

Crime Prevention Through Sports

The Experience of British Columbia

**A report presented to the Crime Reduction Research Program,
B.C. Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General**

We gratefully acknowledge their funding support

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We are grateful to work on Sto:lo traditional and ancestral lands and we pledge to work towards truth and reconciliation in solidarity with our Indigenous communities.

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Community safety and wellbeing as part of 'Sports Based Crime Prevention Programming' is used specifically for this project based on a Public Safety Canada report titled *Research Highlights Crime Prevention Sports-Based Crime Prevention Programs* (2017). According to the Public Safety Canada Report, Sports Based Crime Prevention Programming (SBCPP) includes "those offering physical activities to youth in either a social development or diversion-based intervention".

In 2019 we undertook a study as part of the South Asian Research Fellowship Program and found that there are numerous service providers, agencies implementing sports and crime prevention focused physical activity related youth mentorship programs which target at-risk youth as a means to dissuade involvement in gang related activities. The next phase was the understand the efficacy of these programs.

This 2021 report is authored by two renowned criminologists who have taken the time to conduct a fulsome literature review, interview key informants, conduct robust analysis and make recommendations to go forward based on the findings.

We are indebted to Yvon Dandurand (UFV Professor Emeritus) and Dr. Jonathan Heidt (UFV Associate Professor) for undertaking this broad, thorough yet very BC relevant research that clearly and unequivocally addresses what is required for crime prevention to be undertaken through sport.

We invite you to take the time to read this extensive report and we would appreciate any and all feedback.

We gratefully acknowledge funding support for this project from the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General.

Sincerely



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Executive Summary

Sports stand with several other activities (e.g., education, mentoring, religious teaching, and volunteering) as a potential factor in influencing positive social development among children and youth. Crime prevention strategies have therefore tried to build on the popularity and benefits of sport activities to promote positive youth development and to influence risk and resiliency factors associated with criminal involvement. Various sport-based crime prevention programs, usually targeting youth crime, have been implemented in Canada over the last two decades. Unfortunately, very few of these programs, whether in Canada or elsewhere, have been subjected to a rigorous evaluation. As a result, many of these programs have overly ambitious crime prevention objectives, vague rationales for their activities, and limited evidence of impact on youth crime.

This study attempted to conceptualize the links between criminological theory, positive youth development, and sports-based crime prevention programs. It took stock of the current research evidence on the impact of sport-based crime prevention programs on youth crime and gang recruitment. It also aimed to identify emerging successful practices for promoting positive youth development through sport-based programs for crime prevention purposes. Finally, the study developed an inventory and review of existing sport-based crime prevention programs in B.C. and conducted a high-level evaluability assessment of these programs.

There is a long-standing tradition in the crime prevention field of distinguishing between three complementary levels of crime prevention. The first level involves interventions that address social, environmental, or situational conditions associated with various forms of criminal activities. The second level includes interventions that target individuals or groups known or assumed to be particularly at risk of criminal involvement. The third level entails a range of interventions within or outside the criminal justice system to prevent individuals already engaged in criminal activity from reoffending and encouraging them to desist from crime and successfully reintegrate into society. It is generally assumed that sport activities have the potential to contribute to crime prevention at all three levels.

At the primary level, one finds sport-based programs that generally promote sport participation in school, after school or in the community to promote individual development, community development, or even more generally, social development. At the secondary level, one tends to find sport-based

programs that purportedly target at-risk individuals or groups and tend to use sport as a platform for delivering other interventions. These interventions can be either strength-based or deficit-based, depending on the extent to which they focus on mitigating risk factors or enhancing resiliency factors. At the tertiary level, the interventions are part of rehabilitation, re-education, or reintegration programs to promote desistance from crime and to prevent reoffending.

Sport-based crime prevention programs can be categorized by the relative role that sport plays in them, or the centrality of the role of sport in them. Some programs are focused on facilitating youth participation in sport and their acquisition of related technical and other skills. Other programs consist of a mix of complementary interventions where sport acts as a *hook* to attract and retain youth and as a platform for engaging them in additional interventions.

The relationship between sport and crime is difficult to disentangle. There is much controversy around whether sports participation should be regarded as a protective or a risk factor in the development of juvenile delinquency. Research on the relationship between sport participation and subsequent illegal behaviour does not clearly establish whether sports participation acts as a preventative measure or an additional risk factor for illegal behavior later in life. Some studies have revealed a link between sport participation and involvement in certain types of delinquency including violence and problematic alcohol use. It is very clear that involvement in sport can impact different aspects of one's personality and social setting in both positive and negative ways. It is also quite clear that risk-based theories of youth crime prevention rest on shaky evidence and that positive youth development interventions, through sports or other forms of interventions, still have to demonstrate how they can produce tangible crime prevention outcomes.

Sport Participation and Primary Crime Prevention

There is a wide variety of community-based programs aiming to use sport either as a means or a complementary activity to achieve youth development and generally prevent youth crime.

Due to methodological and practical challenges, it is difficult to reach general conclusions on the effectiveness of these programs. Despite numerous anecdotal accounts, there is still little definitive evidence to support the assumption that sport participation is effective in reducing youth crime. The root causes of youth crime, whether understood at the individual or societal levels, cannot reasonably be expected to be single-handedly addressed by the provision of sport opportunities. Programs should guard against having overly ambitious objectives.

Sports and Secondary Crime Prevention – Youth at Risk

At the secondary level of crime prevention intervention, some sport-based programs are relied upon to reach and support children and youth deemed “at risk”. Although there is very little evidence of a causal link between sport participation and the prevention of crime, there is some evidence that sport can be an effective tool for recruiting and delivering other crime prevention interventions to mitigate risk factors and strengthen protective factors of crime and violence.

Many youth crime prevention and drug prevention programs are designed as early interventions to reduce the impact of risk factors and enhance corresponding protective factors, by targeting "high risk" individuals or groups. Such programs may have many benefits for participants, but they tend to overstate their ability to prevent crime. The “evidence” of their success, when there is any at all, is mostly anecdotal or based on the perceptions of participants or program leaders. Furthermore, many community-based programs with limited funding focus on receptive youths and overemphasize the fact that these youths may somehow be “at risk”.

Sports and Tertiary Crime Prevention - Desistance from Crime

At the tertiary level, sport-based programs, delivered either in the community or in a correctional setting, can potentially contribute to the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders, although there is still very little evidence that they actually do.

Theory of Change

The study attempts to conceptualize the links between criminological theory and sports-based crime prevention programs. This involves clarifying existing concepts and connecting them to existing theories commonly used to understand young offending and desistance from crime. This is a pre-requisite to forming a cogent theory to explain how sport-based programs can, at least in theory, produce crime prevention outcomes at the individual level.

Emerging Good Practices

Based on a review of the relevant research and discussions and interviews with coaches and leaders of sport-based crime prevention or positive youth development programs in British Columbia, the study identifies some emerging good practices in youth crime prevention through sports. The goal is to maximize the value and potential impact of crime prevention interventions through sports until rigorous program evaluations can provide more specific program development guidance. Some programming principles that have emerged so far include:

- The specific crime prevention objectives of the program must be explicit and articulated based on a clear and credible theory of change. The program rationale or logical framework should specify what in the chosen sport activities and accompanying interventions can be logically expected to lead to crime prevention outcomes.
- The intervention should be intentionally structured to teach life skills and help youth develop core competencies.
- The program should be tailored to the local context, interests, and cultural background of the young people it seeks to influence. It must address the local crime situation and respond to local crime prevention goals and priorities.
- The program must align its objectives with the youth's specific needs. Sports-based interventions must be sensitive to the diverse needs of young people, particularly if they are to tackle the underlying structural inequalities that are responsible for youth crime.
- The program should be gender responsive and respectful of cultural differences. Prevention programs based on skills and competencies development must be culturally relevant.
- The program should be accessible to youth from vulnerable and at-risk groups, without further stigmatizing them. Vulnerable groups are not homogeneous, and each group presents different challenges that must be considered during the planning and delivery of crime prevention interventions.
- When using sport as a 'hook' to recruit at risk youth, the sport activity must be popular among the target group and the youth must possess a clear sense of ownership and control over the activities that are offered and delivered through an intervention.
- The program must have an effective, non-discriminatory, and non-stigmatizing youth recruitment strategy aligned with the program objectives and a clear definition of the intended program beneficiaries.
- The program should offer intensive and lasting interventions through sustained delivery mechanisms that engage youth in the long-term and enable lasting relationships.
- The program must be delivered within a safe and supportive environment. The physical and psychological safety of participants is crucial to successful interventions.

- The program must recognize the significance of social relationships, create a sense of community, employ a multi-agency approach, build a structure to ensure sustainability, and be flexible enough to allow program activities to respond to changes in the local context and challenges that inevitably arise.
- The program must facilitate quality interactions between the youth and key social agents (peers, parents, teachers and coaches). The integration of family, school and community efforts are important for the success of sport-based crime prevention programs.
- The program must have well trained coaches and facilitators. The present study identifies some of the main components of a training program for coaches and facilitators.

Inventory of B.C. Sport-based Crime Prevention Programs

The report includes an inventory and review of existing sport-based crime prevention programs in BC, noting that many of them have been cancelled, suspended or reduced because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Program Evaluations

The lack of robust evaluations and monitoring of sport-based crime prevention programs has hampered progress towards more effective interventions. The programs are rarely evaluated and, when they are, the evaluations are methodologically weak and overly simplistic in their theorizing about the causes of delinquency.

To our knowledge, none of the sport-based crime prevention or positive youth development programs in B.C. have been evaluated or empirically reviewed. Also, none of the programs we examined had a clear theory of change or logic model that could link its activities directly to crime prevention. It was not clear that any of them were committed to achieving specific or measurable crime prevention outcomes. Program documentation and program management data were both limited. Program leaders and representatives did not appear to be particularly interested in participating in an evaluation of their program, as program evaluation did not appear to be a requirement of funding agencies. The conclusion of the evaluability assessment was simple but disappointing: none of the existing BC programs is ready for an outcome evaluation.

Introduction

Sport-based crime prevention enjoys a level of popularity and political support which, despite the boastful claims of its supporters, is not totally justified by its meager success. Many sports-based youth programs purport to prevent youth crime or youth involvement in gangs. However, few sports-based crime prevention programs, whether in B.C. or elsewhere, have been subjected to a rigorous evaluation. As a result, many of these programs have overly ambitious crime prevention objectives, vague rationales for their activities, and limited evidence of impact on youth crime.

The concept of sport-based crime prevention is a hazy concept that perpetuates itself without clear definitions, a coherent theoretical basis, or persuasive empirical evidence. There remains a critical need for further research and theory to identify the contexts and processes through which sport participation may contribute to crime prevention. In particular, further research is needed on how and under what circumstances sports contribute to positive youth development and the extent to which helping youth develop human, social and psychological capital actually prevents criminal behaviour or encourages desistance from crime.

With the financial support of the Crime Reduction Research Program, British Columbia Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, the University of the Fraser Valley's South Asian Studies Institute (SASI) undertook a project to identify and review existing sports-based crime prevention programs in British Columbia, their main objectives and characteristics, as well as their theoretical foundation and alignment with effective evidence-based practices in the field of sports and crime prevention.

The project also aimed to:

1. Take stock of the current knowledge on the impact or potential impact of sport-based crime prevention programs on youth crime and gang recruitment
2. Identify emerging successful practices for promoting positive youth development and facilitating sports-based programs for crime prevention purposes
3. Create an inventory of existing sport-based crime prevention programs in B.C.
4. Review existing sport-based crime prevention programs in B.C.
5. Conduct a high-level evaluability assessment of existing programs

6. Offer some general guidance for the development or enhancement of effective sport-based crime prevention programs

At a later stage, the project may lead to the development of a training curriculum and training tools for coaches, leaders, and facilitators involved and interested in creating and delivering effective sports-based crime prevention programs.

The report begins with a general discussion of crime prevention through sports, including some definitions, and examines the role of sport participation and sport-based programs at three levels of crime prevention intervention. It then presents our attempt to conceptualize the links between criminological theory and sports-based crime prevention programs, followed by a presentation of promising practices within these programs, as well as a chapter on coaches and coaching practices. The next chapter focuses on sport-based crime prevention programs in British Columbia and includes an inventory and a summary review of existing programs. The report concludes with a brief chapter on the evaluation of sport-based crime prevention programs as well as comments on an evaluability assessment of BC programs.

1. Sport-based Programs and Youth Crime Prevention

Crime Prevention

Since antiquity, sports have been seen as a vehicle for moral education and physical and mental health. Today, there is a growing interest in trying to define the place that sports and sport-based interventions can occupy in implementing social policies, from social development¹, conflict prevention and peacebuilding² or the promotion of social cohesion, to crime prevention, the prevention of violent extremism³, or the social reintegration of offenders⁴. There is some evidence that early sport participation may protect against development of depression, anxiety, and/or other internalizing behaviors among youth.⁵ The benefits of sport and exercise after severe traumatic brain injury have also been documented, including as a means to assist with social reintegration.⁶ Sports interventions, often targeting youth who are searching for group belonging and a sense of identity, are also used in the prevention of violent extremism⁷ and have been identified as crucial tools, together with educational and vocational activities, in the rehabilitation of radicalised individuals⁸.

¹ United Nations General Assembly (2017) Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal. 13 November 2017. A/RES/72/6.

² Giulianotti, R. (2004). Human rights, globalization and sentimental education: The case of sport. *Sport in Society*, 7:3, 355-369. Giulianotti, R. (2011). Sport, transnational peacemaking, and global civil society: Exploring the reflective discourses of "Sport, Development, and Peace" project officials. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 35(1), 50-71.

³ Samuel, K. L. H. (2018). *Desk Review on Sport as a Tool for the Prevention of Violent Extremism*. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

⁴ Meek, R. & Dandurand, Y. (2019). *Integrating Sport into Youth Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Strategies. Background paper for the Expert Group Meeting*, Bangkok, December 2019, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Draper, C.E., Errington, S., Omar, S., & Makhita, S. (2013). The therapeutic benefits of sport in the rehabilitation of young sexual offenders: A qualitative evaluation of the Fight with Insight programme. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 14, 519-530.

⁵ Sheppard, A. C. & Mahoney, J. L. (2012). Time spent in sports and adolescent problem behaviors: A longitudinal analysis of directions of association. *Journal of Youth Development*, 7(3), 120703RS001.

⁶ Quilico, E. L., Harvey, W. J., Caron, J. G., & Bloom, G. A. (2020). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Community Exercise Experiences after Severe Traumatic Brain Injury, *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, Ahead-of-print, 1-16.

⁷ [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime](#) (2020). *Preventing Violent Extremism Through Sport - Technical Guide*. Vienna: United Nations.

⁸ [Richardson, C., Cameron, P.A., & Berlouis, K.M. \(2017\). The Role of Sport in Deradicalisation and Crime Diversion. *Journal for Deradicalization*, 13, 29-48.](#)

The international interest in sport and development is often connected with other efforts to use sport for the purposes of social intervention, crime prevention, and risk reduction.⁹ However, while the international community markets sport as an effective development tool, much less work has been done to conceptualize, organize, and structure the whole sport and development field.¹⁰ For Hartmann and Kwauk, “(w)ith little more than anecdotal evidence, beliefs about the impact of sport in development are driven mainly by heartfelt narratives, evocative images, and quotable sound bites of individual and community transformation, packaged and delivered more often than not by those running the programs”.¹¹

The sport environment is obviously a popular and important training ground for child and adolescent development. Sports stand with several other activities (e.g., education, mentoring, religious teaching, and volunteering) as a potential factor in influencing positive social development among children and youth. Crime prevention strategies have therefore tried to build on the popularity and benefits of sport activities to promote positive youth development and to influence risk and resiliency factors associated with criminal involvement. Various sport-based crime prevention programs, usually targeting youth crime, have been implemented in Canada over the last two decades. Internationally, the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 74/170 entitled “Integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies”, encouraged Member States to use sports-based activities more widely to promote primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention of youth crime and the social reintegration of young offenders.

As implied in the previous paragraph, there is a long-standing tradition in the field of crime prevention research of distinguishing between three complementary levels of crime prevention. The first level involves interventions that address social, environmental, or situational conditions associated with various forms of criminal activities. The second level includes interventions that target individuals or groups known or assumed to be particularly at risk of criminal involvement. The third level entails a range of interventions within or outside the criminal justice system to prevent individuals already engaged in criminal activity from reoffending and encouraging them to desist from crime and

⁹ Coalter, F. (2010). Sport-for-development: Going beyond the boundary? *Sport in Society*, 13(9), 1374-1391; Hartmann, D., & Kwauk, C. (2011). Sport and development: An overview, critique, and reconstruction. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 35(3), 284-305.

¹⁰ Coalter, F. (2006). *Sport-in-Development: A Monitoring and Evaluation Manual*. London: UK Sport.

¹¹ Hartmann, D., & Kwauk, C. (2011), pp. 285-6.

successfully reintegrate into society. It is generally believed that sport activities have the potential to contribute to crime prevention at all three levels.

The above categorization of levels of crime prevention interventions can help distinguish between different approaches to sport-based interventions. At the primary level, one finds sport-based programs that generally promote sport participation in school, after school or in the community to promote individual development, community development, or even more generally, social development. At the secondary level, one tends to find sport-based programs that purportedly target at-risk individuals or groups and tend to use sport as a platform for delivering other interventions. These interventions can be either strength-based or deficit-based, depending on the extent to which they focus on mitigating risk factors or enhancing resiliency factors. At the tertiary level, the interventions are part of rehabilitation, re-education, or reintegration programs to promote desistance from crime and to prevent reoffending.

The concept of sport-based crime prevention is still in need of standard definitions, including operational definitions of what constitutes a sport-based intervention or program other than the inclusion of a sport-related component. There is no terminology to differentiate between programs where sport is the sole activity, those that combine sports with other social interventions (e.g., using sport as a hook to recruit youth), and those where sport is a marginal aspect of the program. The centrality of sport in such programs can vary considerably. In many instances, sport is only one of several activities in which participants take part and it is therefore very difficult to identify or quantify sport-specific effects.

There is much controversy around whether sports participation should be regarded as a protective or a risk factor for the development of juvenile delinquency. “Sport participation” is a concept that needs to be clearly defined, as participation in sports can take many forms, whether it is as a player or athlete, a coach or leader, a referee or volunteer, or even as a spectator.¹² All of these forms of participation have been suggested as means to prevent youth crime. Research on the relationship between sports participation and subsequent illegal behaviour does not clearly establish whether sports participation

¹² Participation as a sport spectator has been associated with its own problems (problem alcohol use, violent confrontations, hooliganism, riots) and limited positive impact. For instance, some researchers have found significant reductions in crime during televised sports games, although the effect is time limited. See: Copus, R. & Laqueur, H. (2019). Entertainment as crime prevention: Evidence from Chicago sports games. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 20(3), 344-370. See also: Groombridge, N. (2017). *Sports Criminology: A critical criminology of sport and games*. Bristol: Policy Press.

acts as a preventative measure or a risk factor for illegal behavior later in life.¹³ A study of the short and long-term impacts of school-based youth sports participation and adult illegal behavior, by Davis and Menard, suggests that in general, sports participation has very little if any direct impact on illegal behavior.¹⁴ Further, the theoretical and empirical knowledge about the relationship between sports participation and juvenile delinquency are both lacking.¹⁵

What is also missing is a clear and coherent theoretical conception of sports-based crime prevention programs, or a theory of change that might explain coherently how and why such programs might be expected to work and how they should be implemented.¹⁶ We will revisit this point in the second chapter of this report.

Typology

Petitpas and his colleagues suggested that, in order to develop a working definition of youth development through sport, one must differentiate between the terms development, intervention, and prevention.¹⁷ They suggested that sport programs could be classified into four broad categories: (a) sport-based intervention programs, (b) sport as prevention programs, (c) life-skill based programs, and (d) skills development programs. They indicated that the first two categories aim to either stop negative behaviors or prevent youth from experimenting with these behaviors, whereas life-skill based programs focus on developing skills that can be transferred to non-sport settings. Finally, they recognized that skill development programs tend to be more traditional, community-based sport initiatives that focus on growth and sport skills acquisition and may or may not have specific personal developmental goals.¹⁸

One can also categorize a program by the relative role that sport plays in it, or the centrality of the role of sport in it. One can distinguish between programs that are limited to facilitating youth participation in sport and the development of associated technical and life skills, and programs that consist of a mix of complementary interventions where sport acts as a hook to attract and retain youth and a platform for

¹³ Davis, B. S., & Menard, S. (2013). Long term impact of youth sports participation on illegal behavior. *The Social Science Journal*, 50(1), 34-44.

¹⁴ Idem.

¹⁵ Spruit, A., Vugt, E., Put, C., Stouwe, T., Stams, G. J. (2016). Sports participation and juvenile delinquency: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 45(4), 655-671.

¹⁶ Hartman, D. (2003). Theorizing sport as social intervention: A view from the grassroots. *Quest*, 55, 118-140.

¹⁷ Petitpas, A. J., Cornelius, A. E., Van Raalte, J. L., & Jones, T. (2005). A framework for planning youth sport programs that foster psychosocial development. *The Sport Psychologist*, 19(1), 63-80.

¹⁸ Idem.

engaging them in additional interventions. Many so-called *sports-plus* programs, for example, expect youth not only to participate in sport activities, but also to engage in various forms of community service or volunteer activities and commit to upholding certain values in all aspects of their life. In some cases, this is accompanied and reinforced by material and status incentives (e.g., travel, scholarship, branded clothing items, access to some opportunities, status within the group or outside).¹⁹

Later we will present the simple typology that we used for creating an inventory of sport-based crime prevention programs in B.C. However, for the remainder of this chapter, we use the distinction we referred to earlier between the three strategic levels of intervention in crime prevention (primary, secondary, and tertiary), while acknowledging the limitations of such a typology.

Sport Participation and Primary Crime Prevention

There is a wide variety of community-based programs which generally aim to use sport, either as a means or complementary activity, to achieve youth development and prevent youth crime. Because of its presumed ability to contribute to moral development, character building and the acquisition of life skills, sport (especially competitive team sport) is frequently promoted as having the potential to contribute to crime prevention, the reduction of anti-social behaviour, and the rehabilitation of recidivists.²⁰ One should note, however, these primary crime prevention initiatives are seldom explicit about the type of crime they purport to prevent. Some of them refer generally to problem or deviant behaviour and may include anything from lack of self-discipline, defiance of authority, school absenteeism, or experimentation with drugs, to theft, violent and confrontational behaviour, or contacts with the police. Other initiatives specifically refer to violent behaviour, delinquency, or gang involvement, without specifying the exact behavioural nature of the outcomes to be achieved.

Despite numerous anecdotal accounts, there is still little definitive evidence to support the assumption that sport participation is effective in reducing youth crime.²¹ Methodological and practical challenges in evaluating the impact of sport participation explain why there is little definitive/empirical evidence to support the assumption that sport is effective in reducing youth crime. Challenges include identifying

¹⁹ See: McMahon, S., & Belur, J. (2013). *Sports-based programmes and reducing youth violence and crime*. London: Project Oracle Children and Youth Evidence Hub.

²⁰ Coalter, F. (2007). A wider social role for sport: Who's keeping the score? New York, NY: Routledge. Coalter, F. (2012). 'There is loads of relationships here': Developing a programme theory for sport-for-change programmes. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 48(5), 594-612.

²¹ Coakley, J. (1998). *Sport in Society: Issues and controversies*. Boston: McGraw Hill.; Coalter, F. (2010). The politics of sport-for-development: limited focus programmes and broad-gauge problems? *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 45(3), 295-314. Spruit, A., Vugt, E., Put, C., Stouwe, T., Stams, G. J. (2016).

what aspects to measure to gauge success, poor-quality data, and difficulties in isolating the impact of sports-based initiatives from other confounding factors. Due to research limitations, it is difficult to reach general conclusions on the effectiveness of these programs.²²

The relationship between sport participation and local crime rates is ambiguous and there is very little definitive evidence to confirm that sport participation reduces criminal activities. The link between sport participation and crime varies by type of crime and there are obviously other variables at play.²³

A large-scale survey of 15-year-old German youth tended to confirm²⁴ that the evidence is quite clear that sport activities do not automatically prevent violence. Indeed, a multilevel meta-analysis of 51 published and unpublished studies that examine the relationship between sports participation and juvenile delinquency showed that there is no overall significant association between sports participation and juvenile delinquency, indicating that adolescent athletes are neither more nor less delinquent than non-athletes.²⁵ In some of the studies reviewed for the meta-analysis, sample and sports characteristics had a significant but modest moderating effect on the relationship between sport participation and juvenile delinquency.

Furthermore, there appears to be clear differences in how young men and women are impacted by their sport involvement. Some programs have positive outcomes for male participants but increase the likelihood of delinquency for female participants, while others have the opposite effect.²⁶

²² Public Safety Canada. (2017). *Research highlights: Sports-based crime prevention programs*. Ottawa: PSC.

²³ Brosnan, S. (2020). The impact of sports participation on crime in England between 2012 and 2015. *Sport in Society*, 23(6), 1080-1090.

²⁴ Mutz, M. & Baur, J. (2009). The role of sports for violence prevention: Sport club participation and violent behaviour among adolescents. *International Journal of Sport Policy*, 1(3), 305-321.

²⁵ Spruit, A., Vugt, E., Put, C., Stouwe, T., Stams, G. J. (2016); Also: Spruit, A., van der Put, C., van Vugt, E., and Stams, G. J. (2018). Predictors of intervention success in a sport-based program for adolescents at risk of juvenile delinquency. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 62(6), 1535-1555; Spruit, A., Hoffenaar, P., van der Put, C., van Vugt, E., & Stams, G. J. (2018a). The effect of a sport-based intervention to prevent juvenile delinquency in at-risk adolescents. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 94(4), 689-698.

²⁶ Fagan, A., & Lindsey, A.M.L. (2014). Gender differences in the effectiveness of delinquency prevention programs: What can be learned from experimental research? *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 41(9), 1057-1078; Lipowski, Lipowska, Jochimek, & Krokosz, 2016.

The long-term impact of youth sports participation on illegal behavior (including adult criminal behavior) is still not clear. According to Davis and Menard, it is unclear whether sports participation acts as a preventative measure or a risk factor for illegal behavior.²⁷ One of the findings of program evaluations so far is that youth participation in sport, in itself, is unlikely to produce crime prevention outcomes.²⁸ In fact, methodologically robust evidence is lacking to support the notion that participation in sport activity can lead to a reduction in anti-social and offending behaviour.²⁹ There is indeed a lot of wishful thinking and proselytizing behind many of these programs.³⁰

Based on available evidence, Hartmann and Hauk came to two important conclusions: (1) sports programming and participation do not automatically and inevitably lead to prosocial outcomes and effect; (2) sport programming must be combined with other, non-sport programming and investment in order to achieve broader developmental goals.³¹ For these authors, a failure to recognize these points compromises the effectiveness of sport-based initiatives and programming and risk producing the opposite effects of those intended. They add: “Not to realize these two points is to both overestimate the social power of sport and to underestimate the depth, scale, and scope of the challenges of development, education, and intervention.”³²

Depending on their respective goals and design, sports programs can help divert youth from crime and other problematic activities, may contribute to character building or positive youth development and provide youth with access to pro-social networks and positive role models.³³ However, the root causes of youth crime, whether understood at the individual or societal levels, cannot reasonably be expected to be single-handedly addressed by the provision of sport opportunities. Programs should guard against

²⁷ Davis, B. S., & Menard, S. (2013).

²⁸ Groombridge, N. (2017); Davis, B. S., & Menard, S. (2013); Ehsani, M., Dehnavi, A., & Heidary, A. (2012). The influence of sport and recreation upon crime reduction: A literature review. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 2(6), 98-104; Caldwell, L. L., & Smith, E. A. (2006). Leisure as a context for youth development and delinquency prevention. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 39(3), 398–418.

²⁹ Chamberlain, J.M. (2013). Sports-based intervention and the problem of youth offending: A diverse enough tool for a diverse society? *Sport in Society*, 16(10), 1279-1292.

³⁰ Giulianotti, R. (2004).

³¹ Hartmann, D., & Kwauk, C. (2011).

³² Idem, p. 298.

³³ Hermens, N., Super, S., Verkooijen, K. T., & Koelen, M. A. (2017). A systematic review of life skill development through sports programs serving socially vulnerable youth. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 88(4), 408-424.

having overly ambitious objectives.³⁴ According to the conclusions of an international group of experts convened by the United Nations, “the power of sports to produce social change should not be overestimated and sport should not be seen as an alternative to public investments in education, access to employment, social services, access to justice, and rehabilitation programmes”.³⁵

Character Building

An unavoidable question, raised by Coakley nearly twenty years ago, remains unanswered. It is: “What leads many people to think that youth sport programs might solve problems of deviance and violence when research clearly shows that these problems are related to a long history of economic decline, high rates of poverty, and feelings of despair in inner cities?”.³⁶ Another challenging question is: “How do we explain the troubling prevalence of corruption, deviance and crime among the privileged class and individuals who had opportunities to participate in high school or college sport, or even elite sport, throughout their youth and beyond?”

Participation in sport is seen as a means to teach young people to internalise the values of conventionality and become better citizens, and there is evidence that sports, under the right circumstances, can contribute to the youth’s moral development.³⁷ However, some studies have questioned the assumption that sport build moral character. Gamesmanship strategies, including cheating and aggression, are far from unheard of in youth sport. Many different types of aggressions (e.g. physical, verbal, hostile, instrumental) have been reported by high-school athletes who rationalized such behaviours as being part of the game.³⁸ The findings of a study by Camiré & Trudel, who were interested in high school athletes’ perspectives on character development through sport participation, “suggest that, while a combination of both social and moral values seems to be present, the majority of athletes tend to believe that the type of character that best describes the development that occurs in sport is social”.³⁹

³⁴ Bailey, R. (2005). Evaluating the relationship between physical education, sport and social inclusion, *Educational Review*. 57(1), 71-90.

³⁵ [United Nations \(2020\). Outcome of the expert group meeting on integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies, Report of the Secretary General, April 2020, E/CN.15/2020/14.](#)

³⁶ Coakley, J. (2002). Using sports to control deviance and violence among youths: Let’s be critical and cautious, in M. Gatz, M.A. Messner, and S. J. Ball-Rokeach (Eds.), *Paradoxes of Youth and Sport* (pp. 13-30). New York, NY: University of New York Press

³⁷ Pennington C. G. (2017). Moral development and sportsmanship in physical education and sport. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 88(9), 36-42.

³⁸ Camiré, M., & Trudel, P. (2010). High school athletes’ perspectives on character development through sport participation. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 15(2), 193–207.

³⁹ Idem, p. 205.

Gould and Carson also arrived at the conclusion that sport does not necessarily build character in youth:

"Sport participants are typically compared to non-participants on measures of moral development, with results often showing that participants do not exhibit higher levels of moral reasoning and, in some sports (e.g., male contact sports), may even exhibit lower levels of character development."⁴⁰

Many proponents of sport-based programs, on the basis on some idealized beliefs in sport's capacity to promote moral development and character building, may be prepared to assume that engaging youth in sports will automatically serve the goals of education, socialization, and moral development.⁴¹ However, as Côté & Hancock advised, "(s)port researchers and the wider sports community need to have a clear vision of the inherent value of sport participation and the best way to transmit positive personal values through sport".⁴²

Positive Contacts and Role Models

Some prevention programs do not include youth participation in sports, but purport to expose youth to successful athletes as role models. An evaluation of a school-based program that used successful sport personalities to deliver a series of motivational activities to young people revealed that, although the teachers and young people reported an immediate positive reaction to the activities, there was limited evidence of a wider impact on young people's behaviour, school attendance or self-esteem.⁴³

However, the majority of sport-based prevention programs involved contacts and relationships with adults whom, for better or worse, youth may regard as models. The actual impact of these role models on the youth social, psychological, and human development is difficult to isolate from the impact of various other factors involved in a sport-based program and is therefore rarely measured.

There is sometimes some confusion about the difference between adults acting as role models or as mentors. Mentoring is of course a very commonly used form of intervention with youth engaged in, or

⁴⁰ Gould, D. & Carson, S. (2008). Life skills development through sport: Current status and future directions. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 1(1), 58-78, p. 63.

⁴¹ Hartmann, D., & Kwauk, C. (2011).

⁴² Côté, J. & Hancock, D. J. (2016). Evidence-based policies for youth sport programmes. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 8(1), 51-65, p. 54.

