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A Case Study of a High School Sport Program Designed to Teach Athletes Life Skills and Values

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A case study of a high school ice hockey program designed to teach players life skills and values was conducted to understand, from the perspective of administrators, coaches, parents, and players, the strengths and challenges of the program. Results indicated that the program's strengths lied in its comprehensive approach to teaching life skills and values in addition to coaches' ability to foster relationship with players. However, program members also faced many challenges related to traveling, a lack of resources, and conflicting goals. Results are discussed using the Petitpas et al. (2005) framework and the youth development through sport literature.

Organized youth sport is considered a viable setting in which to teach life skills and values because most youth are intrinsically motivated to engage in sport and because sport is an activity that attracts a large number of participants (Gould & Carson, 2008). Life skills (e.g., being organized, setting goals) are defined as behavioral, cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal skills that enable individuals to succeed in the different environments in which they live (Danish, Forneris, Hodge, & Heke, 2004). Values (e.g., respect, honesty) are defined as shared characteristics that help guide peoples' thoughts, feelings, and actions and are regarded as qualities that enable human beings to live cooperatively with one another (Arnold, 1999). Life skills and values are closely related concepts as some values (e.g., discipline) can also be considered important life skills that allow individuals to lead fulfilling lives.

Unfortunately, sport is not an activity in which youth automatically learn life skills and values as the social and competitive nature of sport provides youth with opportunities to lie, cheat, intimidate, and injure (Kavussanu, 2008). Whether sport participation leads to positive or negative outcomes is a complex matter that is dependent on stakeholders' actions and the types of climates created (Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2009). Nonetheless, Holt and Jones (2008) argued that the positive outcomes related to sport participation generally outweigh the negative outcomes as persevering, regulating emotions, and working as a team are inherently part of the sporting experience.

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To maximize positive outcomes, researchers have created physical activity and sport programs designed specifically to foster the development of youth. The main strength of these programs lies in their use of physical activity and sport as tools to promote youth's academic, personal, and social development. Examples of such programs include Sports United to Promote Education and Recreation (SUPER), Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR), Play It Smart, and The First Tee. There is evidence supporting the efficacy of these programs. For example, Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish, and Theodorakis (2005) evaluated the implementation of an abbreviated version of SUPER with youth volleyball and soccer players and found that participants involved in the program had higher self-beliefs for goal setting, problem solving, and positive thinking than those who did not participate in the program. Hellison and Walsh (2002) reviewed 26 studies investigating the impact of TPSR and found evidence that the program helped youth improve their self-control, effort, and teamwork. Petitpas, Van Raalte, Cornelius, and Presbey (2004) evaluated the pilot phase of the Play It Smart program and results indicated that participants all graduated from high school, and were involved in volunteer activities. Finally, youth benefited from their participation in The First Tee as they verbalized how they can transfer life skills learned in the program to nonsport settings (Petitpas, Cornelius, & Van Raalte, 2008).

Although empirical evidence suggests that sport-based development programs can have a positive influence on youth, it is essential to note that they also have their challenges and limitations. First, it is often challenging to recruit, train, and supervise the adult mentors who are in charge of implementing these programs (Petitpas

et al., 2008). Second, such programs are few in number (Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, & Jones, 2005) and are generally offered to underserved youth in urban areas. As a result, they have limited reach and are accessed by only a small proportion of youth when compared with the millions who practice organized sport in North America (CSSF, 2008; NFHS, 2010). Third, implementing programs for underserved youth is challenging because this population faces many social and economic problems and their value systems often run counter to the values promoted by programs (Hellison, Martinek, & Cutforth, 1996).

It should be noted that sport-based development programs are not the only sport programs mandated to offer participants a positive developmental experience. In fact, most organizations overseeing organized youth sports in North America communicate through their mission statement the developmental benefits associated with participation in their programs (Camiré, Werthner, & Trudel, 2009). However, sport-based development programs and organized youth sport are fundamentally different in terms of their goals, structure, and whom they involve. For instance, sport-based development programs have trained instructors and activities designed to achieve positive developmental outcomes while school and community sport programs are generally designed to enhance physical activity, connect youth to school, and promote the development of athletic talents. Gould and Carson (2008) noted how one weakness of current research is how sport participation is often depicted as a single entity. As a result, it is essential to examine more precisely if school and community sport programs do in fact represent suitable developmental environments for youth.

Schools have been deemed attractive environments in which to practice sport given that it is where youth are most accessible and school sport programs can contribute to the educational mission of schools (Danish, Forneris, & Wallace, 2005). Researchers have explored stakeholders' perspectives on development in the context of high school sport and generally, participation is believed to lead to positive outcomes. Coaches have been shown to prioritize the global development of their athletes and see themselves as responsible for promoting a diverse range of competencies (Vella, Oades, & Crowe, 2011). For their part, parents have stated that high school sport should promote pleasure, participation, and positive development whereas athletes believe they can learn and transfer life skills and values such as communication, teamwork, and respect (Camiré & Trudel, 2010; Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2009). Large-scale studies provide empirical support to stakeholders' perspectives. Marsh and Kleitman (2003) found that participation in high school sport had positive effects on school grades, occupational aspirations, and self-esteem. Fox, Barr-Anderson, Neumark-Sztainer, and Wall (2010) found that at the high school level, team sport participation was associated with higher grades for both boys and girls.

