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The Implicit/Explicit Continuum of Life Skills Development and Transfer

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ABSTRACT

There is an ongoing discussion as to how life skills development and transfer should be addressed. Previously, researchers have proposed an implicit/explicit dichotomy to explain how life skills teaching occurs. As research within the area of sport-based youth development continues to progress, a model is needed to delineate the varying levels of implicitness/explicitness at which coaches can facilitate life skills development and transfer. Within this article, an implicit/explicit continuum of life skills development and transfer is presented and distributed across six levels: (a) structuring the sport context, (b) facilitating a positive climate, (c) discussing life skills, (d) practicing life skills, (e) discussing transfer, and (f) practicing transfer. The levels found within the continuum are grounded in existing sport psychology literature. Conceptually, researchers can use the continuum to empirically situate how coaches teach life skills. Practically, the continuum can help coaches frame their approach to life skills development and transfer.

KEYWORDS

Positive youth development; life skills; youth sport; coaching; intentionality; sport; coaches

The Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework is grounded in relational developmental systems theory (Geldhof, Bowers, & Lerner, 2013) and is used to frame the “development of personal skills or assets, including cognitive, social, emotional, and intellectual qualities necessary for youth to become successfully functioning members of society” (Weiss & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009, p. 1). The PYD framework is prominent within youth sport (Holt, 2016) and many researchers have situated the skills that can be derived from sport participation as life skills, defined as “internal personal assets, characteristics, and skills, such as goal setting, emotional control, self-esteem, and hard work ethic that can be facilitated or developed in sport and are transferred for use in non-sport settings” (Gould & Carson, 2008a, p. 60).

Research has shown how sport can foster life skills development (e.g., Eime, Young, Harvey, Charity, & Payne, 2013), but that the *quality* of program delivery is a crucial factor to consider (Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010). Understanding the variables within program delivery that facilitate positive developmental outcomes, including life skills development, are key areas of interest within youth sport research (Bean & Forneris, 2017a; Gould & Carson, 2008b). One such variable is *intentionality*, referred to as the extent to which deliberate decisions are made by sport organizations, and the coaches

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within those organizations, to create opportunities intended to maximize developmental outcomes (Kerrick, 2015; Walker, Marczak, Blyth, & Borden, 2005).

Turnnidge, Côté, and Hancock (2014) examined the notion of intentionality by discussing how life skills transfer can occur through implicit and explicit processes. The implicit approach refers to programs that focus on developing sport-specific skills (e.g., dribbling, skating) without conscious attention or effort placed on the development or transfer of life skills (Turnnidge et al., 2014). Within the implicit approach, the inherent features of sport (e.g., competition, rules, climate) are identified as factors that can influence the learning and transfer of life skills (Camiré & Kendellen, 2016; Chinkov & Holt, 2016). Previous research has shown how youth can develop life skills through sport participation and transfer such skills beyond sport, even when coaches do not explicitly focus on life skills development and transfer (e.g., Camiré & Trudel, 2010; Jones & Lavallee, 2009). Some coaches believe that the context of sport naturally fosters life skills development and transfer (e.g., Camiré & Trudel, 2010; Lacroix, Camiré, & Trudel, 2008). In sum, the implicit approach does not preclude life skills development and transfer (e.g., Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008) but rather leaves it up to chance.

Conversely, the explicit approach refers to programs, and the coaches within these programs, that deliberately target the development and transfer of life skills (Turnnidge et al., 2014). Many researchers (e.g., Camiré, Forneris, Trudel, & Bernard, 2011; Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, & Jones, 2005) have posited that coaches must deliberately and systematically integrate life skills development and transfer strategies within their coaching to optimize athlete development. For instance, coaches must be explicit in drawing connections as to how life skills can transfer from sport to everyday life (Allen, Rhind, & Koshy, 2015; Pierce, Kendellen, Camiré, & Gould, 2018; Weiss, Stuntz, Bhalla, Bolter, & Price, 2013). Strategies such as debriefs, the use of imagery, and intentional leadership opportunities have been recognized as aiding life skills development and transfer (Allen et al., 2015; Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2012; Jacobs & Wright, 2017; Weiss, Bolter, & Kipp, 2016).