⁴³ Armour, K., & Duncombe, R. (2012). Changing lives? Critical evaluation of a school-based athlete role model intervention. *Sport, Education, and Society*, 17(3), 381-403.

thought to be at risk for delinquent behavior, school failure, aggression, or other antisocial behavior. Adult-youth mentoring programs are often a component of youth crime prevention programs, whether related to sport activities or not.⁴⁴ The fact that sport activities can provide opportunities for developing positive mentorship is indisputable. But it is sometimes doubtful whether crime prevention outcomes should be attributed to the mentoring relationships or participation in sport.

Diversion

It is sometimes suggested that participation in sport can act as a *diversion* from crime and/or anti-social behaviour⁴⁵, helping youth avoid situations and activities that normally attract 'at-risk' youth.⁴⁶ It is presumed that offering challenging and demanding activities that encourage youth to channel their energy and quest for excitement into something worthwhile will divert them from offending. It is often suggested that the stimulus-seeking behaviour of certain types of delinquents explains why they may be attracted to and benefit from sport activities. The idea is that risky youth behaviour can be prevented by providing youth with alternatives and teaching them to make healthy decisions. Unfortunately, prevention programs which pursue the general goal of diverting youth from crime by providing them with alternative leisure activities and a different social environment tend to have vague rationales and overly ambitious objectives or are based on fairly simplistic understandings of the multiple and complex causes of youth crime.⁴⁷

The goal of some more structured interventions is to help youth "become more intrinsically motivated by having goal-oriented leisure pursuits and decreasing levels of amotivation, learning to overcome peer pressure, and becoming more aware of leisure opportunities".⁴⁸ Caldwell and Smith summarized, from a criminological perspective, the potential links between leisure and crime: (1) time filled with prosocial activities cannot be filled with deviant activities; (2) certain activities are more likely to instigate deviant behaviour or association with a deviant subculture; (3) time spent in informal and/or unsupervised activities is likely to promote deviance, while time spent in supervised activities protects against it; and,

⁴⁴ For a meta-analysis of the impact of mentoring interventions with youth at risk, see: Tolan, P., Henry, D., Schoeny, M., Bass, A., Lovergrove, P., & Nichols, E. (2013). Mentoring Interventions to Affect Juvenile Delinquency and Associated Problems: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 2013, 10.

⁴⁵ Nichols, G. (1997). A consideration of why active participation in sport and leisure might reduce criminal behaviour. *Sport, Education and Society*, 2(2), 181-190. Nichols, G. (2007). *Sport and Crime Reduction: The role of sports in tackling youth crime*. London: Routledge.

⁴⁶ Crabbe, T., Bailey, G., Blackshaw, T. Adam, B., Choak, C. Gidley, B. Mellor, G., O'Connor, K., Slater, I., & Woodhouse, D. (2006). *Knowing the score: Positive Futures case study final report*. Swindon: Positive Future Team and Crime Concern.

⁴⁷ Ehsani, M., Dehnavi, A., & Heidary, A. (2012).

⁴⁸ Caldwell, L. L., & Smith, E. A. (2006), p. 411.

(4) self-control and attachment to conventional norms and activities protect against deviant behaviour.⁴⁹

Developmental Outcomes

At the primary level of crime prevention interventions, sports programs are seen as contributing, through an emotionally interactive engagement, to the development of personal skills or assets, including cognitive, social, emotional, and intellectual qualities, necessary to function constructively in society. The outcomes of youth sport involvement are sometimes referred to as the 3Ps: performance, participation and personal development.⁵⁰ Peers and identity formation during sports activities (including the importance of being a team member, belonging to a team) have been shown to influence youth development.⁵¹ Sport activity has the potential to promote the youth's social engagement and confer citizenship benefits, but only when integrated into wider programs of social support and community engagement.⁵² However, other extra-curricular (after school) activities can have a similar impact. Unstructured and structured after-school activities (sport and non sport) provide contexts in which youth may face challenges and have positive and negative experiences that may benefit their development. What seems to matter the most is that the activity is one that they like and engages them.⁵³ Adventure education, for example, has also been shown to help youth develop several life skills and contribute to their positive development.⁵⁴ In fact, in recent studies of the benefits of extracurricular activities, sport was the only activity that showed both positive (e.g. the development of teamwork, emotional control and initiative) and negative developmental outcomes (e.g. pressure to do things that are morally wrong, or alcohol use).

⁴⁹ Idem, p. 399.

⁵⁰ Côté, J. & Hancock, D. J. (2016).

⁵¹ Bruner, M.W., Balish, S.M., Forrest, C., Brown, S., Webber, K., Gray, E., McGuckin, M. Keats, M.R., Rehman, L., & Shields, C.A. (2017). Ties that bond: Youth sport as a vehicle for social identity and positive youth development. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 88(2), 209-214. Andrews, J. P., & Andrews, G. J. (2003). Life in a secure unit: The rehabilitation of young people through the use of sport. *Social Science & Medicine*, 56, 531-550.

⁵² Parker, A., Morgan, H., Farooq, S., Moreland, B., & Pitchford, A. (2019). Sporting intervention and social change: Football, marginalised youth and citizenship development. *Sport, Education and Society*, 24(3), 298-310.

⁵³ Gadbois, S., Bowker, Anne, B., Rose-Krasnor, L., & Findlay, L. (2019). A qualitative examination of psychologically engaging sport, nonsport, and unstructured activities. *The Sport Psychologist*, 33(2), 97-109.

⁵⁴ Ganea, V., & Grosu, E.F. (2018). Adventure education: A method to prevent antisocial behavior. *Palestrica of the third millennium – Civilization and Sport*, 19(2), 116-122.

Misguided and potentially misleading claims of developmental outcomes are sometimes made by various sports programs.⁵⁵ However, a growing number of studies would lead one to question the strong beliefs that often exist with regard to the developmental potential of sports.⁵⁶ Assumptions made about how sports interventions contribute to achieving certain positive development outcomes and the ways through which these outcomes can be attained are seldom clearly formulated or left unquestioned.⁵⁷ There is little understanding of the mechanisms through which sports can foster positive youth development.⁵⁸ The current evidence suggests that sport does not automatically promote healthy development and there is very little empirical evidence to suggest that sport participation itself is sufficient for healthy development. This led some researchers to conclude that: "There appears to be nothing inherent about playing, competing, or knocking a ball around that teaches adolescents positive values and skills."⁵⁹

On balance, research on the relationship between sport and youth development leads so far to the conclusion that the developmental outcomes are contingent on other factors and that, by itself, the act of sports participation among young people does not lead to regularly identifiable developmental outcomes. The assumption that sport can inherently transmit social values to its participants has been successfully challenged. Producing positive youth development outcomes is contingent on a combination of many factors, including the type of sport played, one's peers, parents, coaches, and the norms and cultures associated with particular sports or sporting experiences. Coakley concluded that sport's developmental benefits are dependent on material and cultural contexts and may vary depending on, for example, the sport subculture, social relationships, shifting meanings of sport across the life course, and social characteristics of participants.⁶⁰ Furthermore, as will be discussed in more detail later, it is often too quickly assumed that the learning that occurs during sport participation, including the values adopted and skills acquired, will necessarily be transferred to other non-sport contexts in a youth's life and automatically become resiliency factors.

⁵⁵ Beesley, T. & Fraser-Thomas, J. (2018). Claims of positive youth development: A content analysis of mixed martial arts gyms' websites. *Leisure/Loisir*, 43(1), 1-25.

⁵⁶ Buelens, E., Theeboom, M., Vertonghen, J. & Martelaer, K. D. (2015). Socially vulnerable youth and volunteering in sports: Analyzing a Brussels training program for young soccer coaches. *Social Inclusion*, 3, 82-97. Coakley, J. (2011). Youth sports: What counts as "positive development"? *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 35(3), 306-324. Beesley, T. & Fraser-Thomas, J. (2018).

⁵⁷ Coalter, F. (2013). *Sport for Development: What game are we playing?* London: Routledge.

⁵⁸ Buelens, E., Theeboom, M., Vertonghen, J. & Martelaer, K. D. (2015).

⁵⁹ Brunelle, J., Danish, S. J., & Forneris, T. (2007). The impact of a sport-based life skill program on adolescent prosocial values. *Applied Developmental Science*, 11, 43-55, p. 43.

⁶⁰ Coakley, J. (2011).

Clearly, not all youth sport programs are properly structured or implemented in a manner that supports positive youth development or the acquisition and transfer of key life skills to other life domains.⁶¹ For instance, researchers have pointed out that some youth sport programs, instead of focusing on the short-term and inherent enjoyment that result from sport participation, focus too narrowly on performance, long-term athlete development, elitism, early selection and early specialization with the explicit or implicit goal of developing elite-level athletes.⁶² Some sport programs organized and supervised by adults require higher levels of investment from earlier ages and focus on certain aspects of sport participation that do not necessarily coincide with children's motives to participate in sport in the first place (developing technical skills as opposed to simply having fun and being with friends).⁶³

There is evidence suggesting that sport programs such as these may not be providing optimal environments for youths' long-term participation in sport and, as importantly, hinder overall physical and psychosocial development.⁶⁴ On the one hand, therefore, a sport program whose sole focus is on performance and the acquisition of technical skills neglects the importance of participation and personal development and minimizes the potential that sport involvement can have on youth's lives.⁶⁵ On the other hand, sport programs that are primarily designed to teach life skills and personal development and do not align with children's motivation to participate in sport.⁶⁶ However, when youth sport programs incorporate the goal of holistic development of the athlete as a person, positive development outcomes will remain intact regardless of whether the athlete achieves great athletic success.⁶⁷

Life Skills Development

Working within the positive youth development approach, many researchers have focused their attention on better understanding how sport is conducive to the development of life skills. Life skills are

⁶¹ Danish, S., Forneris, T., Hodge, K., & Heke, I. (2004) Enhancing Youth Development Through Sport. *World Leisure Journal*, 46(3), 38-49.

⁶² Collins, M. (2010). From 'sport for good' to 'sport for sport's sake': Not a good move for sports development in England? *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 2(3), 367-379. Côté, J., Strachan, L., & Fraser-Thomas, J. (2008). Participation, personal development and performance through youth sport. In N. L. Holt (Ed.), *Positive Youth Development Through Sport* (pp. 34-45). New York, NY: Routledge, 34-45. Côté, J., Coakley, C., & Bruner, M. W. (2011). Children's talent development in sport: Effectiveness or efficiency? In Dagkas, S. & Armour, K. (2012). *Inclusion and Exclusion through Youth Sport*. London: Routledge, 172-185.

⁶³ Côté, J. & Hancock, D. J. (2016).

⁶⁴ Côté, J., Coakley, C., & Bruner, M. W. (2011).

⁶⁵ Côté, J. & Hancock, D. J. (2016).

⁶⁶ Côté, J. & Hancock, D. J. (2016).

⁶⁷ Johnston, J., Harwood, C. & Minniti, A. M. (2013).

skills that enable individuals to succeed in the different environments in which they live, such as school, work, home, and community. They are defined by the World Health Organization as “abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”.⁶⁸ Life skills can be classified as behavioral (e.g., effective communication), cognitive (e.g., decision-making), interpersonal (e.g., friendship, respect, teamwork), and intrapersonal (e.g., focus, perseverance, goal setting, emotional regulation).

There is no doubt that youth have opportunities to learn social skills by participating in sport activities, including teamwork, leadership, communication, and learning to work with different types of people.⁶⁹ There is also evidence that they can learn cognitive, emotional, and intellectual skills through sport, as well as agency, self-efficacy, goal setting, problem solving and time management. Under the right conditions sport can teach important life lessons to young people.

Pierce, Gould and Camiré proposed the following definition of life skills development in sport:

“The ongoing process by which an individual further develops or learns and internalizes a personal asset (i.e., psychosocial skill, knowledge, disposition, identity construction, or transformation) in sport and then experiences personal change through the application of the asset in one or more life domains beyond the context where it was originally learned”.⁷⁰

The specific life skills that a particular sport or sport program are meant to help youth develop are often not precisely defined or specified.⁷¹ Coaches in various sport contexts may focus on teaching different life skills. Many of them promote life skills based primarily on their own perception of the needs of the

⁶⁸ World Health Organization. (1999). *Partners in life skills education*. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/mental_health/media/en/30.pdf

⁶⁹ Holt, N. L., Tink, L. N., Mandigo, J. L., & Fox, K. R. (2008). Do youth learn life skills through their involvement in high school sport? A case study. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 31(2), 281–304; Holt, N., & Tamminen, K. (2009). An interpretative analysis of life skills associated with sport participation. *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise*, 1(2), 160-175.

⁷⁰ Pierce, S., Gould, D. R., & Camiré, M. (2017). Definition and model of life skills transfer. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 10(1), 186–211, p. 11.

⁷¹ Gould, D. & Carson, S. (2008), p. 59.

athletes, in both their sport and their personal lives.⁷² Furthermore, life skills are only one important form of learning that take place in sports-based programs.⁷³

The acquisition of life skills is often considered as an end rather than a means to an end. Research examined the acquisition of life skills, but provided fewer insights about how the life skills acquired through the sport-based programs actually play a role in changing participants' lives.⁷⁴ A comprehensive meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials on the effects of social skills training (not necessarily alone and not through sport) revealed that such interventions had a significant but small effect on aggression, delinquency, and related antisocial outcomes.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, the assumption that the acquisition or development of life skills prevents criminal involvement or desistance from crime, rather than simply resulting in producing more competent criminals, is on very shaky grounds.

Life Skills Transfer

There is evidence, based on the youths' perceptions, that the life skills they developed in high school sport are sometimes applied in other life domains.⁷⁶ Surveys of sport participants about the skills they have acquired and their transfer to other contexts showed that participants are conscious of the skills they have acquired.⁷⁷ The ability to transfer skills learned in sports to other domains is a crucial aspect in achieving optimum personal development outcomes. To be considered life skills, the skills learned in sport must be transferable.⁷⁸ Pierce and his colleagues have suggested that "for a skill learned in sport to

⁷² Trotter, C. & Robitaille, S. (2014). Fostering life skills development in high school and community sport: A comparative analysis of the coach's role. *The Sport Psychologist*, 28(1), 10-21.

⁷³ Ronkainen, N. J., Aggerholm, K., Ryba, T. V., & Allen-Collinson, J. (2020). Learning in sport: From life skills to existential learning, *Sport, Education and Society*, published online 9 January 2020.

⁷⁴ Camiré, M., Forneris, T., Trudel, P., & Bernard, D. (2011). Strategies for helping coaches facilitate positive youth development through sport. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 2, 92-99.

⁷⁵ Beelmann, A. & Lösel, F. (2020). A comprehensive meta-analysis of randomized evaluations of the effect of child social skills training on antisocial development. *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*, published online 5 May 2020.

⁷⁶ Kendellen, K. & Camiré, M. (2017). Examining the life skill development and transfer experiences of former high school athletes. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 15(4), 395-408.

⁷⁷ Bean, C., Kendellen, K., & Forneris, T. (2016). Moving beyond the gym: Exploring life skill transfer within a female physical activity-based life skills programs, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 28(3), 274-290.

⁷⁸ Chinkov, A. E., & Holt, N. L. (2016). Implicit transfer of life skills through participation in Brazilian jiu-jitsu, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 28: 139-153; Camiré, M., Trudel, P., & Forneris, T. (2012). Coaching and transferring life skills: Philosophies and strategies used by model high school coaches. *Sport Psychologist*, 26(2), 243-260.

qualify as a life skill, it must transfer and be successfully applied beyond sport".⁷⁹ Sport-based programs can have a more sustained impact by focusing on the concepts of learning and "skills transfer".⁸⁰

A central idea behind sport-based positive development programs is that the learning that takes place during sport participation or the program as a whole will actually transfer these valuable life skills to other non-sport contexts in a youth's life.⁸¹ However, claims that positive development outcomes are transferred to other domains should be made carefully.⁸² In fact, there is no consensus yet regarding how life skills transfer from sport to other domains.⁸³ Facilitating positive youth development through sport is neither easy, nor is it automatic.⁸⁴ The life skills that are developed through sports programs must be transferred beyond sporting domains. Any simplistic notion of learning 'transfer' should be questioned.⁸⁵

Pierce, Gould and Camiré explained that transfer is not an outcome, but an ongoing process that occurs over time at the intersection of skill learning in one context and skill application in another context.⁸⁶ They added that the potential for transfer resides within the learner, not the skill, and can occur in different ways depending on the individual's motivation, capacity and personal characteristics. The individual is therefore at the center of the transfer process and must take advantage of opportunities to apply the skills acquired or perfected in sport in one or more life domains beyond sport. For these researchers, the process of life skills transfer is influenced by the specific transfer contexts (e.g., classroom, peer group, community, family) that the youth experience outside of sport and how athletes

⁷⁹ Pierce, S., Kendellen, K., Camiré, M., & Gould, D. (2018). Strategies for coaching for life skills transfer. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 9(1), 11–20, p. 11. See also Pierce, S., Gould, D. R., & Camiré, M. (2017).

⁸⁰ Armour, K. & Sandford, R. (2013). Positive youth development through an outdoor physical activity programme: Evidence from a four-year evaluation. *Educational Review*, 65(1), 85–108.

⁸¹ Jacobs, J. M. & Wright, P. M. (2018). Transfer of life skills in sport-based youth development programs: A conceptual framework bridging learning to application. *Quest*, 70(1), 81-99.

⁸² Vierimaa, Erickson, Côté, & Gilbert, 2012.

⁸³ Chinkov, A. E., & Holt, N. L. (2016).

⁸⁴ Bean, C. & Forneris, T. (2016). Examining the importance of intentionally structuring the youth sport context to facilitate positive youth development. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 28(4), 410-425; Camiré, M., Trudel, P., & Forneris, T. (2012).

⁸⁵ Armour, K. & Sandford, R. (2013).

⁸⁶ Pierce, S., Gould, D. R., & Camiré, M. (2017).

perceive and interpret these contexts.⁸⁷ Youth experience life skills transfer as an ongoing process whereby they continually interact and interpret their environments.⁸⁸

Studies that explored the transfer process have tended to focus on programs that include structured discussions around the topic, an established mentoring component, or complementary volunteer experience in the community.⁸⁹ Unfortunately, less attention is given to what happens between the start of a program and when a participant eventually makes use of life skills outside the program.⁹⁰

Sport-based positive development programs tend to approach the question of skills transfer differently. Researchers have distinguished two approaches to that question: the *explicit approach* and the *implicit approach*.⁹¹ The explicit approach proposes that youth who participate in sports need assistance in identifying the skills they can attain through sport and understanding how these skills can be applied in other settings; they should be provided opportunities and strategies to practice their skills in a variety of contexts and develop the confidence to employ them in non-sport domains.⁹² It is associated with sport programs intentionally designed to provide instruction about the transferability of life skills, in which life skills sessions are often taught in non-competitive settings before, during, or after practices. The implicit approach proposes that youth can be active producers of their own development and do not necessarily need to rely on adults to learn and apply transferable skills (youth-driven learning). This second approach places less emphasis on deliberately teaching the transfer of skills and more emphasis on offering sport environments that are conducive to youth-driven learning approach.⁹³ However, both explicit and implicit means can be present within the same context and combine to facilitate (or hinder) positive youth development within youth sport settings.⁹⁴

⁸⁷ Idem.

⁸⁸ Pierce, S., Kendellen, K., Camiré, M., & Gould, D. (2018).

⁸⁹ Jacobs, J. M. & Wright, P. M. (2016). An alternative application of imagery in youth sport: Promoting the transfer of life skills to other contexts. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 7(1), 1-10.

⁹⁰ Idem.

⁹¹ Turnnidge, J., Côté, J., & Hancock, D.J. (2014). Positive Youth Development From Sport to Life: Explicit or Implicit Transfer?. *Quest*, 66(2), 203-217.

⁹² Petitpas, A. J., Cornelius, A. E., Van Raalte, J. L., & Jones, T. (2005); Turnnidge, J., Côté, J., & Hancock, D.J. (2014).

⁹³ Turnnidge, J., Côté, J., & Hancock, D.J. (2014).

⁹⁴ [Holt, N. L., Sehn, Z. L., Spence, J. C., Newton, A., & Ball, G. D. C. \(2012\). Possibilities for positive youth development through physical education and sport programs at an inner city school. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 17, 97–113](#); Bean, C., Kramers, S., Forneris, T., & Camiré, M. (2018). The implicit/explicit continuum of life skills development and transfer. *Quest*, 70(4), 456-479; Pierce, S., Erickson, K., & Dinu, R. (2019). Teacher-

The explicit transfer approach is perhaps more widely supported in the youth sport literature.⁹⁵ A qualitative study (18 youth 12- 13 participating in sport within the school context in the U.K.) suggested that the use of explicit strategies and group discussions aid the learning and transfer of life skills. For example, the Transfer-Ability Program was a multi-faceted intervention that sought to explicitly teach male participants life skills through sporting activities and facilitate transfer opportunities.⁹⁶

Studies have shown that an intentional focus on well-defined life skills within a sport-based positive youth development program can promote a foundational understanding of life skills among youth.⁹⁷ Intentionally structured programs (i.e. deliberately structured to teach life skills) scored higher on program quality and positive youth development outcomes than non-intentionally structured programs, with intentional sport scoring significantly higher on some measures of program quality and positive youth development than leadership programs.⁹⁸ Given that recent research emphasizes the crucial role of intentionality in maximizing the developmental gains of sport participation⁹⁹, training for coaches can be designed to help them create environments conducive to the intentional teaching of life skills through high school sport.¹⁰⁰ When coaches use an intentional approach to youth development, they

coaches' perceptions of life skills transfer from high school sport to the classroom. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 31(4), 451-473.

⁹⁵ E.g., Bean, C. N., Fortier, M., Post, C., & Chima, K. (2014). Understanding how organized youth sport may be harming individual players within the family unit: A literature review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 11(10), 10226–10268; Camiré, M., Trudel, P., & Forneris, T. (2012); Weiss, M. R., Stuntz, C. P., Bhalla, J. A., Bolter, N. D., & Price, M. S. (2013). 'More than a game': Impact of the first tee life skills programme on positive youth development: Project introduction and year 1 findings. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 85(3): 214–244.

⁹⁶ Allen, G. & Rhind, D. (2019). Taught not caught: exploring male adolescent experiences of explicitly transferring life skills from the sports hall into the classroom. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(2), 188-200.

⁹⁷ Hemphill, M. A., Gordon, B., & Wright, P. M. (2019). Sports as a passport to success: Life skill integration in a positive youth development program. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 24(4), 390-401.

⁹⁸ Bean, C. & Forneris, T. (2016).

⁹⁹ Bean, C. & Forneris, T. (2016); Bean, C., Kramers, S., Forneris, T., & Camiré, M. (2018); Holt, N. L., Neely, K. C., Slater, L. G., Camiré, M., Côté, J., Fraser-Thomas, J., MacDonald, D., Strachan, L. & Tamminen, K. A. (2017). A grounded theory of positive youth development through sport based on results from a qualitative meta-study. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 10(1), 1-49.

¹⁰⁰ Camiré, M., Kendellen, K., Rathwell, S., & Turgeon, S. (2020). Evaluating the coaching for life skills online training program: A randomised controlled trial, *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 48. Camiré, M., Turgeon, S., Kramers, S., Rathwell, S., Bean, C., Sabourin, C., & Pierce, P. (2021). Development and initial validation of the coaching life skills in sport questionnaire, *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 53.

can play an important part in helping young people to reach adulthood with the necessary competencies to face the social challenges ahead.¹⁰¹

There is still a lack of theoretical support to explain life skills transfer resulting from sport-based programs.¹⁰² The underlying mechanisms in transfer are very difficult to study.¹⁰³ Participants may not be aware of the exact skill they have acquired, the behavioural change presumably associated with the skills transfer may not be immediately evident, the point at which a transfer takes place is hard to pin down, or the transfer may only occur when an external factor provides an opportunity for the individual to try to apply to the new skill.¹⁰⁴

Further research is required on the cognitive processes through which skills acquired by sports participation can be effectively transferred to other aspects of the participants' life. However, research has recently begun to explain this transfer process and to identify program features and delivery strategies that may aid such transfer, including creating conditions prior to the intervention that enhance transfer, mentoring, organizing peer discussions, providing opportunities for reflection after program activities, and including follow-up experiences to enhance and reinforce learning. Many successful sport-based youth development programs include follow up activities, often in association with schools¹⁰⁵, and purposefully seek to facilitate the transfer of life skills in collaboration with teachers and other school officials.¹⁰⁶ Opportunities for youth to discuss skills transfer with coaches and mentors

¹⁰¹ de Sousa Ferreira dos Santos, F., Camiré, M., & Henrique da Fonte Campos, P. (2018). Youth sport coaches' role in facilitating positive youth development in Portuguese field hockey. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 16(3), 221-234.

¹⁰² Holt, N. L., Neely, K. C., Slater, L. G., Camiré, M., Côté, J., Fraser-Thomas, J., MacDonald, D., Strachan, L. & Tamminen, K. A. (2017).

¹⁰³ Jacobs, J. M. & Wright, P. M. (2018); Jacobs, J. M. & Wright, P. M. (2019). Thinking about the transfer of life skills: Reflections from youth in a community-based sport programme in an underserved urban setting. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, published online 19 august 2019.

¹⁰⁴ Idem.

¹⁰⁵ Allen, G. & Rhind, D. (2019); Armour, K. & Sandford, R. (2013); Armour, K., Sandford, R., & Duncombe, R. (2013). Positive youth development and physical activity/sport interventions: Mechanisms leading to sustained impact, *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 18(3), 256-281. Coakley, J. (2011). Eisman, A., Lee, D.B., Hsieh, H.F., Stoddard, S.A., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2018). More than just keeping busy: The protective effects of organized activity participation on violence and substance use among urban youth. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 47, 2231-2242.

¹⁰⁶ Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A. M., Lonczak, H. S., & Hawkins, J. D. (2002). Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 591(1), 98-124. Armour, K. & Sandford, R. (2013); Allen, G. & Rhind, D. (2019).

are also important.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, providing youth with opportunities to get involved in further projects or complementary activities can also allow them to transfer the skills learnt through the sport-based programs to other situations and to develop them further.¹⁰⁸

Different strategies are used to help youth identify and learn about life skills, including a specific life skills curriculum in the program¹⁰⁹ or requiring youth to memorize some knowledge about life skills in order to provide youth with a common language around these skills and fostering a desire to learn and apply them to their lives.¹¹⁰ These curricula are designed to help youth make cognitive connections about how life skills apply beyond the sport context and contribute to personal success or a better life.

Several studies have explored the role of athletic coaches in facilitating life skills transfer among youth through intentional teaching strategies. A pedagogical approach appears necessary, including a precise methodology with concrete aims alongside practical activities and strategies that make them work.¹¹¹ Jacobs and Wright suggested that "(...) coaches must take advantage of authentic teachable moments that arise during practice to discuss how these experiences can be pertinent in other non-sport situations".¹¹² Trottier and Robitaille suggested that, by promoting self-confidence and self-awareness in athletes as a direct teaching strategy, coaches can create conditions that may help youth transfer their acquired life skills to other life areas.¹¹³ Coaches must work deliberately to give youth the confidence to use the skills they learned in sport in everyday life.¹¹⁴

Pierce and his colleagues identified seven broad strategies for coaches to help their athletes transfer life skills from sport to other life domains: (1) prioritize coaching life skills and recognize the need to intentionally foster transfer; (2) foster life skills mastery and reinforce life skills transfer beyond sport; (3) maintain positive coach-athlete relationships; (4) expose young athletes to learning situations

¹⁰⁷ Allen, G. & Rhind, D. (2019).

¹⁰⁸ Armour, K., Sandford, R., & Duncombe, R. (2013).

¹⁰⁹ Hodge, C.J., Kanters, M.A., Forneris, T., Bocarro, J.N., McCord-Sayre, R.A (2017). A family thing: Positive youth development outcomes of a sport-based life skills program. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 35(1), 34-50.

¹¹⁰ Hemphill, M. A., Gordon, B., & Wright, P. M. (2019).

¹¹¹ Schwenzer, V., et al. (2007). *Sports Activities for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Crime*. Berlin: AGIS.

¹¹² Jacobs, J. M. & Wright, P. M. (2016), p. 2.

¹¹³ Trottier, C. & Robitaille, S. (2014).

¹¹⁴ Gould, D. & Carson, S. (2008); Camiré, M. (2015). Reconciling competition and positive youth development in sport. *Staps 2015/3*, 109, 25–39.

outside of sport to provide them with opportunities to apply their life skills; (5) develop partnerships and maintain open lines of communication with key social agents in athletes' lives at school, at home, or in the community; (6) provide life skills boosters; and, (7) facilitate youth reflection.¹¹⁵

Studies have shown that coaches believe that they effectively teach life skills when they use specific pedagogical techniques to emphasize how skills learned in sport can transfer to other domains. These techniques include athletes sharing personal reflections, contracts for behavioral expectations, organizing team-bonding events, meeting with athletes individually, and goal setting.¹¹⁶

Finally, it seems that promoting the acquisition of life skills is not at all incompatible or unrelated to coaches or athletes' performance enhancement goals. Many life skills learned in sport also help youth become better athletes and performers. Youth who apply life skills in non sport contexts may refine these skills and learn not only to use them in life but also transfer them back into the sport context.¹¹⁷ Transferring life skills learned in sport to other life settings "should not be seen as a separate activity unrelated to coaches or athletes' performance enhancement goals".¹¹⁸ Performance success and positive youth development are goals of youth sport coaching that need not conflict with each other.¹¹⁹

Negative Aspects of Sport Participation

Research does not support the claim that youth sport necessarily fosters positive outcomes. Positive physical and psychological developmental outcomes can accrue from regular participation in sport, but sport participation can also lead to various negative outcomes. Sport experiences vary in terms of the teaching, coaching and supervision the individuals receive, and so do their effects.¹²⁰ High school sport participation, for example, exposes student-athletes to a variety of experiences that can positively and

¹¹⁵ Pierce, S., Kendellen, K., Camiré, M., & Gould, D. (2018), pp. 14-18.

¹¹⁶ Camiré, M., Forneris, T., Trudel, P., & Bernard, D. (2011); [Holt, N. L., Sehn, Z. L., Spence, J. C., Newton, A., & Ball, G. D. C. \(2012\).](#)

¹¹⁷ Pierce, S., Kendellen, K., Camiré, M., & Gould, D. (2018).

¹¹⁸ Pierce, S., Kendellen, K., Camiré, M., & Gould, D. (2018), p. 19.

¹¹⁹ Preston, C. & Fraser-Thomas, J. (2018). Problematising the pursuit of personal development and performance success: An autoethnography of a Canadian elite youth ice hockey coach. *The Sport Psychologist*, 32(2), 102-113; Whitley, M. A., Massey, W. V., & Wilkinson, M. (2018). A systems theory of development through sport for traumatized and disadvantaged youth, *Psychology of Sport & Exercise*, 38, 116-125.

¹²⁰ Bailey, R. (2005).

negatively influence their personal development, with coaches playing a particularly influential role in this developmental process.¹²¹

In some instances, participation in organized sport activities during adolescence may be associated with poor health-related outcomes (e.g., injuries, concussions, harmful weight control practices, increased anxiety, stress and burnout, alcohol and drug use).¹²² Contrary to the assumption that sport serves as a protective factor against alcohol and drug use, high school sport participation has also been associated with substance abuse among young adults.¹²³ Adolescents' participation in some organized competitive sport was found in some studies to be associated with higher levels of alcohol use¹²⁴ and an increased growth in alcohol use over time¹²⁵, and early adolescent alcohol use is itself associated with violence, injuries, drunk driving and later alcohol misuse.¹²⁶ It appears that the relationship between sports participation and problem alcohol use depends on participation in sports in combination with other activities.¹²⁷ However, findings are not consistent and the relationship between sports and alcohol use seem to vary according to the type of sport.¹²⁸ With regards to youth mental health, increased alcohol consumption has been linked to sports participation (particularly in certain team sports), as well as decreases in well-being with high levels of training, which likely leads to burnout and dropout.¹²⁹

¹²¹ Turgeon, S., Kendellen, K., Kramers, S., Rathwell, S., & Camiré, M. (2019). Making High School Sport Impactful. *Kinesiology Review*, 8, 188-194.

¹²² Bean, C. N., Fortier, M., Post, C., & Chima, K. (2014). Cowan, D. & Taylor, I. M. (2016). 'I'm proud of what I achieved; I'm also ashamed of what I done': a soccer coach's tale of sport, status, and criminal behaviour. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 8(5), 505-518.

