Sailing Coaches

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Abstract

Despite growing interest in coaching sciences, literature has revealed a dearth of research on coaches who work with para athletes (e. g. Cregan, Bloom, & Reid, 2007; McMaster, Culver, & Werthner, 2012). The purpose of this study was to explore how novice coaches in parasport develop their knowledge. The study was conducted in real-time during the coaches' first contact with the context. Semi-structured interviews and participant observation were conducted with six Canadian para sailing coaches. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) revealed that coaches developed context-specific knowledge and skills through a blend of formal, nonformal, and informal learning situations. The participants highlighted the importance of learning from others, especially other coaches and from athletes.

Key words: Disability sport, coach learning, coach development, Paralympic, sailing

Introduction

Physical activity and sport have consistently been proven to have positive implications on the physical, mental, and social health of people with disabilities (Canadian Heritage, 2006; Wilhite & Shank, 2009; World Health Organization [WHO], 2011). However, people with disabilities are drastically under-represented when it comes to engaging in an active lifestyle (Canadian Heritage, 2006, 2008; Rimmer, Riley, Rauworth, & Jurkowski, 2004;). Although people with disabilities represent over 14% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2006), they make up less than 1% of national sport organization membership (Canadian Heritage, 2006).

This lack of physical activity presents a serious concern especially when considering that people with disabilities tend to have inferior health and experience higher levels of social isolation than those without disabilities (Canadian Heritage, 2006; WHO, 2011). While there exists less literature on physical activity participation amongst people with disabilities than there is on able-bodied participation (Rimmer et al., 2004), the research specific to this demographic highlights many potential physical, environmental, and personal barriers (Buffart, Westendorp, van den Berg-Emons, Stam, & Roebroek, 2009; Canadian Heritage 2006). One of the most daunting barriers to sport participation seems to be a lack of qualified, experienced coaches to work with disabled individuals (Canadian Heritage, 2006, 2008; DePauw & Gavron, 1991, 2005;). Although “selection and training of coaches” (DePauw, 1986, as cited in Reid & Prupas, 1998, p. 169) was named by the US Committee on Sports for the Disabled as a research priority as early as 1986, Reid and Prupas (1998) found that only five data-based articles on the topic were published in the decade that followed. In that same review, the authors noted that in parasport, “the coaching area is in dire need of data-based research to assess coach selection

process, the effectiveness of coaches' training programs, and sport-technical versus health-related backgrounds" (1998, p. 172) yet even very recent research continues to reveal a dearth of research on the subject (Cregan, Bloom, & Reid, 2007; McMaster, Culver, & Werthner, 2012; Tawse, Bloom, Sabiston, & Reid, 2012). Additionally, there have been few, if any, real-time studies that have examined coaches' learning situations as they are introduced to the context. In light of this need, the purpose of this study was to explore how coaches in this context develop their knowledge in order to narrow this gap in the literature.

Conceptual Framework

According to Maxwell (2005) a conceptual framework is a "system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs your research" (p. 33). My conceptual framework includes the literature review, theoretical frameworks of coach and human learning, my personal interest and experience, and my knowledge of the specific research context.

Parasport

Competitive parasport has developed dramatically from its inception as a post-war effort to treat injured British veterans (Howe, 2008). While a variety of terms exist, we will use the term endorsed by the Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC): *parasport*. The CPC defines 'parasport' as sport "for people with a disability. It is "para"lled to sport for able-bodied athletes, with adapted equipment or rules to make the game fun and accessible for everyone. There are also some parasports that do not have an able-bodied equivalent" (CPC, 2013). The Paralympics are now the second-largest sporting event in the world, behind only the Olympic Games, and drew over 4,000 athletes from 165 countries at the most recent summer Games in 2012 (International Paralympic Committee [IPC], 2013). Although barriers still exist for athletes with

disabilities, increases in community-based clubs, competitive opportunities in addition to the proliferation of more visible role models, have led to enhanced participation and competition at all levels (DePauw & Gavron, 2005).

With the rise in the quantity of opportunities and quality of competition comes a need for capable coaches who will help to guide parasport athletes to their best performances (De Paul & Gavron, 2005; Canadian Heritage, 2006). Given that coaching is understood to be a complex task, it is generally agreed that coaches need appropriate training and support to be effective (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Jones & Turner, 2006). Despite an overall increase in research related to coaching sciences and coach learning in the past 15 years (Trudel & Gilbert, 2006; Rangeon, Gilbert, & Bruner, 2012), there has been little research conducted on coaches who coach athletes with disabilities, and research on effective learning strategies for such coaches is negligible (Cregan et al., 2007; DePauw & Gavron, 1991). Thus, a better understanding of coach development for parasport coaches is urgently needed.

Coach Learning

It has been acknowledged that coach learning can occur through a wide variety of resources and activities (Erickson, Bruner, MacDonald, & Côté, 2008; Mallett, Trudel, Lyle, & Rynne, 2009; Werthner & Trudel, 2006). Recently, in an effort to better understand how coaches learn to become effective, some researchers have classified the learning processes that coaches may undergo (Erickson et al., 2008; Mallett et al., 2009; Nelson, Cushion, & Potrac, 2006; Werthner & Trudel, 2006). Several studies have used Coombs and Ahmed's (1974) framework of formal, non-formal, and informal learning as an analytical framework with which to categorize coach learning processes and situations (Erickson et al., 2008; Mallett et al., 2009; Nelson et al., 2006).

Formal learning situations. In the context of coaching, and with the focus more on the learning situation than the type of learning, Mallett, Trudel, Lyle, and Rynne (2009) stated “formal learning situations are associated with institutionally sanctioned structures and (guided) delivery, whereas informal situations may be assumed to provoke learning but are likely to be unguided and/or incidental” (p. 326). Formal learning situations are defined as learning that occurs in an “institutionalized, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured education system” (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974, p. 8). In recent decades, there has been a global trend to launch large-scale, national coach education programs, such as the National Coach Certification Program (NCCP), the United Kingdom Coaching Certificate, and the American National Standards for Sport Coaches (Mallett et al., 2009). Curriculum-based, standardised programs like these tend to fall into the category of “formal” learning (Erickson et al., 2008; Mallett et al., 2009; Nelson et al., 2006).

However, it is important to note that there have been diverse findings on the effectiveness of many of these widely-used coach education programs. Some coaches do give credit to formal coach education programs (Lemyre, Trudel, & Durand-Bush, 2007). For example, Werthner and Trudel (2009) investigated the learning pathways of 15 Canadian Olympic coaches and found that many cited formal coach training as useful to their development. On the other hand, a British study found that in some cases, formal coach education programs were seen as useful by some coaches, but not by others (Stephenson & Jowett, 2009). Still other findings have criticized formal coach training programs as overly compartmentalized, inconsistent, and taught out of context, which results in overall low impact on coach learning (Nelson et al., 2006). Generally, it seems there are few formal training programs available for coaches who work in the parasport context (Cregan et al., 2007; McMaster et al., 2012). Regardless of the perceived effectiveness of

such programs, it should be noted that a lack of programs tailored to parasport still means one less learning opportunity for most coaches who coach in this setting. A lack of specialized coaching has been identified by Sport Canada as a “barrier” (Canadian Heritage, 2006, p. 13) to sport access for individuals with disabilities.

Nonformal learning situations. Although more closely akin to formal situations, nonformal situations can be seen as lying between formal and informal on the continuum of learning situations. Nonformal situations tend to be guided, voluntarily attended, and lie outside of formal education systems. They may include coaching conferences, seminars, and workshops (Mallett et al., 2009).

Informal learning situations. Informal learning is “the lifelong process by which every person accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes, and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment” (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974, p. 8). Informal learning situations may include learning by doing, interacting with others (Erickson et al., 2008; Nelson et al., 2006), mentoring (Nelson et al., 2006; Werthner & Trudel, 2009), and learning through personal experiences (Wright, Trudel, & Culver, 2007; Nelson et al., 2006). Numerous recent studies have found that coaches emphasize the impact of informal learning experiences on their development (Cushion et al., 2003; Erickson et al., 2008; Lemyre, et al., 2007; Mallett et al., 2009; Wright et al., 2007). While informal learning experiences encompass a variety of potential processes, and interactions with others have been cited by coaches in both able-bodied and parasport as important informal means of learning (Cregan et al., 2007; Erickson et al., 2008). Interactions with others seem to be of particular importance to coaches who coach athletes with disabilities (McMaster et al., 2012).

Coach Learning Issues Specific to Parasport

Parasport coaches perform many of the same tasks as their colleagues in able-bodied sport, but also face additional challenges unique to the context. Studies have shown that parasport coaches encounter contextual factors that are unique to working with athletes with disabilities (Cregan et al., 2007; McMaster, et al., 2012; Tawse, Bloom, Sabiston, & Reid, 2012). In a study on coaches of swimmers with disabilities, the athlete-coach “shared relationship” was one aspect that emerged (Cregan et al., 2007, p. 343). In this relationship, coaches and athletes contribute *equally* to the coaching process, with the coach as expert on technique, but the athlete as expert on his or her own disability. In addition to these distinct relationships, coaches working in parasport may also face coaching issues entirely unique to the context. A recent study about wheelchair rugby coaches found that the coaches held a multitude of responsibilities on top of their typical coaching duties, including teaching life skills and even personal care such as transfer technique or bowel/bladder management (Tawse et al., 2012). The authors noted that “these additional responsibilities set the coaches apart from coaches of able-bodied athletes” (p. 17). The wide spectrum of skills and knowledge required to coach parasport, coupled with diminished access to sport-specific training, seems to have led coaches to rely heavily on informal learning situations such as interactions with athletes, the athlete’s family members, as well as support staff to assist them with their duties (McMaster et al., 2012; Tawse et al., 2012).

Coach development is still in the emergent phases for most parasports. While not yet on par with able-bodied sport, learning opportunities for parasport coaches have increased significantly in recent years. In Canada, of 64 NCCP sports, 26 have developed or are developing some form a parasport coach training support, such as stand-alone professional development modules or the integration of parasport material in coach training. Despite these developments,

parasport coaches still seem to rely heavily on informal learning situations, and interactions with others seem to be of particular importance (McMaster et al., 2012). There is currently opportunity to develop effective support for parasport coach learning, and the literature encourages new ways to provide such support. Research to better understand such learning processes amongst parasport coaches, especially novice coaches, is thus needed.

Human Learning

Over the course of several volumes, Jarvis (2006, 2007, 2009) developed a conceptualization of lifelong human learning. He held that humans live in specific “life-worlds” that are demarcated, in part, by a person’s location, surrounding culture, cultural practices, and their position in society. As we navigate through our life-worlds over the course of a lifetime, we continually encounter opportunities to learn along the way. To describe this process, Jarvis (2009) defined lifelong learning as:

The combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, meaning, beliefs and senses) – experiences social situations, the content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively, or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual’s biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person. (p. 25)

From this definition, four concepts merit further examination in order to better understand Jarvis’ theory of learning: the *whole person*, the *experience of social situations*, and the subsequent *transformation* of these experiences which are then integrated into the person’s *biography*. Our *biographies* are the cumulative experiences and memories which have occurred over our lifetimes. Every person’s biography is unique and comprises not only a cognitive dimension, but emotional and physical facets as well: the biography encompasses the *whole person*, not just a sum of parts. Our biography is also “an unfinished product constantly undergoing change and

development” (p. 25). As an individual encounters various *social situations* in their life-world, these situations and experiences become a part of, or *transform*, the ever-evolving biography, resulting in a more experienced person: we learn through the experience of living. According to Jarvis, these experiences can be categorized in two ways. A *primary* experience is when we experience a situation directly by living or doing it. A *secondary* experience is when we interpret the experiences of others, such as when we observe or hear about someone else’s primary experiences.

At times, we are in harmony with the world in which we live; these are the moments when we take the world for granted because our expectations of situations and our actual experiences are congruent. However, we live in a world where society changes very rapidly, and we often face what Jarvis terms moments of *disjuncture*. Disjuncture is “the gap between what we expect to perceive when we have an experience of the world as a result of our previous learning, and, therefore, our biography, and that with which we are actually confronted” (Jarvis, 2009, p. 29). When we encounter disjuncture, our understanding of the world is disrupted and we must reevaluate. At this point, we may follow one of two paths: resolve the disjuncture through learning (e.g. by giving meaning to the disjunctural experience, developing new knowledge, or emotions) or reject the opportunity to learn, either because we feel we do not have the time or we feel frightened by the prospect of changing our world view, and live with the disjuncture. The latter is termed by Jarvis (2009) as “non-learning” (p. 83). Thus, every unfamiliar situation presents us with the chance to transform our biography through learning, however only if we choose to attend to the situation.

This learning process can be illustrated with a coaching example. An experienced coach with a successful coaching record coaches an able-bodied swim team. Familiar with her life-

world, and thus in harmony with it, she takes her coaching practice for granted. When a new athlete, an upper limb amputee, wishes to join the team, the coach faces disjuncture, realizing that she is unsure of how to adapt her coaching techniques to the athlete with a disability. She considers recommending a different club to the athlete (which would be to reject the opportunity to learn) but instead works with the athlete, the athlete's parents, and caregivers, and other coaches in order to learn how to coach the athlete effectively. She resolves the disjuncture, emerging as a transformed person with an altered biography, and re-enters a harmonious state. Here, the coach has been able to learn through the informal situations.

Goals, Personal Experience, and Purpose

I approached the topic of parasport coach development with passion and relevant expertise. I have spent 18 years working with participants who have disabilities of all ages in a variety of sport contexts. In the past decade, I have managed programs for athletes with disabilities in three Canadian provinces. My work with these athletes, who range from first-time participants to Paralympians, as well as their coaches, has provided me with a unique perspective on the learning processes of coaches in this field. Given my extensive involvement in the accessible sailing community, I was selected by the Sail Canada to design and implement the first ever "Coaching Persons with a Disability Professional Development Module" in 2008 and to update the module in 2012. Participant input from this study will be used to directly revise the module and ensure it aligns with novice coach needs. My experience as a coach, curriculum developer, and administrator has enlightened me to the dire need for new knowledge and dedicated action in the field of parasport coach development. With the knowledge, experience, and passion I have for parasport, I hope that this study will contribute to enhancing learning

pathways for other coaches and, ultimately, improving their experiences and those of their athletes.

Research Context

This study focused on six coaches who coach sailors with disabilities. Given that our experiences are influenced by the context in which we experience them (Jarvis, 2009), we purposefully selected to work with coaches from a single sport. The lead researcher selected the sport of sailing for three main reasons: (a) athlete variety, (b) existence of nonformal, para-specific coach training, and (c) familiarity and convenience.

First, para sailing, as a sport, can accommodate an exceptionally wide variety of athlete skills, needs, and interests. Sailing can be practiced as a rehabilitative activity, as a recreational pastime, or as a competitive pursuit. With sophisticated equipment, the sport is accessible to participants with almost any physical, sensory, or intellectual disability, for example those with high-level quadriplegia or multiple amputations. Men and women of all ages participate alongside each other, and various degenerative diseases can be accommodated with the ongoing adjustment of equipment and technique as physical needs evolve.

Second, the national governing body, Sail Canada, has developed sport-specific nonformal training for coaches in the form of the “Coaching Sailors with a Disability” professional Development module. This module, developed and often delivered by the lead author, consists of a one-day workshop designed to “provide [coaches] the basics of what [they] need to know to get started especially in First Contact, Fundamentals, and learn to Sail Fast settings” (Coaching Sailors with a Disability Manual, in press). The module includes a short classroom session that provides an overview of types of disabilities and their potential sailing-specific impact, dockside work to learn rigging of adaptive equipment and how to transfer sailors

into the boats, and an on-water session in accessible boats to try out specialized assistive equipment and, most importantly, to interact with para sailors. The module is always offered with the assistance of a para sailor who shares their experiences, helps teach safe transfers, and sails with the candidates to share knowledge for best practices on the water. When possible, an expert such as an occupational therapist also provides information on disability, transfers, seating, and positioning. Immediately after every module delivery, coaches are sent a link to an online survey to provide anonymous feedback about their experience and the module facilitator is encouraged to remain available to the coaches throughout the season.