To date, little research has empirically examined the role of intentionality by comparing youth developmental outcomes that emanate from implicitly structured programs versus explicitly structured programs. Bean and Forneris (2016) conducted systematic observations of training sessions to compare intentionally (explicit) and non-intentionally (implicit) structured youth programs. Findings indicated that intentionally structured programs that deliberately targeted life skills development yielded higher program quality scores and greater perceived developmental outcomes than non-intentionally structured programs. Although there is some preliminary evidence supporting the use of explicit approaches, within the sport psychology literature, there is still ongoing discussion as to how life skills development and transfer should be addressed. As research within the area of sport-based youth development continues to progress, there is a need to move beyond an implicit/explicit dichotomy to explain how life skills development and transfer occur. A continuum of life skills development and transfer can help further elucidate the mechanisms that support PYD within the sport context (Hodge, Danish, Forneris, & Miles, 2016) in order to more precisely delineate the varying levels of implicitness/explicitness at which coaches, the direct purveyors of sport experiences, can facilitate life skills development and transfer. Chinkov and Holt (2016) highlighted that more information is needed on how to create sporting environments that enable participants to learn life skills that transfer to other life domains. Researchers (e.g., Bean & Forneris, 2016) have previously indicated that the teaching of life skills may fall on a

continuum and have made calls for further research to develop a continuum to guide our understanding of the role of intentionality in fostering PYD outcomes. As part of their recent qualitative meta-study of PYD, Holt and colleagues (2017) called for knowledge synthesis of existing PYD literature to create new models that bridge the gap between research and practice, which can help develop evidence-based strategies for sport practitioners. Therefore, this article responds to calls for further research and addresses identified gaps by presenting a continuum designed to guide researchers and practitioners in understanding and framing life skills development and transfer.

Purpose

Within the present article, an implicit/explicit continuum of life skills development and transfer of youth sport is presented and distributed across six levels: (a) structuring the sport context, (b) facilitating a positive climate, (c) discussing life skills, (d) practicing life skills, (e) discussing transfer, and (f) practicing transfer. The levels found within the continuum are grounded in existing sport psychology literature. The continuum is designed to (a) extend previous conceptual work (Gould & Carson, 2008b's, levels of social-emotional and life skills development through sport; Turnnidge et al., 2014's, implicit and explicit approaches) and (b) align with recent frameworks that model PYD and life skills development and transfer in sport (Holt et al., 2017; Pierce, Gould, & Camiré, 2017). Conceptually, the continuum is intended to help researchers examine the extent to which coaches are implicit or explicit in their approach to life skills development and transfer. Practically, the continuum is intended to help coaches and sport organizations frame their approach to life skills development and transfer.

The implicit/explicit continuum of life skills development and transfer

Based on empirical evidence (Bean & Forneris, 2016), the inherent premise of the continuum is that life skills development and transfer are optimized (i.e., youth athletes [hereafter referred to as athletes] have a greater likelihood of experiencing positive development outcomes) as coaches move up the continuum. However, it is still considered possible for coaches to implicitly foster life skills by appropriately structuring the sport context (i.e., level one) and facilitating a positive climate (i.e., level two). To move up the continuum (i.e., levels three to six), coaches must work toward explicitly targeting life skills development and transfer through discussion and practice. The six levels within the continuum are visually portrayed in a manner that exemplifies how they build on one another (see Figure 1). For example, for coaches to get their athletes to effectively practice life skills (i.e., level four), they must first discuss life skills (i.e., level three) within a positive climate (i.e., level two) and an appropriately structured context (i.e., level one).

Consistent with recent work (e.g., Holt et al., 2017), a main tenet of the continuum is that the practice of life skills is further conducive to development than the mere discussion of life skills. Specifically, coaches who go beyond the discussion of life skills and transfer (i.e., levels three and five, respectively) and intentionally provide opportunities for youth to practice life skills and transfer (i.e., levels four and six, respectively) are posited to further facilitate the life skills development process. Another important tenet is that many factors, extending beyond the direct control of coaches (i.e., their own willingness to be implicit or explicit in their

