

EXPLORING LIFE SKILL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COACHING IN  
EMERGING ADULTS

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## Abstract

Much research has highlighted the potential of sport programming to foster youths' life skill (LS) development, yet no similar exploration has focused on emerging adults' LS development through their early coaching experiences. Guided by Holt and colleagues' (2017) *Model of PYD Through Sport*, this exploratory qualitative study involved a partnership with a local sport for development (SFD) facility to gain an understanding of coaches' experiences and LS development as emerging adults. Eight coaches and/or sport leaders employed at *MLSE LaunchPad* who identified as emerging adults (Arnett, 2000) engaged in semi-structured interviews with open ended questions framed around PYD through sport, LS development and emerging adulthood. Results emerged through five interconnected themes: (a) developing LS as young athletes, (b) conceptualizing LS at the SFD facility, (c) contrasting LS development in high performance sport and SFD, (d) recommendations for SFD facility, and (e) developing new LS as coaches. Findings offer insight into LS development through sport beyond youth (i.e., into emerging adulthood), in diverse roles (i.e., among coaches versus athletes), and in diverse contexts (i.e., in SFD versus high performance sport). This work is considered in the context of coaches utilizing an implicit and/or explicit approach to LS development (Bean et al., 2018), laying the foundation for extensive future work exploring LS development across the life course, while offering preliminary implications for the SFD facility.

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**List of Abbreviations**

|             |                                     |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>CF</b>   | Critical Friend                     |
| <b>LS</b>   | Life Skills                         |
| <b>MLSE</b> | Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment |
| <b>PA</b>   | Physical Activity                   |
| <b>PYD</b>  | Positive Youth Development          |
| <b>SFD</b>  | Sport for Development               |

## Introduction

Life skills (LS) are defined as “the skills that enable students to succeed in the different environments in which they live, such as school, home, and in their neighborhoods” (Danish, et al., 2004, p. 40). Positive youth development (PYD), a field focused on fostering optimal development among youth through an asset building approach (Lerner et al., 2005) has highlighted sport as an ideal context for LS development to occur (Holt et al., 2017). Extensive research has examined PYD through sport programming, showing LS such as initiative, communication, leadership, and cooperation can be developed within a sport setting and transferred to other life contexts (Camiré et al., 2012). A significant criticism of youth sport programming, however, is the lack of opportunities for youth as they "age out" (or are selected out) of the sport system (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2017). Coaching often offers a natural next step for youth athletes, providing them with an opportunity to make valuable contributions within their community (Balish, et al., 2015). Many youth athletes may transition into coaching during the life stage termed ‘emerging adulthood’ (e.g., ages 18-25/30) - a life period after youth, before adulthood, suggested to be socially and culturally constructed in recent decades (Arnett, 2000). While several studies have focused on youths’ positive development through sport programming, no similar exploration has focused on emerging adults’ LS development through their early coaching experiences. Guided by Holt and colleagues’ (2017) *Model of Positive Youth Development Through Sport*, the purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of emerging adults’ experiences as coaches, in relation to potential LS development. This exploratory study involved a partnership with a local sport for development (SFD) facility - the MLSE LaunchPad - located in downtown Toronto, Canada.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Positive Youth Development**

Human development entails progressive, mutual accommodation throughout the life span between a growing human organism and his or her changing immediate environment; human development is the embodiment of person-context interactions (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1995). It can, therefore, be inferred that human development encompasses all of the physical, cognitive, emotional, and psychological changes that humans undergo over a lifetime.

Rooted in developmental psychology, positive youth development (PYD) is an asset building approach to understanding the development of youth over time (Damon, 2004). This approach views the characteristics of children and adolescents, and their corresponding environment as a means to build a set of skills that can foster positive developmental outcomes, enabling them to lead a healthy, productive adult lives (Holt & Neely, 2011). PYD has also been conceptualized as the development of personal skills, assets, or qualities necessary for youth to become successfully functioning members of society (Weiss & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009). Further, organized activities – such as sport - can provide youth with opportunities to experience PYD (Larson, 2000).

### **Positive Youth Development Through Sport**

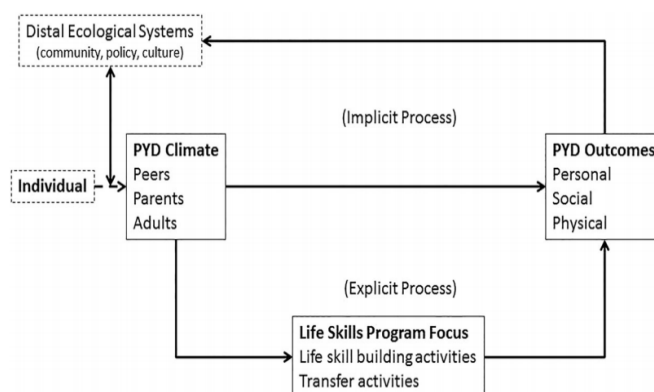
In recent years, researchers within the field of sport psychology have examined sport participation within the framework of PYD. Several sport-specific PYD models have been essential in advancing understanding of developmental processes and outcomes associated with sport participation (Côté et al., 2014; Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; Holt, & Neely, 2011; Turnnidge et al., 2014). For instance, Fraser-Thomas and colleagues (2005) suggested organized sport could facilitate PYD outcomes in youth if/when sport programs made an effort to maximize

positive opportunities and experiences for youth. More recently, Holt et al., (2016) described PYD through sport as the experiences and processes that enable participants in adult-supervised sport programs to gain transferable personal and social life skills, along with physical competencies. Due to these experiences and processes, youth gain skills and competency outcomes which enable them to thrive and contribute to their communities – now, and in the future.

In line with these conceptualizations, Holt and colleagues (2017) developed a *Model of PYD Through Sport*, which served as a framework to guide the current study. The model is grounded in a meta-review of 63 qualitative studies depicting the processes and outcomes associated with youth sport (Figure 1). Further, it outlines extensive potential developmental benefits of sport participation, however, emphasizes that developmental benefits cannot be gained simply by participating in sport. Rather, the model suggests PYD outcomes are significantly dependent on (a) social interactions that occur within sport settings (i.e., PYD climate of positive relationships between coaches, peers, and parents), (b) the way in which sport programs are structured and delivered (i.e., designed to intentionally teach LS), and (c) broader (distal) ecological systems and individual factors. More specifically, Holt and colleagues (2017) suggest that empathetic relationships formed with adults/coaches/leaders, positive interactions with peers, and the supportive involvement of parents can create a PYD climate, enabling youth to gain experiences that will contribute to PYD outcomes. PYD outcomes can also be achieved if a LS program focus is implemented (i.e., involving explicit attempts to teach LS and transfer LS to other contexts). In turn, as youth gain PYD outcomes through sport and begin to transfer LS beyond sport contexts, they will be successful and make positive contributions to their communities (Holt et al, 2017). Finally, the model emphasizes that these processes are integrated

within the context of (distal) ecological systems (e.g., community, policy, culture) and individual factors (e.g., gender, ethnicity), emphasizing that PYD through sport may vary between individuals and consideration should be given to broader social networks and community influences.

**Figure 1.** Model of PYD Through Sport



In sum, the model offers five hypotheses: (a) distal ecological systems and individual factors influence PYD through sport; (b) a PYD climate (adult-coach relationships/peer relations) can produce PYD outcomes; (c) PYD outcomes can be attained if programs have a LS focus (i.e., with LS building activities) and in the presence of a PYD climate; (d) the combined effects of a PYD climate and a LS focus will produce more PYD outcomes than a PYD climate alone; and lastly, (e) gaining PYD outcomes in and through sport will facilitate transfer and enable youth to thrive and contribute to their communities.

### Life Skills

Holt et al.'s (2017) model of PYD through sport, like many frameworks of PYD through sport, includes a focus on LS development. While there is not one clearly agreed upon definition of LS within the PYD literature, several studies have correlated youth's involvement in extracurricular activities and community organizations with personal and interpersonal growth

related to LS such as communication, teamwork, and initiative (Dworkin, et al., 2003; Larson, 2000). Broadly, PYD outcomes are often referred to as LS that can be developed in sport and transferred and applied in non-sport settings (Pierce et al., 2018). Two widely utilized definitions of LS include:

Skills that enable individuals to succeed in the different environments in which they live, such as school, home, and in their neighborhood. Life skills can be behavioural... or cognitive...; interpersonal...or intrapersonal (Danish et al., 2004, p. 40).

Internal personal assets, characteristics, and skills, such as goalsetting, 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, 2008, p. 60).

As evidenced in the above description and definitions, one of the key tenants of LS is that in order to be termed “life” skills, the learned skills must be transferable to other (non-sport) life settings (Camiré et al., 2012; Danish et al., 2004; Papacharisis et al. 2005). However, LS transferability varies based on a variety of factors; transferability is dependent upon the skills one has already mastered, their resources, and their real or perceived opportunities for transfer (Danish et al., 2002). Several factors must be considered in order for skills to be transferred to non-sport contexts. In particular, athletes must believe that they have valuable skills that can be applied to other settings, they must identify what these skills are, they must recognize how these skills were learned, understand the rationale for learning the skills, and believe in their success in applying these skills in other settings (Danish et al., 2002).