Lastly, the lead researcher is currently an active para sailing coach and very involved in the community at local, provincial, and national levels. Her position facilitated the participant recruitment process, which, given the small size of the parasport coach community compared to able-bodied sport, has been noted as a research challenge (McMaster et al., 2012).

Research Design

The research was guided by a constructivist epistemology. Crotty (1998) explained that constructivism is “[an individual’s] way of making sense of the world” (p. 58) and holds that knowledge is jointly constructed. In line with a constructivist view, we employed Merriam’s (2009) basic qualitative methodology. Merriam (2009) noted that “qualitative researchers are interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they assign to their experiences” (p. 5). A basic qualitative approach is used when a researcher seeks “to *understand* how people make sense of their lives and their experiences” (p. 23), which was the case here as we strove to understand the participants’ experiences as novice parasport coaches.

Methods

Participant selection. This study was part of a larger project on disability sport at the University of Ottawa, already approved by the University's research ethics board. The participants were six sailing coaches (five male, one female), who ranged in age from 18 to 27 years. One participant requested use of a pseudonym, for the final report, the others preferred to have their actual names used. The coaches were selected using purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) aimed at a common criterion of having less than two years' experience coaching in the parasport context. Experience in able-bodied sport was not considered to be an exclusionary parameter. Potential participants were identified through the lead researcher's connections to para sailing programs across the country. Initially, three coaches were selected to participate and three more were selected via snowball sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) shortly after the initial commencement of data collection. All the coaches currently reside and coach in Canada, in six different mid-to-large sized cities spread throughout four provinces (British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia). See Table 1 for a summary of the participants' coaching experience, training, and certification.

Data collection. Data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility in the interview process, so that the interviewer was able to ask probing questions and guide the interview according the interviewee's responses. Participant observation provided an up-close perspective which allowed the researcher a deeper, richer understanding of both explicit and tacit cultural aspects of the sport context. Observations were recorded as field notes in a journal and used as probes in subsequent interviews.

Table 1

Summary of Coach Experience, Training, and Certification

	Highest Coaching Certification ^a	Sail Can CAWAD ^b training?	Years coaching sailing	Years of experience with Parasport	Experience with PWADs ^c
Lee	CanSail 1 & 2	No	0	0	None
Matt	CanSail 1 & 2	No	0	0	None
Brendan	CanSail 5 & 6	Yes	6 (AB ^d)	0	Limited ^e
Rob	CanSail 5 & 6	No	10 (AB)	0	None
Véronique	CanSail 1 & 2	Yes	0	0	None
David	CanSail 1 & 2	Yes	1 (para)	1	Limited ^e

Note. Information above as of the first day of the sailing season during which data was collected

^a Certification nomenclature updated to reflect current Sail Canada terminology, although some coaches have certification from the 'old' NCCP system that transferred over

^b CAWAD = Coaching Athletes With a Disability

^c PWAD = Person With a Disability

^d AB = able-bodied

^e Volunteering with Special Olympics in another sport (Brendan); extended family member who has autism (David)

Data collection took place in three main phases when possible: before, during, and after each coach's first season in the parasport context. Additional interviews were added as needed to follow up on observations or to probe on topics from previous interviews. Some coaches came into the study with experience in the context, either because they had already spent a season at a para program, or because they were selected via snowball sampling partway through their first season. Data were collected for a little over a year, mostly during the summer sailing season as well as one major winter competition for the coach who coached year-round. See Table 2 for details.

Table 2

Summary of Data Collection

	2011	2012								2013				
		May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	...	Jun	Jul	Aug
Brendan		I1 T	☆		O1 I2	I3								
Véronique		I1 T	☆		O1 O2		I2							
David*	T	☆ I1				I2	I3							
Rob				☆ I1		O1	I2 I3			O2				I4
Lee				☆		I1 O1	I2							
Matt			☆			I1 O1	I2							

☆ = First contact with para context

I = Interview

O = Observation

T = Training (Sail Canada Coaching Sailors with a Disability)

*David completed the training and experienced his first contact with para in 2011 prior to the start of data collection. No observation took place with David as he injured himself mid-season and was unable to actively coach, completing only administrative tasks from midseason on.

Analysis. Data analysis was ongoing throughout the collection. 16 interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim and field notes were also transcribed, resulting in 247 pages of single-spaced typed pages. Transcripts were sent to participants for member-checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and no revisions were requested. All documents were coded using NVivo10 software (Qualitative Solutions and Researching International, 2010). Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis. Thematic analysis has been deemed to provide a “flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). The basic steps of the thematic analysis included familiarization with the data, creation of initial codes, and the refinement of relevant themes. Themes were both deductive, driven by coach and human learning theory (e.g. disjuncture, biography), and inductive (e.g. enjoyment, para sailing context), that is, using the participants’ own words to guide the coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Validity. As with any qualitative research project, this study faced validity threats (Maxwell, 2005). Given that I am a member of the community in which I researched, researcher bias (Maxwell, 2005) and reflexivity (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) were distinct possibilities. In an effort to minimize bias, I participated in a pre-study bracketing interview (Rolls & Relf, 2006) and throughout the data collection I recorded all research activities in a research journal in the form of notes, memos, and reflections (Janesick, 2011). Both activities prompted me to reflect throughout the process and helped to identify and address the influence of bias. To address reflexivity, it was important to create an open environment to make the participant feel as comfortable as possible, and to be conscious of wording and body language, for example when questions and probes were selected (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Additionally, my roles as both researcher and as an experienced coach and learning facilitator in the community augmented the potential of an imbalance of power, real or perceived, which could threaten the relationships with participants. In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009) and as such it was critical to reflect on this role and its influence on the relationships I built, and to “avoid a simplistic view of [my] interactions” (Winkler, 2003). Journaling and dialoguing with participants and other researchers assisted this process.

Other efforts to minimize validity threats included multiple methods of triangulation and member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The first mode of triangulation was through multiple methods of data collection, including interviews and participant observation. Additionally, the researchers themselves were triangulated, as I worked collaboratively with a second, experienced researcher who assisted with the planning and execution of the study. Finally, the prolonged engagement allowed for rich relationship building between the researcher and the participant.

Results

Results will be presented in the form of two articles. The first article explores the experiences of six coaches during their first contact with the parasport context. The second article focuses on the particular experiences of one of those coaches and explores the transition from one context to another more closely.

Article 1

How Do Novice Parasport Coaches Develop Their Knowledge?

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Abstract

Literature has revealed a paucity of research on coaches who work with para athletes (e. g., Cregan, Bloom, & Reid, 2007; McMaster, Culver, & Werthner, 2012). The purpose of this real-time study was to explore how novice parasport coaches develop their knowledge. The study was conducted in real-time during the coaches' first contact with the context. Semi-structured interviews and participant observation were conducted with six Canadian para sailing coaches over the course of 15 months. Data were analyzed by thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Findings revealed that while the coaches adopted "athlete-first" attitudes, focusing on athletic abilities and interests as opposed to physical disabilities, they nonetheless felt they required parasport-specific knowledge and skills to be effective. They developed this knowledge through a blend of formal, nonformal, and informal learning situations. The participants highlighted the importance of learning from others, especially other coaches and from athletes.

Key words: Disability sport, coach learning, coach development, sailing

How do Novice Parasport Coaches Develop Their Knowledge?

People with disabilities are drastically under-represented when it comes to engaging in an active lifestyle (Canadian Heritage, 2006, 2008; Rimmer, Riley, Rauworth, & Jurkowski, 2004). One of the most daunting barriers to sport participation seems to be a lack of qualified, experienced coaches to work with people with disabilities (Canadian Heritage, 2006; DePauw & Gavron, 1991, 2005, 2008). Although “selection and training of coaches” (DePauw, 1986, as cited in Reid & Prupas, 1998, p. 169) was named by the US Committee on Sports for the Disabled as a research priority as early as 1986, recent research continues to reveal a dearth of research on the subject (Cregan, et al., 2007; McMaster et al., 2012; Tawse et al., 2012). Additionally, there have been few, if any, real-time studies that have examined coaches’ learning situations as they were introduced to the context. In light of this need, the purpose of this study was to explore how coaches in this context develop their knowledge in order to narrow this gap in the literature.

Literature Review

Human Learning

An exploration of coach learning is well framed by an overview of human learning in general. Over the course of several volumes, Jarvis (2006, 2007, 2009) developed a conceptualization of lifelong human learning. He held that humans live in specific “life-worlds” that are demarcated, in part, by a person’s location, surrounding culture, cultural practices, and his or her position in society. As we navigate through our life-worlds over the course of a lifetime, we continually encounter opportunities to learn along the way. To describe this process, Jarvis (2009) defined lifelong learning as the “combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person (...) experiences social situations, the content of which is then

transformed cognitively, emotively, or practically (...) and integrated into the individual's biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person" (p. 25). According to Jarvis, these experiences can be categorized in two ways. A *primary* experience is when we experience a situation directly by living or doing it. A *secondary* experience is when we interpret the experiences of others, such as when we observe or hear about someone else's primary experiences. In order to better understand the specific learning opportunities that coaches access to better their practice, it is helpful to consider that these experiences may take place in formal, nonformal, and informal situations, which will be further discussed in the next section.

It is also important to consider that each person's *biography* is unique and comprises not only a cognitive dimension, but emotional and physical facets as well: the biography encompasses the whole person, not just a sum of parts (Jarvis, 2009). Our biography shapes how we perceive the situations we encounter in our life-world, and influences whether or not we perceive an experience as meaningful. At times, we are in harmony with the world in which we live, however, we live in a society that changes very rapidly, so we often face what Jarvis terms moments of *disjuncture*, when our harmony is disrupted. At this point, we may follow one of two paths: resolve the disjuncture through learning (e.g., by giving meaning to the disjunctural experience, developing new knowledge, or emotions) or reject the opportunity to learn, either because we feel we do not have the time or we feel frightened by the prospect of changing our world view, and therefore decide to live with the disjuncture. Thus, every unfamiliar situation presents us with the chance to transform our biography through learning, but only if we choose to attend to the situation.

Coach Development

It has been acknowledged that coach learning can occur through a wide variety of resources and activities (Erickson, Bruner, MacDonald, & Côté, 2008; Mallett, Trudel, Lyle, & Rynne, 2009; Werthner & Trudel, 2006). Recently, in an effort to better understand how coaches learn, some researchers have classified the learning situations that coaches may experience (Erickson et al., 2008; Mallett et al., 2009; Nelson, Cushion, & Potrac, 2006; Werthner & Trudel, 2006). Several studies have used Coombs and Ahmed's (1974) framework of formal, informal, and non-formal learning as an analytical framework with which to categorize coach learning processes and situations (Erickson et al., 2008; Mallett et al., 2009; Nelson et al., 2006).

Formal learning situations are defined as those in which learning occurs in an “institutionalized, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured education system” (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974, p. 8). Large-scale, national coach education programs, such as Canada's National Coach Certification Program (NCCP), would be considered formal learning situations (Mallett et al., 2009). However, it is important to note that there have been diverse findings on the perceived effectiveness of many of these widely used coach education programs (Lemyre, Trudel, & Durand-Bush, 2007; Stephenson & Jowett, 2009; Werthner & Trudel, 2009). A second type of situation *informal*, involves “the lifelong process by which every person accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes, and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment” (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974, p. 8). Informal learning situations may include learning by doing, interacting with others (Erickson et al., 2008; Nelson et al., 2006), mentoring (Nelson et al., 2006; Werthner & Trudel, 2009), and learning through personal experiences (Wright, Trudel, & Culver, 2007; Nelson et al., 2006). Numerous recent studies have found that coaches

emphasize the impact of informal learning experiences on their development (Cushion et al., 2003; Erickson et al., 2008; Lemyre, et al., 2007; Mallett et al., 2009; Wright et al., 2007).

Finally, *Nonformal*, although more closely akin to formal situations, can be seen as lying between formal and informal on the continuum of learning situations. Nonformal situations tend to be guided, voluntarily attended, and lie outside of formal education systems. They may include coaching conferences, seminars, and workshops (Mallett et al., 2009; Nelson, Cushion, & Potrac, 2006).

Parasport Coaching

Competitive parasport has developed dramatically since its inception as a post-war effort to treat injured British veterans (Howe, 2008). While a variety of terms exist, we will use the term *parasport* in order to remain consistent with the term endorsed by the Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC). The CPC defines 'parasport' as sport "for people with a disability. It is "para"llel to sport for able-bodied athletes, with adapted equipment or rules to make the game fun and accessible for everyone." (CPC, 2013). While barriers still persist, in recent years, increased numbers of community-based clubs, competitive opportunities in addition to the proliferation of more visible role models, have led to enhanced participation and competition at all levels (DePauw & Gavron, 2005).

With this increase of athletes comes a need for capable coaches (Canadian Heritage, 2006; De Pauw & Gavron, 2005). Parasport coaches perform many of the same tasks as their colleagues in able-bodied sport, but also face additional challenges unique to the context. Several studies have shown that parasport coaches encounter contextual factors that are unique to working with athletes with disabilities (Cregan et al., 2007; McMaster, Culver, & Werthner, 2012; Tawse, Bloom, Sabiston, & Reid, 2012). In a study on coaches of swimmers with

disabilities, the athlete-coach “shared relationship” was one aspect that emerged (Cregan et al., 2007, p. 343). In this relationship, coaches and athletes contribute equally to the coaching process, with the coach as expert regarding sport knowledge, but the athlete as expert about his or her own disability. Additionally, in a recent study about wheelchair rugby coaches, the coaches described how they needed to accommodate a wide range of abilities, objectives, and commitment levels among their athletes, while still being dedicated to providing a positive experience for each athlete (Tawse et al., 2012). The authors noted “these additional responsibilities set the coaches apart from coaches of able-bodied athletes” (p. 17). The wide spectrum of skills and knowledge required to coach parasport, coupled with diminished access to sport-specific training, seems to have coaches relying heavily on informal learning situations such as interactions with athletes, the athlete’s family members, as well as support staff to assist them with their duties (McMaster et al., 2012; Tawse et al., 2012).

Given that coaching is understood to be a complex task, it is generally agreed that coaches need appropriate training and support to be effective (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Jones & Turner, 2006), and coaching is context specific (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). Despite an overall increase in research related to coaching sciences and coach learning in the past 15 years (Trudel & Gilbert, 2006; Rangeon, Gilbert, & Bruner, 2012), there has been little research conducted on coaches who coach athletes with disabilities, and research on effective learning strategies for such coaches is negligible (Cregan et al., 2007; DePauw & Gavron, 1991). Thus, a better understanding of coach development for parasport coaches is urgently needed.

Research Design

The research was guided by a constructivist epistemology. Crotty (1998) explained that constructivism is “[an individual’s] way of making sense of the world” (p. 58) and holds that

knowledge is jointly constructed. In line with a constructivist view, we employed Merriam's (2009) basic qualitative methodology. Merriam (2009) noted that "qualitative researchers are interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they assign to their experiences" (p. 5). A basic qualitative approach is used when a researcher seeks "to *understand* how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (p. 23), which was the case here as we strove to understand the participants' experiences as novice parasport coaches.

Research Context

The lead researcher purposefully selected to work with coaches from a single, specific sport for three main reasons: (a) athlete variety, (b) existence of nonformal coach training and (c) convenience. First, para sailing, as a sport, can accommodate an exceptionally wide variety of athlete skills, needs, and interests. With sophisticated equipment, the sport is accessible to participants with almost any physical, sensory, or intellectual disability, for example those with high-level quadriplegia or multiple amputations.

Second, the national sport organization, Sail Canada, has developed sport-specific nonformal training for coaches in the form of the "Coaching Sailors with a Disability" Professional Development module which includes a short classroom session that provides an overview of types of disabilities and their potential sailing-specific impact, a dockside component to practice rigging and transferring, and an on-water session. Immediately after every module delivery, coaches are sent a link to an online survey to provide anonymous feedback about their experience and the module facilitator is encouraged to remain available to the coaches throughout the season.