¹²³ Eitle, D., Turner, R.J., and Eitle, T. (2003). The deterrence hypothesis reexamined: Sports participation and substance use among young adults. *Journal of drug issues*, 33(1), 193-221.

¹²⁴ Terry-McElrath, Y. M., O'Malley, P. M., Johnston, L. D. (2011). Exercise and substance use among American youth, 1991-2009. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 40(5): 530-540. Farb, A.F. & Matjasko, J. L. (2012). Recent advances in research on school-based extracurricular activities and adolescent development. *Developmental Review*, 32(1): 1-48.

¹²⁵ [Mays, D., DePadilla, L., Thompson, N. J., Kushner, H. I., & Windle, M. \(2010\). Sports participation and problem alcohol use: A multi-wave national sample of adolescents. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 38\(5\): 491-498.](#)

¹²⁶ Hallinberg, B., Moore, S., Morgan, J., Bowen, K., & Van Goozen, S. (2015). Adolescent male hazardous drinking and participation in organised activities: Involvement in team sports is associated with less hazardous drinking in young offenders. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 25, 28-41.

¹²⁷ [Mays, D., DePadilla, L., Thompson, N. J., Kushner, H. I., & Windle, M. \(2010\).](#)

¹²⁸ Hallinberg, B., Moore, S., Morgan, J., Bowen, K., & Van Goozen, S. (2015).

¹²⁹ Bean, C. N., Fortier, M., Post, C., & Chima, K. (2014).

Some sport activities may ritualize and even legitimize violence and confrontation in connection with certain ideals of masculinity. It is often suggested that sports may lead to the acquisition of aggressive skills and behaviours that could be brought into play outside sport settings. There is evidence that sports-based activities can have a negative impact on youth violence, although both positive and negative impacts are mediated by circumstantial factors.¹³⁰ Stanfield argued that the association between sports and delinquency is more nuanced and that the type of sports involvement matters, with some sports having a greater association with delinquency for males than other sports.¹³¹ Moreover, an emphasis on violence in sport may be linked to sexual violence among athletes. The United Nations' expert group emphasized the importance of ensuring that sport-based programs do not encourage toxic masculinity, confrontations, violence or gender-based violence.¹³²

Social activities around certain sport events are often violent and fueled by the excessive consumption of alcohol, involving both the youth, their parents or supporters.¹³³ Violent actions which would be deemed as criminal in other contexts may be normalized in certain sport contexts.¹³⁴ Violence and incivility of players in professional sports has attracted a lot of research attention¹³⁵ and its influence on the amateur youth sport culture cannot be easily dismissed.

There are also potential negative developmental experiences associated with sport participation that are not always acknowledged by sports-based programs (stress, social exclusion, discrimination, aggression, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, and various forms of intimidation and control by coaches and peers). A few studies have revealed, for example, how the aggressive subcultures of some sports have permeated into high school sport and created negative sport experiences for participants.¹³⁶

¹³⁰ McMahon, S., & Belur, J. (2013). Kreager, D.A. (2007). Unnecessary roughness? School sports, peer networks, and male adolescent violence. *American Sociological Review*, 72(5), 705–724. Stansfield, R. (2017). "Teen Development in Sports and Risky Behaviour". *The British Journal of Criminology*, 57(1): 172-193.

¹³¹ Stansfield, R. (2017).

¹³² Idem.

¹³³ Rich, K., Bean, C., & Apramian, Z. (2014). Boozing, brawling, and community building: sport-facilitated community development in a rural Ontario community. *Leisure/Loisir*, 38(1), 73-91.

¹³⁴ Engelberg, T. & Moston, S. (2020). Crime and misconduct in sport. *Sport in Society*, 23(6), 975-980.

¹³⁵ Engelberg, T. & Moston, S. (2020). Ruppé, W., Sirosta, O., Durand, C., & Dermitt, N. (2020). Measuring the violence and incivility of players in professional sport and the disciplinary bodies' management: statistical analysis of French professional football. *Sports in Society*, 23(6), 981-1003. Sheppard-Marks, L., Shipway, R., & Brown, L. (2020). Life at the edge: exploring male athlete criminality. *Sport in Society*, 23(6), 1042-1062.

¹³⁶ Kendellen, K., & Camiré, M. (2015). Examining former athletes' developmental experiences in high school sport. *Sage Open*, 5(4), 1-10. Fraser-Thomas, J., & Côté, J. (2009). Understanding adolescents' positive and negative developmental experiences in sport. *The Sport Psychologist*, 23(1), 3–23. Gould, D., Flett, R., & Lauer, L. (2012).

Participation in team sports may encourage minor forms of group offending (e.g., cannabis use, underage alcohol use, vandalism).¹³⁷ Coakley suggested that, unless mentors and coaches instill a philosophy of non-violence and encourage self-control, self-confidence, responsibility, and respect (to both oneself and others), participation in sport may exacerbate or encourage aggression.¹³⁸ Stanfield acknowledged that “the degree to which sports teams or recreational groups support violence and alcohol likely varies highly across type of sport, level of commitment and coaching.”¹³⁹

Several studies have examined various aspects of child maltreatment in sport (allegations of emotional abuse, bullying and physical abuse, as well as sexual abuse). Bullying occurs in various settings. Competitive environments, limited supervision, and unstructured time are program elements perceived as increasing the likelihood of bullying behaviors.¹⁴⁰ Children and youth participating in sport, especially girls, are sometimes particularly vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, and violence because of their reliance on the support of coaches and others in positions of influence. The nature and extent of abuse of children and youth in sport is still not well understood. Sexual, physical, and psychological violence against athletes, from coaches, opponents and teammates, is still poorly reported or measured.¹⁴¹ McPherson, summarizing some of the relevant research, noted that children who have a disability or who have been victims of previous abuse, or who are same sex attracted may be more vulnerable to abuse and exclusion in sport may be more vulnerable to an experience of abuse in the context of sport.¹⁴²

A UK study examined the harmful experiences of children in a sport setting and revealed that disrespectful and emotionally harmful treatment, harmful training, and bullying of young people were commonplace in children’s experiences of sport in the UK.¹⁴³ In Australia, in a survey designed to explore children’s experiences of organized sport, as recounted by young adults between the ages of 18 and 25

The relationship between psychosocial developmental and the sports climate experienced by underserved youth. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 13(1), 80–87.

¹³⁷ Davis, B. S., & Menard, S. (2013).

¹³⁸ Coakley, J. (2011).

¹³⁹ Stansfield, R. (2017), p. 189.

¹⁴⁰ Shannon, C.S. (2013). Bulling in recreation and sport settings: Exploring risk factors, prevention efforts, and intervention strategies. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 31(1), 15-33.

¹⁴¹ Parent, S. & Fortier, K. (2017). Prevalence of interpersonal violence against athletes in the sport context. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 16, 165-169.

¹⁴² McPherson, L., Long, M., Nicholson, M., Cameron, N., Atkins, P., & Morris, M.E. (2017). Children’s experience of sport in Australia, *Sociology of Sport*, 52(5), 551–569.

¹⁴³ Alexander, Stafford & Lewis, 2011; McMahon, S., & Belur, J. (2013).

years, respondents overwhelmingly identified their sport experience as children as a positive, socially enriching, and fun experience with lasting developmental benefits of participation in organized sport as children, but half of them also reported negative experiences, including emotional and physical harm and sexual harassment. The category of abuse most frequently reported by survey respondents was emotional abuse, most often by other children, but also by coaches and other children's parents. Coaches were most frequently named as perpetrators of physical abuse and sexual harassment.¹⁴⁴

Most interestingly, a large-scale cross-national study seems to confirm the relationship between youth participation in sport and delinquency, including violence and problematic alcohol use.¹⁴⁵ The study revealed that higher levels of sports involvement increased involvement in violence, but that the risk of alcohol and drug use behaviour diminish as sport started to occupy a greater part of a youth time. There seems to be a turning point where more engagement in sports translated into a reduced risk.¹⁴⁶

Sport Participation and Social Inclusion

Crime prevention requires the *promotion of inclusion* and social cohesion, thus the idea that sport can play a unique role in this respect by generating social capital and by helping mobilize communities and promote social inclusion and solidarity. Sport participation is often presented as a means of social inclusion and integration, as a site for meetings and bonding relationships between youth and formative role-models.¹⁴⁷ It offers youth a sense of belonging and an opportunity to expand their social networks.¹⁴⁸ The need to create a sense of community and belonging among individuals has been identified by a number of authors as perhaps the most significant element in any program for disaffected youth.¹⁴⁹ Social capital is pivotal to understanding the impact of sport participation. It is viewed as a means of promoting social inclusion for marginalized groups.¹⁵⁰ Social capital theory assumes that "social activity within the context of group participation, exhibiting clear aims and

¹⁴⁴ McPherson, L., Long, M., Nicholson, M., Cameron, N., Atkins, P., & Morris, M.E. (2017). See also: Alexander K., Stafford, A. & Lewis, R. (2011).

¹⁴⁵ Stansfield, R. (2017).

¹⁴⁶ Idem.

¹⁴⁷ Eckholm, D. (2019). Sport as a means of governing social integration: Discourses on bridging and bonding social relations. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 36, 152-161.

¹⁴⁸ Bailey, R. (2018). Sport, physical education and educational worth, *Educational Review*. 70(1), 51-66; Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A. M., Lonczak, H. S., & Hawkins, J. D. (2002); Coalter, F. (2012); Eisman, A., Lee, D.B., Hsieh, H.F., Stoddard, S.A., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2018); Roth, J. L. & Brooks-Gunn (2016).

¹⁴⁹ Sandford, R. A., Armour, K. M. & Warmington, P. (2006). Re-engaging disaffected youth through physical activity programmes. *British Educational Research Journal*, 32(2), 251-71.

¹⁵⁰ Sherry, E., & Strybosch, V. (2012). A kick in the right direction: Longitudinal outcomes of the Australian Community Street Soccer program. *Soccer & Society*, 13(4), 495-509, p. 498.

outcomes, results in an increase in the social capital for participants”.¹⁵¹ However, both the notions that sport and leisure activities are suitable means of promoting social relations and social capital and that social capital leads to social integration are disputable.¹⁵²

Expanding positive peer and adult connections is a mechanism by which organized activity participation may reduce risk of negative outcomes.¹⁵³ Morgan and Parker, using the concepts of recognition and acceptance as a basis of social inclusion, suggested that within contexts in which youth can engage in meaningful and trusting interpersonal relationships with coaches and other key program personnel, sport-based programs may potentially "incubate social assimilation" and promote integration.¹⁵⁴

Sport participation is sometimes also linked to the development of community resilience and the strengthening of cross-cultural awareness in young people and communities. For example, sport participation has the potential to facilitate the inclusion of migrants, but its effect is still limited by its role and the barriers that hinder the migrants' participation in sports.¹⁵⁵ An underlying assumption behind strategies to promote social inclusion through sports is that interactions between diverse social groups generate social capital, which can potentially function as a social lever for socially disadvantaged groups.¹⁵⁶ Sport participation may have potential social integration benefits by exposing participants to different cultural backgrounds and transforming attitudes and behaviours. Participation in sports, it has been suggested, can improve feelings of confidence and self-esteem in relation to negotiating cultural differences and cultural stereotypes.

Sport participation does not always translate into real inclusion and there is still a lack of clear evidence to support the rhetoric about the ways in which sport can contribute to social inclusion.¹⁵⁷ In reality, youth sport cultures themselves are not always very inclusive and sport programs do not necessarily

¹⁵¹ Idem.

¹⁵² Eckholm, D. (2019).

¹⁵³ Eisman, A., Lee, D.B., Hsieh, H.F., Stoddard, S.A., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2018).

¹⁵⁴ Morgan, H. J., & Parker, A. (2017). Generating recognition, acceptance and social inclusion in marginalised youth populations: The potential of sports-based interventions. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 20(08), 1028–1043

¹⁵⁵ D'Angelo, D. (2019). Sport and integration of migrants: Some considerations. *Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge*, 4(1), 3-15.

¹⁵⁶ Fehsenfeld, M. (2015). Inclusion of outsiders through sport. *Physical Culture and Sport. Studies & Research*, 65(1), 31-40.

¹⁵⁷ Dagkas, S. (2018). "Is social inclusion through PE, Sport and PA still a rhetoric?" Evaluating the relationship between physical education, sport and social inclusion. *Educational Review*, 70(1), 67-74.

lead to greater social inclusion. Furthermore, vulnerable groups at risk of exclusion are not homogeneous. Each one presents peculiarities which should be considered at the time of intervention. To support the integration of at-risk groups, programs must have an explicit commitment to support social integration and include interventions that are tailored to the needs and circumstances of the group facing some form of exclusion.¹⁵⁸ Also, the strategies aiming at social inclusion through sports need to take social context and local power dynamics into consideration.¹⁵⁹

Sport-based interventions have been developed as mechanisms through which social inclusion and social mobility can be promoted for marginalized youth. Sport-based programs aimed at promoting social inclusion have a very limited impact on exclusionary processes and actually risk legitimating a reductive analysis of these complex processes, highlighting individual deficits and de-emphasizing structural inequalities.¹⁶⁰

Another important way in which sport-based programs may promote social inclusion is through interventions designed to sustain school engagement. Engagement or reengagement with education and employment is a typical goal of sport-based programs designed to enhance social inclusion of marginalized youth by helping them acquire psychological capital.¹⁶¹ Involvement in a community sport-based program can potentially reconnect young people with formal education or, more specifically, enhance their participants a sense of self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, and encourage them to see school engagement as a means to achieve their goals.¹⁶² Sport-based community programs for youth have the potential to help youth acquire human and social capital as the means to enhanced employability prospects, and consequently, social mobility. The acquisition of positive psychological capital (i.e., self-efficacy, hope, optimism and resilience) is proposed as a means to actualize social

¹⁵⁸ Fernandez-Gavira, J., Heute-Garcia, A., & Velez Colon, L. (2017). Vulnerable groups at risk for sport and social exclusion. *Journal of Physical Education & Sport*, 17(1), 312-326.

¹⁵⁹ Fehsenfeld, M. (2015).

¹⁶⁰ Kelly, L. (2011). 'Social inclusion' through sports-based interventions? *Critical Social Policy*, 31(1), 126-150. Kelly, L. (2012). Sport-based interventions and the local governance of youth crime and antisocial behavior. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 37(3), 261-283. Kelly, L. (2012). Representing and preventing youth crime and disorder: Intended and unintended consequences of targeted youth programmes in England. *Youth Justice*, 12(2), 101-117.

¹⁶¹ Morgan, H. J., & Bush, A. J. (2016). Sports coach as transformative leader: Arresting school disengagement through community sport-based initiatives. *Sport, Education and Society*, 21(5), 759-777. Morgan, H., Parker, A., & Roberts, W. (2019). Community sport programmes and social inclusion: What role for positive psychological capital? *Sport in Society*, 22(6), 1100-1114.

¹⁶² Morgan, H., Parker, A., & Roberts, W. (2019), p. 1111.

mobility.¹⁶³ However, it appears that sport-based programs' impact on school engagement is very much context specific and relates strongly to the youth's relationships with the facilitators.¹⁶⁴ Morgan and Bush suggested that community-based sports coaches can become "transformative leaders" and support schools in arresting school disengagement and reorienting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds towards more optimistic futures and educational objectives.¹⁶⁵

Access to Sport and Exclusion

Social exclusion results in unequal access to educational, occupational, and political opportunity. Access to sport is indicative of wider social exclusion, as social marginalization and discrimination often result in lower access to and participation in sports.¹⁶⁶ This includes access to sports facilities and spaces which are often lacking in areas of low resources or have access restrictions. This is reflected in the fact that lower-socio-economic populations tend to have lower rates of sport participation.¹⁶⁷

Given increasing elitism, institutionalization, and competition in youth sport, youth sport programs are not equally accessible to all youth, regardless of socio-economic status, race, culture, ethnicity, or gender.¹⁶⁸ Vulnerable youth who might benefit most from sporting activities actually access them the least.¹⁶⁹ For example, children in care who, as a group, are at an elevated risk of victimization and criminal involvement, face specific challenges in accessing sports-based programs, including disrupted patterns of engagement coupled with additional institutional constraints that shaped access to sporting activities.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶³ Morgan, H. (2017). Enhancing social mobility within marginalised youth: The accumulation of positive psychological capital through engagement with community sports clubs. *Sport in Society*, 22(11), 1669-1685.

¹⁶⁴ Sandford, R.A., Duncombe, R. & Armour, K.M. (2008). The role of physical activity/sport in tackling youth disaffection and anti-social behaviour. *Educational Review*, 60(4), 419-435.

¹⁶⁵ Morgan, H. J., & Bush, A. J. (2016).

¹⁶⁶ Sherry, E., & Strybosch, V. (2012), p. 498.

¹⁶⁷ Idem.

¹⁶⁸ Fraser-Thomas, J. L., Côté, J., & Deakin, J. (2005). Youth Sport Programs: An avenue to foster positive youth development. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 10(1), 19-40.

¹⁶⁹ Hallinberg, B., Moore, S., Morgan, J., Bowen, K., & Van Goozen, S. (2015).

¹⁷⁰ [Quarmby, T. \(2014\). Sport and physical activity in the lives of looked-after children: a 'hidden group' in research, policy and practice. *Sport, Education and Society*, 19\(7\), 944-958.](#)

Participation in sports programs is not always affordable to disadvantaged youth.¹⁷¹ Availability of equipment, cost, transportation, and interest limit many youths' participation in after-school sports programs. In addition to these limitations, safety concerns in urban communities also act as barriers to participation.¹⁷² Low neighbourhood safety and social disorder is related to decreased physical activity and participation in sports among youth. Street crime, gang activity and fear can prevent youth from visiting parks or restrict their participation in sport activities (e.g., going to places that require crossing gang boundaries).¹⁷³

Sport-based programs need to address the obstacles to sport participation that confront various vulnerable groups (migrants, children of incarcerated parents, street children, gang-involved youth, Indigenous groups, etc.) and seek to involve youth and community members in the recruitment process, the choice of the sports activities, and the design of the program.¹⁷⁴ For instance, Indigenous youth face many challenges accessing a sport system that is largely based on Euro-Canadian values and structures and experience many constraints to participation, including racism, marginalization, and socioeconomic barriers.¹⁷⁵ Physical activity and sport provides many positive developmental opportunities for Aboriginal youth, as well as possible negative developmental experiences (e.g., racism, bullying, and exclusion).¹⁷⁶

Planning sports-based interventions in a disadvantaged urban context or a remote location can present many challenges. Tensions within the community, rivalries, territorial conflicts between gangs, and a host of other factors and circumstances can negatively affect sports-based interventions. The social and

¹⁷¹ Cameron, M., & MacDougall, C. J. (2000). Crime prevention through sport and physical activity. *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, 165, 1-6. Berdychevsky, L., Stodolska, M., & Shinew, K. J. (2019). The roles of recreation in the prevention, intervention and rehabilitation programs addressing youth gang involvement and violence. *Leisure Sciences*, 1-23. Published online April 2019.

¹⁷² Marttinen, R., Johnston, K., Phillips, S., Fredrick, R.N., & Meza, B. (2019). REACH Harlem: young urban boys' experiences in an after-school PA positive youth development program, *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 24(4), 373-389.

¹⁷³ [Stodolska, M., Shinew, K.J., & Acevedo, J.C. \(2013\). 'I was born in the hood': Fear of crime, outdoor recreation and physical activity among Mexican-American urban adolescents. *Leisure Sciences*, 35, 1-15.](#)

¹⁷⁴ [United Nations \(2020\).](#)

¹⁷⁵ Strachan, L., McHugh, T.-L., & Mason, C. (2018). Understanding positive youth development in sport through the voices of Indigenous youth. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 40, 293-302.

¹⁷⁶ Bruner, M. W., Hillier, S., Baillie, C. P. T., Lavallée, L. F., Bruner, B. G., Hare, K., Lovelace, R., & Lévesque, L. (2016). Positive youth development in Aboriginal physical activity and sport: A systematic review. *Adolescent Research Review*, 1(3), 257-269.

power structures responsible for the exclusion of certain youth from healthy sport activities need to be considered.

Some efforts to target at risk youth with sports programs may serve to further stigmatize and isolate them from the larger community.¹⁷⁷ Sports-based crime prevention programs designed for at risk youth often target marginalized, disaffected youth who can be difficult to locate and even more difficult to engage. Youth recruitment strategies, often relying on sports clubs and volunteers, sometimes overlook young people whose social exclusion is more complex or acute, and who, most likely, are in greater need of intervention support. In fact, the social inclusion goals of some programs are sometimes defeated by their own youth recruitment strategies or predetermined participation targets which tend to exclude youth with more complex exclusion issues.¹⁷⁸

The sport experiences of socially vulnerable youth are not always positive and supportive.¹⁷⁹ Sport participation can have integrative effects (friendship, trust, and social cohesion), but it can also entail the opposite.¹⁸⁰ For some socially vulnerable individuals sport participation results in experiences of discrimination, bullying and exclusion, and feelings of rejection, disappointment and personal failure. Although sport participation tends to be a positive experience for socially vulnerable youth, it can also instigate a “negative spiral of vulnerability”.¹⁸¹

Sports-based crime prevention must safeguard participants. That includes ensuring non-discriminatory access for all to sport activities and access to safe sport spaces. It also includes making sure that interventions targeting at-risk groups or young offenders are trauma-informed and do not contribute to

¹⁷⁷ Coakley, J. (2002). Coakley, J. (2011). Chamberlain, J.M. (2013). Eckholm, D. (2019). Armstrong, D. (2006), ‘Becoming criminal: the cultural politics of risk’. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 10 (2-3), 265-278.

¹⁷⁸ [Morgan, H. & Costas Battle, I. \(2019\). “It’s borderline hypocrisy”: Recruitment practices in youth sport-based interventions. *Journal of Sport for Development*, 7\(13\), 1–14](#)

¹⁷⁹ Super, S., Wentink, C. Q., Verkooijen, K.T., & Koelen, M.A. (2017). Exploring the sports experiences of socially vulnerable youth. *Social Inclusion*, 5(2), 1-12.

¹⁸⁰ Collins, M. F. & Kay, T. (2014). *Sport and social exclusion* (2nd Edition). New York: Routledge.

¹⁸¹ Super, S., Wentink, C. Q., Verkooijen, K. T., & Koelen, M. A. (2019). How young adults reflect on the role of sport in their socially vulnerable childhood, *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(1), 20-34.

their stigmatization or social exclusion. Coaches can play a role in creating meaningful and supportive sporting experiences for vulnerable youth.¹⁸²

Finally, one needs to consider that sport clubs and organizations that support sport-based programs are primarily interested in sport, and not necessarily in sport as a social service. There is perhaps an exaggerated belief in the interest of sport organizations in attracting and caring for socially excluded or deviant youth.

Given the various degrees of participation of and access to sports-based programmes by different populations, there is a need to develop strategies to engage those in vulnerable situations and with more restricted access. This includes devising effective recruitment strategies, conducting individual assessments to better understand the needs and aspirations of young participants, and ensuring the availability of and equitable access to sports facilities and spaces.

Sports and Secondary Crime Prevention – Youth at Risk

At the secondary level of crime prevention intervention, some sport-based programs have been relied upon to reach and support children and youth deemed “at risk”. As was discussed earlier, participation in sport is mistakenly assumed to automatically reform at-risk children and youth and prevent them from criminal involvement.¹⁸³ Although there is very limited evidence of a causal link between sport participation and the prevention of crime and recidivism,¹⁸⁴ there is some evidence that sport can be an effective tool for recruiting and delivering other crime prevention interventions to mitigate risk factors and strengthen protective factors of crime and violence.¹⁸⁵

Indeed, many youth crime prevention and drug prevention programs have used sports as a vehicle or platform for delivering various other forms of interventions. They are usually designed as early

¹⁸² Super, S., Verkooijen, K., & Koelen, M. (2018). The role of community sports coaches in creating optimal social conditions for life skill development and transferability: A salutogenic perspective. *Sport, Education and Society*, 23(2), 173-185.

¹⁸³ Coakley, J. (2011); Eckholm, D. (2013). Sport and crime prevention: Individuality and transferability in research. *Journal of Sport for Development*, 1(2), 1-12; Riley, A., Anderson-Butcher, D., Logan, J., Newman, T. J., & Davis, J. (2017). Staff practices and social skill outcomes in a sport-based youth program. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 29(1), 59-74.

¹⁸⁴ Eckholm, D. (2013).

¹⁸⁵ Cameron, M., & MacDougall, C. J. (2000); United Nations (2020).

interventions to reduce the impact of risk factors and enhance corresponding protective factors, by targeting "high risk" individuals or groups.¹⁸⁶ The nature and impact of these other interventions is sometimes unclear. The programs may have many benefits for participants, but they tend to overstate their ability to prevent crime.¹⁸⁷ The "evidence" of their success, when there is any at all, is mostly anecdotal or based on the perceptions of participants or program managers. Furthermore, many community-based programs with limited funding focus on receptive youths and overemphasize the fact that these youth may somehow be "at risk".

Some of the programs focus primarily on drug prevention. As Crabbe observed, sport is used in drug prevention and treatment interventions because young people enjoy it, but it is also for the same reason that they might also choose to use illicit drugs, become involved in criminal activity, or even sport-related violence.¹⁸⁸

Other sport-based crime prevention interventions are designed more specifically to support *gang prevention* initiatives and aim to prevent the recruitment of at-risk youth into gangs, offer gang involved youth a way out, or facilitate their social reintegration. Sports-based interventions are meant to create opportunities to engage gang-involved youth in positive transitional experiences, alternative identity construction and desistance actions.¹⁸⁹ Programs addressing youth gang involvement that include recreation components create opportunities for youth to develop prosocial relationships with their peers and help break racial/ethnic stereotypes.¹⁹⁰

A small study of sport-based interventions and self-reported gang involvement and delinquency among a diverse sample of rural high school girls reported less gang involvement and lower individual delinquency.¹⁹¹ A study by Deuchar and his colleagues suggested that boxing can offer disadvantaged

¹⁸⁶ Kelly, L. (2012). Sport-based interventions and the local governance of youth crime and antisocial behavior. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 37(3), 261-283.

¹⁸⁷ Kelly, L. (2012). Sport-based interventions and the local governance of youth crime and antisocial behavior. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 37(3), 261-283.

¹⁸⁸ Crabbe, T. (2000). A sporting chance: Using sport to tackle drug use and crime. *Drugs: Education, Prevention & Policy*, 7(4), 381-391.

¹⁸⁹ Osterberg, E. C. (2020). "We can't arrest our way out of this": Police responses to gang violence in British Columbia Lower Mainland. Doctoral thesis, University of British Columbia, July 2020.

¹⁹⁰ Berdychevsky, L., Stodolska, M., & Shinew, K. J. (2019).

¹⁹¹ [Taylor, M. J., Nanney, J. T., Welch, D. Z., & Wamser-Nanney, R. A. \(2016\). The impact of sports participation on female gang involvement and delinquency. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 39\(3\), 317-343.](#)

minority male gang members an opportunity for alternative identity construction and support their progressive desistance from gangs.¹⁹² They explained that desistance is not just about transformations in offenders' circumstances, but also involves subjective and inter-subjective processes such as individuals' reconstructions of identities.¹⁹³

Some interventions are possibly more effective than others in reducing youth violence and gang involvement. For example, sports and other forms of recreation can be part of a comprehensive and balanced combination of approaches, or a "weed and seed" strategy blending suppression, enforcement, prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation goals.¹⁹⁴ Interventions addressing gang involvement can help youth develop prosocial relationships with their peers and "give youth a sense of purpose and ownership that can keep them on track in their often chaotic and unfulfilling environments".¹⁹⁵

Spruit and her colleagues (2018a) evaluated a Dutch sport-based program for youth at risk for juvenile delinquency. The primary outcome was juvenile delinquency, measured by official police data. The secondary outcomes were risk and protective factors for delinquency, assessed with self- and teacher reports. The study found small but significant intervention effects of the intervention on juvenile delinquency, and no effects on the risk and protective factors of juvenile delinquency.¹⁹⁶ Another study based on youth's self-reported delinquent involvement (crimes against the person, crimes against property and public disorder) at the beginning of their involvement in one of several sport programs for at-risk youth and six months later, found significant reduction in self-reported delinquent behaviour.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² Deuchar, R., Sogaard, T. F., Kolind, T., Thylstrup, B., & Wells, L. (2016). 'When you're boxing you don't think so much': pugilism, transitional masculinities and criminal desistance among young Danish gang members. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 19(6), 725-742.

¹⁹³ Idem.

¹⁹⁴ National Gang Center (2010). *Best practices to address community gang problems: OJJDP's comprehensive gang model*. Washington (DC): Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

¹⁹⁵ Berdychevsky, L., Stodolska, M., & Shinew, K. J. (2019), p. 18.

¹⁹⁶ Spruit, A., Hoffenaar, P., van der Put, C., van Vugt, E., & Stams, G. J. (2018a); Also, Spruit, A., van der Put, C., van Vugt, E., and Stams, G. J. (2018). Predictors of intervention success in a sport-based program for adolescents at risk of juvenile delinquency. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 62(6), 1535-1555.

¹⁹⁷ Khoury-Kassabri, M. & Schneider, H. (2018). The relationship between Israeli youth participation in physical activity programs and antisocial behavior. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 35, 357-365.

Heller and her colleagues reporting on three large-scale randomized controlled trials in Chicago testing interventions to reduce crime and school dropout by changing the decision making of economically disadvantaged youth (the Becoming a Man program) found that it was very unlikely that sport activities were the main factor influencing outcomes.¹⁹⁸ Cognitive changes (related to automatic thoughts processes) seem to have had the most impact, not changes in emotional intelligence or social skills, or self-control, or a generic mentoring effect.

It is increasingly recognized that when working towards broader prevention outcomes with youth at risk, especially socially vulnerable youth, a specific methodology is required.¹⁹⁹ Whether the intervention focuses on a psychological, socio-pedagogical or a social capital approach, the method of intervention should be specified. Explicit and clearly articulated models of crime prevention are required that support interventions across multiple risk outcomes and supports broader positive youth development outcomes.²⁰⁰

Risk-based Programing

Life course developmental theories of offending have been guiding community-based crime prevention programs, locating them primarily in families, schools and communities and targeting people before they become involved in crime.²⁰¹ This theoretical approach recognizes that there are many potential causal paths to criminal involvement and that crime is a complex behaviour influenced by many factors. The prevention model associated with that theoretical explanation consists of attempting to modify factors that are associated with criminal behaviour. These risk factors and protective factors are statistically associated with the onset or persistence of criminal activity. However, whether these risk and protective factors actually predict criminal involvement is clearly debatable. For one thing, these factors do not necessarily apply to individuals. The predictions made on the basis of such factors applies to groups that present these factors, and not so neatly to specific individuals.

¹⁹⁸ Heller, S.B., Shah, A.K., Guryan, J., Ludwig, J., Mullainathan, S., & Pollack, H.A. (2017). Thinking, fast and slow? Some field experiments to reduce crime and dropout in Chicago. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 132(1), 1-54.

¹⁹⁹ Haudenhuyse, R. P., Theeboom, M., & Skille, E. A. (2014). Towards understanding the potential of sports-based practices for socially vulnerable youth. *Sport in Society*, 17(2), 139–156; Haudenhuyse, R., Theeboom, M., & Nols, Z. (2012). Sports-based interventions for socially vulnerable youth: Towards well-defined interventions with easy-to-follow outcomes? *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 48(4), 471–484.

²⁰⁰ Allison, K. W., Edmonds, T., Wilson, K., Pope, M., & Farrell, A. D. (2011). Connecting youth violence prevention, positive youth development, and community mobilization. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 18(8), 8-20.

²⁰¹ Elliott, D. & Fagan, A. (2017). *The Prevention of Crime*. Malden: Wiley Blackwell.

There are several problems with a risk-based approach to crime prevention through sports. Risk prevention does not necessarily equate with successful adaptation or desistance from crime.²⁰² The many limitations of risk-based prevention programming must be acknowledged. This type of programming is typically planned around the concept of risk and protective factors based on statistical associations at the group level between those factors and "problem behaviour". Despite increasing awareness that risk prevention does not necessarily promote successful social adaptation or desistance from crime, risk prevention remains at the centre of many crime prevention interventions, instead of more positive youth development strength-based approaches that build resiliency.