### **Facilitating Life Skill Development Through Sport**

In line with Holt and colleagues’ (2017) model of PYD through sport, many researchers have suggested that in order for sport to facilitate the development of LS, it is essential for

programs (and more specifically coaches) to integrate LS-building activities designed to foster PYD into programs, so that LS development is specifically targeted (Gould & Carson, 2008; Lerner, 2005). For example, recent research suggests the importance of coaches utilizing deliberate strategies such as including teachable moments within programs, role modelling desired behaviours, providing mentoring opportunities, integrating experiential team building activities (e.g., catchy slogans), demonstrating empathy (e.g., volunteerism or taking part in community service initiatives), and providing LS boosters (e.g., provide examples of successful LS application) (Camiré et al., 2012; Pierce et al., 2018; Trottier & Robitaille, 2014). Another study by Bean et al. (2014) highlighted the value of intentionally providing leadership opportunities for youth; giving youth the opportunity to develop their own cooperative games, incorporate LS into games, and facilitating leadership skills among younger members of the club. Collectively, these studies highlight that coaches who deliberately promote LS development are highly motivated learners who take advantage of learning situations (e.g., opportunities to display and apply LS during practices/games). As such, Bean and Forneris (2016) compared developmental outcomes among participants in programs identified as intentionally and non-intentionally teaching LS. Programs were considered ‘intentional’ if the coach/leader intentionally took time to integrate LS into their programming, while ‘nonintentional’ programs focused primarily on the development of physical/sport-specific skills. Results indicated that youth involved in intentionally structured programs scored higher PYD outcomes (e.g., personal standards, friendship, emotional regulation) compared to non-intentionally structured sport programs.

As an extension of research examining coaches’ intentional LS teaching, there has also been a growing focus on athletes’ ability to transfer skills learned in sport to other domains.

Specifically, studies have explored how coaches can facilitate the transfer process in order for athletes to achieve maximum outcomes outside sport participation. These studies highlight the importance of coaches drawing connections between various life domains and helping athletes internalize learned skills (Bean et al., 2016; Holt et al., 2016), generally concluding that LS developed through sport can be transferred and applied in other life domains such as with friends, at home, and in school (e.g., improvement in the classroom, ability to complete academic work) (Allen et al., 2015; Goudas & Giannoudis, 2010; Weiss et al., 2016; Weiss et al., 2013). Research has also suggested that skills learned through sport can be transferred to other domains later in life such as the workplace (Kendellen & Camiré, 2017).

Despite a significant body of work suggesting the value of explicitly teaching LS in youth sport contexts, some researchers have questioned whether an explicit approach to teaching LS and transfer may always be feasible or necessary. For example, Turnnidge and colleagues (2014) compared explicit to implicit approaches, exploring the effectiveness, sustainability, and type of learning occurring (i.e., youth versus adult-driven) within each approach. In particular, Turnnidge et al. (2014) assert that through an implicit approach (whereby the teaching of LS and transfer by the program/coach is non-intentional), athletes may develop LS (e.g., teamwork, communication) through the inherent structure of the sporting context (e.g., competition, goal-setting, focus over time). Further, they suggest that while sport participation alone may not guarantee PYD outcomes, the implicit approach may offer unique advantages for skill learning, and youth-driven learning, indirectly fostering LS application beyond the sport context. Studies such as Chinkov and Holt's (2016) examination of LS development in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu have provided support for the effectiveness of the implicit approach.

As research on LS development has expanded over the past decade, more questions have emerged. Most recently, Bean et al. (2018) proposed that implicit and explicit facilitation (i.e., intentionality) may not be dichotomized. Rather, they present an implicit/explicit continuum of LS development and transfer across six distinct categories: (a) structuring the sport context, (b) facilitating a positive climate, (c) discussing LS, (d) practicing LS, (e) discussing transfer, and (f) practicing transfer. In line with these six categories, the authors suggest that youth athletes have a greater likelihood of experiencing positive developmental outcomes as coaches move along the continuum (i.e., using more explicit approaches). Their work suggests that the practice of transfer is far more instrumental to development than simply discussing LS with youth athletes or structuring the sport context to facilitate LS development. While the framework provides a significant advancement in the conceptualization of LS development, it has not yet been systematically tested.

Collectively, the aforementioned studies indicate that researchers agree that sport has the potential to play a role in fostering LS in youth, and that there is general support that programs intentionally structured to teach LS may be more likely to foster PYD outcomes such as LS; however, there remain some questions as to how to most optimally do this. One context where LS have been facilitated both explicitly and implicitly, is through sport for development (SFD) programs. SFD is a field within international development that uses sport as a development tool based on the notion that well-designed value-driven sport-based initiatives can be powerful, practical, and cost-effective in achieving development goals (United Nations InterAgency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace, 2003). Broadly, SFD organizations work to improve public health, socialize children, youth, and adults from disadvantaged groups, develop economies, and facilitate intercultural exchange and conflict resolution through sport (Lyras &

Peachey, 2011; Schulenkorf et al., 2016). Given the alignment of the PYD approach and SFD, SFD programs have often served as optimal contexts for the fostering of LS (Warner et al., 2019).

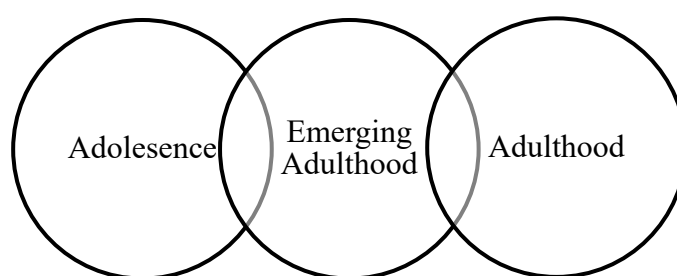
While extensive research has explored LS development in youth sport (and other extra-curricular contexts) over the past several years, little research has examined the facilitation of LS after adolescence. As individuals age, the importance of LS application becomes increasingly important, as LS enable individuals to excel in various environments by allowing a shift in behaviours from setting to setting (Hodge & Danish, 1999). LS are learned through demonstration, modeling, and practice and they are considered to be an on-going developmental process of learning that occurs over the lifespan – including during ‘emerging adulthood’ (Camiré et al., 2012; Turnnidge et al., 2014).

### **Emerging Adulthood**

The term emerging adulthood was first coined by Jeffrey Arnett, a psychology professor at Clark University (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adulthood is a term used to describe a new phenomenon – a life stage that conceptualizes people from their late teens to mid-late twenties (e.g., roughly ages 18 to 25 or 30) (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adulthood was initially proposed as a framework to acknowledge the transitional period from adolescence to adulthood, extending upon past theories of human development. In particular, Erikson (1968) proposed that the adolescent years (i.e., 12-18 years) are focused on identity exploration; adolescents are searching for a sense of self and personal identity through an intense exploration of personal values, beliefs, and goals, as they re-consider and learn the roles they will occupy as adults (Erikson, 1963). However, Erikson noted that a period of *prolonged adolescence* may occur in Western societies, whereby young people experience an extended psychosocial moratorium (i.e.,

withdrawal from responsibilities) and are free to experiment with roles to discover where they fit into society (Erikson, 1950; 1968). According to Erikson's theory, the stage following adolescence is young adulthood (ages 20-45). During this stage an individual explores intimate, committed relationships. Arnett (2000) observed that Erikson's description of prolonged adolescence' does not fall within the adolescent cohort or the young adult cohort and proposed 'emerging adulthood' to define this group. Figure 2 illustrates the possible configuration of emerging adulthood; individuals are no longer adolescents – they are emerging into adulthood, but not fully there yet (Arnett, 2003; Arnett, 2007).

**Figure 2.** Configuration of Emerging Adulthood



Arnett (2004) noted five distinct features of emerging adulthood: (a) identity exploration, (b) instability, (c) self-focused, (d) feeling 'in-between', and (e) the age of possibilities. Arnett (2004) argues that the most central feature of emerging adulthood is *identity exploration*. Through exploration, individuals are able to identify various factors that shape their identity, including learning who they are and what they want out of life by working towards personal improvement and/or self-awareness; this exploration is conceptualized to encompass elements of love, work, and establishing stability in life (Arnett, 2000; 2007; 2015). Emerging adulthood is also an intense period of uncertainty that can be exceptionally unstable, referring to the second feature of emerging adulthood – *instability* (Arnett, 2004). Instability may be the result of

changes in life plans, from school, to work, and within relationships. While emerging adults know they are supposed to have a “plan”, this plan is subject to several revisions and these changes are a natural consequence of their explorations (e.g., in love, work or education), thus, identity exploration and instability are connected (Arnett, 2004). Emerging adults are also *self-focused*; “by focusing on themselves, emerging adults develop skills at daily living, gain a better understanding of who they are and what they want from life, and begin to build a foundation for their adult lives” (Arnett, 2015, p. 14), inferring that self-focus is “normal, healthy, and temporary” (Arnett, 2015, p. 14). Emerging adults’ sense of exploration and instability generate *feeling in-between*, as they are neither adolescent, nor adult, but on their way to adulthood (Arnett, 2015). Several studies (Arnett, 1994, 1997, 2001, 2015) suggest emerging adults incrementally move towards adulthood by accepting responsibility for one’s self, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent. Finally, emerging adulthood offers *the age of possibilities* – whereby emerging adults are both uncertain, but also optimistic; they have high hopes and expectations, with idealistic visions of what the future holds (Arnett, 2004). This stage offers the emerging adults the potential for drastically changing their life direction because “few of their dreams have been tested in the fires of real life” (Arnett, 2015, p. 16).