A recent review of the literature has suggested that the benefits of school sport participation are mediated by the creation of appropriate pedagogical circumstances by adult leaders (Bailey, Armour, Kirk, Jess, Pickup, & Sandford, 2009). Several researchers have explored how coaches promote life skills and values in the context of high school sport. On one hand, researchers suggest that some coaches have a proactive approach to development. Collins, Gould, Lauer, and Chung (2009) examined the philosophical beliefs of exceptional high school football coaches and found that these coaches believed that football should be a vehicle for developing athletes' competencies and that winning and development should not be mutually exclusive but treated as inclusive pursuits of coaching. Gould, Collins, Lauer, and Chung (2007) examined the strategies used by these same football coaches and found that positive development was enacted by providing individualized feedback, building relationships, promoting goal setting, and emphasizing the link between football and life. On the other hand, researchers indicate that some coaches do not intentionally teach life skills and values through high school sport. Holt, Tink, Mandigo, and Fox (2008) conducted a case study of a high school soccer team and found that the coach had few direct strategies to teach his athletes life skills. Camiré, Trudel, and Lemyre (2011) found similar results as most coaches in their study had difficulty providing examples of strategies used to foster development. Lacroix, Camiré, and Trudel (2008) found that some coaches even hold the notion that development occurs automatically.

Based on the results of past research, it appears that high school sport is a practice that can lead to positive developmental outcomes for youth. However, there is evidence demonstrating that a number of high school coaches do not purposely teach their athletes life skills and values as do leaders in sport-based development programs. The question must be raised as to if and how the purposeful approach to development used in sport-based development programs can be adapted and integrated into high school sport, a context where youth are most accessible. To our knowledge, no research has examined how high school sport programs can be designed and delivered with the primary objective of promoting life skills and values. Consequently, a case study of an existing high school ice hockey program specifically designed to teach life skills and values was conducted to understand, from the perspective of administrators, coaches, parents, and players, the program's strengths and challenges. The program examined in this study was chosen for a number of reasons. First, the program is similar to other ice hockey programs established in private schools, such as Shattuck-St Mary's in Minnesota and Athol Murray College of Notre Dame in Saskatchewan, but is unique in its innovative strategies that promote life skills and values which are regularly featured in the media. Examples of titles (translated from French) of newspaper articles discussing the program include "Prioritizing their studies while playing hockey," "The best decision I've ever taken in my life," and "A young man leaves the comfort of home to live an incomparable sport experience." Second, as one of Canada's most popular sports, ice hockey is a strategic

context in which to expose youth to life skills and values because many youth are intrinsically motivated to practice the sport (Robidoux & Trudel, 2006). Third, ice hockey provides an intriguing setting in which to teach life skills and values as the sport has garnered a reputation of sometimes falling short of promoting youth's competencies due to a subculture that approves of aggressiveness and violence (Robidoux & Trudel). The program's distinctive characteristics merit investigation and an understanding of the program's strength and challenges, through the use of the Petitpas et al. (2005) framework, can guide program leaders wanting to teach life skills and values in various sport settings.

To assist in the design and implementation of youth development programs, Petitpas et al. (2005) developed a framework stating that youth are most likely to benefit from their participation in sport in the presence of four components: (1) an appropriate environment (context), (2) caring adults (external assets), (3) an opportunity to learn skills (internal assets), and (4) research and evaluation. The framework is grounded in research findings in the field of youth development and is based on best practices identified by youth development experts. First, an appropriate environment should be psychologically safe and allow youth to find a valued role within a group. Furthermore, activities within a developmentally sound context should be voluntary, intrinsically motivating, and contain clear rules, goals, and incentives. The second component of the framework consists of caring adult mentors, such as coaches and parents, whose role is to support youth's participation in sport. Coaches should nurture close relationships with youth to gain their trust and respect and parents should demonstrate a genuine interest in their child's activities without being intrusive. The third component represents the skills youth should learn through sport participation. Programs should intentionally teach youth goal-setting, problem-solving, and a wide range of social skills. Furthermore, program should help youth develop a sense of identity while providing youth with opportunities to gain confidence in their abilities to use their skills in nonsport settings. The fourth component consists of conducting research and evaluation as programs focused on promoting youth development should document the efficacy of their interventions carefully.

Method

Research Design

A case study protocol (Yin, 2009) was used to examine an ice hockey program established at a private French-speaking high school in the province of Quebec, Canada. Yin stated that the use of the case study protocol is appropriate when the studied object presents unique features that are worthy of documentation as it allows for extensive descriptions to be provided. Petitpas et al. (2005) discussed how experimental designs are desirable but often not feasible to study youth sport programs because of the difficulties related to isolating variables and making cause and effect conclusions. Therefore, as a viable alternative, they advocated for the use of case studies which consider the particular strengths and challenges of each program and allow for the triangulation of data from multiple sources. Hellison and Walsh (2002) stated that case studies are not defined by the nature of the data source and can explore particular program qualities and implementation challenges. Use of the case study protocol often raises issues of generalizability but Flyvbjerg (2006) argued that formal generalization is often overvalued as the main source of scientific progress. Stake (2006) discussed how 'naturalistic' generalizations emerge from cases when researchers provide rich descriptions of action and context. The responsibility rests on readers to decide how the researcher's assertions connect to their own situation and enrich their experiential knowing. The case study is of value in the creation of knowledge and is therefore a viable protocol to examine the strengths and challenges of the studied program.