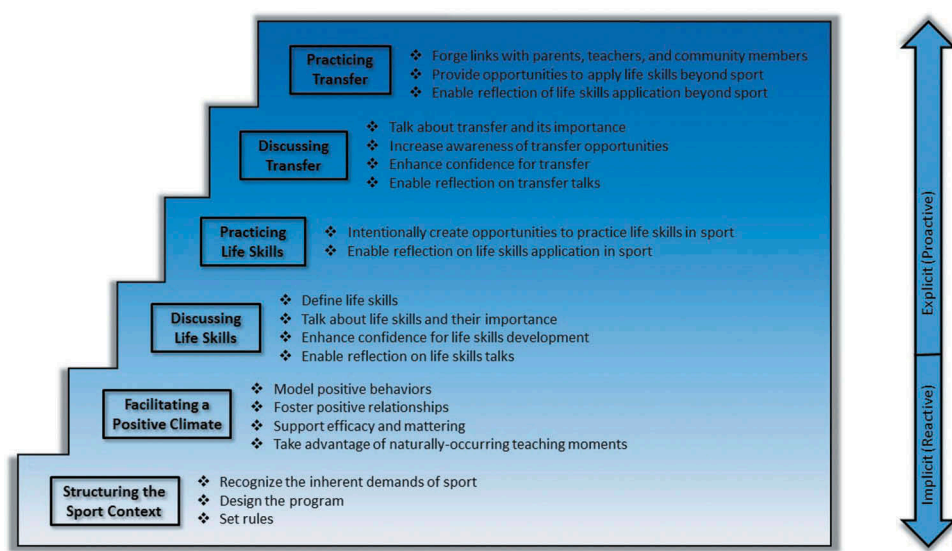


Figure 1. The implicit/explicit continuum of life skills development and transfer.

coaching approach), can influence their mobility within the continuum. Specifically, such factors include interacting with athletes with varying skill sets, operating in sport contexts offering varying levels of resources to teach life skills, and functioning within communities with varying opportunities for transfer. Thus, the reality is that coaches may experience challenges in their ability to navigate through the continuum due to the dynamic nature of the sport contexts in which they coach and the communities in which they operate.

Finally, within the continuum, it is posited that the explicit and proactive targeting of life skills is fundamentally driven by the philosophy coaches bring to the sport context, which ultimately underpins the types of experiences and opportunities they want to/can create for athletes. Based on their philosophical orientations, as well as their motivations and resources, coaches can move up or down the continuum over the course of a season or career. One's philosophy plays a key role in influencing how behaviors are generated and how these behaviors reactively or proactively facilitate youth's life skills development and transfer. The following section examines how a sound coaching philosophy sets the foundation for moving through the continuum.

Coaching philosophy

A coach's experiences, knowledge, values, opinions, and beliefs are said to comprise his/her philosophy, which should technically underpin all aspects of his/her coaching practice (Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2009; Nash, Sproule, & Horton, 2008). When formally produced and written down, a coaching philosophy forms the basis of one's behavioral approach to offering athletes a quality sport experience (Nash et al., 2008). Although a lack of clarity still remains on what a coaching philosophy *is* (Cushion & Partington, 2016), coaches wishing to foster life skills development and transfer should, through reflective practice, regularly question their existing ideology. By creating a philosophy where sport *and* life skills are seen as

equal and inclusive pursuits of coaching, coaches can focus their efforts on enacting strategies that optimize life skills development and transfer. The continuum is designed to assist coaches in establishing developmentally sound philosophical principles by delineating six levels at which life skills development and transfer can be addressed. These levels are described below.

Level one: Structuring the sport context

Structuring the sport context is defined as creating an enriching and intrinsically motivating environment in which athletes feel physically and psychologically safe enough to take risks, learn from their mistakes, and meaningfully engage with significant others (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1993; Petitpas et al., 2005). The first component of this level refers to recognizing the *inherent demands of sport*, which underlie conscious structuring. Three inherent demands of sport figure most prominently. First, competition is rooted in the very definition of sport and the act of competing exposes athletes to experiences that can potentially influence life skills development. Camiré (2015) discussed how healthy competition must be favored and framed as a collaborative process (a striving togetherness) characterized by competitors offering their best effort. Second, sport is inherently a skill-building activity and proficiency requires athletes to develop physically, technically, and tactically (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005). In the process of striving to attain proficiency in sport, athletes can live experiences that can potentially influence life skills development. Third, sport is a social endeavor during which athletes interact with a wide range of stakeholders (e.g., coaches, parents, referees, teammates; Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005). Through these social interactions, athletes are exposed to experiences that can potentially influence life skills development. Taken together, these three inherent demands allow athletes to potentially develop life skills, simply by being engaged in a sporting activity (Chinkov & Holt, 2016; Holt & Sehn, 2008; Holt, Tamminen, Black, Sehn, & Wall, 2008; Lacroix et al., 2008; Pierce et al., 2017).