It has been suggested that emerging adulthood is culturally constructed and therefore not a universal life stage - with the features that make emerging adulthood distinct most widespread in cultures with high participation in post-secondary school and later ages of entering marriage and parenthood (Arnett, 2007; Arnett et al., 2011; Reifman et al., 2007). As such, Arnett and colleagues (2011) noted one key objection to the theory of emerging adulthood is that in order for the life stage to be experienced in its entirety (e.g., identity exploration), young people

require strong social supports that can allow them an extended period of self-focus. For this reason, Arnett et al. suggest one's socioeconomic status (e.g., household supporting income) may be a predictor of whether one will engage in or bypass emerging adulthood. Further, they hypothesized certain racial and ethnic groups may participate more extensively in emerging adulthood explorations than others.

### **Emerging Adult Development Through Sport**

While extensive research has examined how sport may foster PYD outcomes and LS in youth, only limited research has focused on athletes' personal development following adolescence (e.g., Chinkov & Holt, 2016), with the majority of this research focusing on high performance athletes (e.g., Rathwell & Young, 2017). Athletes may deal with more challenges than their non-athlete peers as they become emerging adults, as this time often aligns with their termination from sport as athletes due to age, injury, free-choice, or de-selection (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). An athlete's termination or transition out of sport may create a convoluted situation for athletes entering emerging adulthood. As various challenges accompany emerging adulthood, there is value in better understanding this life stage.

Youth athletes often transition into coaching during emerging adulthood. For many athletes, coaching offers a natural extension of their sport involvement, as it is their first opportunity to volunteer, be employed, and make contributions within their community (Balish et al., 2015). The transition from an athlete to a coach goes beyond tactics and strategies. Coaching has the potential to encompass the development and transference of vital LS, as the ability to transfer skills learned in sports to other contexts is imperative in achieving the maximum outcomes from participation in sports (Papacharisis et al., 2005; Danish et al., 2005; Allen et al., 2015; Weiss et al., 2016). As such, it is beneficial to gain a better understanding of

emerging adults' (Arnett, 2000) experiences as coaches, in relation to potential LS development. More specifically, it is believed that coaching may offer an opportunity for emerging adults to further develop as they transfer LS learned as athletes into their work/professional roles as coaches, while also providing opportunities for the development of new LS in their coaching roles.

### **Rationale and Purpose**

PYD, a field focused on fostering optimal development for all youth through an asset building approach (Lerner et al., 2005) has highlighted sport as an ideal context for LS development (e.g., initiative, leadership, cooperation), suggesting that these learned skills may be transferred to other life contexts such as school and work (Danish et al., 2005). Holt and colleagues (2017) *Model of PYD Through Sport* hypothesized that PYD outcomes may be more optimally gained if a LS program focus is in place through explicit processes, in the presence of a PYD climate (e.g., supportive coaches, parents, peers); however, research also supports the potential for implicit processes alone to facilitate PYD outcomes (Chikov & Holt, 2015; Turnnidge et al., 2014). While extensive research has highlighted the role of sport in fostering LS development in youth athletes (e.g., Bean et al., 2016; Camiré et al., 2012, 2013) little research has explored the role of sport in individuals' development following adolescence. Emerging adulthood is a newly recognized life stage (i.e., ages 18 - 25/30) characterized by features distinct from youth or adulthood, including identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and possibilities (Arnett, 2000; 2004). As athletes transition out of youth sport (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994), coaching often offers a natural extension of their sport involvement into emerging adulthood (Balish et al., 2015). It follows that there is value in better understanding potential LS development through emerging adults' early coaching experiences.

Given the alignment of SFD programming with the PYD approach, a SFD facility offered an optimal context for this research to be conducted. As such, the purpose of this research was to gain understanding of coaches' LS development as emerging adults, within a SFD facility. More specifically, drawing upon Holt and colleagues (2017) *Model of PYD Through Sport*, this study was loosely guided by two key research questions:

- (a) What LS do emerging adults bring to their coaching roles from their sport experiences, and how do they transfer these LS into their coaching roles?
- (b) What new LS do emerging adult coaches develop within their roles as coaches, and how do they transfer these LS into other contexts within emerging adulthood?

## **Methods**

### **Research Design and Methodology**

This study was guided by a phenomenological framework whereby an in-depth understanding of each unique participant was explored. A phenomenological approach, as defined by Creswell (2007), seeks to understand individuals' lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. Specifically, a narrative phenomenological approach was used to explore the lived, felt, and embodied experiences of coaches/sport leaders at a SFD facility, as they navigated the life stage of emerging adulthood. The phenomenological approach aims to provide a rich and complete description of human experiences and meanings through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, while representing research participants' perspectives (Lester, 1999).

### **Procedure**

The project was first conceptualized through consultation between the primary researcher and her supervisor, who had established a preliminary relationship with MLSE LaunchPad – a SFD facility located in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. After receiving ethics approval from the affiliated academic institution, the Director of Research and Evaluation at the SFD facility reached out to potential participants (i.e., coaches/sport leaders at the facility). Potential participants were asked if they would be interested in participating in a study that explored coaches' LS development as emerging adults. Upon coaches' expression of interest, contact information was shared with the primary researcher, who reached out and introduced herself to participants over email, and scheduled an in-person interview. All interviews were scheduled at a time that was convenient for the coaches/ program leaders (e.g., immediately before or after a coaching session) at the SFD facility.

## Context

As noted above, this study was conducted at MLSE LaunchPad - a SFD facility. In Canada, SFD is recognized within the Canadian Sport Policy, outlining that SFD “sets [the] direction for governments, institutions, and organizations that are committed to realizing the positive impacts of sport on individuals, communities, and society” (Canadian Heritage, 2012, p. 2). In practice, SFD in Canada is supported by organizations such as Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment’s *MLSE LaunchPad*, the Toronto Blue Jays’ *Jay Care Foundation*, and the *Vancouver Whitecaps* (Clutterbuck, 2018), which use sport to attract participants to education-first programs. As PYD is considered a key objective of SFD programs and organizations, SFD programs may emphasize PYD by explicitly teaching LS such as by drawing upon program theory, developing youths’ competence in activities, and fostering meaningful relationships with coaches and peers (Warner et al., 2019).

MLSE LaunchPad is an organization which focuses on achieving sustainable, wide-ranging social outcomes for youth facing barriers, as well as developing LS amongst leaders and program participants (MLSE LaunchPad, n.d). MLSE LaunchPad defines ‘youth facing barriers’ as marginalized youth who need additional support and services to reach their full potential (Warner et al., 2019). All programs are offered at no cost to participants; financial support is provided through the MLSE Foundation and other corporate and community sponsors/donors.

MLSE LaunchPad is equipped with a large gymnasium, three classrooms, a rock-climbing wall, a teaching kitchen and a wellness room, providing instructional classes focused on physical activity, sport, LS, and employment training programs for youth (LaunchPad, n.d). The facility is open six days per week (i.e., Monday to Friday from 9:00am to 9:00pm; Saturday from 11:00am – 5:00pm), offering a combination of registered and drop-in classes. Between the

facility's opening in January 2017 and December 2018, the facility welcomed approximately 4,500 youth (ages 6-29) into over 3,000 collaborative program hours, with the help of 40 trained coaches and 13 collaborative partners (MLSE Annual Report, 2018).

Each of MLSE LaunchPad's programs fall under one of the following program pillars: *Healthy Body, Healthy Mind, Ready for School, and Ready for Work*. Programs offer sport and physical activity training in a psychologically and physically safe learning environment (Warner et al., 2019). MLSE LaunchPad programs are aligned with (Sport for Life, 2020) stages with a SFD lens and application, with the aim of promoting physical literacy and the transference of LS through sport. Drawing upon a PYD approach, programs focus of building upon youths' assets, and integrating the development of LS into physical activities. As such, coaching staff are trained in LS development and transference, and provided with research-informed strategies and practices to foster an environment that supports positive psychosocial outcomes (e.g. intrapersonal/interpersonal skills) for youth participants (Warner et al., 2019). Additional areas of training for sport program coaches and/or leaders include physical literacy and fundamental movement skills, diversity/inclusivity training for marginalized communities (e.g., LGBTQ+, Indigenous Awareness Training), and positive practical approaches to leadership in physical activity settings (e.g., HIGH FIVE, n.d.).

## **Participants**

Research participants included 8 emerging adults (n=4 male, n=4 female; ages 18-30,  $M_{age}=25$ ) serving as coaches or sport leaders at MLSE LaunchPad in one of the following roles: program supervisors, program leaders, sport program assistants, or assistant coaches at the facility. While emerging adulthood has been suggested to include the stage from the late teens through the mid-twenties (i.e., 18 – 25), for this particular study, participants up to age 30 were

included, given new demographic trends in industrialized societies where the majority of transitions take place up to age 30, with the median age of entering marriage and parenthood established in the 30s (Arnett, 2000).