The Program

The program was established in 1990 and, at the time of the study, was composed of 135 players at a school with an enrollment of 1000 students. In the province of Quebec, students spend five years in high school and the program allows students of all ages to partake in the program as there are four junior teams (13–14 year old players) and two senior teams (15–17 year old players). One senior team is composed of third and fourth year players and the other is composed of fifth year players. To be part of the program, players must have previous playing experience at the AA, BB, or CC levels, as defined by Hockey-Quebec. All junior players with playing experience at these levels are retained; however, senior players are selected based on their performance in a selection camp and in an individual interview. On average, forty percent of players present at the senior selection camp are retained. All players must maintain an average of 80% during the academic year to remain eligible to play ice hockey.

The program differs from typical high school sport programs as it follows the 'sport-study' format. This format is popular in Quebec as it allows students to integrate both academics and sport in the school day (Government of Quebec, 2010). Students have a condensed academic schedule and spend the morning in class and the afternoon involved in ice hockey related activities. Program staff work to find a balance between the development of life skills and values and the development of sport-specific skills by having players take part in three on-ice training sessions, two off-ice conditioning sessions, and two developmental classes per week. Junior teams compete in local leagues and play their games during the school day. However, the two senior teams are not part of any league and their entire season (55

games) is composed of exhibition games played on the road against University-preparatory schools in the New England area in the United States. The two senior teams travel by bus to the United States during weekends from October to March. Tuition and hockey-related fees are 5500 CAN$ per student per year and only partially cover the program's annual budget, the rest of which is financed through fundraising.

The school's website publicizes the successes of players and alumni. The program's graduate rate is 100% and since 2005, the program has helped 59 players continue their academic and ice hockey careers in University-preparatory schools in both Canada and the United States. During the 2009–2010 academic year, 22 of the 23 alumni enrolled in preparatory schools were on the academic honor roll. Twenty five players have pursued their careers in Canadian and American universities. Professionally, some alumni now hold important positions in companies and organizations worldwide and four alumni have played in the National Hockey League (NHL).

Participants

The school principal holds a master's degree in public administration and has been heading the school for 26 years. The program director, who is also the head coach of the fifth year senior team, has been with the program since 1993, holds a doctorate's degree in counseling, and has over 25 years of experience coaching ice hockey. The program's six full-time coaches were between 25–38 years of age (M = 32) and had between 5–18 years of coaching experience (M = 11). With the exception of one coach, all had a bachelor's degree in physical education and three had a master's degree. Most coaches completed an internship with the program before being hired, becoming familiar with the program's philosophy and strategies. Fourteen of the twenty one players on the fifth year senior team were recruited through the program director who asked his players if they would be willing to participate in an interview on their involvement in the program. Eight of the players interviewed were from the city where the program is established and lived with their parents while six players were from other communities and lived with a host family during the season. Players were all male and were either 16 or 17 years old (M = 16.5). Six players were involved with the program for five seasons, three for four seasons, and five for one season. Finally, parents of the eight interviewed players living in the city were contacted by the researcher and were asked to participate in the study. Seven parents (three mothers, four fathers) voluntarily agreed and were recruited. These individuals were the parents of players involved in the program for either four or five seasons and thus were familiar with the program's functioning. Parents were between 45–51 years of age (M = 47), occupied a variety of professions (e.g., sales representative, engineer, government worker), and all had previous experiences as athletes in organized sport.

Data Collection

Document Analysis. Before the start of the season, a document analysis was performed to better understand the program (see Table 1). The researcher was provided with a copy of the 'player's handbook,' a document conceived by the program director during his graduate studies (see Appendix). This 136 page document includes concepts, theories, and models related to youth development. Each player is provided, at the beginning of the season, with a copy of the handbook which is used to expose players to the program's philosophy, values, and activities. The player's handbook is employed in developmental classes (one hour classes twice a week) which are not part of the school's curriculum but consist of class time specifically intended to teach players life skills and values. The school's website, administrative documents, and media reports were also analyzed, helping the researcher make credible conclusions about the case (Yin, 2009).

Nonparticipant Observation. Eighty hours of observations were conducted and 37 pages of field notes were taken. Observations included eleven practices, five developmental classes, five games, three life skill strategies, and six coach-parent-player meetings. In addition, the researcher spent nineteen hours observing coach interactions in the coaches' office.