Beyond the inherent demands of sport, coaches can actively structure the sport context by *designing the program* (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005). Although many frameworks exist (e.g., Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Petitpas et al., 2005), quality program design in sport generally entails having coaches who (a) foster a physically and psychologically safe environment; (b) provide appropriate supervision; (c) include sequenced, active, focused, and explicit activities; and (d) provide challenging and authentic activities (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; Lockwood & Perlman, 2008; Strachan, Côté, & Deakin, 2011). A safe environment, in which athletes are adequately supervised as they engage in constructive activities, fosters experiences that can potentially influence life skills development.

As part of structuring the sport context, coaches are also expected to *set rules* (Gould, Collins, Lauer, & Chung, 2007; Perkins & Noam, 2007; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2015). Practically speaking, this entails (a) establishing expectations, (b) holding athletes accountable for their actions, (c) discussing and determining consequences for inappropriate behavior, and (d) having stakeholders (e.g., parents, officials) uphold the same rules (Gould et al., 2007; Perkins & Noam, 2007). An environment in which rules are clearly communicated and consistently enforced in a fair manner allows athletes to live experiences that can potentially influence life skills development.

Level two: Facilitating a positive climate

Facilitating a positive climate is defined as making tangible efforts for athletes to experience sporting environments in which positive relationships can be sustained. In order to facilitate a positive climate, coaches should *model positive behaviors* for athletes (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; Gould & Carson, 2008b; Gould et al., 2007). Strategies for modeling positive behaviors include (a) being patient; (b) having realistic expectations; (c) showing respect to athletes, parents, officials, and other coaches; (d) communicating clearly and concisely; and (e) seeing mistakes as learning opportunities (Camiré et al., 2012; Gould, Voelker, & Blanton, 2012; Turnnidge, Evans, Vierimaa, Allan, & Côté, 2016; Vella, Oades, & Crowe, 2013). Athletes who interact with coaches who model positive behaviors experience climates that can potentially influence life skills development.

A positive climate can also be facilitated by *fostering positive relationships* (Camiré et al., 2011; Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007; Turnnidge & Côté, 2016). Ideally, coaches should consider the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral elements of relationship building when interacting with their athletes (Jowett, Paull, Pensgaard, Hoegmo, & Riise, 2005). Coaches can support the development of quality relationships by making conscious efforts to connect with their athletes on matters related to life in and beyond sport (Camiré et al., 2011; Pierce et al., 2018; Strachan et al., 2011). Practically speaking, strategies for relationship building include (a) acting in a warm, genuine, and caring manner; (b) acknowledging athletes' perspectives and values; (c) demonstrating empathy; and (d) clearly outlining one's expectations. Coaches should also work to foster positive relationships between athletes (e.g., organizing team bonding activities) that can help develop a sense of belongingness within a team, which has been linked to positive motivation and engagement (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Strachan et al., 2011; Vella et al., 2016). Sporting environments within which positive relationships are fostered allow athletes to live experiences that can influence life skills development.

Coaches should also *support efficacy and mattering* by providing athletes with opportunities to experience a combination of challenge, skill, and support (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; Perkins & Noam, 2007; Strachan et al., 2011). In practical terms, coaches can (a) involve athletes in decision-making and solution-finding processes, (b) provide a rationale for decisions, and (c) let athletes choose different activities or drills (Côté, Strachan, & Fraser-Thomas, 2008; Jones & Turner, 2006; Lockwood & Perlman, 2008; Mallett, 2005). When athletes deem their coaches to be considerate of their perspectives, it also works to enhance their relationships with teammates (Jõesaar, Hein, & Hagger, 2012). Coaches who promote athlete-centered sporting environments that support efficacy and mattering allow athletes to live experiences that can potentially influence life skills development.

The last element to consider when facilitating a positive climate is to *take advantage of naturally occurring teaching moments* (Camiré et al., 2012; Turnnidge et al., 2014; Vella et al., 2013). Such teachable moments are defined as unplanned events, inherently reactive in nature, that coaches decide to use to start discussions on life skills (Bean & Forneris, 2017b). For example, if a golf coach notices that an athlete failed to report a stroke on his/her scorecard, a discussion on the importance of honesty can be instigated. Coaches who take advantage of naturally occurring teachable moments can help athletes live experiences that can influence life skills development.