Given the study's focus on emerging adults, and recognition that emerging adulthood may be a socially and culturally constructed phase of development (Arnett, 2007), it was important that all participants also identified as emerging adults. As such, the following statement/disclaimer was posed prior to commencing interviews as a form of pre-screening participants:

In recent years, there has been consideration among development professionals of a new life stage between adolescence and adulthood – called 'emerging adulthood' – so roughly from ages 18 to 25 or 30. This new life stage has been proposed in part due to the many social and cultural changes that are leading to a delay in adolescents' transition into adulthood, compared with past generations. *Do you think that you currently fit into this life stage? If not, how would you describe your current life stage?*

When asked this question, 7 of the 8 participants felt that they fell into the category of emerging adulthood. More specifically, they felt they had not fully reached adulthood based on their inability to: (a) accept responsibility for one's self, (b) make independent decisions, (c) become financially independent (i.e., because they had not completed school, entered the workforce, married, or become parents). They also described feelings identified as characteristic features of emerging adulthood such as identity exploration, instability, and feeling 'in-between' (Arnett, 2007). The following are three separate accounts of participants' experiences as to why h/she identify as an emerging adult:

I'm 22 I don't have enough money to buy a house or to move out. I have responsibilities and I'm expected to .... expected to save money, move out, be responsible .... all while being in school with no job and no money (Manny)

[I'm] 25, um I'm doing my third degree right now. I'm starting a [Degree Name] in the fall. I have no idea what I want to do with any of it ... So, I'm 100% trying to figure things out. I have 4 part time jobs ... copious amounts of student debt and a bunch of expensive papers. So yeah, I'm definitely still trying to figure it out ... That life stage [emerging adulthood] is definitely where I'm at. (Samantha)

I think emerging adulthood is just something that's often missed. Like, it's like everyone says you're adulting now. [It] is that age where it's like... Okay, you're done school - or maybe you're not done school ... and now you are kind of in the real world... especially now with the financial burden on everyone ... Also, just like finding yourself. (Veronica)

One participant (aged 30) did not feel she was an emerging adult, but rather - she identified as an adult. When probed about her current life stage and why she considered herself an adult, she said:

... I am past [emerging adulthood]. I'm full on adult. [I'm an adult] ...mostly by age. No, that's not true. Age and responsibility. As you get older life does not take it easy on you...I'm certainly an adult because I have a mortgage... I support myself. I don't live with my parents... I think I'm on the other end now of finding out who you are and being ok with it. Like, in my late twenties, I did all the work, you know, I did all of the soul searching and the self-reflection and the pep talks and now I'm on the other side, where I'm ok with who I am. (Dee)

Although Dee did not identify as an emerging adult, she had recently experienced the phenomenon of emerging adulthood, and expressed a willingness to discuss her experiences, thus it was determined that she was able to inform the research study. In line with the purpose of the study, the participant elaborates on the LS she developed as an athlete (during adolescence and emerging adulthood), expands on the challenges she is learning to navigate as an adult (e.g., confidence, competence) and, the LS she continues to enhance as a coach at the facility (during adulthood).

### **Data Collection**

Participants completed semi-structured interviews between July and August 2019. Semi-structured interviews allowed for focused, conversational communication with the research participants (Patton, 2015). At the onset of interviews, participants were provided with an overview of the study and procedures for confidentiality; they then completed an informed consent form, approved by the Human Research Ethics Board of York University (see Appendix A).

An interview guide was developed in line with the objectives of the study with key questions focused on: (a) coaches' sport background (e.g., as athletes), (b) their coaching experiences within MLSE LaunchPad, (c) their perceptions of LS development through sport (e.g., how they may have developed LS through their sport participation and coaching experiences, and (d) how they may be facilitating LS development among the youth that they work with at the SFD facility) (See Appendix B). Sample questions included: "Can you tell me a bit about your experiences as an MLSE LaunchPad coach/leader?" and "MLSE LaunchPad serves as a platform for development through sport - one of the focuses is to develop LS. How would you define or describe LS?" Finally, "As an emerging adult or in your current life stage,

what are some of the challenges you face?” Sample probe and follow-up questions included, “Can you tell me a bit more about that?” or “Could you provide me with an example?”

Interviews were 30 to 60 minutes in length. They were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim.

### **Data Analysis**

Interview transcripts underwent thematic analysis, defined as “a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data” (p. 79). Thematic analysis allowed for the examination of the different perspectives of research participants, highlighting similarities and/or differences and generating unexpected insights (Nowell et al., 2017). This study adopted an inductive (i.e., data driven) approach to thematic analysis, meaning that identified themes were strongly linked to the data rather than being driven primarily by the specific questions asked of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process involved coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame or the researcher’s analytical preconceptions. This approach was used rather than a deductive or theoretical approach, which is driven more so by the researcher’s theoretical or analytic interest in the area (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Specifically, the inductive analysis was guided by Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase process, which first entailed familiarization - reading and re-reading the interview transcripts to become familiar with the data. Secondly, data was organized in a systematic way through coding. Codes refer to the most basic element of raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As such, codes were used to identify features of the data that were of interest. Specifically, I identified important sections of text and attached labels to index them as they related to a theme (Nowell et al., 2017). Data was organized categorically and chronologically, reviewed repeatedly, and coded. Each segment of relevant data or text that

captured a significant aspect of the research question was given a code (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). For example, several participants provided their perceptions or interpretations of what life skills entailed; these sections of text/interview transcripts were highlighted and given a code name “definition of life skills.” Third, themes were identified by integrating components of ideas or experiences (Nowell et al., 2017). Specifically, codes were organized into broader themes that were coherent, distinct from each other, and relevant to the research question. For example, the code outlined in the previous section regarding participants’ definition of LS became part of a larger theme of how LS were ultimately taught at the SFD facility. As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), themes were characterised by their significance, while drawing upon an inductive bottom-up approach.

In the fourth stage, coded data excerpts for each theme were reviewed to consider whether they formed a coherent pattern (Nowell et al., 2017). Various factors were considered, such as: (a) Do the themes tell a compelling story of the data? (b) What is the relationship between the themes? and, (c) How are the codes interconnected? The revision process helped determine the themes related to ‘life skill development’, ‘sport for development’, ‘emerging adulthood’, and ‘coaching’. The review element of thematic analysis helped identify codes and data clustered around distinct topics, which eventually resulted in near final themes (e.g., LS developed as athletes; conceptualizing LS at a SFD facility; engaging in sport programming at a SFD facility compared to a high performance setting; navigating emerging adulthood as a coach/sport leader; recommendations for the SFD facility). Once all themes were reviewed, data associated with each theme was colour coded for clarity and organization. In the fifth step, themes were defined in order to “identify the essence of what each theme is about” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.92). Theme names were given based on the purpose of the research and

compelling data quotations that captured the central aspect of the theme. For example, the theme ‘recommendations for SFD facility’ includes data quotations that precisely capture various propositions made by the research participants to enhance teaching and facilitating LS at the SFD facility (e.g., “implement focus groups”, “provide staff with formal LS and coach awareness training”). Finally, the sixth step involved the final analysis and write-up of the report by incorporating the analytic narrative and data extracts in relation to existing literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **Methodological Rigour**

In ensuring methodological rigour, a few key procedures were utilized. Most notably, I engaged in reflexivity throughout the project, drawing upon a reflexive journal as an important tool to support this process. Reflexivity involves the researcher bringing awareness to their views in relation to others’ worldviews - and recognizing how these views may influence the research project, thus contributing to the openness and transparency of the research process. The reflexive journal allowed me to engage in ongoing dialogue regarding my interpretations, and to be critical about what I heard, noted, and experienced, with the aim of ensuring the true value of the data (Creswell, 2009; Palaganas et al., 2017). More specifically, reflexivity encouraged me to be open and transparent in the research process, forthright about my strengths and shortcomings, while assessing my biases and motivations (Tracy, 2010). I recognized that my implicit values, personal beliefs, emotions, and social location may have entered my research, but that social research can never be completely objective (McManus, 2005; Tarling, 2006).

With this in mind, I found myself ruminating on the ways in which my aspirations, experiences, and social identity shaped my research (Palaganas et al., 2017). This often involved navigating my own positionality within the research process, and in particular, recognizing how

similarities and differences in my background and status and those of the study participants may influence the research process. Through reflexivity I became aware that cultural and social (e.g., gendered, life stage) similarities and differences could influence the interactions and interpretations between myself and participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). For example, as an African Canadian researcher, I noticed the impact my ethnicity appeared to have on the participants' willingness to share, as one participant expressed that he felt he could talk comfortably about race and the struggles he faced as a black hockey player, growing up in a predominantly white neighborhood. Further, as someone who was also navigating emerging adulthood, I found I identified with several participants on a personal level. I acknowledged my experiences and perspectives as an emerging adult (e.g., identity exploration, financial independence, entering the workforce), and felt I could relate to some of the personal struggles the participants faced with regards to education, LS development, work-life balance, and their definition of success. Although I was able to listen and empathize with the sentiments of the participants, I was conscious not to let my interpretations hinder the objectivity of what participants shared with me, by staying true to their lived experiences as much as possible. In essence, being reflexive allowed me to become aware of participants' contribution to the construction of meanings and of lived experiences throughout the research process (Palaganas et al., 2017). Essentially, reflexivity helped me maintain the ethics of the relationship between myself and the research, allowing the interpretation of the findings to be done through the eyes and cultural standards of the researcher (Berger, 2015).

A second approach to ensuring methodological rigour involved employing member checking. Specifically, participants were given the opportunity to review their interview transcripts to provide input on whether or not the data/results accurately reflected their

experiences (Smith & McGannon, 2018). The data member checks served as a means of controlling subjective bias from the researcher and an opportunity to explore any gaps or similarities regarding interpretations of the research findings. None of the participants shared any questions or concerns regarding the content of the transcripts; however, one participant inquired regarding the presentation of results and in particular the direct quotes whereby they were reminded of ethics protocols related to participant identities. The member checking process enhanced the trustworthiness of the research by validating the credibility of the data and results (Smith & McGannon, 2018).