Lastly, the lead researcher is currently an active para sailing coach. Her position facilitated the participant recruitment process, which, given the small size of the parasport coach community compared to able-bodied sport, has been noted as a research challenge (McMaster et al., 2012). Her role as an active coach also facilitated participant observation given that she was already immersed in the context and had strong understanding of the explicit and tacit dimensions of the community.

Methods

Participant selection. This study was part of a larger project on parasport at the University of Ottawa, already approved by the University's research ethics board. The participants were six sailing coaches (five male, one female), who ranged in age from 18 to 27 years. The coaches were selected using purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) aimed at a common criterion of having less than two years' experience coaching in the parasport context. In contrast to other studies recently published about how parasport coaches learn (Cregan et al., 2007; McMaster et al., 2012), the focus here was specifically on coaches working with athletes who are at the grass roots and developmental levels. Experience in able-bodied sport was not considered to be an exclusionary parameter. Potential participants for the study were identified through the lead researcher's connections to para sailing programs across the country. Initially, three coaches were selected to participate and three more were selected via snowball sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) after the initial commencement of data collection.

Data collection. Data were collected primarily in real time during the coaches' first experiences in the parasport context by means of semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility in the interview process, so that the interviewer was able to ask probing questions and guide the interview according the

interviewee's responses (Bryman, Teevan, & Bell, 2009). Participant observation provided an up-close perspective which allowed the researcher a deeper, richer understanding of both explicit and tacit cultural aspects of the sport context (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002). Observations were recorded as field notes in a journal, thematically analyzed, and used as probes in subsequent interviews.

Data collection took place in three main phases: before, during, and after each coach's first season in the parasport context. Additional interviews were added as needed to follow up on observations or to probe on topics from previous interviews. Some coaches came into the study with experience in the context, either because they had already spent a season at a para program, or because they were selected via snowball sampling partway through their first season. Data were collected for a little over a year, mostly during the summer sailing season as well as one major winter competition for the coach who coached year-round. See Table 1 for details.

Table 1

Summary of Data Collection

	2011	2012								2013				
		May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	...	Jun	Jul	Aug
Brendan		I I T	☆		O1 I2	I3								
Véronique		I I T	☆	O1 O2			I2							
David*	T	☆ I I				I2	I3							
Rob				☆ I I	O1	I2 I3				O2				I4
Lee				☆		I1 O1	I2							
Matt			☆			I1 O1	I2							

☆ = first contact with para context

I = Interview

O = Observation

T = Training (Sail Canada Coaching Sailors with a Disability)

*David completed the training and experienced his first contact with para in 2011 prior to the start of data collection. No observation took place with David as he injured himself mid-season and was unable to actively coach, completing only administrative tasks

Analysis. Data analysis was ongoing throughout the collection. 16 interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim and field notes were also transcribed, resulting in 247 pages of single-spaced typed pages. Transcripts were sent to participants for member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and no revisions were requested. All documents were coded using Qualitative Solutions and Researching International's (QSR) NVivo10 software (2010). Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The basic steps of the thematic analysis included familiarization with the data, creation of initial codes, and the refinement of relevant themes. Themes were both deductive, driven by coach and human learning theory (e.g. disjuncture, biography), and inductive (e.g. enjoyment, para sailing context), that is, using the participants' own words to guide the coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Validity. As with any qualitative research project, this study faced validity threats (Maxwell, 2005). Given that the lead researcher is a member of the community being researched, researcher bias (Maxwell, 2005) and reflexivity (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) were distinct possibilities. In an effort to minimize bias, she participated in a pre-study bracketing interview (Rolls & Relf, 2006) and throughout the data collection recorded all research activities in a research journal in the form of notes, memos, and reflections (Janesick, 2011). Both activities prompted her to reflect throughout the process and helped to identify and address the influence of bias. To address reflexivity, it was important to create an open environment to make the participant feel as comfortable as possible, and to be conscious of wording and body language, for example when questions and probes were selected (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Other efforts to minimize validity threats included triangulation and member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The first mode of triangulation was through multiple methods of data collection, including interviews and participant observation. Additionally, the researchers

themselves were triangulated, as the lead researcher worked collaboratively with a second, experienced researcher who assisted with the planning and execution of the study. Finally, the prolonged engagement allowed for rich relationship building between the lead researcher and the participants, but could also have led to insider bias. Court and Abbas (2013) noted that the challenges of the insider-outsider positioning are constant in qualitative research, yet new with every study. They described the process to address these challenges as “essentially a process of private researcher reflection, though it may well also involve consultation with researcher participants and research colleagues” (p. 480). This was the case in this study as I consulted often with research colleagues, the study participants, and members of the sailing community not directly involved in the project. These frank dialogues coupled with reflective journaling were helpful to counter some of the methodological challenges associated with my role in the community.

Findings

Coach Biographies

All six coaches had strong familiarity and comfort with the Sail Canada curriculum and national youth sailing system as a whole from firsthand experience as youth participants. The national Learn to Sail curriculum experienced by the coaches is informed by Sail Canada’s Long Term Sailor Development framework (Sail Canada, 2013). This sport-specific framework includes athletes with disabilities at all stages, however, actual sailing school programming is primarily designed for, and delivered to, able-bodied youth. The coaches felt that coaching was a natural progression after their youth sailing experiences, and two coaches had already spent time coaching in able-bodied youth programs (Brendan and Rob, six and ten years respectively).

An affiliation with the Canadian youth sailor development system and a passion for sailing seemed to be primary influences in the coaches' decisions to coach.

Conversely, all six coaches had very little knowledge of para sailing, generally as a sport or specifically at their own clubs. When asked about how he began coaching in a para program, one coach described how he had initially hoped to work at his club's youth sailing program, but fluked into para:

I applied for the regular job, with the [youth program], but they had their staff already full, so then they just passed my name onto the [para program director], and he interviewed me and then hired me. I had no idea about [the para program] (until) they told me that they had passed my resume on. (David, Interview 1)

Five coaches worked seasonally at the club level, in para-specific programs offering a broad spectrum of programming (recreational, instructional, competitive) to participants with a wide range of disabilities, both intellectual and physical. Of the seasonal club coaches, all except one (David) were entering their first season at a para program. The sixth coach, Rob, was primarily coaching an able-bodied youth high performance team and had just taken on a year-round contract with a provincial sailing association that would include coaching both able-bodied athletes and para athletes.

It should also be noted that only two of the coaches had any previous experience with persons with disabilities, no matter the context: Brendan had volunteered with Special Olympics floor hockey, and David has a cousin who has autism. While both coaches found that their experiences had helped somewhat to understand some of their sailors' needs, particularly those who had intellectual disabilities, they both found there was little carryover to working with athletes who had physical disabilities, who comprised the majority of their clientele.

Initiation to the Para Context

For most of the coaches, their lack of familiarity with disability and para sailing led to considerable uncertainty about what their actual job would entail. While the coaches all had the primary experiences of participating in an able-bodied youth sailing program, and could easily envision what coaching in a such a setting would look like, most coaches did not know what to expect as a coach in the para context. It became clear that each para program operated with very different facilities, philosophies, and resources, and that each one aimed to serve diverse populations. David, in his second season, looked back on his first year as the sole coach dedicated to his club's para program:

I didn't exactly know what I'd be doing, I didn't know if I'd be by myself or if there'd be like my boss there every day or what was going to happen...it turned out I'd do all the scheduling, I'd do all of the phone calls and emails, and I pretty much ran the entire program myself...I honestly didn't think it would be *that* much, I didn't think I'd be running the entire thing myself. (David, Interview 1)

However, he recognized that the initial disjuncture led to a positive opportunity by adding, "but it's not a bad thing, I think it's good that I got that experience." (David, Interview 1)

In addition to lack of knowledge about the para sailing sport-specific setting, the coaches wondered what it would be like to work with athletes with disabilities. A common thread was the fear of harming a sailor, either physically or emotionally, through actions or words. After six seasons coaching able-bodied youth sailors, Brendan felt confident in his teaching skills, but like several coaches, named the para sailing-specific skill of transferring as a concern:

Transferring was the main thing I was worried about, because I didn't want to get in a situation where I have a sailor in their sling on a lift and then not know exactly what to do, I mean I could put them back down, but I really wanted to feel confident when I was doing it... once I'm in the boat with the sailor, I'm pretty confident in my own sailing and teaching skills. (Brendan, Interview 2)

Other coaches added that the idea of offending sailors or hurting their feelings was a cause of unease. With scarce experience with persons with disabilities, “saying the wrong words” was a concern. Matt noted that, “I was just worried I would say something wrong, or that was offensive, not because I meant it, but you know, because I just talk, I don’t think of what I’m saying sometimes” (Matt, Interview 1). Véronique echoed his concerns, but anticipated that the athletes would be a learning resource:

Just saying the words “disabled people” sometimes, I’m not sure (*pause*) if I say that they’re “disabled”, are [the sailors] going to react in a certain way? So...I’m not going to be sure at first. But if they understand that I’m a new person in that environment, and they just tell me what to say after that, I’m going to be comfortable with it, no problem. (Véronique, Interview 1)

During and after their seasons, the coaches confirmed that the sailors had been instrumental in helping them to feel comfortable working with persons with disabilities. Matt remarked, “Once you get to know your sailors, you’re a different coach. You know the way that you speak to your sailors, you know the repertoire, topics you avoid, and how you say things” (Matt, Interview 1). Rob found that, “all the athletes, you know, they live with [their disability] every day, so they have no problem telling you exactly what they need done or how they need it done” (Rob, Interview 1). The unique nature of the coach-athlete relationships that emerged will be further explored in the section on coach development.

While the prospect of coaching in a para program came with many unknowns, the coaches generally viewed the context with enthusiasm or as an opportunity to learn. When asked, two weeks prior to the start of the season, what his new job would entail, Brendan said “I’m really not sure. I don’t really know what to expect, honestly. I’m going in with an open mind, I’m sure everything will work very smoothly” (Brendan, Interview 1).

Once the coaches began coaching, they became quickly acquainted with unique components involved in para sailing. The five coaches who worked full time in para programs found the circumstances such as scheduling, venues, and coaching expectations were considerably different from their experiences in youth sailing programs.

Several coaches also mentioned additional tasks such as volunteer training and management, sailor recruitment, equipment maintenance, event and outreach planning, and administrative tasks. Two coaches, David and Brendan, worked alone at their programs, and thus were required to manage all aspects of their programs.

In addition to learning about the appropriate communication and safe transfer techniques mentioned earlier, coaches encountered a variety of additional challenges. Some challenges seemed unique to the para sailing program context such as managing a high volume of volunteers, maintaining relationships with non-family member caregivers, handling fluctuating schedules due to the “book-by-the-session” basis, and maintaining specialized equipment such as electronic assistive devices that need to be serviced by outside specialists.

Additionally, the club coaches worked with an exceptionally diverse range of athletes, both in terms of the sailors’ skill levels and goals as well as the nature of their disabilities. David described his program as accommodating “all different kinds of disabilities, we have complete quads, a lot of paraplegic people, cognitive disabilities. I think I've dealt with pretty much everything there is” (David, Interview 3). In terms of programming, Matt commented, “the majority of our sailors are recreational. We also have a small group going through Learn to Sail lessons and then a more advanced group who’s [traveling to competitions]” (Matt, Interview 3). The other club coaches reported similar programming demand.

The coach who worked with the provincial team training group had a significantly different experience compared to the program coaches. Of his four adult athletes, none required any specialized equipment, such as electronic assistive devices. All had sailed extensively in para programs similar to the ones described above, moving from Learn to Sail lessons and onto development racing teams before deciding to purchase their own boats to train and race more seriously. These athletes compete in a technically demanding boat used as the Paralympic one-person class. Rob found his athletes to be strictly focused on racing, quite independent, and highly motivated.

Coach Development/Coach Learning Situations

Given the variety of tasks and challenges they faced, the coaches drew from a wide variety of learning opportunities including previous experiences and experiences that took place during their first seasons with para. The following section will review the different types of learning situations reported by the coaches.

Formal. By the time their first para season began, all the coaches had taken at least some formal coach education courses offered by Sail Canada, the national sport organization. They had taken the courses as a pre-requisite for a job or in anticipation of seeking future employment. The coaches generally found the courses to be effective for exposing them to appropriate lesson content, basic teaching techniques, and sailing drills that they would need as beginner coaches. Most appreciated that the courses included a hands-on component where they needed to plan and execute lessons:

For the most part [the coaching courses] have been very helpful and they actually get you engaged and make you go out and teach a lesson...they make you actually apply the skills that they teach which I think is a good way to learn, because if you just, are lectured

on it, and then don't actually go out and show that you've got those skills, as a coach, it doesn't necessarily always sink in. (Brendan, Interview 1)

Another positive aspect highlighted by several coaches was the emphasis on delivering clear information and effective feedback. Lee recalled one of his learning facilitators giving advice that resonated: "Everyone's a different learner so we learned different ways to give information...I remember [the learning facilitator] kept telling us...ask the sailor a lot of questions (and) to be really specific in your feedback" (Lee, Interview 2).

The coaches did have criticism for the courses as well. When discussing the training in light of working with para athletes, the coaches agreed that some basic sailing skills, lesson planning, and communication techniques were universal, but they still did not feel fully prepared for some of the specific demands of their new coaching contexts. They found that the trainings were primarily designed for coaches working in the able-bodied youth context and were geared towards particular parameters of equipment, time frames, lesson structure, as well as athlete learning styles and goals that were simply not aligned with their coach experiences in para programs. Coaches reported that the majority of their athletes were adults who preferred to engage in dialogue in order to learn about sailing, so some of the activities taught in coaching courses, such as using games or skits for learning, did not seem relevant:

If I'd been coaching as a 'regular coach' with a class I would have been able to use the skills that I learned, on how to teach kids, with visuals, activities and games, but since it wasn't a 'regular class' I didn't really need any of the stuff that I learned. (Lee, Interview 1)

Several coaches spoke to the importance of understanding each para sailor's unique needs, which they felt was not always at the forefront in the youth school model. Matt found the trainings "were all geared toward the youth school. [They were] all geared towards coaching *sailing*, not coaching individuals *sailors*" (Interview 2).

Assessment and evaluation in the formal coach education courses were reported by some coaches as problematic. Two coaches found that the evaluation was not well aligned to their needs in the para program. One of these noted that due to a lack of class-specific knowledge, the evaluator was not able to provide a thorough evaluation. Consequently, he felt the exercise felt more like a “check a box” (David, Interview 2) activity than a meaningful process. Véronique, however, felt she could not access appropriate evaluation at all:

The thing with [the para program]...is that we don't teach what might be considered a 'normal' class. So, I asked [the evaluator] what I should do, and he said that once a week, I should go into the junior sailing program at [the host sailing club] to practice teaching, but I didn't necessarily have the time to do that this summer, and I thought, 'we're at a disadvantage because we don't have an evaluation that's adapted for [para sailing]'.

(Véronique, Interview 2)

Half of the coaches said they would take their next level of certification if a job required them to do so, while the other coaches said they would consider it but had not yet decided. Of the program coaches, three had access to para sailing-specific coach training, which will be discussed in the next section, and the other two who had not had such an opportunity said they would take one if it were available.

Non-formal. Three coaches had accessed a parasport specific non-formal learning situation, namely the Sail Canada Coaching Sailors with a Disability professional development module, and all three reported positive experiences and impact. Coaches felt that the module addressed some of the “unknowns” about the para context. As one coach explained:

Well obviously the clinic was huge, just for an overall introductory, 'here's everything that you're going to possibly be thrown into' and [it] was set up very well just to address pretty much any issue I've come across so far, all the techniques, so that was huge.

(Brendan, Interview 2)

David felt the clinic addressed his concerns about technical aspects as well as respectful communication:

One thing that I learned and really tried to focus on was never saying “oh yeah, yeah, yeah” and agreeing to what [a sailor with a speech impairment] says if you don’t really understand what they’re saying, so I took that and I try and do that as much as possible...Also, all the transfer training was great. Learning how to use the lift, how to use the boats, getting people in. Everything was good. (David, Interview 1)

The hands-on style of the module was considered valuable, especially since coaches in this study lacked the primary experiences of being a sailor with a disability. The opportunity to go through the processes of transferring and using the adapted sailboats and specialized equipment helped the coaches to better understand their athletes’ experiences:

The part where *we* were transferred really helped me because it made me realize how the person is going to feel when she is transferred. Just to put yourself in their position, it opened my eyes about how the transfer will feel for someone with a disability.