Levels one and two of the continuum are implicit and reactive in nature. Thus, relying solely on these two levels does not guarantee life skills development. The following four

levels of the continuum outline explicit approaches for proactively fostering life skills development and transfer.

Level three: Discussing life skills

Discussing life skills is defined as making clear and deliberate efforts to verbally address the notion of life skills within the sport context. The first step in the discussion process consists of *defining life skills*. For example, at the beginning of practice, coaches can ask open-ended questions that stimulate athlete reflection. Using teamwork as an example, questions can include “What does teamwork mean to you?” “How can you effectively work as a team?” and “Why is it important for you to develop teamwork skills in sport?” Following athlete input, coaches can provide a structured definition of the targeted life skill to promote understanding (e.g., teamwork consists of working cooperatively as a group to achieve a common goal; Kendellen & Camiré, 2017). Athletes with a clear understanding of what different life skills mean and entail are better positioned to develop and transfer life skills.

Once life skills have been appropriately defined, coaches should dedicate time during practice to *talk about life skills and their importance*. From an efficiency standpoint, coaches can talk about life skills simultaneously while they address sport skills (Bean & Forneris, 2017b; Hellison, 2011). For example, while discussing the fundamental principles of setting in volleyball, coaches can also acknowledge the importance of the life skill of communication. Coaches who seamlessly integrate discussions on sport *and* life skills within their coaching are ideally positioned to encourage the development of life skills (Camiré, 2015; Gould, Voelker, & Griffes, 2013).

As coaches discuss life skills and their importance, they should also make efforts to *enhance confidence for life skills development*. In practical terms, this means that coaches should (a) encourage their athletes to attempt to apply life skills in sport and (b) reinforce them when they successfully apply their life skills (Danish et al., 1993). Such efforts to enhance athletes’ confidence can occur by having coaches that *enable reflection on life skills talks*. Coaches should deliberately plan time at the end of their practices (e.g., debriefing session) to get their athletes to reflect as a team and share their opinions on what went well and what can be improved as it relates to life skills development (Camiré et al., 2011; Kendellen, Camiré, Bean, Forneris, & Thompson, 2017). Coaches can ask reflective questions such as “What did you learn related to emotional regulation today?” and “Can you provide examples of how you were able to regulate your emotions today?” (Kendellen et al., 2017). Such reflective exercises have been shown to be critical in facilitating the life skills internalization process (Allen et al., 2015; Camiré & Kendellen, 2016); thus, coaches who encourage reflection are ideally positioned to facilitate life skills development.

Level four: Practicing life skills

Building on level three, practicing life skills is defined as providing athletes with concrete opportunities to apply and refine their life skills in the sport context. The first step is to *intentionally create opportunities to practice life skills in sport*. Recent empirical (e.g., Bean & Forneris, 2016) and theoretical (e.g., Holt et al., 2017) work has shown how coaches who move beyond talk and intentionally provide opportunities for practice further facilitate the life skills development process. For instance, when considering the life skill of emotional regulation

in the sport of basketball, coaches can have their athletes practice taking three deep breaths before completing a free throw, while explaining the importance of assessing the situation and calming one's body and mind before completing the movement. Deliberate practice has been associated with the enhanced internalization of new skills (Pierce et al., 2017) and thus, coaches who provide opportunities for their athletes to practice their life skills are ideally situated to promote life skills development (Collins, Gould, Lauer, & Chung, 2009; Gould et al., 2007; Theokas, Danish, Hodge, Heke, & Forneris, 2008).

Once athletes have had opportunities to practice their life skills, coaches should dedicate time to *enable reflection on life skills application in sport*. Coaches can facilitate reflection through journaling, team debriefs, as well as open-ended questioning (Camiré et al., 2011; Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; Pierce et al., 2018). For example, after athletes have opportunities to practice their emotional regulation skills, a golf coach can ask open-ended questions such as “How did you feel after taking deep breaths?” “Why is it important to take deep breaths before a putt?” and “What else can you do to control your emotions while playing golf?” Such questioning provides athletes with opportunities to share their successes and struggles with a specific skill, as life skills development is idiosyncratic in nature (Allen et al., 2015; Pierce et al., 2017). Irrespective of whether the skill application process was successful or not, reflection on said process is considered a learning opportunity (Perkins & Noam, 2007). Thus, coaches who provide opportunities for their athletes to reflect on their life skill application experiences in sport are ideally situated to promote life skills development.