Finally, measures were taken to ensure rigour of the preliminary research findings by engaging with a critical friend (CF) (i.e., my supervisor and second author). We engaged in regular, documented meetings to share and discuss the analysis process and results. Although data analysis was primarily conducted by the lead researcher, a CF proved beneficial in supporting findings. Costa and Kallick (1993) describe a CF as “a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critiques of a person’s work as a friend” (p.50). In this study, the CF took the time to understand the context of the work, helped to guide the questions and objectives that the researcher was working toward, encouraged reflexivity, and provided alternative perspectives, support, and protection from bias (Smith & McGannon, 2018).

## **Results**

Five inter-related themes emerged from the data that ultimately contextualized participants' coaching experiences and informed the purpose of the study – to gain an understanding of emerging adults' experiences coaching, with a specific focus on LS development. The five themes included: (a) developing LS as young athletes, (b) conceptualizing LS at the SFD facility, (c) contrasting LS development in high performance sport and SFD, (d) recommendations for the SFD facility, and (e) new LS developed through coaching experiences. Pseudonyms are used throughout results to protect the anonymity of participants.

### **Developing LS as Young Athletes**

While not the primary focus of the study, each of the participants began by discussing their background in sport, and how they became coaches at MLSE LaunchPad. Throughout these discussions, it became apparent that all of the coaches felt they were hired at MLSE LaunchPad largely because of the LS they had formerly developed as athletes. Participants highlighted four distinct LS that they believed they developed through their experiences as athletes and how they developed these LS, including: confidence, communication, social competency, and resilience.

For example, Veronica described a wide range of LS she felt she developed as an athlete – speaking specifically of confidence, communication, and social competency:

When I didn't make the volleyball team I would still go to practices and build the confidence and competence and ended up starting on the team. Also, through sport you learn how to deal with ... groups of people ... [it] really helps your social skills, but also helps you deal with conflicts ... with your coach ... with your fellow teammates ... the referee. [Sport] teaches you so many life skills.

Ben echoed Veronica's comments regarding the development of social competency, highlighting, "I used to suck at being social at school - like [in] high school I couldn't make friends because I was too shy. Sports was the main source for me to be able to learn those [social] skills." Similarly, Freddy highlighted how sport enhanced his communication skills, which he draws upon in diverse professional and work contexts:

I think the life skill that I've developed is communication, [and now I can use those] just like when you come from the corporate world and you work with a lot of more senior individuals, and then, you [come to MLSE LaunchPad and] work with kids.

Further, two other coaches highlighted how sport served as a platform to help them develop resilience and grit:

Sport came through when I needed something the most. Like when my parents split up, sport is what I turned to. And I think that was such a healthy thing to turn to because through that I built that resiliency. (Serena)

As I started to kind of take soccer a lot more seriously, I found myself working outside of my practice times and I found that [sport] kind of fostered this resiliency and grit that I don't think I once had. (Ryan)

Ryan further described some of the processes within sport that fostered his development of resilience:

[Through sport] you work on your self-esteem because to have a goal and to believe that you can do it, you have to believe in yourself... [and] to organize a plan and carry it out takes a lot of perseverance, determination, [and] grit. I think all those [LS] are important... I would say that I've been able to do that with a lot of the things in my life and it made me a lot more self-aware [because I know] my weaknesses and my strengths.

In sport you won't be great at everything ... you have to kind of look into yourself and see [that], “Hey, maybe I'm not the fastest.”

Coaches discussed many other means through which they felt developed LS as young athletes. For instance, they discussed how sport required them to make decisions, respect authorities (e.g., parents, coaches), regulate their emotions in difficult situations, while also fostering their self-esteem through various accomplishments.

### **Conceptualizing LS at the SFD Facility**

The second theme that emerged related to how coaches conceptualized LS at the SFD facility. Recognizing MLSE LaunchPad’s key focus on LS development, while also aware that LS are often conceptualized differently by different individuals, it was important to first inquire about coaches’ interpretation of LS. While there were many similarities across all coaches’ interpretations, they each nonetheless emphasized slightly different points as follows (emphasis added):

[Life skills] are the *tools* that you use not only in the SFD facility, but in everyday life. They’re the tools to help one *maneuver through life* and any obstacles one may face (Ryan).

[Life skills] are the *core skills* or values that you have to call on time and time again throughout your life that will help *propel you forward*. That will help you face things, obstacles, and adversity in your life and ultimately help you be successful. (Dee)

[Life skills] are the *principles* that occur in society, that society has structured life around to be important. The intangibles you need to get *through life*. (Manny)

Several participants defined and described LS using similar terminology such as, “core skills/principles” that “propel you forward/help you get through life”. Participants’

conceptualizations of LS appeared to have evolved from their past experiences as athletes, while also closely aligning with how they were trained to define and facilitate LS in the SFD context.

As Serena explained:

“When I think of [MLSE LaunchPad], transferable life skills look like grit, competence, teamwork, leadership, communication, time management, accountability... Those are things that aren't just about sport. Like, those are things that happen in your day to day life. How are you accountable as a person? How do you manage your schedule on a day to day basis? What are you like in a work environment? What are you like in school environment? What are you like with your friends?... Sport is such an interesting area because people think it's about being good at something, but it's not just about scoring goals and winning ... I think there's...so much more value in the skills that you gain through your involvement in sport that go beyond your physical capabilities. Life skills could also be about health literacy... and understanding how important it is to move or to maintain your health... you learn a little bit of all that [at MLSE LaunchPad].”

### **Contrasting LS Development in High Performance Sport and SFD**

As highlighted in the two previous themes, coaches first described their development of LS as young athletes, and subsequently outlined how they conceptualized LS development in the SFD facility. Notably, participants highlighted several differences between these two contexts. Specifically, they detailed their experiences growing up in structured and disciplined high-performance sport contexts (e.g., competitive and semi-professional involvement in hockey, dance, and soccer) and the importance of developing LS in that environment simply to “make it” or “survive”. This differed from how they were attempting to teach LS in the SFD environment where LS were more explicitly conceptualized, defined, and taught.

For example, Manny indicated that he learned the value of respect through his high-performance sport experiences because of clear team norms and performance expectations from the coach, but detailed that he found it quite difficult to intentionally teach the value of respect by simply talking about it with the MLSE LaunchPad program participants. Reflecting on his youth sport experience, he stated: “When coach is talking, you’re not talking. If you’re talking like there’s problems. It’s more of a respect thing.” Similarly, Ben had served as a coach in a high performance setting, as well as at MLSE LaunchPad, stating: “I’m a coach for the junior team and with them I do see the difference between [how we coach] the kids that are here and the kids that are there.” He went on to describe key differences:

... coaching for the [high performance team] is more competitive... [At MLSE LaunchPad] we have to structure a plan - [a] weekly plan - that engages the kids in a fun way, and not really in a competitive way ... so basically, each week ... we focus on development [of a LS] for that specific sport, and we make it engaging for [the kids] ... a lot of times we do warm ups at the beginning ...and then we’ll play a fun game at the end.

Essentially, coaches described having learned their LS as athletes implicitly through the environment of high-performance sport, and now being challenged to teach LS more explicitly as coaches/leaders within this SFD environment. Participants often referred to the explicit approach being used at the SFD facility, whereby LS were “taught, not caught”:

I think... life skills have to be taught explicitly, and the thing is that life skills aren’t caught, they’re taught and that’s a huge thing for me ... we can’t just expect kids to show up in the place and play basketball and [expect that] they’re going to learn our seven life

skills... that's just unrealistic, unless we're teaching kids how to form these life skills, then basketball's not [going to] do it. Basketball is basketball. (Samantha)

Interestingly, participants' commitment and belief in the explicit approach to teaching LS sometimes appeared to waver – with some participants even contradicted themselves. For example, in the following quote, Serena first emphasized that LS needed to be taught to be truly learned, but then seems to describe potential implicit forms of learning LS:

[When you're] taught, I'm explaining to you what you're doing. I'm showing you. I'm giving you an example ... I think you're aware of it. Like, when you're taught something, you're aware that it's happening. But I feel like [if life skills are] caught, it's like you're not aware of your “catch”. Like ... when you catch a cold, you're not aware until it has actually happened. ... I feel like a life skill could be similar. You're not aware that you've caught that life skill until you're like, “wow”.

In sum, discussions with participants appeared to highlight a tension between what their experiences were as athletes and what their new experiences were, because the teaching of LS at the SFD centre was so different from their own past experiences of developing LS, coaches did not always feel they were effective or successful in fostering LS among children and youth in their programs.

### **Recommendations for SFD Facility**

Following participants' reflections highlighting the contrast between their past experiences as athletes and their current experiences as coaches, the fourth theme offers five recommendations participants shared for the SFD facility. As described below, participants' suggestions broadly focused on the need for more specific and consistent training in order to improve their competency and preparedness to teach LS within this context.