(Véronique, Interview 2)

Additionally, coaches felt that an extremely valuable component was the opportunity to meet and to work with a para sailor. Brendan spoke about his experience sailing with René, a sailor with high level quadriplegia who uses a “sip n’ puff” straw system to control the sail boat with his breath:

He was great. He just wanted to let me try out the electronics, and try it out to switch it into manual mode. He was great at getting me comfortable and giving me everything I needed to get out of that water session. He was awesome. (Brendan, Interview 2)

It should be noted that the lead author was also the facilitator of the module and made herself available before and after the workshop took place. All three coaches expressed appreciation for the connection. One coach in particular, who worked alone at his program, stayed in touch on a

regular basis throughout the season to troubleshoot situations at his club as they arose and to seek general para sailing information and coaching advice.

Informal. The findings revealed that all coaches relied heavily on informal learning situations. Interactions and learning by doing were the situations that were the most commonly observed and discussed. Other situations mentioned included drawing on past experiences, observing others, and seeking information online.

Interactions. Interactions with others were diverse and highly valued by the coaches. Interactions with other coaches and with sailors were most commonly cited, although interactions with employers, volunteers, the coach's family and friends as well as the sailor's family members and caregivers were also mentioned.

Other coaches. Exchanges with other coaches were considered important ways to learn about coaching, adaptations, and about individual athletes. While all coaches in the study had access to other coaches, only three were a part of a larger staff with whom they interacted regularly. This regular access to other knowledgeable and supportive individuals was valued highly. Three coaches (Matt, Lee, and Véronique) named head coaches or program managers as important resources.

While experienced colleagues were named as helpful resources, Véronique also valued having a novice coach colleague with whom to share experiences: "Well with Annie, it was her first season too, and after a day when we experienced something for the first time we would talk about it, and share it together" (Véronique, Interview 2). Coaches who lacked regular colleagues tended to seek out interactions with volunteers and with coaches from other clubs or other programs within their host club. Several coaches contacted the lead researcher throughout the season to ask questions about electronic assistive equipment, sailing drills, regatta schedules,

contacts in the community, and event planning. Further, two coaches from the study were able to develop a mutually beneficial coaching relationship. Brendan and Rob both coached at City Yacht Club (CYC), with Brendan as the sole coach of the para program, and Rob as coach of the high performance youth team. When Brendan learned midway through the season that he would be providing support to a sailor on the provincial Paralympic class team who trained at CYC, he quickly sought partnership with Rob, who already coached her on a regular basis. The two coaches were able to collaborate several times over the season and coach the athlete together. The coaches agreed that the partnership, which they viewed as a sort of informal, mutual mentorship, was a very valuable opportunity that not only helped each of them to develop their coaching skills but also allowed them to problem solve more effectively to provide better support for the athlete:

It was really good because we were bouncing a lot of ideas off each other and just that brainstorming back-and-forth, talking about things together. I know I definitely learned a couple of things off Brendan and I think it was good, just constant, constant back-and-forth, talking about sail shape, or what she did in a tack or a mark rounding, all that sort of stuff. (Rob, Interview 3)

As exemplified by Rob and Brendan's partnership, the para sailing coaches in this study found the coaching community to be open with regards to sharing information. One coach (Véronique) coached at a provincial regatta, and three others (Matt, Lee, and Rob) coached at the Mobility Cup, an international development class regatta hosted each year by a different Canadian para sailing program. These coaches reported that the regattas were pivotal learning experiences. Coaches described learning about different types of wheelchairs and mobility aids, boat and equipment configurations, and techniques to adapt sailing skills to athlete ability. Additionally, through conversations with other coaches and volunteers, they reported discovering new ways to streamline administrative and operational tasks at their programs. Rob, who was the guest event

coach at the Mobility Cup, found it helpful to exchange ideas with club coaches to gain a better overall understanding of para sailing:

I really enjoyed being in the coach boat with Mark [a club coach], talking about some of the really technical, fine tune stuff about the [development class boat] (...) and then obviously with you [lead researcher] talking more about the broad range in boathandling, the different disabilities, the different ways people do things. (Rob, Interview 2)

While Rob described learning about the context at the club level from the club coaches, club coaches also appreciated the extensive high performance sailing experience Rob brought to the event. Lee explained, “I learned more about racing...especially because Rob gave some coaching tips that I really enjoyed learning from him. He really gave some great advice” (Lee, Interview 2).

Athletes. All six coaches spoke of the importance of learning from athletes. Athletes were major sources of information about disabilities, effective communication, and the broader role of sport in athletes' lives. Matt, who had feared saying “something wrong” before the start of the season was observed interacting comfortably with his own athletes and athletes from other clubs during a competition, both on the water providing feedback as well as spending time socially after racing. Brendan spoke often about one sailor who he worked with several times a week, whom he described as instrumental to his learning: “Daniel’s been monumental in helping me understand that every disability is different and varies hugely...how they go sailing, the process of transferring, even how they get out of their car. They have their own steps to accommodate their own needs” (Brendan, Interview 2). While he had expressed concern about transferring prior to the start of the season, by mid-season Brendan was observed executing safe, confident transfers, and one his sailors remarked that Brendan provided some of the safest and most skilled transfers he had ever experienced (field notes).

Coaches spoke not only of learning from their own athletes, but also of learning from athletes from other clubs. An interesting aspect of development class competitions in para sailing is the widespread practice of rotating coach-athlete companion combinations throughout the event. Coaches companion with (and thus coach) athletes from other clubs in a competitive setting, thereby gaining opportunities to work with athletes of different skill levels and/or who have disabilities they may have never seen before. Lee discussed his experience at Mobility Cup, where he had the chance to work with a variety of athletes: “I learned about different disabilities, for example we didn’t have anyone at our [club] who was blind, so I learned about people’s different disabilities and how they adapt their sailing” (Lee, Interview 2). He anticipated the experiences would help him with his coaching back home, stating, “all the things that I learned [at Mobility Cup], I’m going to be able to bring back and apply”. One coach noted that with such diverse athlete needs, creativity came into play often, since there are “a hundred different ways to do a [skill] and each way could be just as effective for each person” (Rob, Interview 3).

The coaches talked about how their relationships with athletes allowed them to gain a better understanding of the role sport can play in a people’s lives. These revelations prompted some coaches to reflect about their roles as coaches, or even as citizens. Rob felt inspired to work harder once he realized how important sailing was to his athletes: “When people talk about how much sailing has changed their lives...that definitely makes you want to work harder for them, and to be there to help them sail as much as possible when they’re so eager...and so happy to learn” (Rob, Interview 2). Véronique described learning about attributes she had not realized she possessed, such as patience and an affinity to communicate with others. She discussed thinking about these experiences often, and explained that:

Before [coaching para athletes], I wanted to go into architecture, but now I want to go in kinesiology and helping people with their health. I really loved my experience and now I want to go apply it to anyone, disabled or non-disabled persons. (Véronique, Interview 2)

Learning by doing. In addition to learning through interactions, learning by doing was another commonly cited informal learning situation. Coaches agreed that it was important to have hands-on experiences to develop skills and expertise. One coach noted that the dynamic environment created a need to be able to constantly adapt, so it was important to experiment in a practical context: “I didn’t learn from a book. I learned on the job, on the go, for me that’s the best way. (...) You basically need to evolve and change the way you do things to tailor to any situation” (Matt, Interview 1).

While formal and nonformal situations contributed to coach learning, sometimes there was simply no substitute for learning by doing. Brendan noted that while the para sailing module had been very helpful, there was still not enough time in the one-day workshop to become completely comfortable with the specialized assistive equipment. To compensate, he made sure to use the equipment himself to become familiar and to ensure everything functioned:

I took a day during the pre-season once I set up all the boats... I thought, ‘I’ll just try out the electronics’ (...) I thought, ‘I have to try this out’ and it was the perfect time because if I have a sailor in the boat and [the battery] dies, well it sucks for [the sailor] because they have to let me steer and then they’re just hanging out, passive. (Brendan, Interview 2)

For one coach though, learning by doing was problematic. Lee’s club has no docks and the boats must be launched for every sail, a complicated procedure which involves transferring the sailor on dry land and then using a cable and winch system to lower the boat into the water down a sloping beach. Lee noted that the time-consuming process meant that most teaching and

coaching was left up to volunteers, which left him and the other coaches little time to hone coaching skills:

The challenge is that we don't have enough time to coach. It's a big problem (...) I'm not able to learn how to coach I think, because I'm not able to do it. I think the more you do it, the more you learn. (Lee, Interview 2)

Unlike coaches in the able-bodied setting, who would spend close to eight hours a day either teaching theoretical concepts on land or coaching sailing skills on the water, the para coaches found that a variety of obstacles cut into actual coaching time, including complicated transfers, accessible transportation issues, and assistive device failure.

Despite a variety of challenges, all six coaches stayed connected or intended to return to the sport the following season. At the time of writing, Rob was still working with the Paralympic class athletes on an intermittent basis and the five club coaches stayed involved in their programs, either as coaches or as volunteers.

Discussion

The six coaches had several key commonalities within their initial biographies. They felt familiar with the national sailing school system and looked forward to joining it as coaches as a way to share their passion for sailing with others. This long-standing immersion in the sport led to a situation in which the coaches seemed to be in "harmony" (Jarvis, 2009, p. 12). However, as previously reported (Dorogi, Bognar, & Petrovics, 2008), while they felt at ease with the able-bodied youth system, the coaches also shared the fact that they had little or no prior experience with persons with disabilities and had very little knowledge about the sailing possibilities for this population.

The most significant concern expressed by coaches as they transitioned to the para sailing context from their familiar able-bodied youth sailing backgrounds was the fear of harming a

sailor, either physically or emotionally. According to Jarvis (2009), when we encounter a new experience, our anticipations of what we will perceive are based on the sum of our life learning so far – our current biography. However, what we expect to perceive and what actually confronts us are not always aligned, which at times means “our harmony with our world is disturbed and we feel unease” (p. 21), also known as disjuncture. The coaches certainly felt disjuncture when they considered transferring a sailor from a wheelchair into a boat, a task they had never experienced nor observed. Further, with scant previous interactions with persons with disabilities, they were anxious about saying something – even unintentionally - that might offend. These parasport-specific concerns suggest that it would be beneficial to provide coaches with information and training related to such topics prior to their entry in the context. Despite their concerns, the coaches also unanimously displayed curiosity and enthusiasm for their new coaching context. Jarvis noted that disjuncture does not automatically lead to learning: our biographies will influence how we react to such experiences. In this case, the coaches’ love of sailing and their willingness to embrace new experiences led them attempt to resolve the disharmony through learning.

Like many sport coaches, these coaches drew on a variety of learning experiences including formal coach training, informal experiences, and nonformal opportunities (Côté, 2006; Irwin, Hanton, & Kerwin, 2004) both before and after their immersion in parasport. Similar to previous studies, the findings revealed that the coaches had mixed feelings about the impact of their formal coach trainings (Lemyre, Trudel, & Durand-Bush, 2007; Nelson et al., 2006; Stephenson & Jowett, 2009; Werthner & Trudel, 2009), particularly with regard to applicability in the parasport setting. The coaches generally agreed that the formal courses provided a sufficient overview of important safety considerations, basic sailing content, and adequate

teaching techniques to get started teaching beginner para sailors. Coaches often emphasized an “athlete first” approach, insisting that para sailors are, first and foremost, simply sailors. Thus, they believed many skills useful in an able-bodied setting are applicable in the parasport setting as well; a philosophy adhered to by many coaches and integrated support team members who work with athletes with disabilities (Cregan et al., 2007; DePauw & Gavron, 2005; Hanrahan, 2007). Additionally, some coaches mentioned particularly positive experiences in their formal courses linked to exceptional learning facilitators, which supports earlier work suggesting coaches value competent, professional (Hammond & Perry, 2005; McCullick, Belcher, & Schempp, 2005; Nash & Sproule, 2012) and approachable (Nash & Sproule, 2012; Piggott, 2012) learning facilitators.

Several criticisms reported by our coaches aligned with previous research on both able-bodied sport coach perceptions (Nash & Sproule, 2009;) and parasport coach perceptions of formal coach education (Bush & Silk, 2012; Cregan et al., 2007). One of these, that formal courses are decontextualized (Cushion et al., 2003; Nelson et al., 2006; Lemyre et al., 2007; Mallett et al., 2009), seemed to be magnified for the para sailing coaches since the courses they took were designed for coaches working with sailors of different ages, skill levels, and physical abilities who use different equipment than para athletes. Further, each level of certification was tailored to provide skills and strategies to work with athletes at a specific developmental and training stage (Sail Canada, 2012). This categorization makes sense for coaches working in the able-bodied youth context, who train as specialists to work with athletes grouped in this way, but was not as applicable for the para coaches who worked with all levels of athlete skill and interest. Additionally, coaches questioned the authenticity of the evaluation process and a significant concern raised by this study was whether coach evaluators are adequately informed about

coaching in parasport. The coaches were ambivalent about whether they would continue to pursue formal coach certification training. The coaches named time, cost, and lack of perceived value as barriers, concerns which align with previous findings (Nash & Sproule, 2009, 2012).

In Canada, the NCCP requires national sport organizations to acknowledge the needs of athletes with a disability when developing coach training programs so coaches gain at least some awareness and understanding of where to find further resources (Coaching Association of Canada, 2013). Understandably, it is not practical to include significant depth of detail on disability and para equipment in every coaching course offered. Thus, as these coaches expressed a need for additional knowledge and skills, this study's findings support the use of sailing-specific learning opportunities to supplement coach training. Given the shortcomings of the formal coach training, coaches relied on other means to complement their knowledge development, including informal and nonformal situations.

The main informal situations named were interactions and learning by doing. Similar to past studies on parasport coaches, the coaches in this study placed high importance on learning through interactions, especially from athletes (Cregan et al., 2007; McMaster et al., 2012; Tawse et al., 2012). Coaches seemed to develop "shared relationships" (Cregan et al., 2007, p. 343) with their athletes. Coaches were not only able to learn about each athlete's disability and any potential sport-specific impact, but could also engage in sophisticated conversations about preferred learning styles, both of which helped each coach tailor his or her teaching approach more individually. These relationships seemed especially crucial since the coaches in this study were able-bodied and thus lacked primary experience (Jarvis, 2006, 2009) as an athlete or coach with a disability. Coaches also learned on the job by doing, though it became clear that the

potential to learn on the job varied widely from program to program depending on factors such as staff size, sailor population, facilities, and equipment resources.

The coaches developed knowledge through informal situations such as interacting with other coaches. An unplanned occurrence was that several of the other coaches ended up working alongside each other, either in training or competitive settings. Interestingly, the coach who had significantly more experience (in the able-bodied high performance setting) than the other coaches reported learning from the less-experienced para program coaches as much as they reported learning from him. These findings point to the potential benefits of cross-context collaboration as a way for coaches to broaden their knowledge.

Previous literature has revealed that parasport coaches find fellow coaches very willing to share information, perhaps more so than coaches in able-bodied settings, where competition can hinder sharing (Culver & Trudel, 2006; Nash & Sproule, 2009; Occhino, Mallett, & Rynne, 2013). This study extends those findings and also showcases a unique feature of para sailing that further encourages such openness: the custom of inter-club rotation of coach/athlete matchups at development regattas. The coaches in this study found this practice to be highly valuable as a way to increase their knowledge of disability, to strengthen their connection to the para sailing community, and to raise the overall calibre of the fleet. While not the norm in competitive sport, this practice echoes the cooperative environment created by a visionary sport leader in Culver and colleagues' (2009) study of a competitive youth sport setting. In that study, the collaborative environment supported coach development by encouraging them to share their knowledge and to take responsibility for developing all athletes in the league, not just their own.