The assumptions underlying many, if not most, sport-based crime prevention interventions are aligned with a deficit model of youth, which posits that young people from disadvantaged groups are uniformly deficient and in need of development, which can be achieved through sport.²⁰³ These assumptions must also be challenged. The idea that young people from disadvantaged areas or background are uniformly deficient and in need of development is clearly problematic.²⁰⁴ A study conducted in Belgium of 14-25 year-old participants in six sports for development programs surveyed at two different points in time refuted the supposition that young people from disadvantaged urban areas are uniformly in need of more perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem and showed that there was no simple and predictable change in the participants' development.²⁰⁵ Coalter cautioned against the "dangers of an environmental determinism that assumes that deprived communities inevitably produce deficient people who can be perceived, via a deficit model, to be in need of 'development' through sports".²⁰⁶

The risk factor-prevention approach consists of identifying the key risk factors for offending and implementing interventions to counteract them.²⁰⁷ Efforts to prevent criminal involvement can be expected to have different levels of success for different groups, depending on their age, gender, circumstances, characteristics and other attributes. It has therefore been suggested that "to have

²⁰² Allison, K. W., Edmonds, T., Wilson, K., Pope, M., & Farrell, A. D. (2011).

²⁰³ Coakley, J. (2011); Coalter, F. (2010); Coalter, F. (2013); Nols, Z., Haudenhuyse, R., & Theeboom, M. (2017). Urban sport-for-development initiatives and young people in socially vulnerable situations: Investigating the 'deficit model'. *Social Inclusion*, 5(2), 210-222.

²⁰⁴ Coakley, J. (2011); Coalter, F. (2013); Nols, Z., Haudenhuyse, R., & Theeboom, M. (2017).

²⁰⁵ Nols, Z., Haudenhuyse, R., & Theeboom, M. (2017).

²⁰⁶ Coalter, F. (2013), p. 3.

²⁰⁷ Farrington, D. P. (2000). Explaining and preventing crime: The globalization of knowledge. *Criminology*, 38(1), 1-24.

maximum impact, the content of a program should try to change the risk and protective factors that are most likely to occur and to be influential for the group targeted to receive the intervention.”²⁰⁸

The approach is used to identify not only the risk factors but also the individuals to be targeted by various interventions. This typically leads to a very expansive definition of risk factors and ultimately the targeting and potential stigmatization of “problem children” and their families.²⁰⁹ The approach tends to ignore underlying structural issues and inequalities. Crime is reduced to a putative individual social adaptation issue and at-risk youth are deemed to be more inclined towards anti-social or criminal behaviour, whether because of their milieu, their uncaring or incompetent parents, or some other developmental deficit.

As a predictive tool, risk factor analysis is not that useful. At best, it can point to factors that increase the probability of committing crime or being arrested among certain populations with shared characteristics. It is based on evidence that is suitable for generalizations about groups, not about individuals.²¹⁰ At the individual level, the margin of error is very high, and the “predictions” are plagued with false positives and false negatives. This is hardly surprising since the approach rests on two logical fallacies²¹¹, the *fallacy of division* and the *fallacy of composition*, and a statistical fallacy, the *ecological inference fallacy*, which consists of assuming that what is statistically true of a group is true of individuals in that group.²¹²

The actual relationship between risk factors and the behaviour of young people is still poorly understood.²¹³ While risk factors which correlate with certain types of criminal behaviour may be known, the causal links between them and future offending are much less clear.²¹⁴ In fact, the term “risk

²⁰⁸ Elliott, D. & Fagan, A. (2017), p. 88.

²⁰⁹ Garside, R. (2009). Risky individuals, risky families or risky societies? *Criminal Justice Matters*, 78(1), 42-43.

²¹⁰ Armstrong, D. (2006).

²¹¹ A *fallacy of division* is the error in logic that occurs when one reasons that something that is true for a whole must also be true of all or some of its parts. A *fallacy of composition* arises when one fallaciously attributes a property of some part of a thing to the thing as a whole. Both the fallacy of division and the fallacy of composition were addressed by Aristotle in his *Sophistical Refutations*.

²¹² An *ecological fallacy* (also ecological inference fallacy or population fallacy) is a formal fallacy in the interpretation of statistical data that occurs when inferences about the nature of individuals are deduced from inferences about the group to which those individuals belong.

²¹³ Paylor, I. (2010). The scaled approach to youth justice: A risky business. *Criminal Justice Matters*, 81(1), 30-31.

²¹⁴ Farrington, D. P. (2000).

factor” is itself poorly defined and inconsistently used; in many instances it refers to “an extreme category of an explanatory variable”.²¹⁵ Furthermore, risks are assessed on the basis of certain categories of crime; no one is asking why there may be a higher probability of involvement in financial fraud, embezzlement or money laundering among graduates of business and law schools. It certainly can be argued, as Haines and Case do, that “risk factor research thus far has functioned as a quantitative, pragmatic, prescriptive and somewhat self-fulfilling exercise”.²¹⁶ It has led to crime prevention policies focused on individual adaptation rather than more far-reaching social reform. For example, as Armstrong observed, identifying poverty as a risk factor at the group level, does not typically lead to crime prevention measures to address poverty, discrimination, or economic inequality, but to interventions aimed at helping individuals manage their own risk.²¹⁷

Research into risk factors remains highly problematic; it is empirically very limited and theoretically ill-defined.²¹⁸ Risk factors interventions are “based on poor science and a flawed evidence base”.²¹⁹ This discrepancy between the limits of research knowledge and many crime prevention policies is striking.²²⁰ It is at the root of a “sport as social control” approach which focuses on at-risk youth whom it characterizes as a danger or a threat to the community or in need of being controlled and socialized through sport or other structured activities.²²¹ This ideology, to call it what it is, undergirds countless ineffective interventions which misdirected crime prevention investments unfortunately tend to replicate without any demonstrable results.²²²

Strength-based Programing: Sport-based Positive Youth Development

In view of the potentially stigmatizing effect of targeting individuals for interventions from various groups deemed to be at risk,²²³ flexible, individualized, strength-based approaches to programming

²¹⁵ Farrington, D. P. (2000), p. 3.

²¹⁶ Haines, K. & Case, S. (2008). The rhetoric and reality of the ‘risk factor prevention paradigm’ approach to preventing and reducing youth offending. *Youth Justice*, 8(1), 5-20, p. 10.

²¹⁷ Armstrong, D. (2006).

²¹⁸ Armstrong, D. (2004). A risky business? Research, policy, governmentality and youth offending. *Youth Justice*, 4(2), 100-116; Case, S. & Haines, K. (2009). *Understanding Youth Offending: Risk factor research, policy and practice*. Cullompton: Willan Publishing; Case, S. & Haines, K. (2010). Risky business? The risk in risk factor research. *Criminal Justice Matters*, 80(1), 20-22.

²¹⁹ Case, S. & Haines, K. (2010), p. 20.

²²⁰ Garside, R. (2009), p. 42.

²²¹ Chamberlain, J. M. (2013).

²²² Dandurand, Y. (2017). *Institutional Coordination in Crime Prevention: International Perspectives*. United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, 26th Session, May 22, 2017.

²²³ Armstrong, D. (2006).

should most likely be preferred to deficit-based approaches.²²⁴ The positive youth development approach is based on a vision of positive adolescent development in which youth are regarded as a resource to be developed rather than a problem to be solved.²²⁵ It can be defined as the “development of personal skills or assets, including cognitive, social, emotional, and intellectual qualities necessary for youth to become successfully functioning members of society”.²²⁶ Social responsibility²²⁷ is a goal of many physical activity-based positive youth development programs.²²⁸ That approach differs from others which focus on problems encountered by some young people while growing up (e.g., learning disabilities; affective disorders; antisocial conduct; low motivation and achievement; substance abuse, poverty, social exclusion) in that it focuses instead on the youth’s talents, strengths, interests, and potentials.²²⁹ The approach holds promises because it offers an alternative to the problem-centered or risk-mitigating vision of youth crime prevention that has dominated that field. In contrast to a traditional prevention perspective focus on mitigating certain risks, positive youth development emphasizes the resources relevant to promoting healthy development outcomes.²³⁰

The main drawback of the approach, however, is that positive youth development has yet to be convincingly shown to prevent crime. For example, the evaluation of an intervention for young people displaying low-level anti-social behaviour in Chicago suggested that the intervention had its greatest impact on intermediate outcomes (e.g. youth self-esteem and aspirations or their behaviour at home or at school), but that these gains were not mirrored in the impact on the volume of offending behaviour, arrests and use of drugs, alcohol or other substances.²³¹ The researchers remarked: “In these areas, progress is much more hard won, and generally impacts are not statistically significant”.²³²

²²⁴ United Nations (2020).

²²⁵ Damon, W. (2004). What Is Positive Youth Development? *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 591(1), 13-23; Armour, K. and Sandford, R.A. (2013).

²²⁶ Weiss, M. R., & Wiese-Bjornstal, D. M. (2009). Promoting positive youth development through physical activity. *President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Research Digest*, 19, 1-8, p. 1.

²²⁷ *Social responsibility* refers to attitudes and initiative to respect the rights of others, being a responsible citizen, and avoiding violent and destructive behaviors.

²²⁸ Brunelle, J., Danish, S. J., & Forneris, T. (2007); Hellison, D. (2011). *Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility Through Physical Activity* (3.^a ed.). Champaign (IL): Human Kinetics; McDonough, M. H., Ullrich-French, S., Anderson-Butcher, D., Amorose, A. J., & Riley, A. (2013). Social responsibility among low-income youth in physical activity-based positive youth development programs: Scale development and associations with social relationships. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 25(4), 431-447.

²²⁹ McDonough, M. H., Ullrich-French, S., Anderson-Butcher, D., Amorose, A. J., & Riley, A. (2013).

²³⁰ Allison, K. W., Edmonds, T., Wilson, K., Pope, M., & Farrell, A. D. (2011).

²³¹ Berry, V., Little, M., Axford, N. and Cusick, G. R. (2009). An evaluation of Youth at Risk’s Coaching for Communities programme. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 48 (1), 60-75.

²³² Idem, p. 71.

An evaluation of the Fairbridge program in the UK which involved disadvantaged and disaffected young people in sport-based activities was shown to increase the youth personal and social skills in the short term.²³³ However, the gains in these skills did not appear to be maintained a year later, although they were still good predictors of long-term behavioral improvements. The supportive relationships with program staff were of key importance in the long term. Initially, the nature of the sports activities was important in gaining involvement.²³⁴

An evaluation of a sport-based life skills and community service program indicated that the program had a significant positive impact on adolescents' prosocial values and that the community service experience positively impacted the adolescents' levels of empathic concern and social responsibility.²³⁵ These findings supports the view that "sport can serve to enhance character and values when combined with life skill programming and the opportunity to engage in a sustained helping experience".²³⁶ However, the enduring nature of this learning depends on having the opportunity to put them into practice.²³⁷

An evaluation of a program that used structured physical activity or sport as a vehicle for reengaging disaffected youth and promoting positive personal and social development (5- year, school-based program age 13-14 youth, outward bound activities and instructors) identified three issues that are of particular importance: the selection of participants; the 'transfer' of key skills; and the importance of positive social relationships. The study highlighted the importance of social and relational processes in physical activity programs for disaffected youth. It also led to the conclusion that sport-based interventions are no panacea for social problems, nor can they expect to appeal to or influence every individual in the same way.²³⁸ The lessons learned through this evaluation for future program design were later summarized as follows: "the impact of the program is highly individualized and context-specific in many cases, and that positive impact is more likely to be sustained when some or all of the following project features are in place: effective matching of pupil needs with the specific project objectives; locating project activities outside of the 'normal' school context; working closely with pupils to choose activities, set targets and review progress; establishing positive relationships between project

²³³ Astbury, R., Knight, B., & Nichols, G. (2005). The contribution of sport-related interventions to the long-term development of disaffected young people: An evaluation of the Fairbridge program. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 23(3), 82-98.

²³⁴ Idem.

²³⁵ Brunelle, J., Danish, S. J., & Forneris, T. (2007).

²³⁶ Idem, p. 53.

²³⁷ Idem.

²³⁸ Armour, K. & Sandford, R. (2013); Armour, K., Sandford, R., & Duncombe, R. (2013).

leaders/supporters (mentors) and pupils; and giving pupils the opportunity to work with and for others".²³⁹

A central premise of positive youth development programs aimed at crime prevention is the idea that promoting mastery of social and emotional core competencies²⁴⁰ provides a connection between positive youth development and risk prevention programming.²⁴¹ There is a lot of speculation about the links between the so-called core competencies at the heart of positive youth development and youth violence or aggression.²⁴² Much of that literature uses fairly broad concepts such as aggression and externalizing behaviour, but since there are multiple forms of violence that differ in their etiology, age of onset and seriousness, the type of violence must be specified in discussions of the link between core competencies and violence.²⁴³

School failure is understood as a risk factor for criminal involvement, and there is some evidence that the acquisition of core skills is linked to school performance and school attachment.²⁴⁴ However, it appears that contextual factors at the level of the peer group, family, school, neighborhood, and the physical environment moderate the influence of the core competencies on school success.²⁴⁵

²³⁹ Sandford, R.A., Duncombe, R. & Armour, K.M. (2008), p. 419.

²⁴⁰ Five core competencies: (1) positive sense of self, (2) self control, (3) decision-making skills, (4) a moral system of belief, and (5) prosocial connectedness. For a discussion of core assets, see also: Butts, J.A., Bazemore, G., Meroe, A. S. (2010). *Positive Youth Justice: Framing Justice Interventions Using the Concepts of Positive Youth Development*. Washington: U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs; Guerra, N. & Bradshaw, C. (2008). Linking the prevention of problem behaviors and positive youth development: Core competencies for positive youth development and risk prevention, *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 122, 1–17; Jones, Dunn, Holt, Sullivan, & Bloom, 2011.

²⁴¹ Guerra, N. & Bradshaw, C. (2008).

²⁴² Sullivan, T. N., Farrell, A. D., Bettencourt, A. F., & Helms, S. W. (2008). Core competencies and the prevention of youth violence. In N. G. Guerra & C. P. Bradshaw (Eds.), *Core competencies to prevent problem behaviors and promote positive youth development*. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 122, 33–46.

²⁴³ Idem.

²⁴⁴ Bradshaw, C. P., O'Brennan, L. M., & McNeely, C. A. (2008). Core competencies and the prevention of school failure and early school leaving. In N. G. Guerra & C. P. Bradshaw (Eds.), *Core competencies to prevent problem behaviors and promote positive youth development*. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 122, 19–32.

²⁴⁵ Idem.

Sport as a “Hook” for Engaging Youth

As Coakley suggested, it may be more useful to think of sport participation as a “site for socialization experiences”, instead of the cause of socialization outcomes.²⁴⁶ We may remain critical towards the value of sports as a tool for positive youth development²⁴⁷ but there is no doubt that sport offers a “hook” and a platform for various forms of individual and group interventions. Many adolescents participate in sports regardless of its prosocial value, and it makes perfect sense to create opportunities for prosocial development within an area of activity that occupies such a large proportion of the youth’s time and thought.

In sport-based programs that include other interventions, such as teaching, mentoring and other forms of individual support, the sport activity may not be of primary importance as long as it serves as a ‘hook’ for attracting youth into a stimulating field and engaging them in programs where additional teaching or interventions are provided. Program outcomes may be determined much more by the strength of the non-sport aspects of the intervention, than by the choice of sport or the extent of sport participation.

It is often suggested that crime prevention or desistance from crime tends to occur when the initial contact with the sporting activity leads to a deeper, more involved engagement from which relationships of trust and acceptance with activity leaders and others. These relationships, it is also suggested, provide a platform upon which the individual development of the participant can be built, and which may lead to further opportunities in education, training, and employment (pathways that may deter or negate engagement in crime and anti-social behaviour). Research has examined the link between participation in sport-based programs and desistance from crime recognizes the importance of strong interpersonal relationships between programme staff and the participants.²⁴⁸ The assumption is that the positive trust-based relationships that enable participants to feel valued or competent and program leaders to act as role models who can relate to the challenges faced by participants in their everyday life can be used as a platform for additional support and personal development.

²⁴⁶ Coakley, J. (1998), p. 102.

²⁴⁷ Super, S., Wentink, C. Q., Verkooijen, K. T., & Koelen, M. A. (2019).

²⁴⁸ Coalter, F. (2013); Crabbe, T., Bailey, G., Blackshaw, T. Adam, B., Choak, C. Gidley, B. Mellor, G., O’Connor. K., Slater. I, & Woodhouse, D. (2006); Morgan, H. J., & Parker, A. (2017).

The Type of Sport

As Coalter noted, “sport is a collective noun that hides more than it reveals”.²⁴⁹ Most of the literature on sport participation and sport-based programs and crime prevention tends to focus on a few team-based competitive sports (e.g., football, rugby, basketball, hockey) or combat sports (boxing, mixed martial arts). Other sports are occasionally mentioned, including golf²⁵⁰, running, circus arts programs,²⁵¹ canoeing, weightlifting, wilderness adventure²⁵², indoor competition climbing programs,²⁵³ or parkour²⁵⁴. All of them can be intentionally structured to teach life skills and accompanied by a life-skills training program. For example, circus arts programs emphasize building challenging physical skills but with an artistic rather than a competitive orientation. According to one study, participants in youth circus programs demonstrated significant growth in social and emotional skills over the course of their program participation.²⁵⁵ With the right context and careful and intentional programming, it seems that any sport or physical activity can be used as a platform for crime prevention programming. However, it is also feared that the use of unsuitable sport activities may have a detrimental effect.

Different forms of participation can also provide a worthwhile platform for positive youth development. Opportunities to volunteer or participate in different capacities (as a member of the coaching team, as a referee, etc.) in a sport-based program can help recruit youth who would otherwise not be interested in joining a program. The importance of providing experiences of success through volunteering as well as the importance of there being a gradual take up of responsibilities, thereby increasing adolescents’

²⁴⁹ Coalter, F. (2012), p. 595.

²⁵⁰ Kendellen, K., Camiré, M., Bean, C., Forneris, T., & Thompson, J. (2017). Integrating life skills into Golf Canada’s youth programs: Insights into a successful research to practice partnership. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 8(1), 34–46; Weiss, M. R., Stuntz, C. P., Bhalla, J. A., Bolter, N. D., & Price, M. S. (2013); Weiss, M. R., Bolter, N. D., & Kipp, L. E. (2016). Evaluation of the first tee in promoting positive youth development: Group comparisons and longitudinal trends. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 87(3): 271–283.

²⁵¹ Smith, C., Roy, L., Peck, S., & Macleod, C. (2017). *Evaluation of program quality and social and emotional learning in American Youth Circus Organization Social Circus Programs*. Also: Agans, J. P., Davis, J. L., Vazou, S., & Jarus, T. (2019). Self-Determination Through Circus Arts: Exploring Youth Development in a Novel Activity Context. *Journal of Youth Development*, 14(3), 110-129.

²⁵² Ganea, V., & Grosu, E.F. (2018).

²⁵³ Garst, B. A., Stone, G. A., & Gagnon, R. J. (2016). Indoor competition climbing as a context for positive youth development. *Journal of Youth Development*, 11(2), 161102FA003.

²⁵⁴ Gilchrist, P., & Osborn, G. (2017). Risk and benefits in lifestyle sports: parkour, law and social value. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 9(1), 55-69; Gilchrist, P., & Wheaton, B. (2011). Lifestyle sport, public policy and youth engagement: Examining the emergence of parkour. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 3(1), 109-131; Herrmann, J. (2016). *Parkour/freerunning as a pathway to prosocial change* (Master’s thesis, Victoria University of Wellington).

²⁵⁵ Agans, J. P., Davis, J. L., Vazou, S., & Jarus, T. (2019).

engagement at their own pace.²⁵⁶ A systematic approach of the volunteer training program can play an important role in the development of competencies of socially vulnerable youths.²⁵⁷

As one of the coaches we interviewed for this project put it: “There is no question that youth will learn things from their sport experience, no matter what sport. But what is it they are learning: that they are not good enough to get some ice time, that others excel because they break the rules, that winning is the only thing that matters? How the sport is practiced is probably more important than the choice of sport”.

Youth psychosocial experiences in sport-based physical activities vary based on activity characteristics.²⁵⁸ Program activities should have an element of thrill and excitement since many of the youth involved may need greater amounts of stimulation in order to become motivated.²⁵⁹ However, experts have also suggested that sport activities which de-emphasize regulations and winning, and instead emphasize choices for participants and the tailoring of interventions to meet individual needs are most likely better at providing a suitable platform for crime prevention interventions.²⁶⁰

The use of combat sports or martial arts as a basis for crime prevention interventions remains quite controversial. Does combat sport have an impact on participants’ criminality, and if so, are combat sports appropriate for use in offender treatment programmes and crime prevention strategies?

Over the years, the practice of martial arts, increasingly popular among youth, raised concerns because of the possible harmful effects on the personal and social well-being of young participants in terms of aggressive and violent behavior (externalizing behaviour). It is still unclear whether martial arts participation is associated with externalizing behaviour, but a fairly recent meta analysis of twelve

²⁵⁶ Buelens, E., Theeboom, M., Vertonghen, J. & Martelaer, K. D. (2015); Buelens, E., Theeboom, M., Vertonghen, J., & Martelaer, K. D. (2017). Conditions for successfully increasing disadvantaged adolescents’ engagement in the development through volunteering in community sport. *Social Inclusion*, 5(2), 179-197.

²⁵⁷ Buelens, E., Theeboom, M., Vertonghen, J. & Martelaer, K. D. (2015)

²⁵⁸ Evans, M. B., Allan, V., Erickson, K., Martin, L. J., Budziszewski, R., & Côté, J. (2017). Are all sport activities equal? A systematic review of how youth psychosocial experiences vary across differing sport activities. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 51(3), 169-176.

²⁵⁹ Andrews, J. P., & Andrews, G. J. (2003).

²⁶⁰ United Nations (2020).

studies revealed that there was no overall relation between martial arts participation and externalizing behaviour in youth.²⁶¹ As compared to non-athletes and team sport athletes, martial arts participants showed similar levels of externalizing behavior, but they showed more externalizing behavior when compared to individual sport athletes.²⁶² Another meta analysis of 12 studies measuring the impact of martial arts on problematic externalizing behaviour (aggression, anger, and violence) among youth age 6 to 18 concluded that martial arts has a potential to reduce externalizing behaviors in youth.²⁶³ It has also been suggested that combat sport participation can act as a protective factor which distances participants from socio-cultural and individual risk factors in the behavioural, economic and social spheres.²⁶⁴ However, it appears that martial arts intervention programs that focus exclusively on playing the sport or teaching moral lessons do not produce the desired reduction in aggressive behaviour outcomes.²⁶⁵

On the one hand, integrating youth into supportive martial arts communities provides opportunities for mentorship, the development of external and internal assets, and the youth's psycho-social development.²⁶⁶ Martial arts may have a potential to reduce externalizing behaviors in youth, although further research is needed to determine the mechanisms of change and specify the most relevant population groups for targeted interventions.²⁶⁷ On the other hand, the values learned through martial arts are not exclusively pro-social. Many of them are problematic expressions of masculinity (e.g. toxic masculinity): fear is constant in mixed martial arts (MMA) and part of establishing one masculine identity consists of learning to manage one's fears and fostering fear in others, or managing one's emotional manhood.²⁶⁸ Also, MMA participants often refer to the potential of violence in everyday life

²⁶¹ Gubbles, J., Van der Stouwe, T., Spruit, A., & Stams, G.J.J.M. (2016). Martial arts participation and externalizing behaviour in juveniles: A meta-analytic review. *Aggression & Violent Behaviour*, 28, 73-81.

²⁶² Idem.

²⁶³ Harwood, A., Lavidor, M., & Rassovsky, Y. (2017). Reducing aggression with martial arts: A meta-analysis of child and youth studies. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 34, 96-101.

²⁶⁴ Jenkins, C., & Ellis, T. (2011). The highway to hooliganism? An evaluation of the impact of combat sport participation on individual criminality. *International Journal of Police Science and Management*, 13(2), 117-131.

²⁶⁵ [Lai Chu Fung, A. Ka Hung Lee, T., Fung, A.J.C., & Lee, T.K.H. \(2018\). Effectiveness of Chinese martial arts and philosophy to reduce reactive and proactive aggression in schoolchildren. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*, 39\(5\), 404-414.](#)

²⁶⁶ [Lorenz, A. \(2018\). Hierarchy, community, and attachment: Integrating at-risk youth into martial arts and combat sports academies. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 16\(2\), 42-54.](#)

²⁶⁷ Harwood, A., Lavidor, M., & Rassovsky, Y. (2017).

²⁶⁸ Vaccaro, C. A., Schrock, D. P., & McCabe, J. M. (2011). Managing emotional manhood in the cage: Masculinity and mixed martial arts. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 74(4): 414-437.

as a reason for practicing MMA to learn how to respond to violent threats in the cage or on the street.²⁶⁹

At yet another level, gyms, private gyms and secret boxing gyms may serve play a role in the recruitment strategies of far-right extremist groups. Miller-Idriss notes how extreme-right-wing martial arts gyms in Germany have long sought to integrate physical fitness, militancy, and extreme nationalist ideologies.²⁷⁰ She also notes the convergence of various studies linking masculinity and sports. She writes: “MMA becomes a powerful incubator for the far right when these ideas about masculinity – the notion that being a man is achieved through violent confrontation, domination, and physical intimidation of opponents – layered onto far-right ideology about immigrant invasions and defense of the nation”.²⁷¹

Role of coaches and facilitators

One of the objectives of sport-based programs is to support positive interactions between the youth and key social agents (peers, parents, coaches, leaders, teachers). Facilitators, sports coaches, and volunteers play a very crucial role in the successful delivery of sports-based crime prevention interventions, by recruiting and motivating youth, providing role models, developing mentoring relationships, keeping the youth engaged in the program, and providing a safe and supportive environment. The development of authentic and meaningful relationships between coaches and youth, based on trust and mutual respect, is a key aspect of these sport-based crime prevention interventions. Behavior of coaches, mentors and program leaders and their relationship with program participants have been shown to be extremely important.²⁷² Supportive relationships seem to have most impact on long term results.²⁷³ Research has stressed the importance of mutual relationships between practitioners and participants in sport-for-development programmes and the importance of trust and respect in these relationships.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁹ Green, K. (2016). Tales from the mat: Narrating men and meaning making in the mixed martial arts. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 45(4): 419-450.

²⁷⁰ Miller-Idriss, C. (2020). *Hate in the Homeland: The new global far right*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

²⁷¹ Idem, p. 106.

²⁷² Coalter, F. (2012); Coakley, J. (2011); Crabbe, T. (2000).

²⁷³ Astbury, R., Knight, B., & Nichols, G. (2005); Coalter, F. (2012); Sandford, R.A., Duncombe, R. & Armour, K.M. (2008).

²⁷⁴ Debognies, P., Schaillee, H., Haudenhuyse, R., & Theeboom, M. (2019). Personal development of disadvantaged youth through community sports: A theory-driven analysis of relational strategies. *Sport in Society*, 22(6), 897-918.

Several sport-based programs are sponsored or led by police organizations as part of efforts aimed at strengthening community-police relations.²⁷⁵ This kind of police engagement in sports-based programs takes many forms, including as part of community policing initiatives, and aim to improve police-community relations and youth's respect for the law.

Sports and Tertiary Crime Prevention - Desistance from Crime

At the tertiary level, sport-based programmes, delivered either in the community or in a correctional setting, hold a potential to contribute to the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders. Some preliminary research has attempted to link sport-based interventions and offenders' desistance from crime. Jump explains that:

"A critical feature of desistance is finding an activity or change in circumstances that has the potential to engage and motivate individuals and enable them to develop alternative pro-social identities, as well as contributing to the development of positive networks. The key to understanding desistance in this context, is the recognition that in order to abstain successfully from crime, offenders need to 'make sense' of their lives as non-offenders. The desistance literature has identified a range of factors associated with no longer being actively involved in offending, many of which are concerned with the acquisition of something meaningful to the offender which promotes a re-evaluation of their sense of self".²⁷⁶

The European Prison Rules stipulate the right of prisoners to have access to sport activities.²⁷⁷ There are various benefits to practicing sports in prison: improved physical health and psychological functioning; relief from boredom; alleviation of stress, depression, and anxiety. Performing sports activities can be a coping mechanism for inmates to combat mental and emotional distress.

²⁷⁵ For example, in the United States, the National Association of Police Athletic/Activities Leagues, supports community-based youth sports and athletics activities as a means to develop better relationships with the community, trust-building strategies between the police and the community, <https://www.nationalpal.org/>

²⁷⁶ Jump, D. (2017). Why we should think some more: A response to 'when you're boxing you don't think so much': pugilism, transitional masculinities and criminal desistance among young Danish gang members. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 20(8), 1093-1107, p. 1098.

²⁷⁷ Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers. (2006). Recommendation Rec(2006)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the European prison rules.

In most countries, sport in prison is mainly performing a recreational role, but in some countries it is considered a form of education.²⁷⁸ However, there remains fairly little research on the impact and significance of sport practices in correctional environments.²⁷⁹ According to Norman, “(...) the rationale underpinning such interventions is commonly based upon a faulty assumption that sport can inherently transmit social values, such as hard work, discipline, and respect for authority, to its participants”.²⁸⁰ An evaluation of a 12-week programme intended for child and youth sexual offenders and combining boxing and cognitive-behavioural therapy in South-Africa (Fight with Insight) seem to have an impact on recidivism and interpersonal relationships, although the effect may be attributable mostly to the therapy.²⁸¹

Three main aims of prison-based sport programs have been identified in research: inmate health and wellbeing, inmate rehabilitation, and inmate management. Outcomes for both inmates and prisons tended to focus on inmate health and wellbeing and inmate management. However, the efficacy of rehabilitation efforts through sport remains uncertain.²⁸² Outcomes of prison-based sports programs (in Australia) tended to focus on inmate health and wellbeing and inmate management. Sport and recreation programs appeared to have a positive influence on inmates’ health and behaviour; however, the efficacy of rehabilitation efforts through sport remains uncertain.²⁸³ In the UK, the evaluation of a

²⁷⁸ Martos-García, D., Devís-Devís, J., & Sparkes, A. C. (2009). Sport and physical activity in a high security Spanish prison: An ethnographic study of multiple meanings. *Sport, Education and Society*, 14(1), 77-96.

²⁷⁹ Norman, M. (2017). Sport in the underlife of a total institution: Social control and resistance in Canadian prisons. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 2017, 52(5), 598–614; Norman, M., & Andrews, G. J. (2019). The folding of sport space into carceral space: On the making of prisoners’ experiences and lives. *The Canadian Geographer*, 63(3), 453-465.

²⁸⁰ Norman, M. (2017), p. 600.

²⁸¹ Draper, C.E., Errington, S., Omar, S., & Makhita, S. (2013).

²⁸² Gallant, D., Sherry, E., & Nicholson, M. (2014). Recreation or rehabilitation? Managing sport for development programs with prison populations. *Sport Management Review*, 18(1) 45-56.

²⁸³ Gallant, D., Sherry, E., & Nicholson, M. (2014). See also: [Lewis, G. and Meek, R. \(2012\). The role of sport in reducing offending among young men in prison: assessing the evidence base. *Forensic Update*, 107, 12-18;](#) Meek, R., & Lewis, G. (2014). The impact of a sports initiative for young men in prison: Staff and participant perspectives. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 38 (2), 95-123; Meek, R., & Lewis, G. E. (2014). Promoting well-being and desistance through sport and physical activity: The opportunities and barriers experienced by women in English prisons. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 24(2), 151-172; Meek, R., Champion, N., & Klier, S. (2012). *Fit for release: How sports-based learning can help prisoners engage in education, gain employment and desist from crime*. London, UK: Prisoners Education Trust; Meek, R. (2012). *The role of sport in promoting desistance from crime: An evaluation of the 2nd Chance Project Rugby and Football Academies at Portland Young Offender Institution*. Southampton, Hampshire: University of Southampton; Meek, R. (2014). *Sport in prison: Exploring the role of physical activity in correctional settings*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge; Meek, R.

sport-based (rugby and football) program in prison to help young adult male prisoners in identifying and meeting resettlement needs and facilitating their transition from custody to community showed that it had motivated individuals to take responsibility for their actions, and inspired them to generate positive aspirations for the future. The study confirmed that statistically significant improvements were observed in established measures of conflict resolution, aggression, impulsivity, and attitudes towards offending following participation.²⁸⁴

In prison, sport-based programs create an opportunity for delivery staff and community partners to engage with those prisoners who can be especially hard-to-reach and develop positive support and mentoring relationships.²⁸⁵ However, there are barriers to sport activities in prison, both internal (lack of motivation, lack of self-efficacy, low energy, age) and external to the individual (lack of resources, lack of access or lack of age-appropriate opportunities).²⁸⁶

Studies indicate that sport within youth institutional settings can be beneficial (e.g., learning social skills) or problematic (e.g., social exclusion) depending on how they are structured, delivered and, ultimately, experienced by the youth. Sports can play a role in the rehabilitation of youth in detention, but it should be used selectively.²⁸⁷ According to Andrews and Andrews, unsuitable activities and programmes may have a detrimental effect on participants; some sports, because their structure, context and rules replicate institutional settings from which these youths are already alienated, may be problematic for some youth.²⁸⁸

(2018). *A sporting chance: An independent review of sport in youth and adult prisons*. London, UK: Ministry of Justice; Parker, A., Meek, G., & Lewis, G. (2014). Sport in a youth prison: Male young offenders' experiences of a sporting intervention. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 17(3), 381-396; Psychou, D., Kokaridas, D., Koularis, N., Theodorakis, Y., Krommidas, C. (2019). The effect of exercise on improving quality of life and self-esteem of inmates in Greek prisons. *Journal of Human Sport and Exercise*, 14(2), 374-384; [Sempé, G. \(2018\). *Sport and prisons in Europe*. Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe Publishing.](#)

²⁸⁴ Meek, R. (2012).