### *Living LS; Not Reciting LS*

One of the most consistent recommendations shared by participants related to the explicit manner in which LS were being taught at the SFD facility, and for consideration to also be given to ways to teach LS more implicitly. Veronica described the lack of interest she observed among program participants when coaches were explicitly teaching LS: “I feel like as a coach you see [athletes reciting life skills] like ... “self-esteem!” ... Not that they don't care, but the kids just ... [recite these] so they can either go home or start their activity.” Similarly, Samantha observed:

Now, say [the LS is] self-esteem. All the kids know what life skill we're on, but could they define it for you? Probably not very well. The commonality of [the youth athlete's] answers are... “What's social competence?” ... all [of] the kids are like “Respect!” ... “What's self-esteem?” ... “Respect!” ... like it's just whatever answer [the youth athletes] can shoot off that they think [the coaches are] looking for [so that the coaches can] move on to the sport.

Instead of this approach, participants suggested youth might be more engaged by living LS rather than reciting them. Samantha outlined the importance of coaches “having more opportunities to learn and to understand different ways to coach and teach...”. Veronica emphasized how these different approaches could positively influence a youths' LS development:

It depends on the coach. Like, don't rush your [teaching of] LS - and also do it throughout [the training sessions]. So, as you're doing transitions or [a] water break, [coaches] could give a couple high-fives before, [and] that maybe will help with [the youth athletes'] self-esteem.

Essentially, participants wanted to find ways to mitigate the lack of enthusiasm from youth when explicit teaching approaches were used to facilitating LS development.

### ***Training on LS Development***

Coaches also suggested the need for more training, resources, and opportunities to be better able to teach LS. Veronica noted that, “during our team meeting we did like maybe a half hour, or an hour dedicated to [LS]; but maybe having more of a dedicated training session about LS would be great!”. Coaches suggested regularly engaging in debriefing sessions after programs to share ideas to discuss what worked and/or what did not work. They also suggested implementing additional resources such as Ted Talks, focus groups, and conflict resolution training to enhance their coach training and experiences, and help them be better equipped to address challenges. As Freddy described,

I think maybe sometimes [MLSE LaunchPad] can do more scenario type training where we have scenarios of different kids, and how they act, and [the meeting facilitators can provide] a guideline [of what] to do in that situation. A lot of [the training] is just free flow right now, and based on your past experiences. [MLSE LaunchPad] expects you to just... know how to do it, which is fine. But, if you want your coaches to really thrive and prosper, it'd be good to get that kind of [hands-on] training.

### ***Working with Marginalized Youth***

Participants also felt they could have benefitted from more context-specific training relevant to working with youth who are marginalized within the community. Considering participants’ past sport experiences were primarily in high-performance settings – and MLSE Launchpad is a community-based SFD facility - participants believed they needed more knowledge and understanding of the facility, the community, and the people within these contexts. This training could encompass cultural sensitivity awareness and understanding of the

LGBTQ+ community, among other knowledge. Ryan highlighted the importance of cultural competence and awareness within the organization (i.e., in relation to race, sexuality):

I think having [cultural sensitivity] training and opening up that dialogue to the [youth] is [important]. A lot of these kids have self-expression and that's what I love about them. They express themselves no matter what, and unapologetically, but making [MLSE LaunchPad] an open space, [where] other people feel safe ... people, for example, who are homosexual and transgender, anything. I think it's super important.

Ryan went on to elaborate on the importance of creating a safe space by “implementing training and a healthy dialogue within the staff” stating:

Having an open dialogue from our directors, to our assistant coaches, [from] top to bottom; - having that dialogue and having ... the full-time staff or directors, [and] our managers, pretty much telling us, [that] this is the precedent. This is the expectation. We're creating the safe space, not only for, boys and girls of color. ... but also, for our queer population.

### ***Mental Health Preparedness***

Participants also suggested that it was important to engage them in mental health training. Typically, highly trained/specialized partners (e.g., clinicians) were brought into the SFD facility through mental health initiatives (e.g., Sport & Health Mind). This program included both drop-in and counselling with expertly trained clinicians that “listen, engage, assist, and empower young people to recognize their strengths, expand their capabilities, enhance their well-being, and mental health” (MLSE Launchpad, n.d.). However, participants felt they too needed be trained in basic mental health, should an event ever occur during a regular training

session. Further, participants emphasized the importance of mental health programs, especially during emerging adulthood. As Ben stated:

I personally think as you get older you will need more mental health, help. [MLSE LaunchPad] does have support for [the] kids, [if] they come in [and] have any issues ... they speak to someone. [So], maybe engage the staff with that program as well. Not just the external members. Maybe have a plan where [staff/coaches/sport leaders] drop in ... not a psychologist, but someone who has experience [on the effects of] mental health.

### ***Evolving the Definition of LS***

Finally, in line with previously discussed theme of participants conceptualizing LS – it follows at that coaches suggested the SFD facility’s conceptualization of LS should continue to evolve, as they ‘got better’ at effectively teaching LS. Veronica illustrated this point stating, “I think [MLSE LaunchPad] should have some set of unified definition or glossary of life skills.”

### **Developing New LS as Coaches**

The final theme that emerged from the data related to the development of new LS through coaching (i.e., following youth, as emerging adults) – and continued development of LS (i.e., that they had already learned as youth, but were now further developing and/or applying as emerging adults). New LS included *self-regulation/coping*, *decision-making*, *time management*, and *growth mindset*, while LS that were being developed in new ways included *resilience/grit* and *confidence*. Participants described their coaching experiences at the SFD and the applicability of the LS they learned in this context to their new life stage of emerging adulthood.

Several participants outlined how coaching occurred in a fast-paced environment, where they were required to develop coping and self-regulation skills: “Being in a high-pressure environment and learning how to cope with like stress - I had to use a growth mindset, like -

always wanting to get better.” (Veronica) Participants also highlighted how they drew upon the resilience, grit, and determination they developed through coaching, and applied this to other domains of their life as emerging adults. As Ryan stated, “You kind of need to [develop determination and grit]... I guess in this stage you are kind of learning about yourself and you're learning who you are.” Similarly, others outlined:

The only reason I really have [resilience and grit] is because I've been put in situations through sport [and coaching] where I had to rise up to the challenge. Like, there's always noise around you, but you need to be able to focus on yourself. And just keep it moving.  
(Dee)

[In this job and life stage], you just have to get used to getting shut down, getting told “no”... that you're not good [enough] and then you just have to like ... realize that, that's alright ... you'll figure it out and you are good, and keep trying. (Samantha)

Many participants described LS development as an ongoing process. Manny explained that he'd used time management to navigate his coaching position, but that he was still working on self-regulation and self-esteem. Similarly, Samantha described her continued development of decision-making skills explaining, “That's been a real hard one for me lately.” Finally, Ben stated that he has developed his confidence, although he “could still develop being more social”. He goes on to explain, “I love being by myself. I don't like being in group settings as much, so [I have to continue to] be more engaged, with different people and different groups.”

## Discussion

Guided loosely by Holt and colleagues' (2017) *Model of PYD Through Sport*, the purpose of this research was to gain understanding of coaches' LS development as emerging adults within a SFD facility. Specific research questions were:

- (a) What LS do emerging adults bring to their coaching roles from their sport experiences, and how do they transfer these LS into their coaching roles?
- (b) What new LS do emerging adult coaches develop within their roles as coaches, and how do they transfer these LS into other contexts within emerging adulthood?

### Development and Transferability of LS

Overall, study findings offer support for Holt and colleagues' (2017) *Model of PYD Through Sport* and the growing body of literature indicating that youth sport provides a rich context for the development of cognitive, emotional and social skills that are transferable to non-sport settings (Bean & Forneris, 2016; Camiré et al., 2012; Pierce et al., 2018; Trottier & Robitaille, 2014). Findings of the first theme (i.e., *Developing LS as Young Athletes*) add to existing research that has broadly correlated youth's involvement in extracurricular activities and community organizations with personal and interpersonal growth (Danish, et al., 2004; Dworkin et al., 2003; Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; Larson, 2000; Lerner et al., 2005), with participants describing specific LS they developed as young athletes related to improved confidence, communication, social competency, and resilience.

Central to definitions of LS development is the transference of skills learned in sport to other life settings (Danish et al., 2004; Gould & Carson, 2008). A number of participants were able to identify and discuss LS transference – outlining how they utilized skills they developed as youth athletes to environments other than sport (e.g., school, work, home, community).

Participants in this study clearly emphasized that the LS they developed as youth through sport helped them (a) earn their job positions as coaches at the SFD facility, and (b) navigate their roles as coaches at the SFD facility. These findings reinforce and extend limited research that has examined LS transference from sport over time (Kendellen & Camiré, 2017). Further, these findings support the role of MLSE LaunchPad (n.d.) in delivering outcomes across different pillar domains – particularly as they relate to programs leaders being *Ready for Work*.

Findings may also offer an opportunity to extend Holt and colleagues' (2017) *Model of PYD Through Sport*. Of particular note, within the final theme (i.e., *Developing New LS as Coaches*) participants highlighted new LS that they learned through a new sport context (i.e., coaching) at a new life stage (i.e., emerging adulthood); these included self-regulation/coping, decision-making, time management, and growth mindset. Participants also described continued and ongoing development of LS during emerging adulthood, that they had previously learned through sport as athletes (i.e., resilience/grit, confidence, social competence). These findings advance the minimal research exploring development during emerging adulthood, which has focused primarily in high performance sport contexts (e.g., Rathwell & Young, 2017). Various theories of development (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1995) attest that development should not be viewed as a process that occurs solely during childhood and adolescence – but rather - occurs across the lifespan. Some preliminary work has explored PYD-like outcomes among Master athletes (Dionigi et al., 2018) and preschoolers (Harlow et al., 2019), showing both parallels and differences in developmental processes and outcomes across life stages. There appears to be value in further studying coaching as a means for developing LS during emerging adulthood, to better understand how the development of LS may “look different” at different stages of development. Given concerns that young athletes typically “age out” of the sport system during

adolescence (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2017), research in this area could also offer important implications for continued positive LS development through sport.