Three coaches in this study participated in para-specific nonformal learning situations provided by their sport, and, as some coaches in previous studies have reported (McMaster et al.,

2012), all agreed that it was an important learning situation. During the pre-season workshop, the coaches engaged in primary experiences such as rigging specialized equipment, transferring, and companioning, as well as secondary experiences such as hearing para sailors describe their needs and perspectives. Coupled together, the primary and secondary experiences helped the coaches to resolve some of their disjuncture (Jarvis, 2006, 2009) and prepared them for the situations they would encounter when they began coaching full time.

As the season progressed, it became clear that the coaches were integrating a myriad of experiences into their biographies as they became “more experienced [people]” (Jarvis, 2009, p. 25). Several types of learning situations, including formal, informal, and nonformal contributed to the development of their skills and knowledge, thus this study supports previous studies that have suggested one situation is not necessarily more influential than another (Mallett et al., 2009; McMaster et al., 2012; Nelson et al., 2006; Werthner & Trudel 2006, 2009, Wright et al., 2007) and that coaches can, and do, follow idiosyncratic learning pathways (Werthner & Trudel, 2009). It is interesting to note that the impact of the coaches’ experiences seemed to reach far beyond simply becoming more skilled at coaching para sailors. Several coaches believed that skills they acquired in the para context – such as a heightened awareness of individual athlete needs, or increased creativity – would augment their coaching effectiveness in any setting. Perhaps even more interesting was the impact on the “whole person” beyond the “coaching self”. Jarvis (2009) noted that experiences can affect our “emotions, beliefs, attitudes and values” (p. 89), essentially altering our perception of our entire life worlds. This appeared to be the case for these coaches, who emerged from their coaching experiences with a new understanding and respect for persons with disabilities as well as for the role that they, as coaches, play not just in an athlete’s sporting endeavours, but in a person’s whole life. The connections the coaches forged with their athletes

went well beyond a purely athletic relationship as the coaches learned about themselves on a deeper level and, in some cases, even re-considered career paths and life goals.

Conclusions and Limitations

This study is one of the few studies on coach learning to take place in real time, and is the first to follow coaches closely during their first contact coaching in the parasport setting. The real time component of this study afforded the witnessing of the evolution of the coaches' biographies as they transitioned (Jarvis, 2006, 2009) from coaches who had little or no experience coaching para athletes to coaches with at least a full season of rich experience behind them. Additionally, the real time component ensured that the data that are extremely current, given that the coaches' experiences and perspectives are embedded in the present parasport landscape, as opposed to the parasport setting of a decade or even a few years ago. Since parasport is a rapidly evolving field, this study offers a unique vantage point of new coaches' contemporary experiences.

While this study enhanced the understanding of how novice parasport coaches develop their knowledge, a few limitations should be addressed. First, all coaches in this study were able-bodied. To the best of our knowledge, there are currently only two coaches with a disability who coach sailing full time or seasonally in Canada. It would be interesting, as some other studies have done (McMaster et al., 2012; Tawse et al., 2012), to include coaches with a disability. Second, while the small sample size of six coaches working in a purposefully selected sport allowed for prolonged engagement and strong researcher-participant relationships, we do not claim this study to be representative of parasport coaches across all sports.

The findings highlight that coaches new to parasport, particularly able-bodied coaches, may have specific concerns with regards to working with disabled athletes, but that such

concerns can be addressed with appropriate training and on the job learning. Additionally, this study illustrates that informal situations need not be accidental: facilitating situations where coaches and athletes can gather in a cooperative atmosphere seems to enhance the opportunity to interact and to share knowledge. Event hosts should be encouraged to consider competitions as learning opportunities not only for athletes, but for coaches as well. Finally, given the importance of learning through interactions with others, we would suggest that opportunities to interact with other be built into coach development programming as well as training camps and competitions, whenever possible.

The fact that all six coaches remained involved in para sailing after their first season speaks to the importance of positive first experiences for novice coaches. Despite their initial lack of para experience, and a variety of challenges faced throughout the season, the coaches were able to access a wide variety of learning situations to help them develop their knowledge and to emerge as “more experienced [people]” (Jarvis, 2009, p. 29).

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Article 2:

An Experienced Youth Coach's Transition to the Parasport Context:

A Study in Real Time

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Abstract

Literature has revealed a lack of qualified coaches in the parasport context (Cregan, Bloom, & Reid, 2007; McMaster, Culver, & Werthner, 2012). One suggestion to attract more coaches, as well as provide learning opportunities for those in the parasport context, is to encourage cross-context collaboration between able-bodied sport coaches and parasport coaches (Sawicki, 2008). However, there is little, if any, literature regarding coaches who transition from one coaching context to another. The purpose of this study was to explore the learning experiences of an experienced coach of able-bodied youth athletes as he transitioned to coaching para athletes. The study was conducted in real-time during the coach's first season in the context. Semi-structured interviews and participant observation were conducted. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) revealed the importance of previous coaching experience, appropriate training groups, and support from others such as athletes and knowledgeable peers to facilitate the transition.

Key words: Disability sport, Paralympic, coach development, cross-context, sailing

An Experienced Youth Coach's Transition to the Parasport Context: A Study in Real Time

Burgeoning research related to the coaching sciences (Trudel & Gilbert, 2006), primarily conducted in able-bodied sport settings, has led to a better understanding of coaching and coach learning. In recent years, there has been a steady growth of research on topics such as coach perceptions of large scale coach education programs (Misener & Danylchuk, 2009; Nash & Sproule, 2012), the professionalization of coaching (International Council for Coaching Excellence [ICCE], 2012), and the development of coach expertise (Côté, 2006; Gilbert & Trudel, 2013). However, there has been little research conducted on coaches who coach athletes with disabilities, and research on effective learning strategies for such coaches is sparse (Cregan et al., 2007; DePauw & Gavron, 1991; McMaster et al., 2012; Tawse, Bloom, Sabiston, & Reid, 2012). This is worrisome given that a lack of knowledgeable coaches for athletes with a disability has been repeatedly identified as a concern for over two decades (DePauw & Gavron, 1991, 2005; Liow & Hopkins, 1996; Robbins, Houston, & Dummer, 2010) and has been named as a barrier to sport participation (Canadian Heritage, 2006, 2008).

Several strategies have been offered as ways to address this problem, including the addition of general disability information to able-bodied coach training (Dorogi, Bognàr, & Petrovics, 2008), the development of sport-specific manuals, and increased access to sport-specific workshops (Cregan et al., 2007). Given that research shows coaches value learning from each other (Erickson, Bruner, MacDonald, & Côté, 2008), and that parasport coaches report learning through interactions (McMaster et al., 2012), a recent suggestion offered by a Canadian Paralympic coach merits further exploration. Sawicki (2008) called for more cross-context coach partnerships as a means to broaden current coach knowledge and potentially attract already experienced able-bodied coaches to work with para athletes. In light of this suggestion, the

purpose of this study was to explore one coach's transition from able-bodied sport coaching to parasport coaching in hopes of understanding factors that could facilitate such crossovers.

Literature Review

Coach Learning

Coaching has been widely acknowledged to be a complex task (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Jones & Turner, 2006) that requires a broad spectrum of skills in order to be effective (Gilbert, Nater, Sawik, & Gallimore, 2010). Given this complexity, an exploration of coach learning and the processes of developing expertise is merited. Gilbert and Trudel (2013) recently examined coach expertise and the contribution of different learning situations as well as deliberate practice to coach learning (Trudel & Gilbert (2012, 2013). The authors drew from the Integrated Definition of Coaching Effectiveness and Expertise (Côté & Gilbert, 2009) to provide a basis to illustrate how coaches move along a continuum of expertise development.

The Integrated Definition of Coaching Effectiveness and Expertise (Côté & Gilbert, 2009) considers three key features that comprise coach expertise: coaches' knowledge, athletes' outcomes, and coaching contexts. The Integrated Definition acknowledges that coaches' knowledge is diverse in nature, and must include professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal facets. Athlete outcomes are seen as holistic, including both athletic and socio-emotional facets. Finally, both coach knowledge and athlete outcomes are intrinsically linked to the specific coaching context (Gilbert & Trudel, 2012). "Coaching context" generally refers to a grouping of athletes based on the nature of their athletic interest and the level of their athletic ability and are often broadly viewed as either 'participation sport' or 'performance sport' (Côté & Gilbert, 2011), or, somewhat more specifically, as 'recreational', 'developmental', and 'elite' sport (Trudel & Gilbert, 2013). When a coach enters the new context, there will be time spent in the

‘beginner’ stage of coach expertise, albeit perhaps only briefly, especially for coaches in the development context who likely have experience both as athletes and as coaches (Trudel & Gilbert, 2013).

Based on the work of Werthner and Trudel (2006), Trudel and Gilbert (2013) also examined the contributions of different learning situations (mediated, unmediated, internal) to coach learning (see Figure 1). Mediated situations are those in which an external person or group selects the learning material as well as the timing and the style of delivery. Unmediated learning situations occur when a coach decides what information and skills he or she requires and selects which sources to consult (Internet, coach colleague), and when to do so. Finally, internal learning situations do not involve new learning material, but rather the reorganization of current knowledge and understanding, for example through journaling or discussion with a personal coach or mentor (Trudel & Gilbert, 2013). Given the multi-faceted nature of learning, these various types of learning situations will have different degrees of impact depending on a coach’s stage on the expertise development continuum, be it beginner, competent, proficient, or expert (Trudel & Gilbert, 2013).

Beginner coaches tend to participate frequently in mediated situations, such as formal coach education courses. These coaches, typically in the first few years of coaching in a particular context, are often in a dependent stage of learning where the focus is on knowledge acquisition rather than knowledge re-organization (Trudel & Gilbert, 2013). As coaches enter the next stage, *competent*, they may still participate in mediated situations but are increasingly becoming more independent, both as learners and as coaches, and will access more unmediated situations as a way to expand their learning. At this point, they will also use internal learning situations

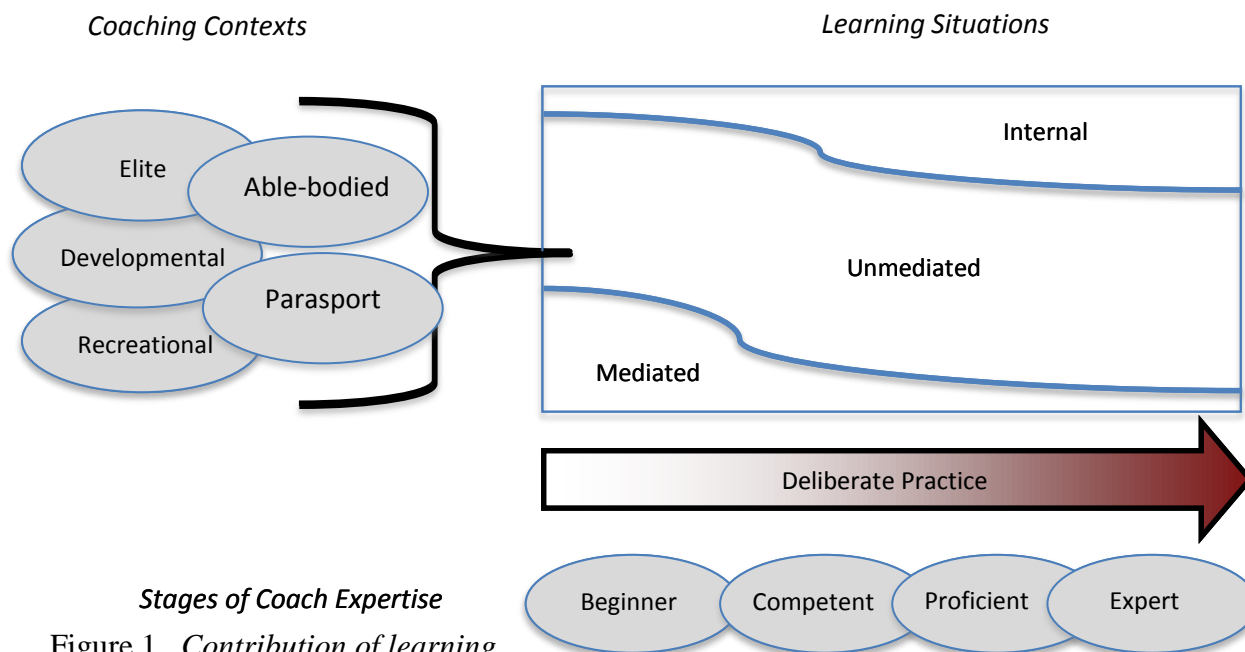


Figure 1. Contribution of learning situations and deliberate practice in developing coaching expertise

Note. We have adapted the model to include able-bodied and parasport as additional contexts such as reflection on their coaching in a “stop and think” (Trudel & Gilbert, 2013, p. 18) style as a way to improve their practice. Following this stage, some coaches may progress towards the *proficient* and *expert* stages, and will move from an independent mindset to one that is interdependent. Thus, coaches in these stages understand the value of sharing knowledge with other coaches and are also more likely to become mentors to coaches in the earlier stages. These coaches are capable of continually adapting to specific contextual factors. Proficient and expert coaches use “critical reflection that allows them to see the big picture, shift perspectives, and identify new ways of thinking” (p. 18). Critical reflection, an internal learning situation, can be thought of as level of a deep reflection spurred by “self-induced periodic confusion” (Gilbert & Trudel, 2013, p. 36) or disjuncture (Jarvis, 2006, 2009).

The Parasport Coaching Context

The scant research available on parasport coach learning suggests that coaches in this context employ strategies (Banack, Sabiston, & Bloom 2011; Cregan et al., 2007) and philosophies (Robbins, Houston, & Dummer, 2010), similar to those of coaches who work with able-bodied athletes. They also seem to emphasize an athlete-first approach, focusing on the individual's athletic ability as opposed to their physical disability (Bush & Silk, 2013; Cregan et al., 2007; Robbins et al., 2010; Tawse et al., 2012). Additionally, while most coaches seem to 'stumble into' the parasport context, they generally report high levels of job satisfaction and find their work very rewarding (Cregan et al., 2007; McMaster, et al., 2012; Tawse et al., 2012). Still, there remains a significant lack of knowledgeable coaches working in parasport (Canadian Heritage, 2006, 2008; DePauw & Gavron, 1991, 2005), potentially due to low awareness of parasport and/or a lack of sport-specific coach training opportunities (Canadian Sport Centers, 2012). Studies have shown that parasport coaches do engage in formal coach education courses, however since these courses are often directed at an able-bodied sport coach audience, the coaches tend to value unmediated situations such as interactions more highly (Cregan et al., 2007; McMaster et al., 2012).

A lack of coaches is felt all the way from grassroots parasport programming (Canadian Heritage, 2006, 2008) to the Paralympic Games (Sawicki, 2008), but the question remains of how to increase both the number and calibre of coaches working with athletes with disabilities. Sawicki (2008) noted that an important resource for parasport programs at all levels would be the ability to "develop a broader knowledge base in coaching, which will increase the level of professionalism and, ultimately, program quality" (p. 39). Based on conversations with multiple Canadian Paralympic coaches, Sawicki (2008) went onto suggest cross-context partnerships as a

way to build better coaches. Potential partnerships could include linking high-performance coaches with development coaches to share knowledge, or scenarios such as parasport coaches working with able-bodied sport coaches “to allow cross-pollination of ideas, technique, strategy, etc” (Sawicki, 2008, p. 38). The latter could be especially favourable, since “coaches often find that, in working with an athlete with a disability, they become stronger coaches from the experience, and typically will remain involved in some facet within parasport” (p. 39).

To the best of our knowledge, a model or theory to describe context transition does not currently exist. While there is a good deal of literature on the development of coach expertise, and this expertise seems to be context specific, we know little about what happens when a coach changes contexts, or adds another context to his or her repertoire. Given that cross-context experiences may be a way to increase the numbers and calibre of parasport coaches, a better understanding of such transitions is merited. We believe that Trudel and Gilbert’s (2013) model of the contribution of learning situations in developing coach expertise could serve as a helpful starting point to consider a coach’s transition from one context to another.