Levels three and four of the continuum represent explicit processes for fostering life skills development in sport, building upon levels one and two. However, for a skill learned in sport to be truly considered a life skill, it must be successfully transferred and applied outside of the sport context (Danish, Forneris, & Wallace, 2005). The following two levels outline explicit approaches for facilitating life skills transfer in contexts extending beyond sport.

Level five: Discussing transfer

Discussing life skills transfer is defined as making clear and deliberate efforts to verbally address the notion of transfer. Coaches should dedicate time during practice to *talk about transfer and its importance* through discussions with their athletes. Transfer talks include helping athletes identify the different contexts in which skills learned in sport can be transferred and applied (e.g., school, home, work; Danish, Taylor, & Fazio, 2003; Pierce et al., 2017). Past research has shown how athletes are not always able to conceptualize that their skills learned in sport are often useful when applied outside of the sport context (Camiré et al., 2012; Petitpas et al., 2005). Therefore, coaches should *increase athletes' awareness of transfer opportunities*. Awareness can be increased by facilitating discussions during which athletes are tasked with identifying their strengths in sport and then asked to consider how such strengths can nurture one's performance in life (Camiré et al., 2012; Hellison, 2011; Petitpas et al., 2005). Analogous to level three, transfer-specific open-ended questions can encourage athletes to enter into a reflective process by asking questions such as “What does life skills transfer mean to you?” “What are examples of life skills you can transfer beyond sport?” and “Why is transferring life skills important to you?” (Camiré et al., 2011). Coaches should emphasize the links that exist between sport and life, encouraging athletes to reflect on how their successful actions in sport can carry over beyond practices and games (Gould et al.,

2007). Coaches who talk about transfer and foster athlete awareness of transfer are ideally situated to promote their athletes' abilities to transfer their life skills beyond sport.

As they work to increase their athletes' awareness of transfer opportunities, coaches should also deliberately *enhance athletes' confidence for transfer* (Allen et al., 2015; Gould & Carson, 2008b; Pierce et al., 2017). Given that athletes often lack confidence in their ability to successfully transfer their skills (Danish et al., 1993), coaches should help their athletes by (a) providing social support, (b) offering concrete and positive feedback for transfer attempts, (c) using transfer failures as important learning opportunities, and (d) helping athletes develop a realistic plan to practice their skills in contexts extending beyond sport (Danish et al., 1993; Pierce et al., 2017, 2018; Theokas et al., 2008). Past research has shown how adequate coach support positively influences athletes' success with life skills transfer (Allen et al., 2015; Martinek & Lee, 2012; Pierce et al., 2017). Therefore, coaches who work to enhance their athletes' confidence are ideally situated to promote life skills transfer.

Coaches can *enable reflection on transfer talks* to enhance their athletes' confidence for life skills transfer. Practically speaking, coaches can incorporate within their training sessions planned team debriefs during which athletes have opportunities to discuss successful and/or unsuccessful life skills application experiences outside of sport. Based on the key messages emanating from these team debriefs, athletes should be encouraged to then reflect independently on their own transfer attempts (Allen et al., 2015; Camiré & Kendellen, 2016). During the debriefing process, coaches should consider providing examples of their own successful and unsuccessful life skills transfer attempts, thereby providing athletes with real-life examples from a respected figure (Camiré & Kendellen, 2016). Coaches who foster transfer-specific reflection are ideally situated to promote life skills transfer.

Level six: Practicing transfer

Practicing the transfer of life skills is defined as providing athletes with concrete opportunities to apply and refine their life skills in contexts extending beyond sport. To enable the successful application in life of skills learned in sport, coaches should make efforts to *forge links with parents, teachers, and community members* (Camiré & Kendellen, 2016; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Pierce et al., 2018). Coaches who engage in collaborative partnerships between sport, school, and community foster situations whereby athletes have a greater likelihood of being *provided with opportunities to apply life skills beyond sport* (Camiré & Kendellen, 2016; Danish et al., 2005; Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish, & Theodorakis, 2005).