Interviews. Pilot interviews were conducted with one administrator, one coach, one player, and one parent to test the interview guides and verify the appropriateness of the questions asked. Minor changes related to the wording of some questions were made. The interview guide contained four general sections: demographics, context, external assets, and player development. However, given that participants' involvement in the program varied, questions in each section were adapted. In the demographics section, administrators, coaches, and parents provided their age, occupation, education, and past experiences in sport while players only discussed their age and athletic experiences. In the context section, administrators and coaches discussed the program's philosophy, strengths, and challenges while players and parents elaborated on their experiences. In the external assets section, questions were specific to each type of participant. Administrators discussed the recruitment/retention of coaches, relationships with coaches, and interactions with parents. Coaches described the resources received to coach and their relationships with parents. Players elaborated on parental support and relationships with coaches. Parents discussed issues related to support and coaches' influence on players. Finally, in the player development section, administrators and coaches discussed the strategies used to teach life skills and values while players and parents discussed how the program promoted life skills and values. At the end of the season, a second interview was conducted with the program director who presented a general summary of the season.

Table 1 Data Collection: Timeline

Date	Activity	Observations	Interviews
August-September 2009	Document analysis		
Early October 2009	Pilot interviews		One administrator
			One coach
			One athlete
			One parent
October 26–29, 2009	First data collection period	Four practices	Three coaches
		Two developmental classes	School principal
		One life skill strategy	Program director
		Two coach-parent-player meetings	
December 1–3, 2009	Second data collection period	Two practices	Three coaches
		One developmental class	
		One match	
		One life skill strategy	
		Four coach-parent-player meetings	
January 22–23, 2010	Road trip with senior team	Two games	
		One life skill strategy	
March 22–25, 2010	Third data collection period	Three practices	Ten players
		Two developmental classes	Four parents
		Two games	
April 13–15, 2010	Fourth data collection period	Two practices	Four players
			Three parents
May 22, 2010	Closing interview		Program director

Before each interview, participants were reminded of the voluntary nature of the study and signed a consent form. All interviews were audio recorded and conducted in French by the first author who is fully bilingual. During interviews, probes were used to have participants elaborate on or clarify certain responses using actual events. Given social desirability issues in interpretive research (Alvesson, 2011), all participants were assured that only the researcher could access the interview transcripts for them not to feel that their participation in this study could compromise their involvement in the program. Interviews with players ranged from 21–39 min ($M = 31$) and from 21–56 min ($M = 39$) for parents. Interviews with coaches ranged from 67–104 min ($M = 85$). The school principal's interview was 68 min in length and the program director's two interviews were 102 and 94 min in length respectively. Approval to conduct the study was granted by the researchers' University Ethics Board.

Data Analysis

A case study database (Yin, 2009) was created and the software NVivo 8 (NVivo, 2008) was used to organize documents, field notes, and interviews transcripts. Before analysis, interview transcripts were sent to participants via e-mail for them to confirm the accuracy of the responses shared with the researcher and no changes were asked to be made. The researcher reviewed the data on many occasions to identify preliminary themes. A thematic analysis was performed whereby the data were broken into meaning units and submitted to descriptive treatment (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A thematic analysis is a flexible method for analyzing and reporting data from multiple sources of evidence and various types of participants. Analysis was guided by the Petitpas et al. (2005) framework and three higher-order categories were developed (i.e., context, external assets, internal assets) in which meaning units were clustered into specific themes (e.g., developmental strategies, lack of resources, relationships with parents) and labeled as either a strength or a challenge of the program. Codes were used to represent participants (i.e., School Principal = SP; Program Director = PD; Coach = C; Parent = Pa; Player = P). All quotes were translated in English by the first author and care was taken to protect their integrity.

Trustworthiness

Several measures were taken to increase the credibility of findings and interpretations. Before collecting data, the researcher participated in a bracketing interview (Rolls & Relf, 2006). Bracketing interviews help researchers reflect on their assumptions and as a high school coach at the time of the study, the researcher wanted to monitor how his assumptions may influence the construction of knowledge. During data collection, data were triangulated from multiple methods (i.e., documents, interviews, observations) and sources (i.e., administrators, coaches, players, parents). The convergence of evidence provided a more comprehensive account than either method or source could offer by itself. During analysis, a peer worked with the researcher to discuss how to properly organize the themes until a consensus was reached, thereby offering greater assurance that the analyzed data offered an accurate portrait of the case. Finally, during the writing phase, member checking was performed by having the program director verify the accuracy of the researcher's descriptions of the program (e.g., sport-study format, player's handbook) and substantiate the researcher's interpretations. The program director corrected minor inaccuracies and declared the program to be accurately described, bringing out the uniqueness of the case.

Results and Discussion

Context

Strengths. A first strength of the program is its philosophy, which was effectively communicated by appearing on the first page of the player's handbook (see Table 2). The philosophy reads

> The ice hockey program is at the service of the whole person. We consider ice hockey as a means to humanize the person. Through our interventions, we dedicate ourselves to fostering the global development of students. Our goal is to have students acquire modes of living, thinking, and action that make them the master of their physical, mental, emotional, social, and moral development. (Philosophy, Player's Handbook, p. 1)

According to the school principal, the program's philosophy is effective because it guides how the program director oversees the program and matches the school's objectives of developing students in multiple dimensions: "What I appreciate about him [program director] is his values. His philosophy matches the school's philosophy of developing the entire human being. He works on the development of individuals' values, corresponding with what we want to offer as a school" (SP). Players and parents also believed that the program's focus is the global development of players. A player discussed the importance of academics: "The program puts a lot of emphasis on school. Education is important here. It's about performing in class as much as you perform in hockey" (P11). A father praised the program's emphasis on teaching players many life skills and values: "The program teaches self-control, respect, discipline. It makes them more mature. They discover their strengths and weaknesses. It's quite a program" (Pa2).