The purpose of this study was to explore, in real time, how a coach, experienced in the youth able-bodied setting, transitions to working with adult para athletes. It was hoped that through an understanding of his experiences, insight could be gleaned into developing effective cross-context partnerships, such as those suggested by Sawicki (2008).

Research Design

The researchers used a constructivist epistemology. Crotty (1998) explained that constructivism is “[an individual’s] way of making sense of the world” (p. 58) and holds that knowledge is jointly constructed. The methodology for this study was Merriam’s (2009) basic qualitative methodology; a fitting approach when a researcher seeks “to *understand* how people

make sense of their lives and their experiences” (p. 23), which was the case here as we aimed to discover how one coach transitioned from coaching able-bodied youth to coaching adult para athletes.

Methods.

Participant Selection. As part of a larger study, the coach at the center of this study was purposefully sampled (Patton, 2002) through the lead researcher’s connections to accessible sailing programs across the country. The main criterion for the larger study was that participants had to be new to the parasport context, which was defined as no more than two years’ experience coaching para athletes, in any sport. One coach, who had ten years’ experience coaching high performance able-bodied youth, emerged as distinct among the rest of the participants, most of whom had little coaching experience. Given this coach’s unique biography, we saw potential for an extension of the study’s original purpose and chose to investigate his experiences more closely.

The participant, Rob Frost, is a 28-year old sailing coach who, as an athlete, has extensive racing experience on national and international levels. At the commencement of data collection, he had been coaching for ten years, mostly with able-bodied high performance youth teams competing at the national and international levels. He has been recognized for his coaching achievements, both on the water as a nominee for Sail Canada’s Coach of the Year Award, as well as off the water as the 2012 winner of his Provincial Sailing Association’s Leadership Award presented to coaches who show exceptional leadership in a Learn to Sail or Race program.

Born and raised in Ottawa, he comes from a sailing family, and was introduced to the sport by his grandfather as a child. His parents and sister were also sailors, and his father played

a key leadership role in the sailing club's youth racing program. Although Rob played other sports in high school, such as football and hockey, he named sailing as the most important one. Rob completed the national sport organization (Sail Canada, then Canadian Yachting Association) youth Learn to Sail program at his local sailing club and went on to race as a teenager before deciding to begin coaching at age 16. After one season of teaching beginner sailors, he quickly moved on to become assistant coach to the race team by his second year, and by his fourth season was head coach of a high performance youth race team, a position he has kept since.

Data Collection. After the university's Research Ethics Board granted approval, informed consent was obtained. Data were collected by means of four semi-structured interviews and two extended periods (one week and two weeks, respectively) of participant observation. Semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility in the interview process, so that the interviewer was able to ask probing questions and guide the interview according to the interviewee's responses. Semi-structured interviews were used primarily to gather information about the coach's biography as a youth sailor and as an able-bodied sailing coach, as well as to understand his perceptions of his coaching and learning throughout his first season working in the parasport context. Participant observation was extensive and provided an in-depth look at the coach's practices and interactions in training, competitive, and social settings with a variety of athletes and other coaches. As the lead researcher was also an active sailing coach during data collection, she had the opportunity to co-coach with the participant at two major events, one national development regatta and one Paralympic class World Cup event. During this event, the two coaches spent six to eight hours per day together rigging, coaching on the water in a shared

coach boat, debriefing, and generally assisting the athletes. Observations were recorded as field notes in a journal and used as probes in subsequent interviews.

Data collection began about three weeks after the coach had his first experience working with para athletes and continued for approximately 15 months. The researcher was present at the coach's first parasport training camp as a coach herself, so while this interaction was not a formal part of the data collection, the researcher could later ask questions about the coach's first contact experience based on that direct observation.

Data Analysis. Data analysis was ongoing throughout the collection. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, and field notes were also transcribed, resulting in 65 pages of single-spaced pages. Transcripts were sent to the participant for member-checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and no revisions were requested. All documents were coded using NVivo10 software (Qualitative Solutions and Researching International, 2010). Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The basic steps of the thematic analysis included familiarization with the data, creation of initial codes, and the refinement of relevant themes. Themes were both deductive, driven by coach and human learning theory (e.g., mediated, unmediated and, informal), and inductive, that is, using the participant's own words to guide the coding (e.g. athlete first, athlete diversity) (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Validity. This study faced validity threats (Maxwell, 2005), as is the case with any qualitative research project, Given that I am a member of the community about which I was conducting research, and was actively coaching alongside the coach at the center of this study, researcher bias (Maxwell, 2005) and reflexivity (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) were distinct possibilities. In an effort to minimize bias, I engaged in a pre-study bracketing interview (Rolls & Relf, 2006) and recorded all research activities in a research journal (Janesick, 2011). Both

activities prompted me to reflect throughout the process and helped to identify and address the influence of bias. To address reflexivity, it was important to create an open environment to make the participant feel as comfortable as possible, and to be conscious of wording and body language, for example when questions and probes were selected (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Coincidentally, during this study, I was a participant in another researcher's case study at the time, a process which allowed me to deepen my reflection on the research process from a participant's perspective.

Finally, triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was used as an effort to minimize validity threats. Triangulation included multiple methods of data collection and triangulation of the researchers themselves, as I worked collaboratively with a second, experienced researcher who assisted with the planning and execution of the study.

Findings

Rob's Coaching History

In his first few years coaching, Rob accessed a remarkable variety of learning opportunities. Like most young sailing coaches in Canada, he followed the National Coach Certification Program (NCCP) and Sail Canada formal coach training. At the time, the training involved a combination of multi-sport and sport-specific theoretical, technical, and practical components presented in a condensed format over the course of a weekend or two, or, in the case of more advanced levels, a week. Rob completed his first four levels of coaching certification within his first four seasons of coaching, and expressed mixed feelings about the courses. On the one hand, he acknowledged that one of his more advanced courses had been very helpful:

My Learn to Race was the best I ever did though, because [several experienced race coaches] were there, and there were a couple of other sailors who were actual racers who

were coming out of it. I learned by far the most there, in terms of how to coach race teams by actual racing coaches. (Interview 1)

Rob found the opportunity to learn from experienced coaches a valuable one. However, he felt that the first levels of courses had only offered him rudimentary knowledge and focused too heavily on how to deliver an entertaining lesson as opposed to how to manage and develop more advanced sailors.

Rob's perceptions of his formal training and coach learning can be further elucidated by exploring his access to other sources of learning during those years, particularly his extensive mentorships. Rob's father, who founded the club's high performance youth team, set up a mentorship program in which Rob was paired with the team's coach, a Canadian Olympian and America's Cup champion. Rob played the role of assistant coach:

I'd do the running around, getting the motor boats, setting up and marks, making sure the kids were organized and all that sort of thing... [my mentor] wanted to try to get me up to speed as quickly as he could to make sure I could run the program for the foreseeable future...he sort of made me do a lot of the small jobs to give me an idea of what it takes to actually do the program. (Interview 2)

As the mentorship progressed, Rob gained what he regarded as some of the most valuable experiences of his coaching career. He discussed at length the importance of learning from his mentor, and stated that compared to his formal coach training, he learned about "the things that they [formal courses] don't teach you, things related to sailing off the water: the fundraising, the working out, the sport psychology. All those things... [that are] a huge part of making a winner" (Interview 2).

His mentorship experience continued beyond his formative first season coaching the race team. In his second season as Assistant Coach, his mentor extended the program, bringing in three more coaches to work with the race team, and thus Rob, on a rotational basis throughout

the season. That season, Rob gradually took on more responsibility and coached alongside two more Olympians and a Sail Canada Coach of the Year. He described feeling well-prepared when he took over the high performance race team on his own the following season, in just his fourth year as a coach.

In the years to come, Rob worked with able-bodied high performance youth sailors, both boys and girls, in a variety of boat classes including single-handed (one person) and double handed (two person) boats, often all within the same team. He described how the variety of athletes and equipment was not always easy, noting that he had never sailed some of the classes he coached at the time. To overcome the challenges, he described working hard to implement the “comprehensive approach [and] attention to detail” (Interview 2) he had learned from his various mentors. He also noted that other coaches on the circuit were open to sharing their knowledge, and he gradually gathered an understanding of the particularities of each class, summarizing his philosophy as, “any coach who views other coaches as rivals instead of sources of information is going to really limit themselves on how far they can go” (Interview 3). Finally, he discussed the concept of “thinking about coaching all the time” (Interview 3). He described “the conversation I have in my head” (Interview 3) to work through coaching problems and challenges, and found that sometimes the best way to resolve those challenges was to discuss them with a trusted colleague or mentor.

Rob’s Initiation to Para Sport

At the commencement of data collection, Rob was taking on two new endeavours: a year-round part-time contract with a youth team based at a new club and a contract as a provincial coach by his provincial sailing association. He spoke with excitement about the prospect of finally becoming a full time career coach, calling the opportunity a “dream job” (Observation 2),

and described a wide variety of learning opportunities that he intended to engage in to be fully prepared. The first opportunity, a mediated learning situation, was mandated by his provincial employer: Rob enrolled in advanced Sail Canada/NCCP coach training. Prior to the training, Rob expressed hesitation, recalling his first mediated learning experiences in formal coach education courses. However, the program had undergone significant changes since to become a competency-based system, with a range of modules addressing topics such as developing athletic abilities and the psychology of performance. Compared to his early experiences with formal training, Rob found these courses far more effective:

The sailing component is great, I'm learning a lot and working with other experienced coaches, sharing ideas. I also like the multisport modules, the best part about multisport is learning from other sports. It's cool to hear how other coaches work in their sport, what they do, how they see things. It's a different lens and I think you can take back ideas to your own sport. (Interview 4)

As a program requirement, he was paired with a sailing coach mentor, a national team coach for whom he held great respect. Near the end of data collection, Rob was just beginning to work with his mentor but already reported positive experiences. In addition to his mentor, he connected with his provincial colleagues on a regular basis either on the job or through phone calls. He was also looking forward to extended professional development opportunities, as his provincial sailing association provides funds for coaches to choose professional development activities they feel will be meaningful for their specific needs. Finally, Rob also described a variety of other self-selected, learning opportunities including mediated, such as attending racing rules seminars; unmediated, such as seeking online materials or engaging in conversations with other coaches; as well as his own internal conversations.

One of Rob's first assignments as a provincial coach was to work with the provincial Paralympic classes sailing team. Chris, a local volunteer coach who worked with several of the

provincial team athletes, knew Rob both personally as an athlete and as a successful youth coach. Chris initiated discussion with the provincial association who then assigned Rob as the lead coach for the provincial Paralympic class team. For the first time, Rob would begin to work with para athletes in a boat he had never sailed nor coached before.

Over the course of the season, Rob worked fairly regularly with four provincial team para athletes, as well as Chris, who trained with the group and also offered additional coaching and travel support. Rob described his knowledge of para sailing at the start of the experience as fairly limited, admitting that, “I didn’t really have any experience whatsoever...I knew [there was one para club near his home club] but I wasn’t really sure how many other places really had programs” (Interview 3). Nonetheless, he described approaching the context “with the idea, ‘I’m just going to teach these guys how to sail fast’... because they just want to go out and train hard, just like any other athlete would” (Interview 1). Rob stressed the importance of Chris’s role, especially during his first experiences. Chris offered support and guidance as Rob initiated his relationship with the group:

[Chris] talked a little bit about what the athletes’ needs were, and what we needed to do with them in terms of setting their boats up, rigging, and sort of the basic principles of how the boat [is lifted] in the water, how it tacked, that sort of thing. And then, you know from there, I picked a lot of it up from watching Chris, he was always sailing every time I was there coaching. (Interview 2)

Further, Chris encouraged Rob to ask the athletes themselves about their needs. While Rob acknowledged this was crucial advice, he found the athletes were all more focused on their abilities than their limitations:

I asked Kelly [about her disability], and she was just like, ‘ah whatever, it doesn’t matter’ and after that, it was just, you realize that they have some slight disabilities, and they do

things differently to get around it, they've figured out their own ways to work around them, so it's like they don't have them at all. (Interview 1)

Rob was quickly "hooked" (Interview 2) by the new context. After his first training camp with the group, he called his supervisor at his provincial association and told him, "this is amazing, I want to do some more work with these guys, give me as much work as we can do with them" (Interview 1). Rob's supervisor supported his efforts, assigning him continued work with the provincial para team as well as helping him to troubleshoot the scheduling challenges that arose from his demanding multi-team schedule. It also became clear, through repeated observations, that his supervisor offered guidance to Rob if he encountered any coaching challenges (in any of his contexts) and was available as a sounding board if need be.

As the season progressed, Rob expressed high satisfaction with his work with the para training group, who were eager to train hard. He drew on his previous experiences as he worked with them, implementing practices he had used as an athlete and as a coach. He reviewed their training logs, met their personal trainers, and also brought ideas to the group such as using energy gels for quick fuel between races, or heart rate monitors to track physical demands (field notes). He particularly enjoyed the challenge of finding sailor-specific techniques to suit each athlete's unique needs:

It makes it so much more interesting as a coach, because depending on what people's disabilities are, or how they have their boats set up for them, it makes it so interesting because you've really got to *look* for what's best for that person, and there's no straightforward way that, 'that's *the* way you should do it'. (Interview 2)

He went on to explain that he believed they were the perfect group of athletes to help guide him through his new experience:

They're always so eager to learn, we always have such a great time on the water. They are one of my *favourite* groups of athletes that I've ever worked with, I really can't say

enough good stuff about them. I'm really glad I jumped into the [para class boat] with that group, they really got me hooked...It really changed things around for me.

(Interview 2)

As the sailors developed as athletes, Rob felt he was developing as a coach alongside them. He found working with adults pushed him to reflect on his coaching style, and to carefully consider the content and delivery of information:

Working with adults, you have those 'how' and 'why' questions all the time, and it's really nice because it really makes you think about the question and the process... as a coach, it's better to have to think through [what you're teaching], and once you have to think like that, [the athletes] end up getting a better answer and understanding [the concept]. (Interview 3)

Through his work with the provincial para athletes, Rob began to learn about the network of grass roots development clubs, often termed "adapted" or "accessible" sailing programs. As word of his work spread throughout the tightly-knit accessible sailing community in the region, Rob was presented with two interesting opportunities.

First, Brendan, a coach at a grass roots accessible program, reached out to Rob to initiate a cross-context coaching partnership. He was going to start coaching a Paralympic class athlete and asked Rob to work with him to share his knowledge. Rob described their interactions in the coach boat:

We'd watch her do [a skill] 5 or 6 times, and we'd be having a dialogue back and forth on ways that we thought we could make it better. Then we'd take one of those ideas, try it out, keep talking. There was a lot of dialogue going back and forth between the two of us, trying to brainstorm the best ways to figure things out for her. (Interview 3)

While Rob had some familiarity with the para context at that point in the season, he felt that talking out ideas with Brendan helped him to better understand the particularities of the boat. He found that, "we all see different things sometimes, and then we talk about it a bit, and then we

could come to a conclusion” and later confirmed, “I know I definitely learned a couple of things off Brendan, I think it was good, just constant, constant back-and-forth, talking about sail shape, or what she did in a tack or a mark rounding” (Rob, Interview 3). Both coaches strongly agreed that the experience had been mutually beneficial.

The second opportunity came when the lead researcher, who was head coach of an accessible club, invited Rob to be the event coach at a major development class regatta in the fall. Rob was excited for the event, noting that the athletes in his core training group, some of whom continued to race development events, encouraged him to take the opportunity: “They were all ranting and raving about how awesome Mobility Cup was and how much of a great time it was going to be. So I was really looking forward to it to see what all the excitement was about” (Interview 1).

The event, known as “Canada’s international regatta for sailors with a disability” (Able Sail Network [ASN], 2013) is hosted in a different Canadian city each year and typically draws 40-50 para sailors from across Canada, the United States, and often further abroad. The event is open to both novice (including first-time racers) and experienced athletes, who are divided into two separate fleets. The development class boat raced at this event is a common club boat and its design, coupled with add-on electronic assistive devices, can accommodate a very wide spectrum of disabilities. The boats are built with an extra seat in the cockpit and the novice fleet sailors are required to sail with a sailing companion: an experienced coach or volunteer who is permitted to coach before, during, and after the races. Like all development class regattas in Canada, the companions are rotated on a daily basis to ensure that all new sailors, especially those who lack access to regular coaching, can spend time with a variety of experienced race

companions. Thus, coaches at the event will coach not only their team, but athletes from other clubs as well.