²⁸⁵ Idem.

²⁸⁶ Brosens, D., Dury, S., Vertonghen, J., Vert, D., De Ponder, L. (2017). Understanding the barriers to prisoners' participation in sports activities. *The Prison Journal*, 97(2), 181-201.

²⁸⁷ Andrews, J. P., & Andrews, G. J. (2003); Roe, D., Hugo, M., & Larsson, H. (2019). 'Rings on the water': Examining the pedagogical approach at a football program for detained youth in Sweden. *Sport in Society*, 22(6), 919-934; [Williams, D., Collingwood, L., Coles, J., & Schmeer, S. \(2015\). *Evaluating a rugby sport intervention programme for young offenders*. *Journal of Criminal Psychology*, 5\(1\), 51-64.](#)

²⁸⁸ Andrews, J. P., & Andrews, G. J. (2003).

Some programs have used yoga²⁸⁹, meditation and mindfulness-based interventions as part of a community-based rehabilitation program for young offenders, on the basis that mindfulness teachings could complement and reinforce other cognitive-behavioral interventions.²⁹⁰ Yoga is also used as a well-being intervention in prison.²⁹¹

2. Theory of Change Underlying Sport-Based Programs

As was discussed so far, the relationship between sport and crime has been difficult to disentangle. Some argue that involvement with sport results in a variety of positive impacts for youth including increases in resiliency self-esteem, self-efficacy, a wider network of relationships and opportunities.²⁹² Others have noted that there is a link between sport participation and involvement in certain types of delinquency including violence and problematic alcohol use.²⁹³ It is very clear that involvement in sport can impact different aspects of one's personality and social setting in both positive and negative ways. It is also quite clear that risk-based theories of youth crime prevention rest on shaky evidence and that positive youth development interventions, through sports or other forms of interventions, still have to demonstrate how they can produce tangible crime prevention outcomes.

According to a recent United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) desk review, sport-based crime prevention programs with well-developed methodologies and robust theories of change are the

²⁸⁹ From ancient times, yoga has been referred to as a spiritual practice, but it is also referred to yoga as a sport activity because, like other sports, it requires strength, high-skill techniques, and training.

²⁹⁰ Barret, C. J. (2017). Mindfulness and rehabilitation: Teaching yoga and meditation to young men in an alternative to incarceration program. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 61(15), 1719-1738.

²⁹¹ [Muirhead, J., & Fortune, C.A. \(2016\). Yoga in prisons: A review of the literature. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 28, 57–63.](#) Kerekes, N., Brandstrom, S., & Nilsson, T. (2019). Imprisoning yoga: Yoga practice may increase the character maturity of male prison inmates. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 10(406), 1-7; Bartels, L., Oxman, L.M., & Hopkins, A. (2019). "I would just feel really relaxed and at peace": Findings from a pilot prison yoga program in Australia. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 63(15-16), 2531-2549; Griera, M. (2017). Yoga in penitentiary settings: Transcendence, spirituality, and self-improvement. *Human Studies*, 40(1), 77-100; [Wimberly, A.S., & Engstrom, M. \(2018\). Stress, substance use, and yoga in the context of community re-entry following incarceration. *Journal of Correctional Health Care*, 24\(1\), 96-203.](#)

²⁹² [Morgan, H. & Costas Batlle, I. \(2019\);](#) Morgan, H., Parker, A., & Roberts, W. (2019); Morgan, H., Parker, A., Meek, R., & Cryer, J. (2019). Participation in sport as a mechanism to transform the lives of young people within the criminal justice system: An academic exploration of a theory of change. *Sport, Education and Society*, 1-14.

²⁹³ Stansfield, R. (2017).

exception rather than the rule. Most programmes fall into the category of local grassroots initiatives, often established by youth for youth, with limited resources and capacity, with only broad identifiable goals, no clearly identifiable methodologies or documented assessments of their effectiveness.²⁹⁴

There have been several attempts to develop a theory of positive development through sports²⁹⁵ and at least one attempt to propose a theoretical framework that links sports to positive youth development and crime prevention.²⁹⁶ Despite substantial research progress in the last decade, we are still lacking a clear and coherent theoretical conception of these sports-based prevention programmes, an understanding of how and why they might be expected to work, and therefore, how they can most effectively be implemented.

The following is an attempt to conceptualize the links between criminological theory and sports-based crime prevention programs. This is a pre-requisite to forming a cogent theory to explain how sport-based programs can, at least in theory, produce crime prevention outcomes at the individual level. This involves clarifying existing concepts and connecting them to existing theories commonly used to understand young offending and desistance from crime. The focus here is on understanding how participation in sports-based prevention programs at the community level may affect the likelihood that the targeted youth will become or continue to be involved with criminal activities or criminal groups.

Drift, Delinquency, and Sport: A Starting Point

Matza's theory of drift and delinquency explains that youth become involved in crime through a process that involves the slow loosening of social control or what is known as "drift".²⁹⁷ Because young people have less of stake in society and more time for leisure activities, nearly all of them are in a constant state of drift in which criminal activity is a constant temptation. Leisure activities are associated with what he called "subterranean values", which often involve thrill-seeking and masculine displays of aggressiveness. Based on this description it should come as no surprise that there can be considerable overlap between leisure activities and delinquency.

²⁹⁴ [Samuel, K. L. H. \(2018\)](#), p.62

²⁹⁵ Holt, N. L., Neely, K. C., Slater, L. G., Camiré, M., Côté, J., Fraser-Thomas, J., MacDonald, D., Strachan, L. & Tamminen, K. A. (2017); Coalter, F. (2012).

²⁹⁶ Morgan, H., Parker, A., Meek, R., & Cryer, J. (2019).

²⁹⁷ Matza, D. (1990) (1964). *Delinquency and drift – 1st Edition*. New York: Routledge.

Moffitt provides some support to the notion that criminal opportunities tend to be ubiquitous for young people:

“Data from epidemiological studies using the self-report method suggest that almost all adolescents do commit some illegal acts (Elliott et al., 1983). In addition, even studies using official records of arrest by police find surprisingly high prevalence rates (for a review see Farrington, Ohlin, & Wilson, 1986).”²⁹⁸

While it may be true that many juveniles engage in some sort of criminal activity, this does not mean that serious or high levels of youth criminal activity should be considered normal. For example, many adolescents engage in underage drinking, illegal drug use, and minor crime like theft or vandalism; however, more serious types of crime involving violence, persistent criminal activity, and gang involvement are not viewed as normal child development experiences. In an analysis of data from the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development, Basto-Pereira and Farrington found that a key research issue in criminology is understanding how and why some people exceed normative levels of offending between the expected beginning in adolescence and the expected end in adulthood.²⁹⁹ This suggests that it may be important to think in terms of preventing an entrenchment in a criminal career or perhaps disrupting a criminal career, rather than in terms of absolute desistance from crime.

Given that the vast majority of young people are in a state of drift, are tempted to engage in delinquency on a daily basis, and take part in criminal activity at high levels, it seems reasonable to suggest that theories of desistance might offer some insight into their decisions to avoid delinquent activities.³⁰⁰ Sport is but one factor that may or may not play a role in criminal involvement.³⁰¹ However, programs with a solid theoretical basis and a grounding in research could be an effective tool for supporting desistance or disengagement from criminal activities and also reducing the likelihood of youth involvement in persistent youth crime.

The model we propose considers a range of factors and attempts to specify the interrelationships among them (see *Figure One* for a graphic depiction of the model). It is important to note at this point,

²⁹⁸ Moffitt, T. E. (1993). Adolescence-limited and life-course-persistent antisocial behavior: A developmental taxonomy. *Psychological Review*, 100(4), 674–701, p. 698.

²⁹⁹ Basto-Pereira, M., Queiroz-Garcia, I., Maciel, L., Leal, I., & Gouveia-Pereira, M. (2020). An International Study of Pro/Antisocial Behavior in Young Adults. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 54(1), 92–105.

³⁰⁰ Given that theories of desistance are attempting to explain adult behavior, adjustments will obviously have to be made when dealing with other groups such as youth and young people in this case. However, certain core principles and concepts from these theories are still relevant.

³⁰¹ Morgan, H., Parker, A., & Roberts, W. (2019).

that we are not suggesting that mere participation in sports activities can prevent criminal behaviour. Indeed, as we noted earlier, it may have the opposite effect by providing more opportunities to get into trouble.³⁰² Rather, our goal is to specify the conditions and factors that may increase the likelihood of success of sport-based crime prevention programs. To begin, we will identify key concepts derived from various theories based on individual differences and personality development. Later the focus will shift to social-psychological concerns identified by desistance and social support theories.

Psychological and Social Capital: What makes the difference?

Research has shown argue that certain life events like getting married and getting a good job can serve as “hooks for change” in adult offenders.³⁰³ In a similar vein, as was seen earlier, it is often suggested that sport can be used as a hook or relationship strategy with which an intervention can be undertaken.³⁰⁴ Giordano and her colleagues have identified four aspects of the cognitive transformation that offenders undergo when they decide to desist from crime.³⁰⁵

First, they must have an openness to change for any event to have an impact. Second, the person must define the event as meaningful and come to the determination that their previous delinquent behavior is fundamentally incompatible with the new situation. Third, the event must impact the person enough that they begin to see themselves in a new light – they craft a replacement identity. Fourth, the person will begin to reinterpret their past problematic behavior in a new light. It seems that in their decision to distance themselves from delinquent behavior, youth might experience a shift like the one described above.

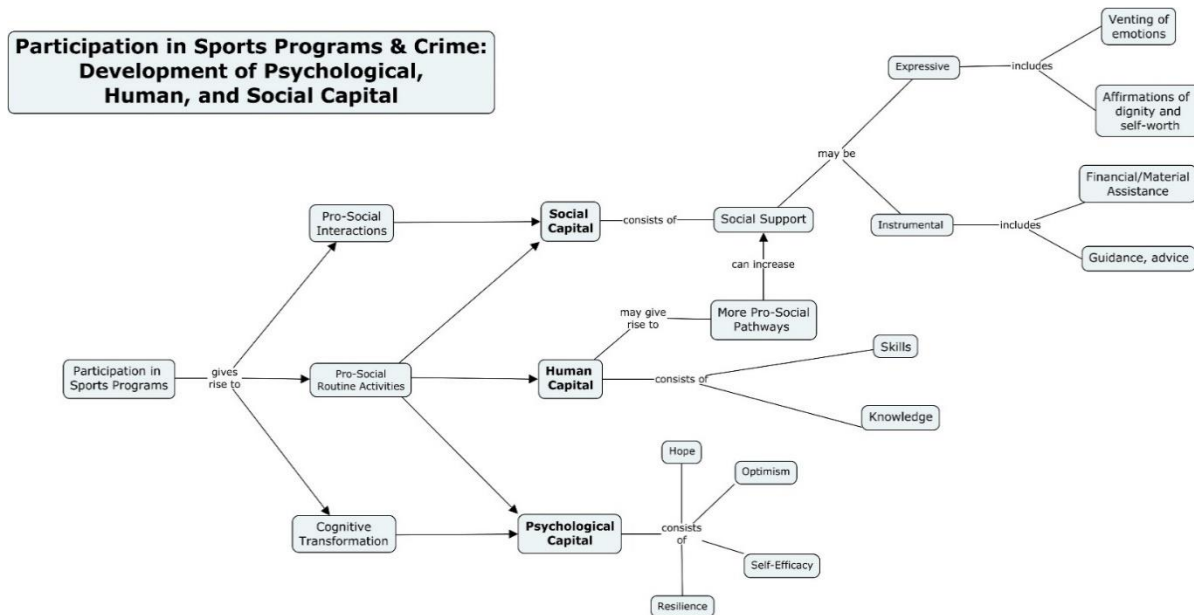
³⁰² Stansfield, R. (2017).

³⁰³ Giordano, P. C., Cernkovich, S. A., & Rudolph, J. L. (2002). Gender, Crime, and Desistance: Toward a Theory of Cognitive Transformation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 107(4), 990–1064.

³⁰⁴ E.g., Nichols, G. (2007).

³⁰⁵ Giordano, P. C., Cernkovich, S. A., & Rudolph, J. L. (2002).

FIGURE ONE



Morgan, Parker, and Roberts contend that through sports, participants often develop psychological capital which can be helpful when accessing opportunities (e.g., school, employment) that enhance one's sense of social inclusion.³⁰⁶ Psychological capital consists of four components including self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience. They go on to acknowledge that sport participation may also raise levels of human and social capital in participants but claim then claim that: "simple accumulation these forms of capital may, in themselves, be insufficient in acquiring employment, and with it, social inclusion".³⁰⁷ Despite this caveat, according to some criminological theories of desistance, social capital plays an important role in decisions to distance oneself from crime. For example, Laub and Sampson's extensive research on their age-graded theory of informal social control suggests that cognitive transformation is not a requirement for desistance³⁰⁸: (pg. 1102).

Many men made a commitment to go straight without even realizing it. Before they knew it, they had invested so much in a marriage or a job they did not want to risk losing their investment (H. Becker, 1960, 1964; see also Matsueda and Heimer, 1997).

³⁰⁶ Morgan, H., Parker, A., & Roberts, W. (2019).

³⁰⁷ Idem, p. 1102.

³⁰⁸ Laub, J. H., & Sampson, R. J. (2003). *Shared beginnings, divergent lives: Delinquent boys to age 70*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, p. 1102.

In other words, “habits provide an anchor by strengthening the forces that make for persistence in behavior” (G. Becker and Murphy, 2000: 152) (...) The majority of men we interviewed desisted from crime largely because they were able to capitalize on key structural and situational circumstances. They often selected these structural and situational circumstances (for example, they decided to get married or get that job or hang out with those friends but these institutions and relationships in turn influenced these men as well.³⁰⁹

Given that there’s strong evidence that young people tend to be in a state of “drift” and that delinquent opportunities are ubiquitous for many of them, one could argue that social capital may be of particular importance to reorienting those who might be tempted to engage in crime.³¹⁰ As described earlier, Morgan and his colleagues have identified several aspects of psychological capital that might be cultivated through participation in sports programs.³¹¹ It is important to note that the current literature does not support the notion that participation in sport alone can enhance these qualities and that not all sports are created equally in terms of their potential to effect positive changes in individuals.³¹² Morgan and his colleagues also identified human or social capital as a benefit noting that this is the standard focus in most policy interventions; however, this concept and the processes associated with it are still vague and unspecified.³¹³

In the next section, we will expand on the notion of psychological capital by using Deci and Ryan’s self-determination theory.³¹⁴ We will also attempt to specify various elements of social capital using Cullen’s social support theory.³¹⁵

³⁰⁹ Idem, pp. 278-279.

³¹⁰ For some empirical evidence to support this, see: Coalter, F. (2012).

³¹¹ Morgan, H., Parker, A., & Roberts, W. (2019).

³¹² Morgan, H., Parker, A., Meek, R., & Cryer, J. (2019).

³¹³ Idem.

³¹⁴ Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11, 227–268.

³¹⁵ Cullen, Francis T. (1994). Social Support as an Organizing Concept for Criminology: Presidential Address to the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. *Justice Quarterly*, 11 (4), 527-559; Colvin, M., Cullen, F. T. & Vander Ven, T. (2002). Coercion, Social Support, and Crime: An Emerging Theoretical Consensus. *Criminology*, 40, 19 - 42.

Expanding on Psychological Capital and Specifying Social Capital

In their self-determination theory Deci and Ryan offer an interesting avenue for expanding on the concept of psychological capital.³¹⁶ More specifically, they argue that human have basic psychological needs just as they have physiological needs (e.g., food and water). They go on to identify three of these psychological needs including competence, relatedness, and autonomy. *Competence* refers to the innate desire to master skills and knowledge and shares much in common with the concept of self-efficacy.³¹⁷ *Relatedness* is the psychological need to feel connected to a group and needed by other people. *Autonomy* focuses on the need to feel like behavior is freely chosen and congruent with the beliefs of the individual. As will be demonstrated later, these elements are helpful for specifying how psychological capital affects decision-making processes around criminal involvement and desistance from crime.

A great deal of research suggests that social networks are important in the desistance process for adult criminals. In their research Laub and Sampson found that habitual offenders who desisted from crime drew heavily upon resources and support from their social networks that developed from personal relationships established in pro-social activities and important life events (e.g., getting married, getting a good job, having children):

Generally, the persistent offenders we interviewed experienced residential instability, marital instability, job instability, failure in school and the military, and relatively long periods of incarceration...In contrast to the men who desisted from crime, the life of the persistent offender was marked by marginality and a lack of structure that led to even more situations conducive to crime. For those without permanent addresses, steady jobs, spouses, children and other rooted forms of life, crime and deviance is an unsurprising result – even for those possessing so-called prosocial traits. As a consequence of chaotic and unstructured routines, one has contact with individuals who are similarly situated – in these cases, the similarly unattached and free from nurturing social capital or support, and informal social control.³¹⁸

³¹⁶ Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000); Also, Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R. M. as quoted in Petrich, D. (2020). A self-determination theory perspective on human agency, desistance from crime, and correctional rehabilitation. *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*, 6(3), 353-379.

³¹⁷ This overlap suggests some compatibility between these theories.

³¹⁸ Laub, J. H., & Sampson, R. J. (2003), p. 280.

Obviously, young people have much different concerns from the men Laub and Sampson were studying. However, it is possible that the social networks that can be developed by youth through participation in sport could provide a similarly “rooted form of life”. Unfortunately, social capital does not have clearly specified or consistent definition in the literature, and this makes it difficult to translate into a variable and measure. Cullen’s social support theory offers some insight into how one might further conceptualize social capital.³¹⁹

The theory of social support identifies two key dimensions of social support: expressive and instrumental.³²⁰ Examples of *expressive social support* include the venting of emotions and affirmations of dignity and self-worth. *Instrumental social support* refers to not only material and/or financial assistance but also providing advice, guidance, and connections that offer aid and opportunity in advancement in legitimate society. Colvin and Cullen go on to state that: “Social supports reduce the impact of strain by providing resources that allow individual to cope with adversity through non-criminal means”.³²¹ The consistency of the social support is key to the effectiveness of social support in reducing crime. Erratic social support does not have the potential to develop the necessary sense of trust between the recipient and giver for a strong social bond to form. Further, it may cause some people to drift and seek alternative support from deviant sources.³²² Social support that is reliable helps reduce strain and anger and helps generate a stronger internalized sense of self-control that can lead to positive outcomes.

Differential sources of social support are a key dimension to this theory – it is important to consider the source of the support and the possible impact that this could have on the outcome. More specifically, if social support come from illegitimate sources, it may also come with access to an illegitimate opportunity structure that provides “(...) knowledge, skills, connections, role models, a sense of belonging, and social status that promote success in various criminal activities”³²³ and the development of criminal capital. If illegitimate social support is blocked, the person may resort to more unskilled and disorganized forms of delinquency.

³¹⁹ Cullen, F. T. (1994).

³²⁰ Colvin, M., Cullen, F. T. & Vander Ven, T. (2002).

³²¹ Idem, p. 24.

³²² Idem.

³²³ Idem, p. 25.

Cross-Level Theory of Change for Sport and Crime

The factors identified thus far can also help inform the logic behind the theory of change associated with sports programs that focus on crime prevention. As Morgan and his colleagues argue a key part of developing intelligent policy is:

(...) the necessity to shift the perspective through which the theory of change is developed away from families of programmes (such as those related to sport and crime desistance) towards families of mechanisms which capture the ‘processes, relationships and experiences that might achieve the desired [programme] outcomes’³²⁴; in this case desistance from crime.

There are two general steps involved with articulating a theory of change. First, one must state the change or transformation that the program hopes to obtain. In the case of sports-based crime prevention programs, this would be prevention of criminal behavior for those not involved with any, and desistance or disengagement from persistent youth crime³²⁵ for those who have had problems in the past. Second, it is important to clearly articulate the assumptions and logical steps that give rise to the desired outcome. For example, disengagement from crime stems from cognitive transformation that gives rise to psychological capital that impact “soft skills” (e.g., personal drive and self-reliance) and increases in social support and networks that give rise to social capital that induce self-control and provide increased opportunities in legitimate society.³²⁶

Morgan and his colleagues identified three phases involved with developing a theory of change that explains how sports-based programs encourage desistance from crime.³²⁷ *Phase One* describes the initial engagement with the program and the key ‘hook characteristics’. These include choosing an activity that is popular and interesting to youth, allowing youth to feel a sense of control or ownership over the activity, making the activity accessible to youth, providing an activity that is a release or distraction for the participants while still being culturally relevant, and ensuring the activity is conducted in a safe and neutral space. While all of these are important considerations, it seems that some are

³²⁴ Morgan, H., Parker, A., Meek, R., & Cryer, J. (2019), p. 607.

³²⁵ Given Moffitt’s (1993) finding about the normality of deviant and delinquent behavior and what is known about the state of drift, it may be unrealistic to expect full desistance from all criminal activity. Instead, a reasonable expectation might be the formation of negative attitudes about crimes that have clear victims and harm others.

³²⁶ Fox, C., Grimm, R., & Caldeira, R. (2017). *An Introduction to Evaluation*. London: Sage.

³²⁷ Morgan, H., Parker, A., Meek, R., & Cryer, J. (2019).

obvious (e.g., making sure the activity is popular amongst target audience and is conducted in a non-threatening environment). Building on ideas from Cullen's theory of social support, one could also argue that consistency should also be considered a key component to initial engagement. Activities should be regularly held and there should be a clear schedule of when they take place or when they can be accessed.

Consistency is also important when considering *Phase Two* of Morgan and his associates' theory of change – this phase consists of three components.³²⁸ First, they mention that it is crucial to construct trusting relationships within the program; it is difficult to trust a source that is inconsistent and erratic. Second, it is also important to enable the participants to feel valued and that their abilities are recognized. Interestingly, this is key element of expressive social support as described by Cullen.³²⁹ Third, coaches and program leaders must be role models and have a nuanced understanding of the local culture and community issues.

Based on the tenets of the self-determination theory paradigm, one can specify the conditions that ought to be present for these processes to occur. For example, to support competence, programs ought to provide clear rules and expectations of behavior, should offer opportunities to develop skills, present challenges that are achievable, and feedback that is constructive and positive.³³⁰ Further, according to Petrich, “support for relatedness is optimized when an individual experiences acknowledgement, care, and genuine interest from others, as well as where relationships are experienced as cooperative”.³³¹ Lastly, autonomy can be fostered through efforts to understand the perspectives of the participants, supporting choices, using non-coercive measures, and providing meaningful explanations for changes and consequences. Conditions that can thwart the fulfillment of psychological needs include use of punishments and rewards, surveillance, evaluations, use of coercive language or action to control behavior, feeling rejected or shamed by the group, and being made to feel incompetent.³³²

In *Phase Three* intermediate outcomes of the intervention are considered. More specifically, it is thought that participants can increase levels of psychological and human capital through activities

³²⁸ Morgan, H., Parker, A., Meek, R., & Cryer, J. (2019).

³²⁹ Cullen, Francis T. (1994).

³³⁰ Petrich, D. (2020).

³³¹ Idem, p. 4.

³³² Idem.

occurring in the first two phases of the project. In this theory of change, human capital bears very little resemblance to the notion of social capital or social support described earlier as Morgan and his colleagues focus almost exclusively on how relationships lead to educational and employment opportunities.³³³ While this is clearly an important aspect of instrumental social support, the benefits of mentorship, advice, and guidance gained from these relationships and the impact this has on identity, personality, and psychological capital may have been overlooked.

A problem with other theories in this area is that they fail to identify the causal mechanism(s) that lead to prevention of criminality and desistance in young people. They seem to assume that if we can just increase a young person's psychological, social, and human capital a miracle will occur, and they will avoid or disengage from criminal behavior. However, a substantial number of criminals are quite self-confident, resilient, socially connected, and possess a variety of skills that could help them succeed in life and still choose to participate in crime anyway. The key is to explain how having these forms of capital impacts the immediate decision-making process and also various associated with criminal behavior.

One can argue that human, social, and psychological capital have an impact on the cost-benefit analysis that is commonly employed by young people who are in a state of drift – they have more to lose in terms of participation in the activity and relationships tied to the activity than a person not involved. Further, criminal and deviant behavior become less attractive because they already have activities that are a change of pace and involve elements of thrill-seeking and risk-taking. The “sneaky thrills” associated with some types of crime (e.g., theft, drug use, drug dealing) and the positive labeling that makes these acts enticing are important factors that are often ignored or downplayed by criminologists as they tend to focus on psychological, social, and economic factors.³³⁴

Sports programs may be helpful in cultivating the basic psychological needs identified by Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory and can offer insights into how the decision-making process may be affected in this case. One must consider that in some cases, youth fill these needs through criminal activity, and a young person might derive a feeling of accomplishment from being a particularly lucrative drug dealer, being able to produce high quality meth, or having the necessary skills to steal expensive cars. The social

³³³ Morgan, H., Parker, A., Meek, R., & Cryer, J. (2019).

³³⁴ Katz, J. (1988). *Seductions of Crime: Moral and sensual attractions in doing evil*. New York: Basic Books; Brezina, T. & Aragonés, A. A. (2004). Devils in disguise: The contribution of positive labeling to “sneaky thrills” delinquency. *Deviant Behavior*, 25(6): 513-535.

connections made through criminal ventures or as part of a gang or organized crime groups can provide a sense of relatedness. The freedom from work and school that accompany a criminal lifestyle can also provide a sense of autonomy. The various forms of capital that result from participation in sport can provide competition to these criminal opportunities and can alter the cost-benefit analysis that many young people consider before partaking in delinquency.

The spoils of human, social, and psychological capital can also impact motivational factors that often pull people toward criminal activities. First, the development of these forms of capital changes how young people deal with strain in their lives – they have more social support, more people to talk to for advice, and a greater inner reserve to draw from when dealing with adverse or noxious situations. Second, the influence of delinquent peers and acquaintances is less pronounced because they have other relationships made through sport that are built on a non-deviant foundation – this may also serve to break ties with delinquent groups that may have been present previously. Third, the hook provided by involvement with sports programs and the relationships that develop can impact the attachments and connections to outside social institutions associated with the activity (e.g., school, religious, or youth organizations and clubs).

The discussion around the role of life-skills development begs the question: How are these skills most effectively translated from sports to school, work, and family life? As Armour and Sanford suggest, a simplistic conception of skills transfer may obscure the process: “Certainly the data and the wider Positive Youth Development (PYD) literature provide evidence to suggest that, at the very least, specific planning for skill transfer should be built into project design. Yet, it is also possible to question the validity of the whole notion of “transfer” in the context of learning”.³³⁵

As previously discussed, more effort needs to be devoted to understanding how skills developed in sports programs are used in other areas of life and the processes that encourage this activity. Gould and Carson (2008) attempt to further specify important factors based on the research while also warning about negative impacts of sports programs in the passage below:

These findings and others focusing on different life skills have led researchers to conclude that sport has the potential to facilitate life skills development in young people. However, this growth does not occur from merely participating in programs. Life skills must be specifically targeted and taught in environments that are conducive for doing so (e.g., supportive coaches, clear rules and responsibilities, and positive social norms. (...)) It is also

³³⁵ Armour, K. & Sandford, R. (2013), p.102.

important to note that negative social-emotional growth and inappropriate attitudes and behaviors may be developed if sport is not conducted in the right manner.³³⁶

Several other studies have also found that skills obtained through or developed in sports programs need to be cultivated if they are to be applied to other life domains.³³⁷

Our theory of change differs from that of Morgan and his associates³³⁸ in several respects (see Figure Two for a graphic depiction). First, we have used the notion of cognitive transformation, from Giordano and colleagues, to further elaborate on the process behind the accumulation of psychological capital. Second, we have identified an important aspect of program engagement and noted the general importance of maintaining consistent and regularly scheduled activities. Third, based on Laub and Sampson's well-supported theory of desistance, we argue for the importance of social capital beyond its impact of employment and educational opportunities. More specifically, we contend that the networks that come along with high levels of social capital may impact one's levels of psychological capital and offer important expressive social support for at-risk youth. Fourth, we specify the meaning of social capital by using Cullen's theory of social support as an elaborative device.

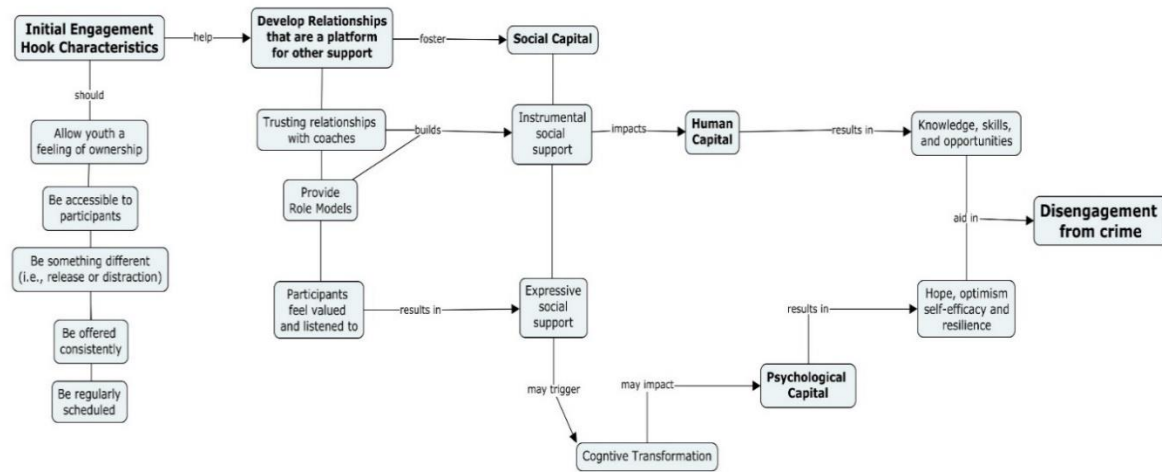
³³⁶ Gould, D. & Carson, S. (2008).

³³⁷ Allen, G. & Rhind, D. (2019); Armour, K. & Sandford, R. (2013).

³³⁸ Morgan, H., Parker, A., Meek, R., & Cryer, J. (2019).

FIGURE TWO:

Alliance of Sport Theory of Change-REVISED



3. Emerging Good Practices

The third chapter identifies some emerging good practices in youth crime prevention through sports. This is based on both a review of the relevant research and discussions and interviews with coaches and leaders of sport-based crime prevention or positive youth development programs in British Columbia.

All contact persons for programs identified in our program inventory were contacted and invited to share with us the objectives, characteristics, and perceived impact of their sport-based program. We then conducted a focus group and eleven confidential interviews with coaches and program leaders who agreed to have a more in-depth discussion. The physical distancing restrictions due to COVID-19 forced us to conduct these discussions online and most participants preferred one-on-one interviews to a focus group. The contacts and interviews served different purposes, but one of these purposes was to enquire about perceived good best practices in promoting positive youth development and facilitating sports-based programs for crime prevention purposes.

The focus group and interviews covered the following themes:

- *Link between sports activity and PYD:* In your view, how can structured sport activities contribute to positive youth development?
- *Recruitment of youth:* Youth who are at risk of criminal involvement often face various developmental challenges, including social exclusion, so what is the best way to engage these students in a sports-based program?
- *Role of coaches:* How can a coach actually help youth acquire useful life skills and transfer these skills to other areas of their life?
- *Coaches acting as mentors:* Do you think that mentoring the youth involved in the sport activities is part of the role of sports coaches and facilitators?
- *Recruitment of coaches:* What should one be looking for in recruiting a good coach or program facilitator?