A second strength of the program is the amount of time it affords coaches and players to interact with one another. The sport-study format allows senior team coaches to work with their players seven days a week during the season. A player discussed how he believes this is positive: "We spend the whole year together at practice and on the bus during weekends. They [coaches] are sort of like our fathers on the road in the United States" (P10). Similarly, a coach stated, "You create strong ties with someone you see seven days a week. I consider that to be very important, especially because of the trust that is created. By listening, they open up to you" (C3). Interactions between coaches and players are also prolonged as players can spend up to five years in the program. A player

Table 2 Summary of Findings

Components	Strengths	Challenges
Context	Shared developmental philosophy	Compressed academic schedule
	Constant coach-player interactions	Demanding traveling schedule
	Motivating and safe environment	
External assets	Nurtured relationships (journal)	Conflicting opinions on mandate
	Regular coach-parent-player meetings	Tensions between coaches and director
	Effective parental support	
Internal Assets	Planned developmental activities	Lack of financial resources
	Identification of values	Fundraising obligations*
	SMART goal setting	Shortage of coaches, support staff
	Volunteer work	Numerous administrative tasks*
	Taking advantage of teachable moments	*Less time to devote to player development

described how he feels comfortable around his coach: "I've known him [coach] for four years. He knows my situation and what I'm living. I can have a conversation with him and I'm not afraid to be judged. He's there to give us feedback on our problems" (P12).

A third strength of the program is the creation of motivating and psychologically safe environments. For instance, coaches organized a three day cottage retreat for the two senior teams as a team bonding initiative. Activities were designed to help players get to know coaches and other players better. The program director explained the objective of this retreat: "Exercises were prepared systematically for problem-solving and communication. If I want to work on the different dimensions of players' development, I first need to gain their trust" (PD). A player acknowledged how the retreat was a useful activity to promote interactions: "At the beginning of the year, we went to the forest as a team. What I liked is that everyone was telling their story. You get to know people better and introduce yourself to others" (P2).

The strengths identified support past research, demonstrating how those who adopt a developmental philosophy are in a preferred position to teach athletes skills and attributes because they intentionally place primary importance on athletes' global development (Collins et al., 2009; Danish et al., 2005). It was interesting to note how in this study, administrators communicated their philosophy in the player's handbook to ensure everyone understood the program's 'raison d'être.' These results differ from those of Camiré et al. (2009), who found that high school administrators simply assumed that athletes and their parents were knowledgeable of the school's mission. As Bart (2004) stated, administrators must communicate their program's purpose given that the usefulness of organizational statements is contingent on stakeholders' awareness of them. Researchers have also discussed the influence of consistent and prolonged involvement in organized activities. Hansen and Larson (2007) demonstrated how youth who spend more time in organized activities report higher rates of developmental experiences. In this study, results indicated that team-bonding activities helped coaches gain their players' trust and allowed players to find a place within the group. These results indicate that the program's approach is in accordance with the Petitpas et al. (2005) framework and support the notion that creating an appropriate context fosters development.

Challenges. Although the program's structure allowed coaches and players to interact in a prolonged and consistent manner, it also created several challenges. First, the sport-study format meant that players had a compressed academic schedule. A player stated, "This year, we have a big project to do. Other students work on the project in the afternoons but we have hockey. We have to do it with all our other homework at night. It's a challenge" (P7). A parent said, "They have to catch up because they have less class time. They have to be organized and disciplined. It's school, ice hockey and that's about it" (Pa4). Second, not being part of any league meant that the two senior teams played on the road the entire season. A player said, "It's demanding, five days of school and two days of travelling. I have to go to the United States every weekend while my friends go to parties. You have to work harder academically and make sacrifices" (P13). Parents also recognized that the program's traveling schedule was challenging for players. A parent stated, "Every weekend from October to March, they're not home. They have to get organized, do their homework. It's a challenge for them" (Pa4). Traveling was also challenging for coaches who, in addition to their regular coaching duties, ensured that players completed their homework on the team bus, removed their hats in schools, wore a suit before games, and acted in a civilized manner (Field Notes, January 23). Some coaches discussed how coaching seven days a week and ensuring that players act responsibly was strenuous and impacted their family life. For example, a coach said, "Family takes a hit. I don't know how much more I can give to hockey. I love coaching but it's taking away a lot of family time" (C3). The program director also discussed how traveling affected him: "It was our seventeenth trip of the year. It was a six hour ride. I had a lot of things to do but I couldn't do anything. I was too tired. I just watched the time go by" (PD).