Rob spent the five-day event on the water, accompanied each day by the lead researcher as well as other coaches from club programs across the country. He provided the event debrief each day, which he found significantly different from his experiences at youth regattas:

It shocked me how eager people always were to try to learn and to get better. You know, I do event debriefs all the time, and you're lucky to get maybe five or ten percent of the participants, and it was shocking, the first debrief I did there was *every* sailor, plus *every* volunteer, and family, and friends...yeah, it was a little intimidating getting up in front of like, probably 75 people or 100 people. (Interview 2)

While Rob was pleasantly surprised by the enthusiasm and commitment to learn displayed by the competitors, given the spectrum of experience, he noticed an important adjustment:

At first...it was difficult giving feedback, it felt important, to get an idea of where each sailor was at before I could give the specific information, to make sure you weren't too far over their heads. For example, with [the Paralympic class athletes], I could really talk about boat-on-boat tactics that could be way over the head of someone who was sailing in the [novice] fleet. (Interview 2)

Rob's experiences with para athletes prior to this event had been with athletes in his provincial training group, who were competing at a fairly high performance level and required few adaptations to equipment or technique. He found it helpful to interact with the club coaches to learn about the athletes as well as the adaptations to equipment and technique in order to offer appropriate coaching to each sailor:

It was pretty overwhelming, diving head first in there, but I did really learn a lot...I think the thing I learned the most from the other coaches was how to work with peoples' specific disabilities and how they worked the boat and equipment, in each situation, for their disability, that sort of thing. (Interview 2)

As much as Rob reported learning from club coaches, several club coaches new to coaching expressed appreciation for the advanced racing expertise that Rob shared throughout the week, remarking that they would bring the lessons home to their clubs in other provinces (field notes).

In addition to learning about individual athletes' needs and specialized equipment, Rob gained a clearer picture of the club system and the disconnect that exists between the clubs, which are often grassroots programs, and the provincial and/or national development programs. He was impressed by the accomplishments clubs were achieving, often with limited resources, but also realized that the provincial organization may have been missing chances to develop athletes:

We haven't done a very good job of identifying disabled sailors ...when I talked to Sam, he had *no* idea that there was a higher level he could go to, and there was all sorts of potential funding that could be available. When I started talking to him about all the possibilities...the more excited we both started getting, realizing that we could be helping him to try to elevate his sailing to get to a higher goal. (Interview 2)

Rob's experiences in the para context were extremely positive. A significant realization was that he had lacked awareness of a burgeoning sailing discipline and a stimulating coaching opportunity:

I never even thought about doing any work with Ablesail [para sailing] until this year, and now I'm kind of kicking myself that it took so long to be able to get into it. I think about how rewarding it is, how much value you can give to these sailors. (Interview 2)

In light of this realization, he decided to capitalize on his position as a youth coach to raise awareness for the next generation of coaches. In the following season, he brought seven of his youth team athletes to a training camp he organized for his para class group. The youth athletes met and interacted with the four para athletes, helped to launch and rig boats, assisted Rob running drills from the coach boat, and even tried out the Paralympic class boat. Rob was excited

at the prospect of passing on his newfound passion, and the potential for positive impact on the sport:

I said to them, ‘you know, this is a really, really cool class and group of people to coach, you should go for it, it could be a cool niche for you’ and I said I’d be happy to put them in touch with [other para coaches]. (Interview 3)

The impact of even a brief contact with the context with the para setting was strong:

I’m hooked on it for sure now, so you know part of my plan will be over the next year will be to spend some more time with some of the different organizations around Ontario and talk to some other coaches, do some coach mentoring, and work with more of the athletes...It’s a big thing that what I want to try to accomplish next year is to make sure that we elevate the level of coaching and we can do that through mentoring, and try to elevate the level of sailing just by working our way around and trying to coach more people. (Interview 2)

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the transition of an experienced coach from the able-bodied youth sport setting to the parasport context. Sawicki (2008) suggested that cross-context exposure and/or mentorships could be way to not only broaden current parasport coach knowledge, but also to attract expert coaches who may be currently coaching in able-bodied settings. For such endeavours to be successful, it would seem important to consider (a) the biography, experience and stage of expertise of the coaches chosen for such partnerships, as well as (b) contextual factors that could foster a positive transitional experience for the coaches involved. This study examined the prior biography and the experiences of an able-bodied youth coach transitioning to the para context, and offers insight into how to build on Sawicki’s (2008) suggestions. Based on the findings, practical suggestions are offered for club, provincial, and national leaders/organizations to consider in their quests to foster improved coaching in parasport.

The coach at the center of this study experienced a smooth transition from the able-bodied youth context to the adult parasport context. An exploration of his biography (Jarvis, 2006, 2009) in conjunction with coaching expertise literature (Gilbert & Trudel, 2012; Trudel & Gilbert, 2013) revealed that he was a suitable selection for such a partnership. His many years coaching in the able-bodied youth setting, and his recognition on provincial and national scales highlight his professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge, as well as his holistic view of athlete development. His ability to coach a variety of ages, both genders, and multiple boat classes, as well as his eventual smooth transition to para, reflect his expertise through his capability to “[constantly adapt] to particular contextual factors” (Gilbert & Trudel, 2012, p. 22).

A review of Rob’s coaching experience over the years reveals a learning path fairly consistent with the stages described by Trudel and Gilbert (2013). In his first few years of coaching, while in the beginner stage of coach expertise, Rob participated in several mediated learning situations, namely through his formal coach certification courses. However, it is important to note that he also had access to opportunities not available to many young coaches, those of his formal mentorships with several high calibre coaches over the course of his first two seasons as a race coach. It is clear that importance of learning from other coaches was strongly instilled during those formative coaching years, as a decade later he still emphasized the importance of his mentors’ teachings. As he began to coach more independently when he took over the high performance team, he moved away from mediated learning situations and came to appreciate unmediated situations (Gilbert & Trudel, 2013), signalling a shift to the ‘competent’ stage of coaching. Through his interactions with peer coaches from his own club as well as others, he continued to recognize the value of sharing knowledge in order to better practice, an appreciation he continued to build on for years. At the time of data collection, he was often on

the other side of the mentor-protégé relationship and also reflected on his coaching practice regularly, either in a “stop and think” (Trudel & Gilbert, 2013, p. 18) manner, or at times through conversations with a “critical friend” (Trudel & Gilbert, 2013, p. 18) such as a close coach colleague or his new mentor. At this point, he seems to be in the proficient/expert stage of his coach expertise development (Trudel & Gilbert, 2013).

Expert coaches need to, and are capable of, adapting to changing contextual factors (Gilbert & Trudel, 2012). Research has also shown that the para context demands coaches who can adapt to a wide variety of circumstantial factors, such as training accommodations to suit an athlete’s disability or accessibility issues at training and competition venues (Cregan et al., 2007; Tawse et al., 2012). Rob’s extensive experience in the youth context provided him opportunity to develop his coaching flexibility which prepared him to take on the unique demands in the para setting. The sport of sailing may have been particularly effective as setting in which to develop this flexibility. In a study on the practical knowledge of expert coaches, Saury and Durand (1998) noted that “in sailing, the environment in which the athletes act is highly uncertain and difficult to predict” (p. 264), which forces coaches to improvise according to ever-evolving conditions. It is clear that prior to his first contact with para, Rob already possessed pertinent skills, knowledge, and the ability to adapt. He was thus a fitting choice for a cross-context experience.

According to the Integrated Definition of Coaching Effectiveness and Expertise, expertise is context-specific (Cote & Gilbert, 2009). Trudel and Gilbert (2013) noted that there will be a “period of socialization” (p. 16) each time a coach changes coaching context, such as from performance to participation. Using Trudel and Gilbert’s (2013) model of the contributions of learning situations and deliberate practice in developing coach expertise served as a helpful

tool to understand Rob's transition. Given that the types of learning situations (mediated, unmediated, internal) will have varying degrees of impact depending on a coach's stage of expertise, the model can help us understand what happens as a coach transitions from one context to another in order to provide the optimal support. In this study, we have also considered "parasport" and "able-bodied sport" as contexts of their own. Further, the findings pointed to differences between working with youth and adult athletes. Taken together, we can discern that Rob actually experienced several different context transitions in one season: from able-bodied athletes to para athletes, from youth to adult, and from performance to participation (the last point in the case of his experience at the development regatta). We will examine key points of these 'micro transitions' framed with concepts from Trudel and Gilbert's (2013) model, and then discuss general factors that facilitated his cross-context experience.

Rob's first contact with parasport came after ten years of coaching able-bodied youth. While the shift to work with athletes with disabilities might initially seem like a significant change, Rob did not find the transition challenging. Similar to findings in previous research (Cregan et al., 2007; Tawse et al., 2012) Rob quickly adopted an athlete-centred approach. It is important to note that while Rob's new group of athletes differed in age and physical ability from his previous groups, the athletes were nonetheless at a similar stage of training, development in a performance context, which facilitated his transition. This key similarity helps to explain why Rob's initial intuition to "just...teach these guys how to sail fast" (Interview 1) was so effective.

Interestingly, Rob did not revert to a fully dependent, beginner style of learning. While he did rely on the experienced volunteer coach, Chris, for early guidance Rob displayed characteristics of proficient/expert coaches even as he navigated multiple changes in his coaching context. He thrived on collaboration with other coaches and reflected critically on his

practice. In fact, the second micro transition of working with adults seemed to spur his reflection, as well as facilitate connections with other coaches when the athletes themselves encouraged him to branch out and coach at the participation level. This final micro transition, to work with athletes of more diverse skill, goals, and abilities at the Mobility Cup, was the most demanding transition. In this context, he found it challenging to provide appropriate feedback tailored to a variety of athlete skills, and also needed to increase his knowledge about disability-specific accommodations. He experienced disjuncture as a gap that emerged between his previous experiences with high performance athletes (either able-bodied or para athletes) and the diverse needs of the development class athletes. However, he continued to capitalize on unmediated learning situations and continued to use internal situations to work through these challenges (Werthner & Trudel, 2006). Thus, he seemed to use his inter- and intra-personal knowledge, well developed over ten years of coaching, in order to augment his professional knowledge; that is, the sport-specific coaching skills necessary to work with a group of athletes whose skills, equipment, and techniques were significantly different from his previous training groups.

Generally, Rob experienced a positive first contact and a relatively smooth shift to the para sailing context. This shift seemed to be facilitated by some key leaders at the club and provincial level. For example, Rob was identified by an experienced para sailing coach/program leader who was familiar with his history as a successful, well-respected youth coach. The athletes themselves proved to be vital resources. The relationship he built with each member of the training group helped him to not only understand their needs as athletes, but also as whole individuals. His repeated emphasis on how this particular group helped him to only develop as a coach, but also to kindle his passion for the sport, was an illustration of the sound coach-athlete relationship needed to develop coach expertise (Gilbert et al., 2010).

His relationships with athletes and coaches outside of his immediate training group proved important as well. By working with club coaches, he came to understand the link, or often lack thereof, between the clubs and the provincial or national frameworks. This understanding is important as it has been noted that it is common for such a gap to exist in parasport (Jurbala, 2013). Thus, increased coach awareness of the long term development pathways in parasport and stronger communication between parties at each level could be needed. While the inherent competitiveness of sport has been known to inhibit knowledge sharing among coaches (Lemyre, Trudel, & Durand-Bush, 2007; Occhino, Mallett, & Rynne, 2013; Wright, Trudel, & Culver, 2007), some research has shown that para coaches may hold a particular “openness” (McMaster et al., 2012, p. 13) to sharing, and the back-and-forth flow of knowledge observed at the development regatta supports these previous findings. The “open concept coaching”, where coaches rotated through working with all athletes at the event, surprised Rob at first, but he quickly came to believe that the practice allowed both coaches and athletes to benefit from a rich “cross-pollination” (Sawicki, 2008) of knowledge. Such openness demands a degree of interdependence among coaches, a characteristic often displayed by coaches in the proficient or even expert stages of coach expertise.

The impact of this event, and indeed Rob’s overall experience coaching para athletes, went beyond learning the technical aspects of a new class of boat and the training needs of a new group of athletes. First, working with adult athletes led him to have complex conversations, both with the athletes as well as on his own, that helped him to re-organize his previous understanding of certain sailing concepts and the ways in which he taught them to others, a crucial form of internal learning used to develop coach expertise (Trudel & Gilbert, 2013). Second, the wide variety of athlete ability he was exposed to called for creative adaptations of equipment and

technique, which reinforced his understanding that there is “no one best way” (Trudel & Gilbert, 2013, p. 18) to develop an athlete. These experiences prompted reflection about his work in the parasport context specifically as well as his overall coaching practice. With this reflection, Rob seemed to engage in the type of “deep understanding and appreciation of the context in which [he coached]” (Gilbert & Trudel, 2013, p. 22) considered important for developing coach expertise.

Limitations and Conclusions

While our findings contribute to the coach learning literature, in particular the knowledge of parasport coaching, some limitations must be addressed. Although the study was primarily conducted in real time, which allowed for a rich description of the coach’s experiences, his precise preconceptions of the context were not captured since he joined the study shortly after his first training camp with his para class training group. However, he was recruited for the study within four weeks of said camp, and thus was asked to recall fairly recent events. Additionally, this study considered the experiences of just one coach, thus no claims will be made about generalizing his experiences to other coaches, parasport or otherwise. The study does, however provide a look at the process of cross-context transition and highlight factors to consider when planning such transitions for coaches.

It is clear from the findings that Rob’s foray into para sailing resulted in significant benefits for him as well as for other athletes and coaches who were a part of the experience. Not only did a well-placed provincial coach gain a better understanding of the grassroots programming, but several young para coaches learned from a knowledgeable colleague. Further, a number of athletes who typically lack access to quality instruction gained valuable coaching. Additionally, since elevating general awareness of the rich coaching opportunities available is a

goal for many parasport organizations, this cross-context partnership was a success on several levels.

Recently, it has been suggested that coach development administrators (CDAs), that is to say, people in positions able to “design, deliver or select coach education programming” (Trudel & Gilbert, 2013, p. 19), should be encouraged to take on a broader role in the process of developing coaches by making efforts to encourage learning in mediated, unmediated, and internal situations (Trudel, Culver, & Werthner, 2013; Trudel & Gilbert, 2013). In this case, key leaders from parasport clubs and the provincial association were able to match a coaching need with an appropriate coach candidate. Their insight, combined with the holistic coach development practices endorsed by the provincial and national governing bodies, fostered a variety of learning situations that ultimately combined to create an extremely positive cross-context experience. An interesting finding in this study was that competition, though not traditionally viewed as an asset for coach knowledge sharing (Lemyre, Trudel, & Durand-Bush, 2007), in this case proved to be a key element of the success of this cross-context endeavour. The “open concept coaching” style could contribute to fostering an interdependent approach to coaching, and should be encouraged at carefully selected events. Sawicki’s (2008) suggestions came from his reflections on the 2008 Beijing Paralympics, and focused mostly on coaches working at the national and international level. However, given that coaching lacunas exist at all levels of parasport, the ideas presented could hold true at the regional and provincial levels as well.

Current literature, including this article, often terms “parasport” in comparison to “able-bodied sport”. However, it is clear from these findings that we must not restrict ourselves to such a binary view. If we genuinely hope to advance coach development, we need to always consider

all contextual factors, including athlete age, skill, interest, and goals, which may at times overlap and intertwine.

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General Discussion and Conclusion

The overarching purpose of this study, which resulted in two articles, was to explore how novice parasport coaches develop their knowledge. The first article examines the diverse experiences of six coaches working in six different para sailing settings. Of these participants, only one coach had significant experience coaching able-bodied athletes at a high performance level, an experience that emerged as an influential condition on his learning pathway in the parasport context. As such, further interviews and observations were conducted, and this coach's transition from the able-bodied youth context to parasport became the focus of the second article.