- *Coaches training needs:* What kind of training would be most helpful for the coaches and facilitators involved in your program?

Based on the focus group and interviews we conducted, the findings of the research literature, and the conclusions of the UN Expert Group meeting referred to earlier,³³⁹ a consensus is emerging around program practices and characteristics that are most likely to yield substantial positive youth development outcomes and encourage the development of valuable social, human, and psychological capital for participants. Notwithstanding the fact that the crime prevention outcomes associated with these same programs have yet to be more conclusively demonstrated, we believe that future program development should be guided by the following evidence-based principles. The goal is to maximize the value and potential impact of crime prevention interventions through sports until rigorous program evaluations can provide more specific program development guidance.

Well Articulated Crime Prevention Objectives and Program Rationale

The specific crime prevention objectives of the program must be explicit and articulated based on a clear and credible theory of change. The *program rationale or logical framework* should specify what in the chosen sport activities and accompanying interventions can be logically expected to lead to crime prevention outcomes.

The program should be grounded in a strength-based approach aimed at enhancing protective factors and mitigating risk factors. It should provide youth with opportunities for learning, personal growth, success and recognition, and offer expressive social support (e.g., affirmations of worth and dignity of participants, sympathetic ears, advice).³⁴⁰

Research shows positive youth development is not necessarily achieved through mere participation in sports and sport-based programs must be intentionally structured to enhance development. Sport-based programs are most likely to be successful as crime prevention initiatives when combined with strategies or mentoring that address issues of social and personal development. Programs must be intentionally structured in order to achieve their PYD goals. *Intentionality* refers to program designs that deliberately and strategically create opportunities that maximize developmental outcomes, in particular

³³⁹ United Nations (2020).

³⁴⁰ Armour, K., Sandford, R., & Duncombe, R. (2013); Berdychevsky, L., Stodolska, M., & Shinew, K. J. (2019); Cameron, M., & MacDougall, C. J. (2000); Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A. M., Lonczak, H. S., & Hawkins, J. D. (2002); Coalter, F. (2012); Roth, J. L. & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2016). Evaluating youth development programs: Progress and promise. *Applied Developmental Science*, 20(3), 188-202.

by fostering life skills development and life skills transfer. The intervention should be *deliberately structured* to teach life skills and help youth develop core competencies. Intentionally structured programs score higher on program quality and positive youth development outcomes than non-intentionally structured programs.³⁴¹

The transferal of life skills is unlikely to be sufficient to prevent crime. Undoubtedly there are many criminals, career criminals and even dangerous criminals, with excellent life skills which they know how to put to good criminal use. A specific kind of intentionality is probably necessary to link skills development to crime prevention: an intentional crime prevention approach is necessary. It is essential that this second level of intentionality focus on targeting changes in values, attitudes, motivation, and adhesion to a culture of respect for others and lawfulness, and all this is related obviously to identity.

Context Specific Programing

Sports programs should be evidence-based and tailored to the local context, interests, and cultural background of the young people they seek to influence. They must address the local crime situation and respond to local crime prevention goals and priorities. Programs should also adopt a flexible approach capable of responding to changes in the local context and the challenges that inevitably arise during program implementation. Because interventions that produced crime prevention outcomes in a certain context cannot be assumed to be immediately transferrable to a different context, intervention models applied in a new context must be adapted to it or developed locally. Decentralized programs and participatory approaches to program design involve intended beneficiaries and their community in the planning process and take local needs and assets into consideration. It is essential to consider how the design, location, and funding of sporting and recreational infrastructure contributes to social cohesion and avoids taking sport and physical activity out of its social context.³⁴²

Responsiveness to the Needs of the Targeted Youth

Programs must align their objectives with the youth's specific needs.³⁴³ Sports-based interventions must be sensitive to the diverse needs of young people, particularly if they are to tackle the underlying

³⁴¹ For example, see: Turnidge, J., Côté, J., & Hancock, D.J. (2014).

³⁴² Cameron, M., & MacDougall, C. J. (2000).

³⁴³ Armour, K., Sandford, R., & Duncombe, R. (2013); Armour, K. & Sandford, R. (2013); Bailey, R. (2018); Berdychevsky, L., Stodolska, M., & Shinew, K. J. (2019); Cameron, M., & MacDougall, C. J. (2000); Chamberlain, J.M. (2013); Crabbe, T. (2000); Ehsani, M., Dehnavi, A., & Heidary, A. (2012); Fagan, A., & Lindsey, A.M.L. (2014); Mason, C., Cleland, J., & Aldridge, J. (2017). *Youth Crime Reduction and Sport Pilot Project Evaluation Report*. Loughborough: Loughborough University; Nichols, G. (1997); Sandford, R.A., Duncombe, R. & Armour, K.M. (2008).

structural inequalities that are arguably responsible for youth crime.³⁴⁴ It has even been suggested that, given the magnitude of personality differences among program participants, practitioners involved in sport-based or other positive youth development programs would benefit from policies and program designs which incorporate personality assessment of the participants in order to better address their individual.³⁴⁵

Needs support may play a significant role in facilitating psychosocial outcomes for youth. It is important to deliver high-quality programmes that support basic psychological needs to foster psychosocial development in youth. Research has emphasized the value of structuring youth sport programmes to satisfy basic needs, which may have positive implications on youth mental health.³⁴⁶

Gender Responsiveness

There is a need for a wide range of safe and accessible sport-based programs for young women and girls, programs that are gender-responsive and respectful of cultural differences.

In truth, however, the absence of clear etiological information regarding the risk and protective factors that are most influential for males and females in a particular context makes “gender-responsive”

³⁴⁴ Chamberlain, J.M. (2013).

³⁴⁵ Anderson, A. (2017). The five-factor model for leisure management: Pedagogies for assessing personality differences in positive youth development programmes. *World Leisure Journal*, 59(1), 70-76.

³⁴⁶ Bean, C., McFadden, T., Fortier, M., & Forneris, T. (2019). Understanding the relationships between programme quality, psychological needs satisfaction, and mental well-being in competitive youth sport. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, published online; Bean, C., & Forneris, T. (2019). Examining the role of needs support in mediating the relationship between program quality and psychosocial outcomes in youth sport. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 17(4), 350-366; Bean, C., Kendellen, K. & Forneris, T. (2016). Examining needs support and positive developmental experiences through participation in a residential summer camp. *Leisure/Loisir*, 40 (3), 271–295; Bean, C., Harlow, M., & Forneris, T. (2017). Examining the importance of supporting youth’s basic needs in one youth leadership program: A case study exploring program quality. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 22:2, 195-209; Bean, C., Forneris, T., & Brunet, J. (2016). Investigating discrepancies in program quality related to youth volleyball athletes’ needs support. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 26, 154–163; Bean, C., Solstad, B.E., Ivarsson, A., & Forneris, T. (2020). Longitudinal associations between perceived programme quality, basic needs support and basic needs satisfaction within youth sport: A person-centred approach. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 18(1), 76-92.

prevention programming difficult, given the goal is to ensure that interventions address the risks, needs, and protective factors that are most salient for each gender group.³⁴⁷

The development of programs that are responsive to the special needs and interests of girls and young women³⁴⁸ can be facilitated by: consulting with women and girls during program design, implementation, and evaluation; drawing on existing expertise from organizations already involved in promoting the participation of women and girls in sport; applying safeguards and trauma-informed strategies and practices for women and girls in sports-based interventions; ensuring that interventions address the risk and protective factors that are most salient for each gender group; recruiting female coaches and facilitators; and, developing capacity among facilitators, coaches, trainers and sports leaders to both act as positive role models and to challenge gender stereotypes, norms and attitudes that condone or justify gender-based discrimination and violence.³⁴⁹

Cultural Relevance of Interventions

Socializing experiences that foster positive development and the acquisition of core skills/ competencies vary across cultural contexts. Prevention programs based on skills and competencies development must be culturally relevant.

On the issue of whether participants should be matched with staff on the basis of gender, race or ethnicity, a recent study by Riciputi and her colleagues offers a qualified answer.³⁵⁰ According to the study, the similarity of staff to youth on race and gender impacts the manner in which engagement with program participant is realized. However, the effect of staff support on emotional engagement was enhanced for youth dissimilar in race/ethnicity to their leader.

³⁴⁷ Fagan, A., & Lindsey, A.M.L. (2014).

³⁴⁸ For example, The Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS) offers some practical tools to help organizations review their operations, set goals, and takes action to actively engage women and girls as participants and leaders. Assessment criteria examine programs, policy, leadership and the physical and social environment. For example: *Actively Engaging Women and Girls: Addressing the Psycho-Social Factors*, *Gender Equity Assessment Tool: For Community Sport and Physical Activity Providers*; and, *Gender Equity Assessment Tool: For Sport Clubs and Provincial/Territorial Sport Organizations*.

³⁴⁹ United Nations (2020).

³⁵⁰ Riciputi, S., McDonough, M.H., Snyder, F.J., & McDavid, M.L. (2020). Staff support promotes engagement in a physical activity-based positive youth development program for youth from low-income families. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*, 9(1), 45-57.

“Matches between youth and their staff leader on both gender and race/ethnicity directly predicted behavioral engagement, whereas the effect of staff support on emotional engagement was enhanced for youth dissimilar in race/ethnicity to their leader. Staff support may promote engagement in PYD programs, with the similarity of staff to youth on race and gender impacting the manner in which engagement is realized. This study demonstrates the importance of teaching staff the value of interactions with youth from different backgrounds and genders to promote engagement in the programs and support PYD outcomes for all youth.”³⁵¹

There is obviously also a need to better understand youth sport and physical activity from diverse cultural perspectives, particularly the perspectives of Indigenous youth.³⁵² Current knowledge of the impact of physical activity and sport programs on Indigenous youth development is limited.³⁵³ There are often obstacles to sport participation among Indigenous youth. Such barriers, including racism, can result in negative sport and recreation experiences among Indigenous youth.³⁵⁴ The incorporation of Indigenous values and traditional ways can enhance sport experiences among Indigenous youth. Sports and recreational activities can create spaces for the positive development of Indigenous youth when these spaces promote holistic health, traditional culture and values, connections to the land, and relationships to Indigenous communities.³⁵⁵

³⁵¹ Idem, p. 55.

³⁵² Strachan, L., McHugh, T.-L., & Mason, C. (2018); Bruner, M. W., Hillier, S., Baillie, C. P. T., Lavallée, L. F., Bruner, B. G., Hare, K., Lovelace, R., & Lévesque, L. (2016); McHugh, T.-L. F., Coppola, A. M., Holt, N. L., & Andersen, C. (2015). 'Sport is community': An exploration of urban Aboriginal peoples' meanings of community within the context of sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 18(1), 75–84.

³⁵³ Bruner, M. W., Hillier, S., Baillie, C. P. T., Lavallée, L. F., Bruner, B. G., Hare, K., Lovelace, R., & Lévesque, L. (2016).

³⁵⁴ Idem.

³⁵⁵ McHugh, T.-L. F., Deal, C.J., Blye, C.-J., Dimler, A. J., Halpenny, E. A., Sivak, A., & Holt, N. L. (2019). A meta-study of qualitative research examining sport and recreation experiences of indigenous youth. *Qualitative Health Research*, 29(1), 42–54; Coppola, A. M., Holt, N. L., & McHugh, T.-L. F. (2020). Supporting Indigenous youth activity programmes: a community-based participatory research approach. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 12(3), 319-335.

Recent research has identified key considerations for developing meaningful and inclusive sport opportunities for Indigenous youth.³⁵⁶ For example, “offering sport opportunities that provide connection to the land seems to be a key component for enhancing sport experiences for Indigenous youth”.³⁵⁷ However, more research is needed to understand how these opportunities should be structured and delivered in a respectful and meaningful to Indigenous participants.

The 89th call to action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report asks the government “to support reconciliation by ensuring that policies to promote physical activity as a fundamental element of health and well-being, reduce barriers to participation in sport, increase the pursuit of excellence in sport, and build capacity in the Canadian sport system are inclusive of Aboriginal peoples”.³⁵⁸

Engagement of Vulnerable Groups and Non-stigmatization

Program should be accessible to youth from vulnerable and at-risk groups, without further stigmatizing them. Vulnerable groups are not homogeneous, and each group presents different challenges that must be considered during the planning and delivery of crime prevention intervention.³⁵⁹ The model of intervention should adapt to the characteristics of the group.

When working with gang-involved youth, the role of group dynamics in helping youth develop a positive identity is particularly important when working with gang-involved youth and should be carefully considered in delivering sport-based interventions. The management of group processes is an important aspect of the role of coaches and facilitators. Understanding group dynamics and interpersonal influence in sport and in the youth’s environment is important because the group environment is a fundamental determinant of individual outcomes such as performance, interpersonal development, and motivation.³⁶⁰ One can further examine the substantial positive impact of cooperative goal structures on

³⁵⁶ Bruner, M. W., Hillier, S., Baillie, C. P. T., Lavallée, L. F., Bruner, B. G., Hare, K., Lovelace, R., & Lévesque, L. (2016); Strachan, L., McHugh, T.-L., & Mason, C. (2018); McHugh, T.-L. F., Deal, C.J., Blye, C.-J., Dimler, A. J., Halpenny, E. A., Sivak, A., & Holt, N. L. (2019).

³⁵⁷ Strachan, L., McHugh, T.-L., & Mason, C. (2018), p. 299.

³⁵⁸ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to action (2015), p. 10.

³⁵⁹ Fernández-Gavira, J., Huete-García, A., & Velez-Colón, L. (2017). Vulnerable groups at risk for sport and social exclusion. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 17(1), 312-326.

³⁶⁰ Evans, B., Eys, M., and Wolf, S. (2013). Exploring the Nature of Interpersonal Influence in Elite Individual Sport Teams, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 25(4), 448-462.

early adolescents' achievement and peer relationships across a number of domains. The management of group processes is an important concern for coaches and practitioners.

Youth must be able to participate in sports and physical activities in settings where they feel physically safe, personally valued, morally, and economically supported, personally empowered, and hopeful about their own future.

Effective Recruitment Strategies

In order for sports to act as a credible mechanism through which crime might be reduced or prevented, an important first step is to engage and retain the target population with the sport-based activity itself.³⁶¹ For the sport to act as a 'hook', the a sport activity must be popular among the target group and the youth must possess a clear sense of ownership and control over the activities that are offered and delivered through an intervention.³⁶² A program's recruitment strategy can obviously have a direct impact on its outcomes. Programs must have an effective, non-discriminatory, and non-stigmatizing youth recruitment strategy aligned with the program objectives and a clear definition of the intended program beneficiaries. Attracting and retaining hard-to-reach youths is difficult. Involving such youth requires most programs to strengthen their outreach, recruitment, and programing strategies.³⁶³

Recruitment assumes an even greater importance within sport-based programs that promote social inclusion and are "aimed at development among otherwise marginalized, disaffected youth who can be difficult to locate much less engage".³⁶⁴ It is probably advisable to decouple recruitment in the program from an individual risk assessment and to reach out to youth without risking their further stigmatization.

In practice, many programs have diffuse ideas of a 'target group', usually some 'at-risk' youth group.³⁶⁵ This was certainly the case of most B.C. programs. As a result, program managers often have difficulty

³⁶¹ [Vandermeersch, H., Vos, S., & Scheerder, J. \(2013\). Who's joining the club? Participation of socially vulnerable children and adolescents in club organised sports. *Sport, Education and Society*, 8, 941-958](#); Morgan, H. & Costas Batlle, I. (2019).

³⁶² Coalter, F. (2007); Crabbe, T., Bailey, G., Blackshaw, T. Adam, B., Choak, C. Gidley, B. Mellor, G., O'Connor, K., Slater, I. & Woodhouse, D. (2006).

³⁶³ Zeldin, S. (2004). Preventing youth violence through the promotion of community engagement and membership. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 32(5), 623–641.

³⁶⁴ Hartmann, D., & Kwauk, C. (2011). [p. 290. See also: Morgan, H. J., & Parker, A. \(2017\).](#)

³⁶⁵ Coalter, F. (2012).

ensuring that the target population is engaged with the program (or the right program, relevant to the youth's needs and circumstances) and stays engaged with it. Those youths who might have the most to gain from a sport-based program do not necessarily volunteer to participate. The programs may also be using recruitment strategies which tend to exclude certain youth in need of support or intervention. For example, following the competitive sport logic, many sport-based programs continue to use performance-based or experience-based criteria for recruiting youth, using try-outs for the youth to qualify or past experience/training in a given sport. The competitive nature of the recruitment process results in some youth not "making the grade", failing the try-outs, being excluded from participating. This only reinforces the experience of many adolescents who may feel ostracized and disillusioned and may turn to less healthy or socially acceptable activities to compensate, find solace, or feel accepted. Other programs recruit youth on the basis of a police referral to it, the youth's place of residence, or some specific socio-cultural criteria. These criteria do not necessarily coincide with the objective of reaching the youth most in need of the intervention. It is usually insufficient also to rely on sports club and volunteers for recruiting youth into programs that are relevant to their needs and circumstances.³⁶⁶

Jacobs, Wahl-Alexander and Mack have identified several best practices for gaining access to non-traditional, hard-to-access environments.³⁶⁷ They suggested that careful planning and persistence is needed to protect youth and provide a safe environment, choose appropriate sport content, identify realistic positive outcomes, foster buy-in from partners, and design a program customized to youths' wants and needs.

However, disadvantaged contexts can also pose problems for obtaining a consistent stream of resources and can incorporate tensions from the streets, such as territorial battles between gangs, into intervention activities. Sports-based interventions can also have a negative impact on youth violence, and this has been reported in cases of young people being referred to them by the police, young offenders, institutions, and schools.³⁶⁸ An awareness of the possibility of violence on programmes can aid planning to act against it.

³⁶⁶ Morgan, H. & Costas Batlle, I. (2019).

³⁶⁷ Jacobs, J. M., Wahl-Alexander, Z., & Mack, T. (2019). Strategies for gaining access to deliver sport programs with highly vulnerable youth. *Journal of Youth Development*, 14(1), 155-164.

³⁶⁸ McMahon, S., & Belur, J. (2013).

Sustained Interventions

Programs should offer intensive and lasting interventions through sustained delivery mechanisms that engage youth in the long-term and enable lasting relationships.³⁶⁹ More effective programs tend to build a structure to ensure sustainability. They consistently involve youth for a longer period (at least 9 months), are well supervised, and include some sustained parental involvement.³⁷⁰ Programs should encourage a gradual take up of responsibilities, thereby increasing the youth's engagement at their own pace.³⁷¹

Program retention is also crucial to achieving positive development and crime prevention outcomes. Duration and continuity of participation in the program have been shown to positively correlate with participants' developmental assets such as relationships, values, skills, abilities, and a positive self-perception developed over time.³⁷²

In one study, participants in a sport-based positive youth development program designed to engage youth through running completed a post program survey measuring their self-determined motivation toward running and achievement of developmental outcomes. Participants with higher self-determined motivation toward running reported higher general self-efficacy, more positive attitudes toward a healthy lifestyle, and lower engagement in threatening behavior.³⁷³

Program retention, or the factors associated with youth's decisions to opt out or drop out of sports-based programs needs further examination. It appears that processes both external and internal to the

³⁶⁹ Mason, C., Cleland, J., & Aldridge, J. (2017).

³⁷⁰ Armour, K. & Sandford, R. (2013); Berdychevsky, L., Stodolska, M., & Shinew, K. J. (2019); Caldwell, L. L., & Smith, E. A. (2006); Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A. M., Lonczak, H. S., & Hawkins, J. D. (2002); Mahoney, J.L., & Stattin, H. (2000). Leisure activities and adolescent antisocial behaviour: The role of structure and social context. *Journal of Adolescence*, 23, 113-117; Mason, C., Cleland, J., & Aldridge, J. (2017).

³⁷¹ Buelens, E., Theeboom, M., Vertonghen, J. & Martelaer, K. D. (2015); Buelens, E., Theeboom, M., Vertonghen, J., & Martelaer, K. D. (2017).

³⁷² [Reverdito, R.S., Galatti, L.R., Carvalho, H.M., Scaglia, A.J., Cote, J., Goncalves, C.E., & Paes, R.R. \(2017\) Developmental benefits of extracurricular sports participation among Brazilian youth. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 125\(5\), 946-960.](#)

³⁷³ Inoue, Y., Wegner, C. E., Jordan, J. S., & Funk, D. C. (2015). Relationships between self-determined motivation and developmental outcomes in sport-based positive youth development. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 27(4), 371-383.

sport activity or the program work together in ways that amplify youths' feelings of not belonging in the program.³⁷⁴ Very few programs have data on participants that opt out of the program and the factors associated with that decision; it may be that the very factors (including social and developmental factors) that put these youth at risk in the first place are also responsible for the same youth dropping out.

A Safe and Supportive Environment

Providing a safe and supportive environment is a prerequisite to successful sport-based crime prevention programs. A successful intervention requires an environment in which youth feel physically and emotionally comfortable and safe.³⁷⁵ The physical and psychological safety of participants is crucial to successful interventions.³⁷⁶ The experiences and opportunities that sport provides are not different from other life situations, and, therefore, it is reasonable to assume that a positive environment is the best way to promote positive youth development through sport participation.³⁷⁷

A Well-Planned Delivery

Eccles, Gootman and Appleton identified the program setting features of effective positive development programs: (1) physical and psychological safety; (2) appropriate structure; (3) supportive relationships; (4) opportunities to belong; (5) positive social norms; (6) support for efficacy and mattering; (7) opportunities for skill building; and (8) integration of family, school, and community efforts.³⁷⁸

Programs must recognize the significance of social relationships, create a sense of community, employ a multi-agency approach, build a structure to ensure sustainability, and incorporate credible monitoring

³⁷⁴ Persson, M., Espedalen, L.E., Stefansen, K., & Strandbu, A. (2019). Opting out of youth sports: how can we understand the social processes involved? *Sport, Education and Society*, 1-13.

³⁷⁵ [Morris, L., Sallybanks, J., Willis, K., & Makkai, T. \(2004\). Sport, physical activity and antisocial behaviour in youth. *Youth Studies Australia*, 23\(1\), 47–52.](#)

³⁷⁶ Eccles, J., Gootman, J. A., & Appleton (2002). *Community programs to promote youth development*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

³⁷⁷ Côté, J. & Hancock, D. J. (2016).

³⁷⁸ Eccles, J., Gootman, J. A., & Appleton, J. (2002).

and evaluation.³⁷⁹ A flexible approach is also necessary in order to allow program activities to respond to changes in the local context and to challenges that inevitably arise.³⁸⁰

Program activities need to be attractive and preferably take place outside the school to reach out youth for whom school engagement is problematic.³⁸¹ Part of the attraction of sports-based programs is that the activities through which they are delivered involves a much-respected and sought-after level of skill and ability. Youth are more likely to engage with a program if it actually teaches them something they think is worth knowing.³⁸² The sport activities included in the program should be respond to the interests of the youth targeted by the program. The latter should probably downplay the competitive elements of the sport activities³⁸³ and emphasize internal motivation and individualized standards of success in a task-oriented setting.

Competitive sports in many ways reflect the social milieus in which vulnerable youth have already experienced hardship, exclusion, and failure. In that regard, they can have a negative effect. Additionally, bullying in sport settings is perceived to be more likely to occur in competitive environments with limited supervision and unstructured.

For some youth, it is important to de-emphasise the achievement of socially defined standards of success:

“The research has demonstrated that, for some children, the activity must de-emphasise the achievement of societally defined standards in a competitive setting. Since many of these children already know that by society’s standards they are ‘losers,’ they do not need to be reminded of this in their play activity. For the most sensitive children, sport activity should be either individual or small group in structure, in which minimal amounts of co-operative behaviour are expected. It should possess an element of thrill and excitement as delinquent youths have a tendency to depress the magnitude of environmental stimuli

³⁷⁹ Sandford, R., Armour, K., & Duncombe, R. (2007). Physical activity and personal/social development for disaffected youth in the UK: In search of evidence. In Holt, N. (Ed.), *Positive Youth Development through Sport*, 97–109. London: Routledge.

³⁸⁰ Mason, C., Cleland, J., & Aldridge, J. (2017).

³⁸¹ Astbury, R., Knight, B., & Nichols, G. (2005); Berdychevsky, L., Stodolska, M., & Shinew, K. J. (2019); Armour, K., Sandford, R., & Duncombe, R. (2013).

³⁸² Crabbe, T. (2000).

³⁸³ [Morris, L., Sallybanks, J., Willis, K., & Makkai, T. \(2004\).](#)

with the result that they often need greater amounts of stimulation in order to become motivated.”³⁸⁴

There are polarized views about the purpose and place of competition within youth sports.³⁸⁵

There are also questions about whether competition is developmentally appropriate and advantageous for youth and some experts oppose youth participation in competition during the formative developmental stage. It is therefore important to understand the conditions under which youth can grow through competition and how competitive experiences can optimally support youth.³⁸⁶ Programs should consider the targeted participants for the program have the required competitive experience and readiness to function in the program’s competitive sport activities.

Well Trained Coaches and Facilitators

An essential ingredient in youth development through sports is the positive relationships formed with caring adult mentors (i.e., coaches, facilitators, support workers) within a carefully structured program. Positive youth development in sport is more likely when youth have enjoyable, positive immediate experiences in sport.³⁸⁷

To a very large extent, a sport-based program is only successful if it recruits and engages qualified trainers, coaches, and facilitators. The coach-participant relationship and the coaches’ pedagogical role are central to producing the program’s desired outcomes.³⁸⁸ In sport-based positive development programs, coaches are expected not only to develop the participants’ sport-specific skills, but also to

³⁸⁴ Andrews, J. P., & Andrews, G. J. (2003), p. 547.

³⁸⁵ Camiré, M. (2015).

³⁸⁶ Kochanek, J., Matthews, A., Wright, E., DiSanti, J., Neff, M., & Erickson, K. (2019). Competitive Readiness: Developmental Considerations to Promote Positive Youth Development in Competitive Activities. *Journal of Youth Development*, 14(1), 48-69.

³⁸⁷ Vierimaa, M., Turnnidge, J., Bruner, M., & Coté, J. (2017). Just for the fun of it: Coaches’ perceptions of an exemplary community youth sport program. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 22(6), 603-617.

³⁸⁸ Cowan, T., Taylor, I.M., McEwan, H.E., & Baker, J.S. (2012). Bridging the gap between self-determination theory and coaching soccer to disadvantaged youth. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 24, 361-374; Coalter, F. (2016); Crabbe, T. (2007); Debognies, P., Schaillee, H., Haudenhuyse, R., & Theeboom, M. (2019).

influence other areas of their lives. Mentoring is also seen as an important part of that role.³⁸⁹ Therefore, a key aspect of planning and delivering sport-based youth development programs is the recruitment and training of the individuals who deliver these programs, especially coaches.³⁹⁰

For coaches adopting a positive youth development approach, the desired outcomes of youth sport participation include not only higher levels of participation (engagement) and performance (sport expertise), but also enhanced personal development (e.g., life skills, core competencies, and various psychosocial outcomes). These coaches are also prepared to assume a role as facilitators/catalysts of social inclusion and integration in their capacity as role-models.³⁹¹

Conflicts are almost unavoidable in a sport context. Sport-based programs for children and youth offer opportunities for coaches and other adults to teach personal and social responsibility,³⁹² but also to help youth learn how to prevent and resolve conflict.³⁹³

It is often suggested that coaches must deliberately and systematically integrate life skills development and transfer strategies within their coaching in order to optimize athlete development.³⁹⁴ The intentional teaching of life skills in sport involves coaches deliberately teaching youth skills such as goal setting, communication, managing emotions, and how to develop effective relationships.³⁹⁵ Additionally, coaches involved in programs for at-risk youths should be sensitive and responsive toward the youth's developmental needs and be reflective of their own behaviour as a role model to maximize the potential of sports-based interventions.³⁹⁶

³⁸⁹ Curran, T. & Wexler, L. (2017). School-based positive youth development: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of School Health*, 87(1), 71–80.

³⁹⁰ Petitpas, A. J., Cornelius, A. E., Van Raalte, J. L., & Jones, T. (2005).

³⁹¹ Eckholm, D. (2019).

³⁹² Jacobs, J. M., Wahl-Alexander, Z., & Mack, T. (2019).

³⁹³ Hemphill, M. A., Janke, E. M., Gordon, B., & Farrar, H. (2018). Restorative youth sports: An applied model for resolving conflicts and building positive relationships. *Journal of Youth Development*, 13(3), 76-96.

³⁹⁴ Camiré, M., Forneris, T., Trudel, P., & Bernard, D. (2011); Bean, C., Kramers, S., Forneris, T., & Camiré, M. (2018); Weiss, M. R., Bolter, N. D., & Kipp, L. E. (2014). Assessing impact of physical activity-based youth development programs: Validation of the life skills Transfer Survey (LSTS). *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 85(3), 263-278.

³⁹⁵ Camiré, M., & Trudel, P. (2010).

³⁹⁶ Spruit, A., van der Put, C., van Vugt, E., and Stams, G. J. (2018).

See chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of the role of coaches and the strategies they employ, as well as the need for coach training programs.

Engaged Parents, Family Members, and Other Significant Adults

“Little League baseball is a very good thing because it keeps the parents off the streets.” Yogi Berra

Social interactions in the educational context that can be created by a sport-based programs are central to how individuals learn life skills and develop core competencies. Interactions with peers, parents, and coaches are crucial components of how people learn life skills through their involvement in sport.³⁹⁷

Quality interactions between the youth and key social agents (peers, parents, teachers and coaches) the integration of family, school and community efforts are important for the success of sport-based prevention programs. Families are a crucial part of sport participation and skills development. Family members and family contexts are an active part of the acquisition and application of life skills.³⁹⁸ Having parents who are aware of one’s leisure interests, activities and friends is a protective factor.³⁹⁹ Programs should therefore find practical ways to promote meaningful interactions between youth and interested and caring adults, fostering a sense of acceptance and belonging, placing value on individual achievement, encouraging a positive attitude to the future, and helping youth develop an ability to work with others and work out conflicts.

Parents are a critical sport socialization agent for children and adolescents as they are often invested emotionally, socially, and monetarily.⁴⁰⁰ For example, a study of a soccer program showed that the parental behaviours of praise and understanding, directive behaviour, and pressure were positively

³⁹⁷ Holt, N., & Tamminen, K. (2009).

³⁹⁸ Hodge, C.J., Kanters, M.A., Forneris, T., Bocarro, J.N., McCord-Sayre, R.A (2017).

³⁹⁹ Caldwell, L. L., & Smith, E. A. (2006).

⁴⁰⁰ Dorsch, T. E., Smith, A. L., & McDonough, M. H. (2009). Parents' perceptions of child-to-parent socialization in organized youth sport. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 31(4), 444–468; Johansen & Green, 2019; Sutcliffe, J. T. et al. (2020). Parents’ moral intentions towards antisocial parent behaviour: An identity approach in youth sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 49, Article 101699, published online.

related to players' perceived life skills development within soccer.⁴⁰¹ Parental engagement in a sport-based program can obviously have many benefits from the point of view of promoting positive youth development. However, greater parental involvement does not necessarily coincide with more positive experiences for children, or the parents.⁴⁰²

The parents' sideline behaviour does not always align with their stated goals for their children's involvement in sport.⁴⁰³ In one survey of 107 youth involved in sports as children, 9 out of 10 respondents reported encountering some form of emotionally abusive or intimidating behaviour on the part of other youth's parents.⁴⁰⁴ Parental antisocial behaviour within the context of the youth participation in sports and its impact on the experience of participating youth can be an issue. There is also the question of whether parents, coaches, and bystanders are willing and prepared to intervene when they witness the antisocial behaviours of certain parents.

The role of parental involvement within the intentional process of psychosocial development through sports requires more attention. Researchers have tried to identify the factors associated with optimal parental involvement from the point of view of producing positive youth development outcomes.⁴⁰⁵ It appears that positive psychosocial outcomes are associated with parental supportive behaviours displayed at home, in training and at competitions, while negative or detrimental psychosocial outcomes are associated with pressure, particularly in relation to competitions.⁴⁰⁶ Parents need to understand their role and utilize a range of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and organizational skills in order to support their child, manage themselves, and manage their interactions with others in the youth sport environment.⁴⁰⁷ Programs can optimize the role of parents by raising their awareness and

⁴⁰¹ Mossman, G. J. & Cronin, L. D. (2019). Life skills development and enjoyment in youth soccer: The importance of parental behaviours. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 37(8), 850-856.