Strategies coaches can use to forge community links and opportunities for life skills application include (a) sharing their coaching philosophy for transfer with teachers, parents, and community leaders; (b) inviting back to their program successful alumni to speak about their life skills transfer experiences to current athletes; (c) providing athletes with opportunities to become involved in community service activities or leadership roles (e.g., coaching, peer-mentoring); and (d) coordinating team volunteerism efforts (e.g., serving meals at a soup kitchen) within the community (Camiré et al., 2011; Gass, 1985; Petitpas et al., 2005; Pierce et al., 2018). Coaches who forge links with other adult leaders in a variety of life contexts allow athletes to expand their social network, which can help them gain the confidence necessary to successfully apply their skills beyond sport (Danish, 1996; Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; Hellison, Martinek, & Walsh, 2008; Petitpas et al., 2005). Through repeated and successful

skill application, generalization can occur, whereby athletes gain the ability to apply their skills in contexts beyond where they were originally learned (Allen et al., 2015; Hodge et al., 2016; Petitpas et al., 2005; Pierce et al., 2017). Coaches who foster links and provide tangible life skills application opportunities are ideally situated to promote life skills transfer.

Similar to level four, coaches should *enable athlete reflection on life skills application beyond sport* (Gass, 1985; Theokas et al., 2008). Quality sport programs should be appropriately designed with specific times dedicated to reflection on athletes' actual life skills transfer attempts (Hellison, 2011; Jacobs & Wright, 2017; Pierce et al., 2017). Reflection can be nurtured through (a) self-evaluation initiatives, (b) group problem-solving activities, and (c) follow-up life skills transfer experiences designed to reinforce learning (Gass, 1985; Hellison et al., 2008; Theokas et al., 2008). Through reflection, athletes are better positioned to evaluate the extent to which they were successful in applying their skills beyond sport and if the outcome was adaptive or maladaptive from a developmental point of view (McKeough, Lupart, & Marini, 2013; Pugh, Linnenbrink-Garcia, Koskey, Stewart, & Manzey, 2010).

Conclusion

The purpose of the present article was to present an implicit/explicit continuum of life skills development and transfer. The continuum is intended to be used by both coaches and researchers to guide programming and research. The continuum extends previous conceptual work (Gould & Carson, 2008b; Turnnidge et al., 2014) and complements recently published PYD and life skills frameworks (Holt et al., 2017; Pierce et al., 2017) by more precisely delineating the varying levels of implicitness/explicitness at which coaches can facilitate life skills development and transfer.

For coaches, it is important to consider that appropriately structuring the sport context and facilitating a positive climate are key to fostering life skills development and transfer. However, based on recent empirical evidence (Bean & Forneris, 2016), the inherent premise of the continuum is that life skills development and transfer are optimized as coaches become more explicit in their approach. The six levels presented in this article, and the practical strategies found within them, are meant to provide coaches with further resources to explicitly address life skills development and transfer.

For researchers, the continuum can be used to empirically examine the extent to which coaches are implicit or explicit in their approach to teaching life skills. Further, the continuum can be used by researchers to more precisely evaluate the quality of youth sport programs (Petitpas et al., 2005; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2015). Holt, Deal, and Smyth (2016) discussed the need for more thorough evaluations in youth sport research pertaining to the processes through which life skills are fostered. The life skills continuum provides a model to be used in future research in the area of sport-based youth development and holds potential for advancing our understanding of how youth sport programs can be strategically planned as settings within which to promote the positive psychosocial development of athletes.

In sum, given that the act of coaching is an intricate and dynamic endeavor, coaches must be aware of the complex interplay of various factors (i.e., psychological, social, cultural) that can influence their ability to facilitate life skills development and transfer. The life skills developed in sport, and the opportunities to transfer said skills beyond sport, may differ based on where coaches and athletes operate; for example, urban versus rural contexts and/or

economically advantaged versus economically disadvantaged areas (Allen et al., 2015; Jacobs, Lawson, Ivy, & Richards, 2017). In a similar vein, life skills development and transfer probably manifests itself differently in Canada compared to Finland, Thailand, or South Africa. Further, a coach's approach may need to be tailored based on whether he/she is working with athletes who have experienced trauma or athletes who participate at a national level. Thus, coaches are encouraged to acknowledge and work to address the particular challenges and situational circumstances that may influence the extent to which they can be implicit or explicit in facilitating life skills development and transfer. Reflection remains a critical tool that coaches are encouraged to use to apprehend the complex dynamics of the sport context and continually work to improve their coaching philosophy (Gilbert & Trudel, 2005). The continuum represents a tangible tool to optimize coach reflection, enabling coaches to situate the extent to which they are explicit in their approach to developing their athletes as functioning, thriving, and contributing citizens.

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