Finally, while not the primary purpose of this research, participants' reflections/excerpts further validated the theory of emerging adulthood as a unique developmental stage (i.e., ages 18-25/30 years) in Western society (Arnett, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2004). Consistent with the theory, participants highlighted distinctive challenges in this stage (e.g., making independent decisions, financial independence), but felt that the LS they developed as coaches helped them better navigate these challenges, once again indicating how sport facilitated the transference of these LS. Holt and colleagues' (2017) model highlights the influence of individual differences and broader distal influences on PYD through sport. Interestingly, individuals in this study had very similar experiences in terms of their development of LS through sport, and experiences of emerging adulthood. While some differences based on cultural background and socio-economic status may have been expected (Arnett et al., 2011), participants discussed more similarities of experiences than differences – perhaps suggesting that broader distal factors (i.e., life stage, sport context) had the greatest influences on their developmental processes.

### **LS Development in Diverse Sport Contexts**

Another important finding emerging from this study relates to how LS are developed in different sport contexts. While Holt and colleagues (2017) hypothesized that youth could experience greater PYD outcomes through the combination of a PYD climate (i.e., positive coach, parent, and peer interactions) and a LS-focused program, findings of this study suggest more nuanced processes underscore LS development. Complexities of LS development were evident within various themes and sub-themes (i.e., *Contrasting LS Development in High Performance Sport and SFD*; *Conceptualizing LS at the SFD Facility*; *Living LS, Not Reciting*

*LS; Evolving Definition of LS*). Essentially, while participants spoke of developing LS through very implicit processes as youth in high-performance sport contexts (i.e., through the sport structure, positive climate; levels one and two of Bean and colleagues' 2018 implicit-explicit continuum), they were encouraged to use much more explicit techniques at the SFD facility (i.e., by discussing and practicing LS and transfer; levels three, four, five, and six of Bean and colleagues' 2018 continuum), and often struggled to do so. These findings highlight a few points for consideration.

First, in line with recent papers (Bean et al., 2018; Turnnidge et al., 2014), these findings may bring into question the binary implicit-explicit approach to LS development through sport, while also challenging Bean and colleagues' (2018) continuum, which suggests greater LS development emerges at higher levels/stages. More specifically, these findings may suggest that some sport contexts (i.e., high performance sport) are more conducive to implicit processes of LS development, while other contexts (i.e., SFD) are more conducive and actually require explicit processes. Should this be the case, other questions persist: (a) In contrast to Holt and colleagues' (2017) hypothesis, could high levels of implicitly fostered PYD lead to equally positive outcomes as explicitly fostered means? (b) While past researchers have highlighted the importance of drawing upon both implicit and explicit processes to foster PYD (Bean et al., 2018; Preston et al., 2019), could optimal processes be more context-specific?

Secondly, it is important to note that participants often struggled to explicitly teach LS at the SFD facility, noting how different the context was from the high-performance sport contexts they experienced in their youth. Differences included, but were not limited to, different standards, different levels of accountability and consequences, and perhaps most notably - different end-goals/foci of programs (i.e., performance versus fun and healthy development).

These findings are further reinforced in participants' conceptualizations of LS development. When discussing their own experiences in sport, participants easily described the LS they learned in their youth, and how sport supported/fostered their learning of these skills; however, when asked to describe LS, they appeared to provide a recited definition, not seeming to connect with the definition in any practical way, and they struggled to intentionally foster LS in the youth they were working with. From a practical standpoint, there may be value in considering some of the contextual elements about high performance sport (e.g., competition, goal-setting, focus over time), that could be implemented in other sport contexts such as a SFD facility, that would allow for more implicit facilitation of LS development. Further, as LS development through sport remains a relatively new research area, there may be value in continuing to review and possibly evolve LS definitions (Danish et al., 2004; Gould & Carson, 2008). In particular, given the centrality of transference within the definition of LS, continued consideration of how to optimally facilitate transfer within youth sport contexts (i.e., the fifth and sixth levels of Bean and colleagues' [2018] continuum) may be necessary, as youth in this study seemed more likely to "recite" rather than connect with the principle of LS transfer.

### **Considerations for SFD Facility**

Finally, while not the primary focus of the study, findings offer some practical considerations for the *MLSE LaunchPad*. As the facility remains relatively new (i.e., opened January 2017) and novel (i.e., unique in Canada and possibly around the world), there is potential for continued growth, learning, and acknowledgement of "best practices" emerging from this study, particularly given the facility's prioritization of research and evaluation. Findings within the sub-themes of *Training on LS Development*, *Working with Marginalized Youth*, and *Mental Health Preparedness* highlight the importance of coaches/leaders within the

facility being adequately prepared for their roles. Consistent with past research on coach training and preparation, many participants highlighted the value of informal learning opportunities through mentoring, debriefs, reflections and discussions, in addition to more formal training and learning approaches (Camiré et al., 2014; Lemyre et al., 2007).

Further, participants' concerns regarding mental health preparedness are worthy of consideration. While the SFD facility had experts and resources in place to support youth struggling with mental health challenges (e.g., on-staff psychologists), participants highlighted that when they were "on the ground" with youth, they felt they needed at minimum basic training in mental health to support and direct youth who may be struggling "in the moment". This finding is particularly important, given *MLSE LaunchPad's* (n.d.) pillar focus on *Healthy Mind*. While little research has examined the role of the coach in supporting youth athletes' mental health, youth sport is increasingly regarded as a potential context to foster optimal mental health among youth participants (e.g., Swann et al., 2018). In line with the SFD facility's (*MLSE LaunchPad*, n.d.) focus on working with youth facing barriers, participants suggested a need for better preparedness to work with marginalized youth. These findings reinforce the importance of recognizing distal ecological systems and individual factors (e.g., community, socio-economic status; Holt et al., 2017) when considering how to optimally foster PYD outcomes in youth.

### **Strengths, Limitations, Future Directions, and Implications**

While recent research has extensively examined LS development through sport among youth (e.g., Camiré et al., 2012, Dworkin, et. al., 2003, Larson, 2000), little work has examined LS development through sport among emerging adults, among coaches, or specifically within a SFD facility. The results of the study extend understanding of LS development through sport, by considering LS development after youth (i.e., during emerging adulthood), in different sport

roles (i.e., among coaches versus athletes), and in different sport contexts (i.e., SFD versus high performance).

The study's design was guided by a phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2007), utilizing semi-structured interviews to capture individuals' lived experiences through their perspectives, opinions, attitudes, and beliefs. I engaged in reflexivity throughout the research, and provided participants the opportunity to review transcripts, facilitating an open and transparent research process (Creswell, 2009). While these approaches offered rich understanding of emerging adults' experiences, my position must be acknowledged; all data was filtered through the lens of interviewer (i.e., me), while also being subject to social desirability bias on the part of the interviewee (i.e., participants). Additional research drawing upon other designs and methodological approaches (e.g., observation, survey, athlete journals/diaries) may be valuable in complementing knowledge gained from the current study.

While the SFD facility, with its aligning focus on PYD (Warner et al., 2019), provided an optimal context to examine LS development, the unique parameters of the participants in this context should not be overlooked; the majority of coaches/leaders at the facility were post-secondary students and former athletes from a large urban centre, who now worked as coaches at a very unique SFD facility in downtown Toronto. As such, findings are not generalizable broadly to all emerging adult coaches. Continued research among diverse emerging adult coaches (e.g., non-students, diverse ages) and in varied sport contexts (e.g., non-SFD, recreational, high performance, rural/urban, diverse sports, different aged athletes) would be valuable. Finally, due to time constraints, experiences were captured only at one time point (July and August 2019). Given the distinct and constantly changing characteristics that encompass emerging adulthood, it

may be useful to conduct longitudinal research to assess how these changes may influence LS development among emerging adult coaches over time.

When viewed within the lens of Holt and colleagues' (2017) *Model of PYD Through Sport*, these strengths and limitations highlight the importance of continued consideration of individual differences and distal ecological systems in influencing the process of development. Results emerging from this study drew attention to the importance of examining and understanding LS learning and transfer with consideration to the implicit-explicit processes of facilitation. Future research should also consider how participants' PYD climate (e.g., peers, adults, coaches) may differ across sport contexts (e.g., high-performance sport versus SFD), and across demographics (i.e., youth versus emerging adult).

Given the exploratory nature of this study, there are several avenues for future research that would enhance the quality and depth of coaching and emerging adulthood literature in sport. First, participants highlighted consistent LS that they had developed as athletes, and subsequently, additional consistent LS they developed as coaches/leaders. These findings suggest there may be value in better understanding how LS development may evolve over the life course. As such, findings may serve as a starting point for the development or adaption of a LS measurement tool in emerging adulthood. Such a tool could allow for more close examination of the LS that may be most facilitative of healthy emerging adulthood, and/or most optimal for the development of 'good' coaches. Second, participants in this study emphasized that the LS they developed through coaching were being transferred into other life domains; however, there would be value in better understanding the transferability of these LS and how they may facilitate healthy development in other domains, given emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) is a relatively new area of study. Finally, findings of this study offer a stepping stone for further

research to better understand how to facilitate young coaches' learning, given the significance of the coach's role in young children's development, and that coaching often offers a natural transition from sport as youth 'age out' of the sport system (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; 2017). Collectively, further research in this area may be beneficial not only to SFD facilities, but also to community sport organizations. Continued research should seek to address the priorities of youth sport stakeholders (e.g., program directors, policy makers, community organizations, and parents) to better inform research agendas in developing sport specific curricula and/or program plans that promote positive developmental outcomes and experiences through sport for both the coach and youth athlete.