This study was prompted by a notable dearth of empirical research on parasport coach development (Cregan et al., 2007; DePauw, 1986; DePauw & Gavron, 1991, 2005; Reid & Prupas, 1998). Persons with disabilities are significantly underrepresented in the Canadian sport system, a situation Sport Canada partially attributes to a lack of qualified coaches (Canadian Heritage, 2006, 2008). Given the numerous physical, mental, and social benefits sport can afford to people with disabilities (Canadian Heritage, 2006; WHO; 2011 Wilhite & Shank, 2009), it is disconcerting to see that barriers to participation persist. As part of a larger, multi-year parasport study underway at the University of Ottawa, this study contributes to narrowing this gap in the literature as well as offering recommendations for key leaders in parasport coach development, and suggestions for future research.

This study was unique in several ways. First, we believe it is the first real time study to closely follow coaches as they entered a new coaching context, or, in the case of several of the coaches, experienced coaching for the first time. This approach allowed us to capture their actual thoughts, feelings, and perceptions before, during, and after their immersion in a context they were accessing for the first time. Literature across a variety of professions has shown that the

first experiences in a new profession can bring uncertainty and stress (Chandler, 2012; Louis, 1980; Niebrand, Horn, & Holmes, 1992). An understanding of newcomers' first contact experiences can provide insight to ensuring positive first encounters and fostering long-term retention (Chandler, 2012). In terms of parasport research, our knowledge of the first-contact situations for coaches is limited to retroactive descriptions, sometimes recalled over the span of decades (Cregan et al., 2007; McMaster et al., 2012); so this study provides valuable, real time insight into this critical window in a coach's career.

A second unique feature of this study was that we sought to directly address the gap that can exist between research and practice. In this case, the lead researcher and the six coach participants worked together to share best practices, coaches from across the country were able to connect and gain a better understanding of the sport at the national level, and input from the coach participants was used to directly amend the current national para sailing professional development module.

This study supported previous findings with regards to the tasks performed by parasport coaches. While parasport coaches need to complete duties similar to coaches who work in able-bodied sport settings, they may need to carry out additional tasks that are specific to the para context and/or work with unique contextual factors. Many challenges reported were similar to those reported by coaches in able-bodied contexts such as managing a heavy workload, multi-tasking, and recruiting athletes (Nash & Sproule, 2011). However, the coaches also needed to be familiar with context-specific skills such as executing transfers or adapting sport-specific skills for sailors who use specialized assistive equipment. Some coaches were also responsible for administrative and outreach tasks that would not typically be responsibilities for their counterparts in the youth school sailing setting. While most coaches do have a unique advantage

of having years of “pre-professional” (Dieffenbach, Murray, & Zakrasjak, p. 4) exposure to their work environments through their role as athletes, and seem to coach based upon how they have been coached (Nordmann, 2006), this was not the case for the para sailing coaches. Their experiences as able-bodied participants in the national youth curriculum were significantly different from the para sailing participants in terms of age of exposure and participation, equipment used, technical considerations, and time on the water. In other words, they lacked both the primary experience of being an athlete with a disability, as well as secondary experiences observing para athletes. It is not surprising then, that all the coaches experienced at least some level of disjuncture (Jarvis, 2006, 2008) upon entering the context. However, like many parasport coaches (Bush & Silk, 2012; Cregan et al., 2007; Tawse et al., 2012), the coaches emphasized an “athlete first” approach, and focused on the similarities between the able-bodied and para contexts. Thus, as they entered the parasport context, they did attempt to draw from their experiences in coach training aimed at coaching able-bodied athletes, or from their own experiences as able-bodied athletes and coaches.

It is interesting to note that, while previous experience coaching able-bodied athletes was not a criterion for participant selection two coaches, by chance, had significant experience coaching able-bodied youth (six and ten years, respectively) before their first contact with parasport. The other coaches had no coaching experience whatsoever before their start in the para sailing context. Thus, while all the coaches were novices in the *para* setting, it could be said that two participants might be considered experienced coaches, while four were complete novices. A key difference emerged between these two ‘sub’ groups: unlike the completely novice coaches, the two coaches with the able-bodied coaching experience were able to draw on their primary experience (Jarvis, 2006) as sailing coaches. These coaches initially expressed

confidence that their coaching skills developed in the youth context would transfer to their work with para athletes. This would make sense as it has been noted that with experience, complex skills become routine (Ericson, 2003a, in Gilbert & Trudel, 2013), so while the new coaches were learning how to teach certain sailing skills and theoretical concepts for the first time, the experienced coaches were likely making adaptations to coaching skills that were already well-practiced. However, experience in able-bodied sport did not mean that no learning took place, or that these coaches simply went through the motions of their able-bodied coaching techniques. Both experienced coaches spoke to the unique demands presented by their new context. Brendan, who worked primarily with recreational athletes, and Rob, who worked with a fairly high performance group, agreed that working with adult athletes came with challenges as well as opportunities. They found that their youth athletes had generally been more difficult to keep on task, and those younger athletes were often satisfied with brief, high level explanations or answers. Conversely, both coaches found that the adult athletes in the para setting were eager for coaching, were highly attentive, and desired sophisticated theoretical and technical discussion; the “how” and “why” questions mentioned by both coaches. Their athletes’ need for more complex knowledge pushed the coaches to re-consider their typical coaching content and the style in which it was delivered. As Gilbert and Trudel (2013) have noted, “self-induced periodic confusion is a launch pad for reflection” (p. 36), an internal learning situation associated with becoming a better coach.

This study supports the need for parasport-specific nonformal and informal learning opportunities. Consistent with previous research (McMaster et al., 2013; Tawse et al., 2013), interactions with coaches and athletes were important learning opportunities. “Mini-mentorships” or opportunities for coaches to gather at competitions, as we saw in this study,

could be effective ways to facilitate such interactions. This study also provided, for the first time, a look at coaches' perceptions of a parasport-specific nonformal learning opportunity: the national para sailing module. The three coaches who participated in the module were unanimous in their positive feedback and felt the workshop was a critical component that eased their para sailing-specific concerns. The most important facets of the workshop were the opportunities to practice para-sailing specific techniques in a safe setting and the chance to meet and learn from para sailors. Based on this feedback, we would recommend that coach developers creating parasport-specific courses, ensure hands-on practice time with specialized equipment, and include para athletes as learning resources.

The coach with the most extensive experience, and the only one who intended to make coaching a full time career, was the sole coach who did not feel that additional para-specific training was necessary to work effectively in the context (note that he had not taken the module). However, it is possible that his perception stemmed from either his position as a proficient, if not expert (Gilbert & Trudel, 2013), coach or from the fact that his initiation to the para context was with high performance athletes, who were similar in skill levels and goals to his previous able-bodied teams, easing the context switch somewhat. It should be noted that his core group of athletes trained in a boat class that requires "minimum disability" and is also open to able-bodied athletes. Generally, athletes competing in this class have disabilities that require minimal adaptation, thus, this coach found that the disability specific needs were not a pressing factor. For this coach, the significant change was not adapting to athletes' physical needs, but to their more complex cognitive needs, as noted above. Interestingly, he did remark, after coaching at the development level regatta and interacting with athletes with a much wider spectrum of disability,

skill, and goals, that para-specific training would be beneficial for coaches beginning in the club context.

Côté (2006) noted that coach development can be “conceptualized as a chain of developmental outcomes and activities that occur in response to personal and contextual requirements over a period of time” (p. 218). From this perspective, coach learning must be viewed as intrinsically connected to the activities performed by coaches and the contexts in which those activities occur. Côté (2006) also noted that:

Three variables must be considered before setting up any kind of coach education program. First, individuals that are initiated into coaching come from different backgrounds, experiences and knowledge. Second, coaches work in various types of contexts with varying amounts of resources, equipment and facilities. Finally, coaches work with athletes that vary in terms of age, developmental level and goals (p. 218).

This study supported the importance of these three major variables. The coaches’ differing biographies (Jarvis, 2006, 2008) led them to seek out different learning opportunities and to place varying degrees of value on the situations in which they engaged. Further, the impact of the each coach’s unique para sailing context cannot be under estimated: each coach worked under a very different set of conditions. While it is difficult to address these variations through formal coach training, opportunities to interact with other coaches and athletes seemed to prompt coaches to consider that there may be a multitude of ways to approach each coaching obstacle. As such, we support previous research that has called for coach development agents to broaden their roles in coach development (Trudel & Gilbert, 2013; Trudel, Culver, Werthner, 2013). Finally, as Côté noted, coaches do work with athletes of diverse ages, developmental levels, and goals – however, typically not all at once, as was the case for the club level para sailing coaches

in this study. This unique aspect further emphasizes the need to facilitate access to appropriate training and to knowledgeable peers who work in similar circumstances.

After many years of living in the shadow of able-bodied sport, parasport is now “a movement whose time has come” (DePauw & Gavron, 2005, p. 4). Beyond the thrill of competition, sport can provide a variety of added health and social benefits to persons with disabilities including stigma management (Tyrell, Hetz, Barg, & Latimer, 2010), psychological benefits (Giacobbi & Stancil, 2008), enhanced adjustment to spinal cord injury (Tasiemski & Brewer, 2011), and improved physical health and valuable social connections (Wilhite & Shank, 2009). Like some other nations, Canada has recognized the multitude of benefits associated with sport participation for persons who have disabilities, and has pledged to “increase access by persons with a disability to the services and programs of the sport community, and improve access to sport activities based on Long Term Athlete Development principles, including access to specially trained coaches” (Canadian Heritage, 2006, p. 9). Key to achieving these goals is an increase in the number of specialized coaches available as well as an improvement in the quality of their training (Canadian Heritage, 2006). To reach these goals, a deep understanding of the idiosyncratic learning situations experienced by novice parasport coaches is crucial. Through a close examination of novice parasport coach learning, this study has contributed towards better learning experiences for coaches in this context, and, ultimately, athletes as well.

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Appendix A

*Interview Guide for Pre-Season Coach Interview**Pre-Interview Routine*

Introduction of researcher, project

Project overview to date

Consent forms and overview of focus group procedure (question format, length, audiotaping)

1. How many years of experience do you have as a coach?
2. In what situation did you start to coach?
3. Were you active in sports before starting to coach?
 - a. What sport(s)? The most important, how many years, at what level?
4. Where does your interest in sport come from?
 - a. What inspired this interest?
5. Where does your interest in coaching come from?
 - a. What inspired this interest?
6. Have you ever worked with persons who have disabilities before?
 - a. In what situation?
7. Have you had any coach training so far?
 - a. Nature: number of hours; provided by? (NCCP, association, etc.)
 - b. Any training specifically for AWAD?
8. What is your impression of this training so far?
 - a. Did you learn a lot?
 - b. Do you anticipate that it will be useful for your coaching this summer?
9. Can you tell me about your job in this summer?
 - a. How did you get the job?
 - b. How did you find out about the program?
 - c. Have you started working yet?
 - d. What have you done so far?
10. What is your understanding of what your job will entail this season?
 - a. Full time/Part time, AWADs only/ABs
 - b. Coaching
 - i. Recreational
 - ii. Rehabilitative
 - iii. Instructional
 - iv. Competition
 - c. Administration
 - d. Maintenance
 - e. Travel
 - f. Other
11. What are you most looking forward to when you coach this summer?
12. Do you think you will face any particular challenges related to your coaching context (AWADs)?

- a. Have you encountered similar challenges before in other contexts?
 - b. Do you know how you will attempt to solve any challenges that arise?
 - i. Resources available to you at your program?
 - ii. Colleagues, sailors, volunteers?
 - iii. Coach training (other coaches you met, resources you gained, facilitators)
13. What are you most hoping to learn about during the Coaching Persons with a Disability training you will take this spring?
14. Do you have any other comments you wish to add?

Appendix B

*Mid-Season Coach Interview Group Guide**Pre-Interview Routine**Introduction of researcher,**Project overview to date**Consent forms and overview of procedure (question format, length, videotaping)*

1. Can you tell me about your sailing program?
 - a. How many sailors?
 - b. What are their ages?
 - c. What are some of the types of disabilities your sailors have?
 - d. What types of sailing experiences do you offer to the participants?
 - i. Rehabilitation, Recreation, Instruction, Competition
 - e. How often do most participants sail?
 - f. How many coaches work at your program?
 - g. Does your program use volunteers? If so, how many, how often (per week)?
2. Can you tell me about your role at your club?
 - a. Do you work exclusively with persons with disabilities?
 - b. What are your main daily/weekly/seasonal responsibilities?
 - c. Which tasks comprise the majority of your time?
 - i. Coaching (Rec, Instruct, Competitive) admin, maintenance, travel...
 - d. Do you do anything else, even if it is on rare occasion?
 - i. Fundraising, recruiting, promotion, website maintenance
 - e. How did you learn how to do each of these tasks?
 - i. Formal training
 - ii. Workshops
 - iii. Interactions with other coaches, volunteers
 - iv. Interactions with sailors, caregivers
 - v. Internet, books
 - vi. Trial and error
 - vii. Draw on previous experience (in sailing or other domains)

Interviewer: *Some of the following questions could be applicable to any coaching job or context, however, since we are examining coaches who work in the disability sport context, please consider the following questions in terms of your experience in this specific context.*

3. How did you feel at the start of the season?
 - a. Was there an aspect of working with sailors with disabilities that you were really excited about?
 - i. If so, how has that turned out for you?
 - ii. Has your perspective changed since the start of the season? How?
 - b. Was there an aspect of working with sailors with disabilities that you were nervous about?
 - i. If so, how has that turned out for you?
 - ii. Has your perspective changed since the start of the season? How?
4. Before the season started, how would you describe your knowledge of disability and adapted sailing?

- a. If you already had some knowledge, how had you gained it?
 - b. Did this knowledge/lack of knowledge influence you and/or how you did your job?
 - i. Confidence, hesitation, need to find information, able to teach others
5. How did you learn about *your specific sailors'* disabilities at the start of the season?
 - a. Training, other coaches, from the sailor, from a parent, caregiver, medical professional?
 - b. How do you accommodate the range of disabilities your sailors have?
 - c. Do you think there is a difference between addressing the needs of a variety of sailors with disabilities compared to addressing the needs a variety of sailors who do not?
6. Have you encountered any challenges this season?
 - a. Can you give an example of a challenge?
 - b. How did you overcome it?
 - i. Go back to previous experiences (as sailor, coach)
 - ii. Trial and error
 - iii. Consult another person (other coaches, sailor, caregiver)
 - iv. Consult a resource on your own (internet, book, coaching manual)
 - c. Do you think this challenge was specific to coaching persons with disabilities?
7. Have you had what you consider successes this season?
 - a. What has been a success for you this year?
 - b. How do you think you were able to achieve this success?
8. Do you interact with others at work?
 - a. Sailors, volunteers, other coaches (in DS or AB stream), club staff, health professional
 - b. If so, how often? (Daily, weekly, occasionally/on demand)
 - c. What is the nature of these interactions?
 - i. Face-to-face, phone, email, Skype
 - ii. Exchange of information, problem solving, small talk
9. Can you tell me about what this specific event (regatta) means to you and your sailors?
 - a. Is this your first regatta with your sailors?
 - b. Can you tell me about preparing to participate in this event?
 - i. What were some of the tasks that needed to be done?
 - ii. Were any of these tasks specific to race preparation for sailors who have disabilities?
 - iii. Who was responsible for the different tasks involved in preparation?
 - iv. What was your role?
 - c. What do you think your sailors will consider a successful regatta?
 - i. What do you think is most important for your sailors to achieve this success?
 - ii. Do you play a role in this success? If so, can you describe your role?
 - d. What will you consider to be a successful regatta for *you*?
 - i. What do you hope to do, achieve, learn, take home?
10. In retrospect, can you think of anything that would have helped to better prepare you for your job working with sailors who have disabilities/helped you to be a more effective coach?

- a. Coaching clinic
 - b. Formal mentoring
 - c. Manual
11. Do you have any other thoughts or comments to add about this event, your season, your program?
 12. Do you have any questions that you would like to ask me or wish to add?