As these results indicate, players found it challenging to have less class time than other students and to be on the road every weekend. The question can be raised if the sport-study format and traveling obligations had undesirable influences on players' academic and social lives. Larson and Verma (1999) examined how youth from around the world spend their time and discussed how North American youth spend considerable time in leisure and sport. Researchers have discussed the importance of being careful when drawing conclusions about the influence of leisure and sport on youth development as they can lead to positive and negative outcomes (Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2009). For their part, some coaches stated how they had reached a limit in terms of the time they could devote to the program. Lacroix et al. (2008) discussed how difficult it can be for high school coaches to remain in coaching positions as coaching requires significant investments in time and energy. Given that coaches in this study worked seven days a week, it is essential to consider if the program's demands exceed what can be asked of high school coaches, even if they are 'full-time.'

External Assets

Strengths. Coaches used a number of strategies to develop and nurture relationships with their players. A first strategy consisted of having players keep a journal in which they discussed personal events related to hockey or life. Coaches picked up the journals on a weekly basis to analyze the content. The program director offered a rationale for having players keep a journal:

> It's an essential tool. It allows us to gather information, perceptions, and feelings from our players as it relates to what is happening in their everyday lives. It allows us to intervene and come back to their goals. It allows them to change certain behaviors and we guide them through that. It's a catalyst that makes them aware of things. (PD)

A player discussed how the journal helped him deal with a personal situation: "The journal is good because through someone's writing, you can see their personality. It's a good way to cultivate relationships. Once, I wrote about a fight with a friend and we went to his [coach's] office to talk about it" (P8). Parents also felt that the journal helped nurture relationships. A parent said, "The journal is good because for some kids, expressing themselves verbally is difficult. The coach can talk to a player who might not disclose a problem directly" (Pa5).

A second strategy used by coaches was coach-parent-player meetings. These meetings were used to communicate the program's approach and to provide players and parents with feedback on players' academic, personal, and ice hockey development. The researcher was present during six coach-parent-player meetings and observed how both player and parent asked questions and shared concerns (Field Notes, October 26). The program director discussed how these meetings were used to ensure that the coaching staff and parents shared the same objectives: "I tell parents at the start of the year, our interventions with your child have to complement yours. Our common goal must be the optimal development of your child" (PD). Parents mentioned that the meetings served a purpose and were beneficial. A parent said, "It allows us to know what is happening with our child. We can say what we like and dislike. As parents, we have to work with coaches to develop our child" (Pa1).

As important external assets, parents supported their child's participation in the program in many ways. A parent discussed how she constantly offered her son emotional support: "I try to ensure that he is well surrounded. I've always tried to encourage him without being controlling" (Pa4). Another parent explained how she provided logistical support: "If he needed help planning his trip, doing his homework. Also, I gave him rides to the rink on weekends when he had to go take the team bus" (Pa3). Many players discussed the financial support received from parents: "Well financially, they contributed a lot that's for sure, everything that surrounds hockey" (P11). Players mentioned how essential it was to receive emotional support from their parents. A player stated, "My parents can't come every weekend to see my games. Nonetheless, they support me by asking me every day how things are going. They really care for my success" (P9).

The coaches in this study invested a substantial amount of time and energy implementing strategies to nurture relationships with their players. Researchers have indicated that by cultivating meaningful relationships, coaches can gain youth's respect and ultimately influence their development in a positive manner (Petitpas et al., 2008). For their part, parents offered their child the support they needed and players acknowledged how this support was essential to their success. Researchers have shown how parents who display supportive behaviors and provide opportunities for success can influence youth's self-esteem and enjoyment in sport (Camiré et al., 2009). These results contribute to the literature and demonstrate the central role parents and coaches play in supporting youth's participation in sport (Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2009). The results are of value to coaches who can use in their coaching practice the strategies described to nurture relationships with their own athletes. Based on the findings, parents and coaches used an approach that is in accordance with the second component of the Petitpas et al. (2005) framework, which states that for youth: 'it is the quality and density of the social interactions and relationships formed with caring adult mentors that is most likely to lead to the development of positive assets' (p. 69).

Challenges. Sustaining a program with the primary objective of teaching life skills and values was difficult. Some parents and coaches had conflicting opinions regarding the program's mandate and how the program should be delivered. For example, the program director shared his frustrations in having to deal with parents who were preoccupied with their son pursuing their ice hockey career in University-preparatory schools: "There's some hypocrisy with parents. They say 'we're going to this program because we know our child will develop' but the real reason is to continue in hockey. It's challenging when our values are in conflict with parents' values" (PD). Throughout the season, the researcher observed how parents often asked coaches questions related to SAT scores and how to approach University-preparatory schools rather than questions related to player development (Field Notes, October 26). The program director explained how trying it was to deal with these parents: "Interactions, they are mostly complaints. It's the most unpleasant part of my job. It's frustrating and takes away my energy because they are never satisfied. I feel exploited because they use us as a springboard to go somewhere else" (PD).

Tensions also existed between some coaches and the program director, who felt that coaches did not totally share his philosophy and did not focus enough on player development: "In general, they don't go 100%. My expectations are really high and I'm very strict with my philosophy. When it goes down the hierarchy, it gets diluted. It's a challenge" (PD). Conversely, a coach explained how he felt the program director should let coaches use their own approach: "I don't agree with the hierarchy. I don't think the program director should be judging my choices. I'm a professional in education and I don't need someone telling me 'you can't do that'" (C5). The program director described how at some point, tensions between himself and his coaches were so high that they sought help from an outside source: "We brought

in an expert in work relations. They said I was too strict and they wanted more independence. It was a good exercise. I could still be demanding towards myself but I couldn't have the same expectations of others" (PD). A coach explained how interactions have since improved with the program director: "Sometimes he [program director] makes decisions that are frustrating but now, when we don't like something, we meet. When there is a problem, we solve it immediately and the relationship is good now" (C6).