## **Conclusion**

This project provided a preliminary exploration of emerging adults' coaching experiences, with a specific focus on LS development in a SFD facility, loosely guided by a PYD framework (Holt et al., 2017). Findings suggest sport serves as a context for emerging adults to continue to enhance their life LS development following their involvement in sport as athletes, and ultimately, develop new LS in their roles as coaches. This research extends past work (Côté et al., 2014, Fraser-Thomas, et al., 2005, Holt, & Neely, 2011, Turnnidge et al., 2014) showing that sport is an important environment to foster psychosocial development in youth; findings indicate that sport can also foster LS development among emerging adults and coaches, in diverse contexts (i.e., SFD facility). In sum, findings offer several notable contributions including but not limited to: (a) an enhanced understanding LS development over time (i.e., beyond youth), (b) a foundation for exploration of LS development in different sport contexts (i.e., with consideration to implicit versus explicit approaches within these contexts), and (c) a starting point of practical implications of LS development within a SFD facility.

### **Consent and Research Ethics**

This research was conducted in accordance with the policies and regulations set out under the York University Graduate Student Human Participants Research Protocol. Identifying characteristics (e.g., names) of study participants were removed and/or replaced. All electronic data was stored on a password-protected encrypted computer. Data will be held for five years, where the data will then be deleted. Audio recordings and electronic transcriptions were stored on a password-protected computer. The data will be retained for five years, and then the electronic data will be destroyed.

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## **Appendix A: Informed Consent Form Template**

**Date:** May – August 2019

**Study Name:** Exploring life skill development through coaching in emerging adults

**Researchers:** Dr. Jessica Fraser-Thomas, Associate Professor, School of Kinesiology and Health Science. Nathania Ofori, MSc. Candidate, School of Kinesiology and Health Science.

**Purpose of the Research:** To gain an understanding of emerging adults' experiences coaching, with a specific focus on life skill development through coaching.

**What You Will Be Asked to do in the Research:** You will take part in one in-depth semi-structured interview that will be 30-60 minutes in duration. The interview questions will focus on your sport history, your coaching experiences with MLSE Launchpad, and your potential life skill development through your sport participation and coaching experiences.

**Risks and Discomforts:** There are no known/anticipated risks associated with this project. Should you feel uncomfortable or upset at any point in the interview, you may take a break from the interview, or ask to bring the interview to an end. Resources (e.g., wellness facilities/ways to deal with anxiety/stress) will also be readily available.

**Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You:** While there are no direct benefits to you, you may enjoy engaging in a positive reflection process about your coaching experiences; this process may enhance your knowledge about yourself, your growth, and your life skill development through sport/coaching. This research advance understanding of emerging adults' life skill development through coaching and will inform the development of a pedagogy to optimize and evaluate life skills development among young sport leaders.

**Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:** Participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision to stop participating or to refuse to answer particular questions will not influence the researchers, or nature with York University, or MLSE Launchpad, either now, or in the future. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed.

**Confidentiality:** Participant data will be safely stored in a password-encrypted computer in a locked facility and only research staff will have access to this information. All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Data from this study will be stored for 5 years, after which point all hard copies of the data will be shredded and electronic files will be deleted from

relevant hard drives. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law. The data collected in this research project may be used, in anonymized form, by members of the research team in subsequent research investigations exploring similar lines of inquiry. Such projects will still undergo ethics review by the HPRC, our institutional REB. Any secondary use of anonymized data by the research team will be treated with the same degree of confidentiality and anonymity as in the original research project.

**Questions About the Research?** If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact Dr. Fraser-Thomas either by email or phone. This research has received ethics review and approval by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics.

### **Legal Rights and Signatures:**

I \_\_\_\_\_, consent to participate in *Exploring life skill development through coaching in emerging adults* conducted by Nathania Ofori. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

**Participant Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Principal Investigator Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Interview Guide

Hello. Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this research project. I will begin with a few questions about who you are, your sports background, and then I will move into some in-depth questions about how you became affiliated the MLSE, along with your perceptions and experiences regarding life skill development as a coach/sport leader. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Tell me about your first involvement with sport.
  - a. What sports did you play?
  - b. Did you compete? If so, at what level?
  - c. Did you also play sports in unorganized settings (like pick-up)? If so, tell me about that.
  
2. Can you tell me about how you became affiliated with the MLSE Launchpad?
  - a. If you were first involved with MLSE Launchpad as an athlete, can you tell me about your transition to become a coach?
  - b. Did you have any training once you received the position as a coach at MLSE Launchpad? If so, can you tell me about the training(s) you received? (Probe for details).
  - c. Did you have any other coach training prior to coming to MLSE Launchpad? If so, describe.
  - d. What sports/activities do/have you coached?
  
3. Can you tell me a bit about your experiences as an MLSE Launchpad coach/leader?
  - a. Can you tell me about a regular day working at MLSE as a coach/leader?
  - b. Describe the structure of your working day or session at MLSE? (e.g., preparation, kids' arrival, focus of activities, end of session, etc.)
  - c. Tell me about your experiences with your fellow coaches here at MLSE.
  
4. As you know, MLSE Launchpad serves as a platform for development through sport. One of the focuses of MLSE launchpad is to develop life skills. How would you define or describe "life skills"?
  - a. Do you think that your experiences in sport and in coaching foster your development of life skills?
  - b. If so, what life skills do you think you have developed through sport and coaching?
  - c. Can you provide specific examples of each of these?
  - d. Can you think of any specific training(s) that helped you be able to better foster or develop your life skills through your coaching?

5. In recent years, there has been consideration among development professional of a new life stage between adolescence and adulthood – called emerging adulthood – so roughly from ages 18 to 25. This new life stage has been proposed in part due to all the social and cultural stages are leading to a delay in adolescents’ transition into adulthood, compared with past generations. Do you think that you currently fit into this life stage? If not, how would you describe your current life stage?
  - a. As an emerging adult or in your current life stage, what are some of the challenges you face?
  - b. What are the positive aspects of being in this life stage?
  - c. What do you think are some of the most important life skills you need during emerging adulthood / your current life stage?
  - d. Do you think you have developed any of these life skills through your sport and/or coaching experiences? Please elaborate / provide examples.
6. There is a saying in developmental psychology that life skills are “taught” not “caught”. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain your answer.
7. As a coach in a sport for development setting, I expect that you are probably trying to foster life skills in the youth you work with. What are the life skills that you focus on most in your training sessions with youth?
  - a. Can you provide examples?
  - b. How do you foster the development of these life skills in youth, through your coaching?
8. Do you have any recommendations for MLSE on how your coach training could be improved to help you better foster your own life skills through coaching?
  - a. Do you have recommendations for MLSE on how your training can make you better at fostering life skills in the youth you work with?
  - b. Do you have any other suggestions for how MLSE can help you to optimize your life skill development?
9. What do you think is the most important that you have learned or that could be learned from being a coach?
10. We are almost at the end of our interview. Before I ask the final few questions about demographics, I’m wondering if there’s anything else you would like to add or talk about that we have not discussed today?

- a. Is there anything you would like to elaborate on or clarify?
  - b. Do you have any questions for me?
11. These last couple questions simply provide us with information so that we can describe our participant group in the study.
- a. How old are you?
  - b. How long were you / have you been affiliated with MLSE LaunchPad? This means you were involved from ages X to X?
  - c. How many hours per week do/did you work for MLSE LaunchPad?
  - d. What is the distance that you live from MLSE LaunchPad?
  - e. When we present quotes from you in our work, we do not use any identifiers. Instead of using your name, we usually use a pseudonym. Is there a particular pseudonym you would like us to use for you? (If not, we will simply develop one ourselves).

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today. I will follow up in a couple of weeks by sending you a transcript of our discussion today. I encourage you to review it to assure that you feel it accurately reflects that nature of our conversation today. Please feel free to reach out at any time if you have questions or further thoughts you'd like to share. Thank you again!

### **Appendix C: Introductory Recruitment Script**

Hello, I am completing a research project to explore your life skill development through coaching as an emerging adult with the MLSE LaunchPad.

This research will assist in the development of a pedagogy to be implemented to optimize and evaluate life skills development among young sport leaders within the organization. It is anticipated that findings may provide athletes, parents, coaches/sport leaders, and sport organizations with additional knowledge to inform their decisions, structures, and policies.

Participation in this research will involve a one-on-one interview, which will take place at the MLSE LaunchPad facility (Downtown, Toronto).

The interview would be recorded and remain confidential. You are not required to share any experiences that are uncomfortable, and you are able to withdraw from the study at any time. Further, there will be no identifiers (name, organization, age, years involved), so you will remain anonymous and your information will remain confidential. During the interview, I would like to discuss the following topics: youth, sports, coaching, and emerging adulthood.

If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to participate in the research, please feel free to contact me at [\[email\]](#).

Thank you for your time.