⁴⁰² Dorsch, T. E., Smith, A. L., & McDonough, M. H. (2009); Sutcliffe, J. T. et al. (2020).

⁴⁰³ Dorsch, T. E., Smith, A. L., & McDonough, M. H. (2015). Early socialization of parents through organized youth sport. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*, 4(1), 3-18.

⁴⁰⁴ McPherson, L., Long, M., Nicholson, M., Cameron, N., Atkins, P., & Morris, M.E. (2017).

⁴⁰⁵ Harwood, C. G., Knight, C. J., Thrower, S. N., & Berrow, S. R. (2019). Advancing the study of parental involvement to optimise the psychosocial development and experiences of young athletes. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 42, 66-73.

⁴⁰⁶ Knight, C. J., Berrow, S. R., & Harwood, C. G. (2017). Parenting in sport. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 16, 93-97.

⁴⁰⁷ Harwood, C. G., & Knight, C. J. (2015). Parenting in youth sport: A position paper on parenting expertise. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 16, 24-35.

facilitating opportunities for them to support the child's psychosocial development and collaborating with coaches, or improving coach education to facilitate parent-coach relationships.⁴⁰⁸

Dorsch, Smith, and McDonough described a process of socialization of parents through organized sports, through which parents became behaviorally and emotionally engaged in youth sport, begin to use sport as a vehicle to teach their children life lessons, and assimilated what was expected of parents into their behaviors in the organized youth sport setting.⁴⁰⁹ Through repeated social interactions, parents embraced their new and emerging roles and became reflective about their own development as parents in the context of organized youth sport.⁴¹⁰ It was also suggested that interventions targeted at parents who do not participate in sport may increase children's participation.⁴¹¹

A connection between parents and coaches appears to be important in terms of facilitating the children's psychosocial development and this often depends on the overall approach or philosophy adopted by coaches and organisations. However, Harwood and his colleagues observed that coaches are the "gatekeepers" to a child-athlete development program and are not necessarily supportive of parental engagement.⁴¹² This attitude is reflected in the coaches' frequent view of parents as pushy, demanding, overinvolved, or poorly behaved parents.⁴¹³

Positive Peer Experiences

Coaches and parents may play very important roles in facilitating positive development through a sport program, but the youth's peers may be even more powerful influencers.⁴¹⁴ Peer interactions appeared to be a most meaningful aspect of youth sport participation.⁴¹⁵ Even when the teaching of life skills is not emphasized in a program, youth and their peers can produce experiences that support the development of some life skills.⁴¹⁶

⁴⁰⁸ Harwood, C. G., Knight, C. J., Thrower, S. N., & Berrow, S. R. (2019).

⁴⁰⁹ Dorsch, T. E., Smith, A. L., & McDonough, M. H. (2015).

⁴¹⁰ Idem.

⁴¹¹ Larocca, V., Wilson, S., & Cavaliere. (2018). Examining the association between parent and child sport participation in Canada: A general social survey study. *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth*, 10(1), 171-190.

⁴¹² Harwood, C. G., Knight, C. J., Thrower, S. N., & Berrow, S. R. (2019).

⁴¹³ Knight, C. J., & Newport, R. A. (2017). Understanding and working with parents of young athletes. In C. J. Knight, C. G. Harwood, & D. Gould (Eds.). *Sport Psychology for Young Athletes*. Abingdon: Routledge.

⁴¹⁴ Camiré, M. (2015); Curran, T. & Wexler, L. (2017).

⁴¹⁵ Holt, N., & Tamminen, K. (2009).

⁴¹⁶ Holt, N. L., Tink, L. N., Mandigo, J. L., & Fox, K. R. (2008).

Interagency Cooperation and Partnerships

Whenever possible, programs should aim to integrate family, school, and community efforts to support the youth. Programs can benefit from an interagency cooperation approach, including schools, sports organizations, crime prevention specialists, and, when relevant, the police and criminal justice agencies.⁴¹⁷ Like most other types of crime prevention initiatives, sport-based crime prevention programs are greatly facilitated by coordination and partnerships between different sectors, levels of government and community organizations. Collaboration with other agencies can broaden the activities the program can offer.

For example, a cooperative relationship between schools and community sports groups can ensure that community-based programs contribute to school engagement.⁴¹⁸ A program's contribution to the development of the youth's social and cultural capital is closely associated with its ability to link up with various institutional agents and the provision of a facilitating context that the youth to broaden their social experience.⁴¹⁹ Similarly, programs can learn from each other and should be eager to share good practices, tools, and resources with each other.

A review of 12 positive youth development programs showed that their implementation varied and was influenced by its context.⁴²⁰ Formal and informal community engagement was a "key factor in ensuring programs were culturally sensitive, accessible, and appealing to young people and their parents as well as the wider community".⁴²¹

Finally, it can be argued that the long-term effectiveness of sport-based crime prevention programs depends on whether they are combined with critically informed strategies to alter the social and economic factors that are responsible for putting some youth at risk of criminal involvement and

⁴¹⁷ Cameron, M., & MacDougall, C. J. (2000).

⁴¹⁸ Morgan, H. J., & Bush, A. J. (2016).

⁴¹⁹ Spaaij, R. (2012). Building social and cultural capital among young people in disadvantaged communities: Lessons from a Brazilian sport-based intervention program. *Sport, Education and Society*, 17(1), 77–95..

⁴²⁰ Dickson, K., Melendez-Torres, G.J., Fletcher, A., Hinds, K., Thomas, J., Stansfield, C., Murphy, S., Campbell, R., & Bonell, C. (2018). How do contextual factors influence implementation and receipt of positive youth development programs addressing substance use and violence? A qualitative meta-synthesis of process evaluations. *American Journal of Health*, 32(4), 1110-1121.

⁴²¹ Idem, p. 1118.

victimization. Sport-based crime prevention programs must be very sensitive to the diverse needs and circumstances of vulnerable youth, if they are to tackle the underlying structural inequalities that are partly responsible for youth crime. To that end, an inclusive approach to partnership development is essential to the long-term success of any 'bottom-up' approach to promoting sport-based interventions as a crime prevention and rehabilitation tool.⁴²²

4. Coaches and Sport-Based Prevention Programs

The coach-athlete relationship is at the heart of coaching⁴²³ and that relationship is central to determining the effects of youth sport participation. Coaches and other program facilitators have unique opportunities to influence the youth they are working with.⁴²⁴ There may not be a consensus on exactly what differentiates effective from ineffective coaches, but factors such as leadership, expertise, motivation, education, and experience are often cited, together with an ability to form meaningful relationship with youth.⁴²⁵

Coaches usually understand the value of life skill integration within sport-based programs, but they do not always have the knowledge and skills to explicitly integrate life skills into their coaching practices.⁴²⁶ The majority of youth sport coaches are volunteers who receive very little training relating to youth development through sports.⁴²⁷ The training they typically receive tends to focus on practice design and skill development, rather than on the promotion of positive developmental outcomes. High school sport coaches are typically not equipped with the knowledge, tools, and skills they would need to deliberately teach life skills.⁴²⁸ Most coaches have had little training on how to structure suitable environments to

⁴²² Chamberlain, J.M. (2013), p. 1289.

⁴²³ Jowett, S. (2017). Coaching effectiveness: the coach–athlete relationship at its heart. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 16, 154-158.

⁴²⁴ Côté, J., Strachan, L., & Fraser-Thomas, J. (2008).

⁴²⁵ Côté, J., & Gilbert, W. (2009). An integrative definition of coaching effectiveness and expertise. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 4(3), 307-323.

⁴²⁶ Bean, C., & Forneris, T. (2017). Is life skill development a by-product of sport participation? Perceptions of youth sport coaches. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 29, 234–250.

⁴²⁷ Newman, T. K., Kim, Alvarez, M. A. G., & Tucker, A. R. (2018). Facilitative coaching: A guide for youth sport leaders. *Leisure/Loisir*, 42(2), 129-148.

⁴²⁸ Camiré, M., Kendellen, K., Rathwell, S., & Turgeon, S. (2020).

facilitate youth development.⁴²⁹ Although coaches and volunteer staff are able to coherently describe their coaching practices, they are not particularly interested in theoretical explanations of their coaching practices.⁴³⁰

In British Columbia, we were told that coaches involved in community-based sport programs receive very little training. The training they receive, if any, tends to focus on the technical aspects of coaching, the rules of the game, issues of physical safety and potential liabilities, and sometimes awareness raising around issues such as sexual harassment or other inappropriate behaviour. With one exception, none of the coaches we met during the present project had received any specific training on how to facilitate youth development or on working with vulnerable groups. The exception was a coach who had received some relevant training while studying for a university degree in kinesiology.

Bean, Kramers, Forneris and Camiré have articulated an empirically-based implicit/explicit continuum of life skills development and transfer distributed across six levels: (a) structuring the sport context, (b) facilitating a positive climate, (c) discussing life skills, (d) practicing life skills, (e) discussing transfer, and (f) practicing transfer. They observed that life skills development and transfer are optimized (and athletes/participants have a greater likelihood of experiencing positive development outcomes) as coaches move up the continuum.⁴³¹

A study by Bean & Forneris revealed that many coaches take on an implicit (as opposed to explicit) approach to teaching life skills, whereby life skills development and transfer are seen as by-products of sport participation.⁴³² The coaches surveyed for this study refer to the challenges involved in trying to integrate life skills training in coaching activities. They lacked training on how to intentionally integrate life skills into their regular coaching practice.⁴³³

⁴²⁹ Camiré, M., Forneris, T., Trudel, P., & Bernard, D. (2011).

⁴³⁰ Cushion, C., & Partington, M. (2016). A critical analysis of the conceptualisation of 'coaching philosophy'. *Sport, Education and Society*, 21(6), 851–867.

⁴³¹ Bean, C., Kramers, S., Forneris, T., & Camiré, M. (2018).

⁴³² Bean, C., & Forneris, T. (2017).

⁴³³ Idem.

Several studies, often based on interviews with successful coaches, have tried to understand the role that coaches actually play in positive youth development and the strategies they utilize.⁴³⁴ For example, a study of coaches' perceptions revealed four themes: (a) life skills are a by-product of sport participation, and transfer "just happens"; (b) if intentionally addressed, it's reactive (coach responding to a situation rather than create the situation); (c) coaches recognize the value of intentionally teaching life skills; and, (d) coaches identify challenges associated with using an explicit approach to teaching life skills.⁴³⁵

Flett, Gould, Griffes and Lauer examined the actions and perceptions of coaches considered to be either more or less effective in terms of their ability to develop psychosocial skills of youth in underserved settings.⁴³⁶ They listed some of the characteristics that distinguished more effective from less effective coaches:

- More effective coaches advocate for stronger peer leadership and autonomy in the youth, while less effective coaches try to create a sense of family within the team, but use very negative, militaristic coaching strategies that are not developmentally appropriate.
- More effective coaches tend to prefer strategies that are supportive while challenging players to improve, attempting to develop close relationships along with a positive team climate, and promote autonomy.
- More effective coaches recognize and prioritize the transfer of psychosocial development beyond sport-settings and the transfer of life skills from sport to life, while less effective coaches lack an understanding or specific strategies for transferring lessons learned in sport into non-sport settings.
- More effective coaches appear to be more open to coach training and different ideas⁴³⁷

Similarly, based on a study of high school football coaches recognized for their abilities to teach life skills, Carson & Gould identified four sets of factors that were common to the narratives expressed by the coaches:

⁴³⁴ E.g., Collins, K., Gould, D. R., Lauer, L., & Chung, Y. (2009). Coaching life skills through football: Philosophical beliefs of outstanding high school football coaches. *International Journal of Coaching Science*, 3(1), 16–37; Bean, C., & Forneris, T. (2017); Flett, R. M., Gould, D., Griffes, K. R., & Lauer, L. (2013). Tough love for underserved youth: A comparison of more and less effective coaching. *The Sport Psychologist*, 27, 325–337; Gould, D. & Carson, S. (2008).

⁴³⁵ Bean, C., & Forneris, T. (2017).

⁴³⁶ Flett, R. M., Gould, D., Griffes, K. R., & Lauer, L. (2013).

⁴³⁷ Idem.

“First, while highly motivated to win, these coaches had well-developed coaching philosophies that placed prime importance on developing life skills in their players. Second, they had the ability to form strong relationships and to connect with their players. Third, the coaches reported a variety of well-thought-out strategies for teaching the life skills they deemed important. Finally, the respondents recognized that environmental factors (e.g., socioeconomic status) and other individuals (e.g., parents) influenced life skills development and took steps to adapt to, deal with and/or resolve these issues.⁴³⁸

These successful coaches did not treat the teaching of life skills as a separate activity from their general coaching duties.⁴³⁹

Some youth sport coaches rely on specific strategies to facilitate positive youth development, while others struggle in articulating how they promote the development of their athletes in actual practice.⁴⁴⁰ There is therefore a perceived need to help sport coaches integrate some psychological skills in their coaching practice.⁴⁴¹

With regards to specific *coaching strategies*, Camiré, Forneris, Trudel, and Bernard identified five strategies for facilitating positive youth development outcomes that include: (1) carefully developing a coaching philosophy, (2) developing meaningful relationships with athletes, (3) intentionally planning developmental strategies in coaching practice, (4) talking about and having athlete’s practice life skills, including organizing tangible learning opportunities, and (5) teaching athletes how to transfer life skills to non-sport settings.⁴⁴² They added that coaches must aim to increase youth’s confidence in using their skills in life situation outside the sport.

Finally, it seems that the leadership style of coaches and other facilitators is also an important factor. Several studies suggest that a transformative leadership approach is more conducive than others to

⁴³⁸ Gould, D. & Carson, S. (2008), p. 64.

⁴³⁹ Idem.

⁴⁴⁰ Camiré, M., Trudel, P., & Forneris, T. (2014). Examining how model youth sport coaches learn to facilitate positive youth development. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 19(1), 1-17.

⁴⁴¹ Camiré, M. & Trudel, P. (2014). Helping youth sport coaches integrate psychological skills in their coaching practice. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 6(4), 617-634.

⁴⁴² Camiré, M., Forneris, T., Trudel, P., & Bernard, D. (2011).

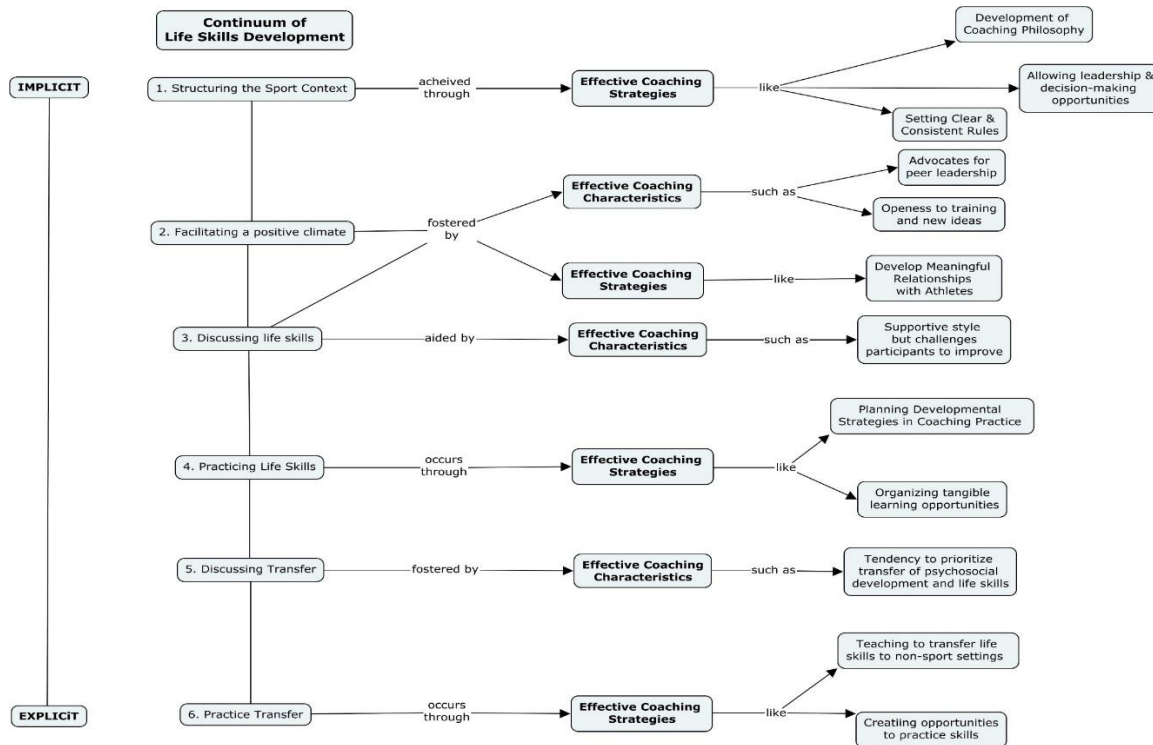
positive psychosocial outcomes among youth who participate in a sport-based program.⁴⁴³ It is a follower-based approach where leaders help followers achieve their full potential, by acting as role models, inspiring, and empowering followers while holding them to high expectations and expressing genuine care and concern for the followers and recognizing their individual needs. A study of the relationships between athletes' perceptions of coach transformative leadership and positive youth development confirmed that a coach's transformational leadership is associated with greater positive development outcomes (i.e., the 5Cs - Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring).⁴⁴⁴

The following diagram summarizes findings of research on coaching success⁴⁴⁵ and is consistent with what we have heard about successful coaches during our own interviews. More specifically, it illustrates how successful coaching characteristics and strategies apply to the different levels of implicit/explicit continuum of life skills development and transfer. This could potentially be used to inform uniform principles for the training of coaches and to help properly structure and plan programs.

⁴⁴³ Turnnidge, J., & Côté, J. (2018). Applying transformational leadership theory to coaching research in youth sport: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 16(3), 327-342; Morgan, H. J., & Bush, A. J. (2016); Newland, A., Newton, M., Moore, W. G. E., & Legg, W. E. (2019). Transformational leadership and positive youth development in basketball. *International Sport Coaching Journal*, 6, 30-41.

⁴⁴⁴ Newland, A., Newton, M., Moore, W. G. E., & Legg, W. E. (2019).

⁴⁴⁵ Gould, D. & Carson, S. (2008); Bean, C., Kramers, S., Forneris, T., & Camiré, M. (2018); and Camiré, M., Forneris, T., Trudel, P., & Bernard, D. (2011); Flett, R.M., Gould, D., Griffes, K.R., & Lauer, L. (2013).



Training

Research on the effectiveness of sport-based youth development and crime prevention programs emphasizes the importance of capacity building and the need to invest in developing and supporting key human resources, in particular coaches, volunteers, and other facilitators. There already are programs for teaching coaches how to intentionally include a positive youth development in working with youth.⁴⁴⁶ There is one manual on life skills training through sport to prevent crime, reduce violence and drug use, developed for the delivery of a specific program.⁴⁴⁷ There are also hundreds of Coach Development Programs (CDPs) with different focuses, objectives, and methods. Only a few of them focus on youth positive development and the role of coaches in promoting it.⁴⁴⁸ Jennifer Turnnidge and Jean Côté, of Queens University (Kingston, Ontario), have developed an evidence-informed CDP based

⁴⁴⁶ Santos, F., Strachan, L., & Pereira, P. (2019). How to promote positive youth development in physical education? The experiences of a physical educator and students through the delivery of Project SCORE. *The Physical Educator*, 76, 1002-1025.

⁴⁴⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2017). *Line Up Live Up Trainer Manual: Life skills training through sport to prevent crime, reduce violence and drug use*. Vienna: United Nations.

⁴⁴⁸ For a review, see: Lefebvre, J. S., Evans, M. B., Turnnidge, J., Gainforth, H. L., & Côté, J. (2016). Describing and classifying coach development programmes: A synthesis of empirical research and applied practice. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 11(6), 887-899.

on the Transformation Leadership (TFL) theory: the *Transformational Coaching Workshop*.⁴⁴⁹ They also suggested some practical strategies for its implementation.⁴⁵⁰

Locally, however, an assessment of local training needs and resources may help develop and deliver training programs that can boost the capacity of existing sport-based programs and encourage the development of more effective ones. Some of the key elements of such training are likely to be:

- Awareness of the importance of nurturing quality coach-youth relationships;
- How to intentionally include a positive development element in their approach with youth;⁴⁵¹
- Strategies to facilitate the transfer of life skills;⁴⁵²
- Transformational coaching;
- Motivational approaches (the role of intrinsic motivation);
- Instilling a philosophy of non-violence and encouraging self-control, self-confidence, responsibility, and respect for oneself and others;
- Gender-sensitive and culturally relevant, including differences in how people of different genders are impacted by involvement in sports;⁴⁵³
- Responding to conflict and helping youth learn how to prevent and resolve conflict;⁴⁵⁴
- Use of coach interpersonal behaviours that satisfy athletes' basic psychological needs;
- Additional developmental knowledge for working with children, including awareness of program attrition issues and ideas for alternative strategies that are developmentally sensitive and effective.⁴⁵⁵
- Key considerations for developing meaningful and inclusive sport-based programs for vulnerable groups and youth from various ethnocultural backgrounds.

⁴⁴⁹ Turnnidge, J. & Côté, J. (2017). Transformational coaching workshop: Applying a personal approach to coach development programs. *International Sport Coaching Journal*, 4(3), 314-325.

⁴⁵⁰ Idem.

⁴⁵¹ Santos, F., Strachan, L., & Pereira, P. (2019).

⁴⁵² Camiré, M., Trudel, P., & Forneris, T. (2014); Camiré, M., Forneris, T., Trudel, P., & Bernard, D. (2011).

⁴⁵³ Fagan, A., & Lindsey, A.M.L. (2014); [Lipowski, M., Lipowska, M., Jochimek, M., & Krokosz, D. \(2016\). Resiliency as a factor protecting youths from risky behaviour: Moderating effects of gender and sport. *European Journal of Sport Science*, 16\(2\), 246-255.](#)

⁴⁵⁴ Hemphill, M. A., Janke, E. M., Gordon, B., & Farrar, H. (2018); Jacobs, J. M., Wahl-Alexander, Z., & Mack, T. (2019).

⁴⁵⁵ Flett, M. R., Gould, D., & Lauer, L. (2012). A study of an underserved youth sports program using the youth program quality assessment. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 24(3), 275-289.

Assessment tools are already available for research and program development purposes. The Coaching Behavior Assessment System (CBAS) has been used in several studies to examine coaches' influence on children's psychological development through sport. A team of Canadian researchers has also developed and initially validated a scale that can be used to measure the extent to which coaches intentionally teach life skills through sport (the Coaching for Life Skills Questionnaire).⁴⁵⁶

Key Research Findings

The following summarizes some key findings of recent research on the role and practices of sport coaches, facilitators and volunteers involved in sport-based positive development programs.

Intentional Teaching and Transfer of Life Skills

- Coaches who go beyond the discussion of life skills development and transfer and intentionally provide opportunities for youth to practice life skills and transfer may further facilitate the life skills development process.⁴⁵⁷
- The practice of life skills is more conducive to development than the mere discussion of life skills.⁴⁵⁸ Coaches must look for opportunities for youth to practice to skills outside of the sport context.
- Coaches lack training on how to intentionally integrate life skills into their regular coaching practice.⁴⁵⁹

Awareness

- Coaches must understand that life skills transfer is not an automatic process and that it must be reinforced continuously in an explicit manner. For example, "whenever teachable moments presented themselves, coaches took advantage of them to talk to their athletes about the transferability of life skills and provided athletes concrete examples of situations and contexts in which life skills can be transferred".⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁶ Camiré, M., Turgeon, S., Kramers, S., Rathwell, S., Bean, C., Sabourin, C., & Pierce, P. (2021). The tool was used for evaluating a Coaching for Life Skills online training program; see Camiré, M., Kendellen, K., Rathwell, S., & Turgeon, S. (2020).

⁴⁵⁷ Bean, C., Kramers, S., Forneris, T., & Camiré, M. (2018).

⁴⁵⁸ Holt, N. L., Neely, K. C., Slater, L. G., Camiré, M., Côté, J., Fraser-Thomas, J., MacDonald, D., Strachan, L. & Tamminen, K. A. (2017).

⁴⁵⁹ Bean, C., & Forneris, T. (2017).

⁴⁶⁰ Camiré, M., Forneris, T., Trudel, P., & Bernard, D. (2011), p. 97.

- Coaches must be sensitive and responsive to the youth's developmental needs and signal their openness to discussing them with youth.⁴⁶¹
- Coaches should be reflective of their own behaviors as a role model to maximize the potential of sports-based interventions.⁴⁶²

Relationships and Leadership

- Meaningful relationships and interactions between youth and adults are crucial to foster young people's development through sport.⁴⁶³
- Several things play a role in how coaches build relationships that can instigate personal development for young people in disadvantaged situations: (a) there is enough time for the relationship to develop; (b) coaches and staff remain authentic; (c) expertise is equalized; (d) a non-judgmental approach is adhere to; (e) the coach's own cultural capital; (f) co-organizing activities with other groups with similar objectives; (g) adopting a 'thousand chances' response to youth behaviour and efforts; and, (h) providing individual support.⁴⁶⁴
- The best predictor of developmental experiences is a combination of the quality of the coach-youth relationship and a coach's transformational leadership behaviour.⁴⁶⁵
- The most influential leadership behaviours are individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, and appropriate role modelling.⁴⁶⁶
- There is a clear link between coach leadership styles and positive youth development. Coaches' transformative leadership is associated with an impact on positive psychosocial development outcomes in the youth participating in a sport-based program.⁴⁶⁷

Attitude

- Coaching life skills is a mindset as well as a specific activity.⁴⁶⁸
- Coaches and other program staff members who are perceived by youth as emotionally supportive and autonomy supportive can help youth improve their self-control.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶¹ Spruit, A., van der Put, C., van Vugt, E., and Stams, G. J. (2018).

⁴⁶² Idem.

⁴⁶³ Debognies, P., Schaillee, H., Haudenhuyse, R., & Theeboom, M. (2019); Crabbe, T. (2007); Coalter, F. (2016).

⁴⁶⁴ Debognies, P., Schaillee, H., Haudenhuyse, R., & Theeboom, M. (2019).

⁴⁶⁵ Vella, S. A., Oades, L. G., & Crowe, T. P. (2013). The relationship between coach leadership, the coach-athlete relationship, team success, and the positive developmental experiences of adolescent soccer players, *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 18(5), 549-561.

⁴⁶⁶ Idem.

⁴⁶⁷ Turnnidge, J. & Côté, J. (2017); Turnnidge, J. & Côté, J. (2018); Morgan, H. J., & Bush, A. J. (2016); Newland, A., Newton, M., Moore, W. G. E., & Legg, W. E. (2019); Vella, S. A., Oades, L. G., & Crowe, T. P. (2013).

⁴⁶⁸ Gould, D. & Carson, S. (2008).

⁴⁶⁹ Riley, A., Anderson-Butcher, D., Logan, J., Newman, T. J., & Davis, J. (2017).

Role Models

- Coaches, parents, referees, especially in competitive games, can influence players' behaviour, learning and socialization. Their actions affect the players' learning and communicate what is regarded as important and valuable. "The pedagogical function of parents, coaches and referees is of key importance in the co-creation of educational practices".⁴⁷⁰

Strategies

- Positive development outcomes are developed through sport-based programs when coaches are able to create suitable environments.⁴⁷¹
- By using specific practical strategies and reinforcing the parallels between sport and life, coaches can heighten the potential of sport as a tool for positive youth development.⁴⁷²
- An "autonomy-supportive" approach to coaching, focused on developing youth's autonomy, competence, and relatedness, is superior to a "controlling" approach in terms of fostering positive youth development.⁴⁷³
- Involving athletes and participants in decision-making processes is crucial for maintaining adaptive motivation and positive consequences.⁴⁷⁴

Authority - Affirmation of Values and Enforcement of Rules

- The coaches' authority relationship with participating youth is viewed as a key didactical proficiency of coaches and a crucial aspect of successful programs. Providing a rule-based setting and a safe sport environment requires coaches who have the authority to put rules into practice.⁴⁷⁵
- Concrete and proactive interventions are required to reduce incidences of gamesmanship and re-emphasize the development of moral character in sport.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁰ Andersson, E. (2019). A referee perspective on the educational practice of competitive youth games: exploring the pedagogical function of parents, coaches and referees in grassroots soccer., *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 24(6), 615-628, p. 617.

⁴⁷¹ Camiré, M., Trudel, P., & Forneris, T. (2012).

⁴⁷² Camiré, M., Forneris, T., Trudel, P., & Bernard, D. (2011).

⁴⁷³ Cowan, T., Taylor, I.M., McEwan, H.E., & Baker, J.S. (2012).

⁴⁷⁴ Idem.

⁴⁷⁵ Haudenhuyse, R. P., Theeboom, M., & Coalter, F. (2012). The potential of sports-based social interventions for vulnerable youth: Implications for sport coaches and youth workers. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 15(4), 437-454.

⁴⁷⁶ Camiré, M., & Trudel, P. (2010).

- Coaches and other program staff should work with specific values and define the meaning of these values to participants.⁴⁷⁷
- Enforcing behavioural rules may not be limited to behaviour during the program activities but may extend to youth behaviour outside of these activities.
- Coaches and other program staff members must be capable of developing a relationship of trust with the youth. They must be able to understand the world the youth live in and, despite this empathy, be able to set limits.⁴⁷⁸
- Coaches must safeguard and promote referee respect among the players. Coaches can safeguard a referee's authority in relation to the players by being friendly, polite, balanced and positive, support difficult decisions, and intervene when players complain and argue with a referee.⁴⁷⁹
- Programs should be monitored and ensure the supervision at program activities to avoid situations where harmful behaviours can occur.⁴⁸⁰

Age and Gender

- The age and gender of participants are relevant to coaching techniques.
- Coaching young children, for example, should not focus too much on coaching them to win games, since most of them do not have the physical, emotional, mental, or social capacity to perform at the coach's expectations.⁴⁸¹
- Some sport-based interventions have different and sometimes opposite effects on male and female participants.⁴⁸²
- The need to ensure that interventions address the risk and protective factors that are most salient for each gender group. It is important to recruiting female coaches and facilitators and to develop a capacity among facilitators, coaches, trainers, and sports leaders to act as positive role models and challenge gender stereotypes, norms and attitudes that condone or justify gender-based discrimination and violence.

Positive Development in the Elite Sport Context

⁴⁷⁷ Idem.

⁴⁷⁸ Schwenzer, V. et al. (2007), p. 42.

⁴⁷⁹ Andersson, E. (2019).

⁴⁸⁰ De Wet, N., Muloiwa, T., & Odimegwu, C. (2018). Extra-curricular activities and youth risky behaviours in South Africa, *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 23(4), 431-440.

⁴⁸¹ Flett, M. R., Gould, D., & Lauer, L. (2012).

⁴⁸² Fagan, A., & Lindsey, A.M.L. (2014); [Lipowski, M., Lipowska, M., Jochimek, M., & Krokosz, D. \(2016\).](#)

- Coaches can facilitate positive youth development in the context of elite competitive sports (e.g., hockey), but the context makes that role more problematic. Coaches often demonstrate behaviours that can potentially facilitate youth development, but the sport structure (i.e., professional sports model that focuses on competition and performance from early childhood) often restricts their ability to do so. In some instances, the coaches' own motivations to achieve performance success presented a challenge to fostering positive youth development.⁴⁸³

Complementary Role of Program Staff and Educators

- Support staff and educators may complement the role of coaches in promoting positive development and are sometimes in a better position to impart and help the transfer of life skills in sports-based positive development programs in high school sports, and in community-based programs.⁴⁸⁴

Tools for coaches

- Personality factors are therefore relevant in developing sport-based positive development programs. It has been suggested that programme designs could incorporate personality assessment of the clients they serve and that program facilitators would benefit from training of assessment and interpretation of personality differences.⁴⁸⁵

5. Inventory of B.C. Sport-based Crime Prevention Programs

SASI's project included an attempt to identify and categorize existing sports-based crime prevention programs in this province, and particularly in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley regions. Our attempts to do so, however, were complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic which changed the way the programs in questions had operated till then. In fact, most programs had suspended their activities and many programs were in fact terminated.