Danish et al. (2004) discussed how there is an ever-growing 'sport as business' mentality in youth sport as parents push their children to compete and "pressure coaches to give them starting positions, in part, because their athletic skills may lead to a college athletic scholarship offer" (p. 38). In the current study, the program's primary goal was to promote the development of players. However, results revealed how some parents were more concerned with their child's career progression than the life skills and values players developed in the program, leaving some staff members feeling like they were sometimes being used. Interactions were also tense between the program director and coaches as the program director had a firm approach which frustrated some coaches who wanted more independence. Petitpas et al. (2008) discussed the challenges associated with having qualified staff and argued that supervision must be strengthened because of the varied skill levels of service providers. However, as this study demonstrates, a balance must be maintained as coaches must feel like they are contributing to the program and have some latitude in their approach to coaching. The results offer valuable insight into the challenges faced by administrators but more research is needed to determine how to overcome such challenges.

Internal Assets

Strengths. Program staff had many strategies to facilitate the development of players' internal assets. A first activity performed during developmental classes consisted of having players select 15 values (e.g., fairness, respect, honesty), classify them, and identify the behaviors needed to live according to those values (Field Notes, October 26). Referencing this activity, the program director stated, "Our objective is to have students identify, arrange, and apply their values. Some will like it, some will be indifferent, and some will hate it but my goal is not to be liked. It's to develop human beings" (PD). A player shared how this activity helped him be more self-aware: "I now realize that I value family, sport, education. With the program this year, I developed as a human being. I determined what I want in life and who I want to become." (P11).

A second activity performed during developmental classes consisted of establishing SMART (i.e., specific measurable, attainable, realistic, timely) goals. The researcher observed during a developmental class how coaches taught players how to establish goals using this system. Following the theory, players completed an activity in the player's handbook (p. 79) in which they had to identify an issue faced during training and competition and a psychological skill that would help them overcome this issue. In addition, players had to discuss the actions to be taken to train this skill and come up with a realistic time frame to achieve their objective (Field Notes, March 23). The program director and a coach each explained why they believe goal setting is an important skill to learn in life: "It's fundamental. Players develop goals as students, human beings, and ice hockey players. We constantly come back to these goals because they represent their values, where they want to go, and how they want to get there" (PD) and "I make them see the importance of setting goals. Often they will ask 'Why are we doing this?' but in the end, they realize what they have accomplished. So goal setting gives them a greater perspective" (C5). Players reported learning about goal setting through their involvement in the program. A player declared, "With the program, we see many things like goals. If I had not been in the program, I never would have learned that. It allows us to mature and decide what we want to do, our long-term goals" (P3). According to a parent, the program "teaches them how it is in real life and how to set and attain goals. Goals make them more mature, more responsible" (Pa4).

A third activity consisted of having players perform volunteer work. Volunteering allowed players to develop life skills and values such as organization, empathy, respect, and altruism. During one specific activity, the researcher observed how senior players were, during an entire afternoon, responsible for helping underserved children (5–6 years old) learn how to skate. Furthermore, each player was asked to donate a toy to the children (Field Notes, November 30). The program director explained the activity and provided a rationale for volunteering:

> Our players have to design a learning session by themselves. They greet the children and give them their lesson on the ice. It makes them conscious that we are fortunate. The importance of giving back to society. It's about giving time and being role models for younger kids. I want a society in which different social classes help each other. I may be idealistic but I want my players to be important actors in society. (PD)

Many players commented on how being a volunteer was a positive experience. A player said

> Working with these children made us understand how lucky we are. We did activities with them on the ice and it made me feel important and responsible. I was a hero for this child. It makes me realize that not everyone has the same opportunities in life and I need to take advantage of mine. I'm more conscious of what is happening around me. (P9)

Although developmental activities were specifically planned during the season, efforts to promote players' global development were not limited to these activities. Life skills and values were continuously taught by coaches who regularly took advantage of teachable moments. For example, during a Monday morning practice, the researcher observed how a coach debriefed his team after an uninspiring performance over the weekend and reminded them that if they wanted to live according to their stated values, they needed to display more effort and perseverance (Field Notes, October 26). In another instance, the researcher observed how one player was slacking during a drill. The coach stopped practice for 10 min and had an in-depth discussion with his players on taking responsibility for their own actions and being honest with themselves (Field Notes, October 27). Near the season's end, a few players complained that training drills were too intense, which led other players to tell them to stop whining. This situation created a negative team atmosphere but the coach took it as an opportunity to deliver a spirited speech about the importance of encouraging rather than bringing down teammates (Field Notes, March 25).

Gould and Carson (2008) discussed that to facilitate development, youth sport programs must teach life skills and values in a purposeful and systematic manner. As past research has shown, sport-based development programs are especially designed to expose youth to a variety of life skills and values (Hellison & Walsh, 2002; Papacharisis et al., 2005; Petitpas et al., 2008). Similarly, in this case study, developmental strategies were conceived with the explicit rationale of teaching players a wide array of life skills and values. Comparable findings were observed by Gould et al. (2007) who conducted a study with exceptional high school football coaches. These coaches viewed performance and development as inclusive pursuits of coaching and used many strategies to promote player development. By implementing developmental strategies, coaches treated their players as resources to be developed rather than problems to be managed and taught players the life skills and values necessary for becoming productive citizens (Gould & Carson, 2008). The studied program's approach is in line with the Petitpas et al. (2005) framework as players were involved in activities promoting goal setting and the exploration of values which are most likely to foster a strong identity. Furthermore, players performed volunteer work which enabled them to take on leadership roles outside of their primary sport. Petitpas et al. have stated how volunteerism allows individuals to transfer skills beyond sport and learn about themselves.

Challenges. Due to financial limitations, the program director was not able to hire the staff necessary to optimally facilitate player development. The program director explained, "I need more money to hire one or two coaches. To have more time to reflect, to develop new intervention strategies, to put things in perspective, to evaluate the program. We are never at ease. We don't have time" (PD). The school principal acknowledged that coaches invest a lot of time in the program to ensure its subsistence: "They don't add up their time. I told them, I would be in a difficult position if I had to pay them by the hour. The key to our survival is having devoted staff" (SP). According to the program director, time that should be devoted to designing developmental strategies is often redirected to "Supervising coaches, negotiating salaries, doing accounting work, advertising the program, booking hotels, ice times, and buses, and answering the phone, emails, letters. We don't have a secretary, it's a problem" (PD). Coaches also stated having little spare time to focus on player development. A coach said, "We don't really have time to plan strategies. We have to manage lots of things that are not necessarily related to coaching. It's the human resources that are missing" (C1). The researcher often observed in the coaches' office how coaches spent much of their time on administrative duties before and after practices (Field Notes, November 30).

Organizing fundraising activities, such as a banquet dinner, an auction, and a souvenir album, also consumed time that should be invested in developing strategies. Program fees alone do not entirely cover the program's costs and as a result, the staff must find alternative sources of revenue to ensure the financial viability of the program. The school principal explained that "The ice hockey program is expensive. If we add up road trips, ice rentals, and if we want enough coaches, it's a challenge. It's possible but it's not evident" (SP). The program director discussed the challenges of fundraising and the downfalls of being dependent on this revenue source: "We have to sell souvenir albums to ensure our own salaries. Basically, we're working twice to get paid. One year, we had a deficit and I took money from my salary and gave it to my coaches" (PD).

An important contribution of this study was demonstrating how a sport program designed to teach life skills and values can be difficult to sustain in a school context. Results demonstrated how conducting administrative duties and fundraising activities left little time for the design of new developmental activities. These findings raise an important question: Is it viable to have such a program in the school system, given the amount of resources and work required to sustain it, if past research has shown how regular high school sport programs already have to deal with limited resources? (Lacroix et al., 2008). Sport-based development programs, such as The First Tee, are supported by the national organizations which have the resources necessary to train their leaders and facilitate youth development (The First Tee, 2010). Currently, in North America, most school boards generally do not allocate these types of resources to their sport programs and in the current environment, a growing number of schools rely on collecting fees from student-athletes. Although challenging, this case study has demonstrated that life skills and values can be taught in an intentional manner through high school sport by creating an appropriate

context, having caring adults, and adopting a systematic approach to development (Petitpas et al., 2005).

Conclusion

It is important to consider the study's limitations. First, the program examined presents distinctive features and its strengths and challenges are not necessarily representative of those of typical high school sport programs found across North America. Second, participants directly involved in the program (i.e., administrators, coaches, players) were all male and gender effects might have influenced the tone of the data. Future research examining similar types of programs should explore gender influences more closely. Third, the program examined used ice hockey, a sport with a distinctive subculture and results might not necessarily be applicable to programs using other sports to foster youth development. Future research is needed to determine how the structure and approach of development programs should be adapted to the subcultures of various sports.

Despite these limitations, this case study offers a valuable contribution to the literature, demonstrating that a sports program designed to teach athletes life skills and values can be established in the school system. The triangulation of data from different sources of evidence provides a comprehensive account of the case and demonstrates that the program's approach is in accordance with the Petitpas et al. (2005) framework. The program's format allowed coaches to spend significant amounts of time with their players, nurture quality relationships, and implement innovative strategies to teach life skills and values. However, gaining access to appropriate resources and dealing with traveling obligations was demanding for players and coaches. The results of this study help administrators and coaches understand how high school sports can be practiced in an innovative manner and provide concrete examples of strategies to teach life skills and values. It appears that a shared philosophy, investments in time, suitable resources, and carefully designed strategies are necessary to ensure the success of school sport development programs. Schools represent viable environments in which to implement such programs, allowing youth to learn about themselves and acquire skills that benefit them beyond sport.

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Appendix

Player's handbook: Table of contents (translated from French)