⁴⁸³ Preston, C., Allan, V., & Fraser-Thomas, J. (2021). Facilitating positive youth development in elite youth hockey: Exploring coaches' capabilities, opportunities, and motivations. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 33(3), 302-320.

⁴⁸⁴ Lim, S. H. R., Koh, K. T., & Chan, M. (2019). "Two Heads are Better Than One": How supporting staff complement high school sport coaches in promoting positive youth development. *International Sport Coaching Journal*, 6(2), 160-171.

⁴⁸⁵ Anderson, A. (2017).

The inventory was constructed by listing the programs which had an online presence and collecting their contact information. Each program was then contacted by phone or by e-mail to obtain a description of the program, its stated goals, methodology, main activities, sponsors, and targeted participants, as well as its approach to crime prevention if any. Program representatives were also asked about other sport-based crime prevention programs they might be aware of. In addition, keeping in mind that community crime prevention programs typically have a connection with the local police, a request for information about existing programs was sent to every municipal police force in the province.

The search yielded information about a few programs that have an explicit and central crime prevention (or gang prevention) mission or mandate, as well as a few positive youth development programs for youth presumed to be at risk of criminal involvement without an explicit focus on crime prevention. The search also identified several programs that had been suspended or canceled as a result of the pandemic. The search also identified sports program that had no other objective but to facilitate youth participation in sport and a few crime prevention programs that had no or only a very incidental connection with sport. The latter two categories were not deemed relevant to our project.

Typology of Programs

Categorizing the crime prevention programs that made use of sport activities proved to be a little more difficult than anticipated. This was because several programs had not fully articulated their goals or were prepared to assume that simply engaging children and youth in sports activities was itself sufficient to prevent crime or youth recruitment in gangs. Other programs had an officially stated crime prevention goal, but their leaders were unable to explain how program activities could produce crime prevention outcomes. In a few instances, the program's objectives were stated in terms of improving police relations with at-risk youth.

A simple typology of programs was developed based on four types of programs: (1) sport-based crime prevention programs; (2) sport-plus programs; (3) crime prevention-plus programs; and, (4) positive youth development sport programs.

TYPOLOGY OF PROGRAMS		
Type	Description	Included in Inventory
1. Sports-based crime prevention programs	A program that uses sports as a platform for crime prevention interventions	5
2. Sport-plus programs	A sport program that may contain a crime prevention intervention which is not central to the program	7
3. Crime prevention-plus programs	A crime prevention program that makes occasional use of sport activity (but the sport activity is only incidental and not a constitutive part of the program)	0
4. PYD sport programs	A sport-based program with stated positive youth development (PYD) objectives but without an explicit crime prevention goal	5

In total, 17 programs were included in the program inventory (see Appendix 1). They were:

Sport-based Crime Prevention Programs

- Gang Tack (Vancouver Police Foundation)
- Kidsplay Foundation
- Surrey Safe Schools/City of Surrey - Wraparound
- Project Breakaway (Vancouver Police Foundation)
- Yo Bro Yo Girl

Sport-Plus Programs

- Code Blue / Mini Blue Programs (Surrey schools & RCMP)
- Eastside Boxing Club
- Night Hoops (Vancouver Police Foundation)
- North Vancouver Police Canoe Family
- Musqueam Basketball Camp (Vancouver Police Foundation)
- Police Athletic League (Vancouver Police)
- West Vancouver Police Canoe Family, Ch'ich'iyuy

Positive Youth Development (PYD) Sports Programs

- Hockey Education Reaching Out Society (HEROS)
- Take a Hike Foundation
- Urban Native Youth Association (Aboriginal Youth First Sports & Recreation):
- Youth Unlimited

Unfortunately, with respect to the second type of programs, the crime prevention intervention was often not clear or immediately obvious. In several cases, the intervention appeared to simply consist of improving youth relationships with the police. As a result, these programs may perhaps be better described as positive youth development programs with police involvement.

Review of Existing Programs

As described earlier in this report, follow-up interviews were conducted online with representatives of the programs included in the inventory. Some of the findings of these interviews already reflect in the chapter on “Emerging Good Practices” and the chapter on “Coaches and Sport-based Prevention”. In addition, the interviews covered questions about the programs’ readiness to proceed with an outcome evaluation (see: Chapter 6 – Program Evaluations). The following summarizes some of the other themes that emerged during the interviews.

The sport-based crime prevention programs are striving to create an environment for positive youth development in the hope that this may prevent them from engaging in criminal activities or with criminal groups. Coaches explained that, as youth are often trying to find their identity and “a place to fit in”, adolescence is a crucial time for fostering self-esteem and finding a sense of belonging. As there are some parallels between sports and gangs (identity, team settings, etc.), sport is seen as a way to instill positive values in youth (such as commitment, sacrifice, dedication, teamwork, leadership, etc.) and ultimately into communities.

Several of the programs are managed in cooperation with or sponsored by local police departments as it is believed that building a connection with police will translate to positive values and experiences having an impact outside the programs.

Many of the programs claim to have a focus on “at risk” youth, especially when participants are referred to program by a counsellor, their school, or the police. As these youths are often from lower

socioeconomic backgrounds, these programs seek to provide opportunities for them to engage in sport or physical activity that otherwise would not be available to them. Most programs seem to have a loosely articulated youth recruitment strategy. Interviewees could rarely explain how these youths were at risk of criminal involvement.

All program representatives mentioned that winning is not the main focus of the program's sport activities, though some programs do provide youth the opportunity to play on competitive teams. Some of them expressed the view that when performance/winning is the main focus of the activities, it can be detrimental to the youth. Overall, the focus for many of these programs is to create a space for youth to develop competencies and life skills.

Alongside the sport activities, many programs give presentations (usually developed by school boards and the police) to engage youth in discussions about important values and life choices. The presentations focus on topics such as racism, bullying, drugs, gangs, healthy lifestyles and on instilling values such as commitment, sacrifice, dedication, teamwork, and leadership that will hopefully translate to keeping youth out of trouble and have positive impacts on society.

A wide range of sports are used, but many programs stick to basic sports for which less equipment or fewer physical skills are needed. That way, a program can offer a few different sports to accommodate wider demographics. In effect, basketball, soccer, and martial arts are the main sports of choice, as they can also be played inside or outside. Canoeing is also used as a platform.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of these programs continued to operate in any way they could, albeit, at reduced numbers and with restrictions (e.g.: wearing masks). Most programs run year-round, but some sports, canoeing for example, do not as they are difficult to practice during Canadian winters.

Most of the sport-based initiatives involve programs for youth aged 4 to 18 (some programs extending to age 25). The programs are typically split by age groups, (e.g.:12-15, 16-18). Almost all programs seek to be inclusive but focus on certain demographics, whether that be age, gender, ethnicity, or culture. Some programs are culturally relevant by design, such as the Ch'ich'iyuy canoe family, where there is partnership with Squamish Nation Elders to educate youth participants on First Nations heritage and the

importance of canoeing in Squamish Nation culture. Other programs are open to all but focus on the primary demographic make up of the school or community in which they operate.

Since many programs are geared towards providing opportunities for youth of low socioeconomic status, most equipment is provided to the youth and further services may be provided through partnerships. Many programs are offered in partnership with police, community groups, and receive government grants or other financial support. Some recreation centres, churches, or other private facilities (e.g., gyms) provide space, a facility, or services free of charge or at reduced rates to the programs. Additionally, some community or institutional partners sometimes provide other resources such as food, clothes, counselling, sometimes even housing for youth.

The staff/volunteers/coaches of these programs consist of off-duty police officers, school staff, community volunteers, or employees of the programs. Many programs offer specific training reflecting the programs values, and many require first aid training and coaching certification. As the goal is to have values of the program extend from sport into the real world, many programs stress the importance of having good mentors (some programs shared the benefits of staff being available outside the program). This sometimes leads to a difficulty in determining how much staff and coaches should be involved outside of the perimeters of the program itself. For example, some coaches apparently struggle with the question of what the appropriate course of action is when a youth shares confidential information with them (including information about potential criminal involvement).

As we mentioned earlier in this report, coaches and other facilitators have received very little training. The training they received, if any, focused on the technical aspects of coaching, the rules of the game, issues of physical safety and potential liabilities, and sometimes awareness raising about issues such as sexual harassment or other inappropriate behaviour. The training did not include knowledge and skills for facilitate youth development or working with at-risk youth. Most coaches had their own explanation about how life skills are imparted to youth through sport. Several of them mentioned that they thought that youth oftentimes need help transferring these skills to other aspects of their life and that coaches may play a role in facilitating this process. They also explained that promoting positive youth development required coaches to engage with youth around and outside the actual sport activity. A few of them revealed that they made themselves available to the youth by phone, at nearly all times, to listen to the youth or provide advice. However, they all made clear also that there are many coaches who are not prepared to go beyond helping youth learn and excel in the sport and do not agree with the idea of an expanded role for coaching staff and facilitators.

Another important aspect that frequently arose during the interviews was the role of parents. Most interviewees readily acknowledged that parents play a very important role in a youth's positive development, but they also acknowledged that the parents' participation can occasionally be problematic. "Real change begins at home", one of them explained, "constructive dialogue is needed between the parents and youth to see change". A positive correlation between athletic success and parent involvement was frequently mentioned. Coaches thought that it was incredibly important for them to build trust with the parents and to try to engage with them about the program and their youth. Promoting parental engagement in the program was a priority for many programs. In fact, a few programs even have conferences/education for the parents as well (e.g., drug and gang forums). That being said, however, it was noted that parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are usually busy working and are not able to participate much or "do not make an effort to come out". Interestingly, despite the fact that all programs explicitly emphasize the important role of mentors and parents, no emphasis is placed on spending time and resources on this aspect of programming. Concerns of funding and need of resources always circled back to the youth's needs and their equipment.

Lastly, many programs claim to have crime prevention elements, but all programs essentially define crime prevention as building rapport with police or generally supporting positive youth development. None of the programs monitors or measures their potential impact on youth crime or youth gang involvement. Interviewees were hard pressed to define what constitutes crime prevention and how exactly a program contributed to it. For instance, there are many ways a youth can be seen as at risk of being recruited by a gang, so success of an intervention can be defined in terms of the youth not joining a gang: "if they are in our program, they are not joining gangs".

The prevailing narrative is along the lines of "empowering youth prevents crime 100-fold"; these youth "need good role models" and "putting them in an environment where they can succeed will lower their chances of getting in trouble with the law". Unfortunately, despite the official claims, many programs are essentially sport programs where coaches/mentors give positive messages to youth at some point during a sport activity or hope that they serve as positive role models. Unsurprisingly, none of these programs have been evaluated for their effectiveness in preventing youth crime. Program leaders did not appear to give any priority to evaluating the impact of their program.

6. Program Evaluations

The coincidence of popular interest in sport-based crime prevention programs and the limited empirical evidence on their impact underscores the need for further research. At this point, we do not know for whom sports-based crime prevention interventions are most effective due to the overall lack of outcome evaluations of these programs and we are unable to draw clear conclusions concerning what, if anything, can make sport-based interventions more effective in preventing crime or violence.⁴⁸⁶ This drawback points to the critical need for concerted efforts for substantial and rigorous evaluations.

We should be able to isolate and understand both the protective and the negative influences of sports on youth crime and to plan interventions so that the negative influences of sport can be confined or mitigated.⁴⁸⁷ It stands to reason that:

"The most successful sport-related programmes and projects are those which understand what is possible and clearly articulate and implement what they are trying to achieve. Resources should not be allocated to projects which make unqualified claims relating to their capacity to impact upon specific social outcomes".⁴⁸⁸

For at least two decades, there have been calls for rigorous evaluations of sport-based programs established for the explicit purpose of crime prevention.⁴⁸⁹ The lack of robust evaluations and monitoring of these programs has hampered progress towards more effective interventions. Sport-based crime prevention programs are rarely evaluated and, when they are, the evaluations are methodologically weak and overly simplistic in their theorizing about the causes of delinquency.⁴⁹⁰ To

⁴⁸⁶ See: Spruit, A., van der Put, C., van Vugt, E., and Stams, G. J. (2018).

⁴⁸⁷ Spruit, A., Vugt, E., Put, C., Stouwe, T., Stams, G. J. (2016). Sports participation and juvenile delinquency: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 45(4), 655-671.

⁴⁸⁸ Crabbe, T., Bailey, G., Blackshaw, T. Adam, B., Choak, C. Gidley, B. Mellor, G., O'Connor. K., Slater. I, & Woodhouse, D. (2006).

⁴⁸⁹ For example, Cameron, M., & MacDougall, C. J. (2000).

⁴⁹⁰ Bailey, 2005.

our knowledge, none of the sport-based crime prevention or positive youth development programs in B.C. have been evaluated.

Crime Prevention Outcomes

There is evidence of the beneficial effects of sport participation. However, the question of whether sport participation promotes or inhibits problem behaviors remains unresolved. A longitudinal study analyzed the direction of the association between sports participation and problem behavior among a nationally representative sample of 1,692 adolescents (ages 11-19) in the United States. The study found that externalizing behaviour was not related to time spent in sport.⁴⁹¹ It also suggested that other intervening factors such as context, prior youth experience, type of sport, related activities are also at play.

Measuring the impact of any crime prevention programs can be challenging, even if some progress has been made in addressing various theoretical and methodological issues.⁴⁹² Notwithstanding these challenges, we must remain committed a commitment to evidence-based crime prevention programming.

Programs should be consistently evaluated using objective measures with a focus on identifying specific factors that prompt behavioural change and promote crime reduction, while also accounting for community and social factors rather than just individual factors.⁴⁹³ Non-sport measures are also needed to test what has changed in the lives of participating youth, and whether and, if so, why this is linked to a reduction of juvenile delinquency.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹¹ Sheppard, A. C. & Mahoney, J. L. (2012). Time spent in sports and adolescent problem behaviors: A longitudinal analysis of directions of association. *Journal of Youth Development*, 7(3), 120703RS001.

⁴⁹² Elliott, D. & Fagan, A. (2017). *The Prevention of Crime*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.

⁴⁹³ Cameron, M., & MacDougall, C. J. (2000); Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A. M., Lonczak, H. S., & Hawkins, J. D. (2002); Chamberlain, J.M. (2013); Coakley, 2002; Nichols, G. (1997); Roth, J. L. & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2016); Armour, K. & Sandford, R. (2013). See also: Hartman, D., & Depro, B. (2006). Rethinking sport-based community crime prevention: a preliminary analysis of the relationship between midnight basketball and urban crime rates. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 30(2), 180-196.

⁴⁹⁴ Spruit, A., Hoffenaar, P., van der Put, C., van Vugt, E., & Stams, G. J. (2018). The effect of a sport-based intervention to prevent juvenile delinquency in at-risk adolescents. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 94(4), 689-698.

However, as research already suggests that sports programs on their own are unlikely to yield crime prevention outcomes and that sport, at best, provides a platform for other interventions, evaluations of sport-based crime prevention programs face the problem of effect attribution and must find ways to distinguish between the effect of sport participation and that of other accompanying interventions. Since it is often suggested that sports merely function as a “hook” to get youth’s attention and engage them in other positive development activities, we must ask for whom is sporting an effective “hook” and are there other popular youth activities that can act as a more inclusive and effective means to engage youth at risk. Future research should focus on refining the classification of programs based on the size and nature of their sport component, as well as quantifying the unique sport-related crime prevention outcomes within multi-component sports-based programs.

There are also practical and methodological difficulties in measuring the impact of a particular sport-based crime prevention program as distinct from the *collective impact* of simultaneous crime prevention initiatives targeting the same youth or community. Since sport-based interventions are expected to be but one aspect of a broader crime prevention strategy, it is sometimes impossible to disentangle their impact from that of other elements of that strategy.

Evaluations of sport-based crime prevention programs have tended to show a high level of satisfaction among participants who typically agree that they have learned useful life skills, but only a limited impact on youth crime.⁴⁹⁵ Keeping in mind that most programs involve a small number of participants (youth or at-risk youth) and that it is difficult to measure any impact on the youth criminal involvement (let alone crime rates), evaluations have tended to rely on self-reported delinquency. Access to control groups for the purpose of comparison or the possibility of conducting a randomized control trial are limited. The crime reduction impact of sports-based intervention is inherently difficult to measure. Furthermore, rigorous evaluations require far more resources than those usually available to these programs.⁴⁹⁶

Evaluability Assessment of B.C. Sport-Based Crime Prevention Programs

The present project was meant to include a rapid assessment of the readiness of BC programs to participate in an outcome evaluation. It was also meant to assess the extent to which current programs are aligned with best practices, culturally and gender relevant, integrated with other crime prevention

⁴⁹⁵ For example, Mason, C., Cleland, J., & Aldridge, J. (2017).

⁴⁹⁶ Nichols, G., & Crow, I. (2004). Measuring the impact of crime reduction interventions involving sports activities for young people. *The Howard Journal*, 43(3), 2677-283.

initiatives, and sustainable. A method and checklist were developed for the purpose of that assessment (See Appendix 2).

The primary objective of an evaluability assessment (EA) is to determine the feasibility of evaluating a particular program. An EA examines the evaluability of a program: (a) in principle, given the nature of the program design and the theory of change that supports it; and, (b) in practice, given data availability to carry out an evaluation and the program's ability to provide it. It also examines the practicality and potential usefulness of an evaluation.

EAs frequently find programmatic deficiencies and a lack of readiness for outcome evaluation. As we conducted a rapid EA for the present project, we did not necessarily expect that many programs would be immediately ready for an outcome evaluation. It was also hoped that it would be possible, as part of the present project, to work with one or two programs to assist them in developing their own theory of change and program logic model.

However, none of the program we examined had a clear theory of change or logic model that could link their activities directly to crime prevention. It was not clear that any of them were committed to any specific or measurable crime prevention outcomes. None of the programs had been previously evaluated or empirically reviewed. Program documentation and program management data were both limited. Program leaders or representatives did not appear to be particularly interested in participating in an evaluation of their program, as program evaluation did not appear to be a requirements of funding agencies.

The conclusion was simple, if disappointing, none of the existing BC programs is even close to being ready for an outcome evaluation.

Appendix 1 – Inventory of B.C. Programs

Sports Based Crime Prevention

Last Update: 02/24/21

Programs in BC

Sport-based Crime Prevention Programs

A program that uses sports as a platform for crime prevention interventions

Gang Tack (Vancouver Police Foundation): (Target group: male youth, ages 14-18). This event brings together professional athletes, UBC Thunderbird alumni, police officers, and at-risk youth to play flag football. Following the games, athletes give strategic talks, and former gang members discuss the myths and realities of gang life. *Contact:* Danielle Tsang - Manager, Operations and Administration. *Email:* dtsang@vancouverpolicefoundation.org - *Phone:* 604-717-3701

Kidsplay Foundation: (Target group: children and youth, ages 6-18). Kids Play holds sports tournaments (variety of sports), conferences, and other projects for the youth community to learn about the opportunities they can seize to help them excel in all phases of life. *Contact:* Kal Dosanjh - Founder and CEO. *Email:* contact@kidsplayfoundation.com - *Phone:* 604-619-1064

Surrey Safe Schools/City of Surrey - Wraparound: (Target group: male youth, ages 6-18). Partnership between the Surrey School District, RCMP and the City of Surrey to foster a genuine and trusting relationship with both the youth and caregiver(s) resulting in a collaborative care plan for the family that aims to greatly reduce the youth's risk level. WRAP has access to immediate interventions that include clinical counselling, athletic/creative outlets, transportation support, one-to-one schooling when necessary and a variety of outreach opportunities. *Contact:* Mandish Saran - Assistant Manager, Safe Schools. *Email:* saran_m@surreyschools.ca - *Phone:* 604-594-6395 (telephone) and 604-754-2066 (cell)

Project Breakaway (Vancouver Police Foundation): (Target group: male youth, ages 15-18). This project is a PAL-sponsored event that allows Vancouver youth an opportunity to play floor hockey during the evenings as a deterrent to gang recruitment and drug use. It promotes positive and meaningful youth/police relations through sports. *Contact:* Danielle Tsang - Manager, Operations and Administration. *Email:* dtsang@vancouverpolicefoundation.org - *Phone:* 604-717-3701

Yo Bro Yo Girl: (Target group: girls, ages 6-18). Runs a series of strength-based programs in Surrey and other parts of the Lower Mainland (uses a variety of sports). In 2016, it was included as a key strategic initiative under the City's Public Safety Strategy. The Initiative cultivates resilience in at-risk youth and empowers them with tools to avoid the perils of drugs, gangs,

crime, and violence. *Contact:* Dori Kaplun - Executive Assistant. *Email:* dori@ybyg.ca - *Phone:* 604-343-6524.

Sport Plus Programs
***A sport program that contains a crime prevention intervention
that is not central to the program***

Code Blue / Mini Blue Programs (Surrey schools & RCMP): (Target group: youth ages 10-18). Code Blue and Mini-Blue programs are proactive endeavours that help to build positive police-youth relationships through fitness. Both programs are a partnership between the Surrey RCMP and Surrey School District Safe Schools and Community Schools departments. *Contact:* Jaclyn Blaney. *Email:* blaney_j@surreyschools.ca - *Phone:* 778-772-3863

Eastside Boxing Club: (Target group: youth ages 12-18). Working with several NPO in Downtown Vancouver, ESB is committed to continuing to facilitate free exercise programs for at risk youth and women that have been exposed to violence. Believing that everyone deserves accessibility to exercise, the ESB mission is to be an inclusive community focused gym that delivers high quality boxing training. Free after school programs. *Contact:* wasn't able to reach. *Email:* coordinator@eastsideboxingclub.com *Phone:* 604-620-0480

Night Hoops (Vancouver Police Foundation): (Target group: youth ages 13-18). Night Hoops is a charity organization that provides late-night basketball programming for at-risk youth and offers them the chance to grow and learn in a supervised and supportive environment. In 1996, this program was created to provide a constructive recreational opportunity for teens on Friday and Saturday nights. Night Hoops' Mission is to encourage healthy life choices for youth through the context of a prosocial late-night basketball program. *Contact:* Danielle Tsang - Manager, Operations and Administration. *Email:* dtsang@vancouverpolicefoundation.org - *Phone:* 604-717-3701

North Vancouver Police Canoe Family: (Target group: Indigenous youth ages 13-18). Canoe program established in 2019 (carried over from West Van canoe) in partnership with Squamish Nation where police, youth workers/counsellors, community volunteers operate a canoe program with weekly excursions and a 10-day trip in BC. There is a canoe awaking in March/April and a canoe sleep ceremony in November with food and prayer. First Nations Culture is heavily integrated. *Contact:* Jeff Wood - Supervisor. *Email:* JeffWood@wvvpd.ca

Musqueam Basketball Camp (Vancouver Police Foundation): (Target group: Indigenous youth ages 5-18). Since 2010, the VPD Musqueam Basketball camp has been held on the Musqueam Reserve, enhancing the positive work by the VPD and fostering the relationship, understanding, and trust the VPD has with the Musqueam community. The objectives of this

basketball camp are to develop community relations between the VPD and the individuals who live on the Musqueam Reserve as well as to develop basketball skills and healthy lifestyles of the children and teenagers participating in the camp. *Contact:* Danielle Tsang - Manager, Operations and Administration. *Email:* dtsang@vancouverpolicefoundation.org *Phone:* 604-717-3701

Police Athletic League (Vancouver Police): (Target group: youth ages 5-18). The Vancouver Police Athletic League (PAL) is a youth crime prevention initiative that uses athletic, recreational, and educational programs as a tool to foster positive rapport and mutual trust between police officers and youths. (Almost always partnered with Vancouver Police Foundation). *Contact:* Howard Tran - Inspector. *Email:* youthservices@vpd.ca *Phone:* 604-717-3389

West Vancouver Police Canoe Family, Ch'ich'iyuy: (Indigenous youth ages 13-18). Canoe program established in 2016 in partnership with Squamish Nation where police, youth workers/counsellors, community volunteers operate a canoe program with weekly excursions and a 10-day trip in BC. There is a canoe awaking in March/April and a canoe sleep ceremony in November with food and prayer. First Nations Culture is heavily integrated. *Contact:* Cst. Nicole Braithwaite – Supervisor. *Email:* nicolebraithwaite@wvpd.ca

Positive Youth Development (PYD) Sports Programs

A sport-based program with stated positive youth development (PYD) objectives but not an explicit crime prevention goal

Boys and Girls Clubs of South Coast BC: (Target group/ages: could not find specific information). “It’s a safe place that provides [youth] with three of the things they need most: a sense of belonging, a sense of success, and positive relationships. That happens through a wide range of activities that are not only of interest to kids, but that are good for them, too: sports, homework, safe access to the on-line world, arts, crafts, and of course, sharing meals.” *Contact:* Mindy Mao - Coordinator. *Email:* northburnabyclub@bgbc.ca *Phone:* 604-299-7040.

Hockey Education Reaching Out Society (HEROS): (ages 9-14). The mission of HEROS is to use the game of ice hockey to teach life-skills and empower at risk youth. Founded in Vancouver, Canada in 2000, HEROS provides free ice hockey programming for at risk youth, offering a safe and stable environment for young people to succeed, experiment and connect. *Contact:* Kevin Hodgson—Executive Director *Email:* kevin@jeroshockey.com *Phone:* 587-228-6928.

Take a Hike Foundation: Take a Hike partners with public school districts to engage vulnerable youth in a full-time mental health and emotional well-being program embedded in an alternate education classroom. The program aims to empower vulnerable youth with the skills and

resilience they need to graduate high school, build healthy relationships, navigate the challenges of young adulthood, and achieve success - however they define it. The program engages youth in intensive and continuous clinical counselling, regular outdoor adventures, and supporting youth in a safe and caring community. *Contact:* Head Office. *Email:* infor@takeahikefoundation.org
Phone: 604-648-3385.

UNYA—Urban Native Youth Association (Aboriginal Youth First Sports & Recreation): (Target group: Indigenous youth ages 11-24). Focus on creating and maintaining an inclusive, safe, and healthy space that supports you to be physically active, make positive life choices, and develop your leadership skills; includes fitness classes, yoga, Ju-Jitsu, kickboxing, track cycling, snowboarding, lacrosse, basketball, running, rock climbing, wrestling. (Also provides professional fitness and nutrition advice and workshops and leadership workshops). *Contact:* Urban Native Youth Association. *Email:* info@unya.bc.ca *Phone:* 604-254-7732.

Youth Unlimited: Youth Unlimited is a faith-based organization that meets vulnerable youth where they are at in communities across Greater Vancouver. Programs are created or retired based on the needs and movements of youth. Youth Unlimited offers various programs. Many of them linking athletics, coaching, outdoor adventure to mentoring, spiritual development, and life skills development. *Contact:* Youth Unlimited *Email:* info@youthunlimited.com - *Phone:* 604-590-3759.

Appendix 2 – Evaluability Assessment Tool

Review of Sports-Based Crime Prevention Programs in British Columbia

Rapid Evaluability Assessment of Selected Programs

As part of SASI's review of sports-based crime prevention (SBCP) programs, an inventory of existing SBCP programs in British Columbia was created. Part of that exercise consisted of identifying SBCP programs that might be ready for an outcome evaluation. To determine program readiness for an outcome evaluation, a simplified evaluability assessment method was used based on a short evaluability assessment checklist. The following is a description of the method and checklist that will be used for this project.

Evaluability Assessments

The primary objective of an evaluability assessment (EA) is to determine the feasibility of evaluating a particular program. An EA examines the evaluability of a program: (a) in principle, given the nature of the program design and the theory of change that supports it; and, (b) in practice, given data availability to carry out an evaluation and the program's ability to provide it. It also examines the practicality and potential usefulness of an evaluation.

An EA may consider the feasibility of different kinds of evaluation, each serving a different kind of purpose: formative evaluation, developmental evaluation, summative evaluation, outcome evaluation. The current project is focused on assessing program readiness for an outcome evaluation to determine the extent to which the program is achieving its intended outcomes, and in the case of a SBCP program, its crime prevention objectives. Outcomes refer to changes that are anticipated to occur as a result of the program intervention.

Stakeholders' involvement is an essential element of an EA. In the context of a rapid or preliminary EA such as those contemplated by the present project, the stakeholders' involvement will be limited, and would need to be built upon should an evaluation be planned.

EAs frequently find programmatic deficiencies and a lack of readiness for outcome evaluation. As we conduct rapid EAs of the present project, very few programs can be expected to be immediately ready for an outcome evaluation. However, it is possible to identify, for some of the nearly ready and interested programs, the steps that they would need to take to increase that evaluation readiness. It may also be possible, as part of the present project, to work with one or two projects to assist them in developing their own theory of change and program logic model.

Program Theory and Program Logical Framework

An outcome evaluation presupposes that the stated outcomes of the program are plausible and supported by a logical and credible theory of change (or program theory). Developing an initial program theory involves clearly articulating the logic of how the program is intended to work. A program's logical framework (or logic model) presents the theory of change alongside the program input and activities, program outputs, and intended program outcomes. The logic model articulates the links between activities, outputs, and outcomes to capture how the change occurs as a result of the intervention (as opposed to how the program is carried out – process).

Unfortunately, a recent international review of existing SBCP programs by UNODC revealed that such programs rarely have a well-developed methodology or a robust theory of change. Programs tend to have vague rationales and overly ambitious objectives or are often based on a simplistic understanding of the multiple and complex causes of youth crime.

It is unlikely that many Sports Based Crime Prevention (SBCP) programs in BC will have a fully articulated theory of change and program logic model. Nevertheless, since developing a program theory is central to an EA, the rapid EAs that will be conducted as part of the present project will attempt a summary review of the program's reality (alignment with its officially stated objectives) and the plausibility of the program's stated goals (especially its crime prevention goals). The rapid EAs will also endeavour to assess whether there is an organizational willingness to proceed with a further articulation of the program theory and logical model.

Finally, as a separate exercise, the present project is developing a generic theory of change to explain why and how certain crime prevention outcomes can be achieved by SBCP programmes and, if so, under

what conditions. This broader, empirically based, and theoretical formulation of the potential crime prevention impact of sports-based programs will also inform future discussions with program managers and leaders about how they may wish to articulate the theoretical foundation of their own programs.

Key Questions in Assessing the Evaluation Readiness of a Program

1. Is the program committed to producing crime prevention outcomes?
 - a. If yes, what are the specific crime prevention outcomes being pursued?
2. Is the agency responsible for the program interested in having it evaluated?
 - a. If yes, who else is interested in the evaluation (funding agency, partners, key stakeholders)?
 - b. Has the program been evaluated before?
 - c. What purpose would the evaluation be expected to serve?
 - d. How long has the program been operated?
3. Are the program goals, logic and structure well-articulated?
 - a. Is there a credible theory of change to support the intervention model?
 - b. Is there a logic model for the program?
 - c. Are the program goals plausible?
 - d. Is the program aligned with its theory of change (program reality)?
4. What are the questions to be addressed by the evaluation (evaluation issues)?
 - a. Given the evaluation issues, what do we already know?
5. What resources are available for the evaluation (e.g., time, human resources, organizational support, authorizations, and funds)?
6. What data sources are available and appropriate, given the program structure and logic, to answer the evaluation questions?
7. What kind of environment does the program operate in and how might this affect the feasibility of an evaluation?
8. Which research design (or evaluation option) is most appropriate for the program? (Including, what will be the basis of a valid comparison in order to estimate the incremental impact of the program?)
9. Is the evaluation of the program feasible at the present time?
 - a. If yes, what would be required for the evaluation to be conducted?

Evaluability Assessment Checklist	
Interest in Conducting an Evaluation	
Organizational Readiness	- Is the agency responsible for the program interested in having it evaluated? - Has the program been evaluated before? - Did the organization participate in other program evaluations?
Stakeholders	Who are the key partners, stakeholders, and funding agencies that might be interested in an outcome evaluation of the program?
Purpose	- What purposes would an outcome evaluation serve from the point of view of program managers and stakeholders? - Is an evaluation required by the program funding agency?
Evaluation Issues	- What are the evaluation issues /questions to be addressed by the evaluation? - Is there already some research evidence on these evaluation issues?
Timing	- How long has the program been in operation? - Is this a good time to conduct the evaluation (in relation to funding, program implementation, etc.)? If not, when would be a good time?
Program Logic and Design	
Program Goals	- Are the program goals, logic, and structure well-articulated? - Is there a credible theory of change supporting the intervention model? - Is there a logic model for the program?
Relevance	- Is the program committed to producing crime prevention outcomes? - What are the specific crime prevention outcomes being pursued? - Is the intended beneficiary group (youth at risk) clearly identified? - Is the program relevant to local crime prevention objectives?
Clarity	- Are the long-term impact and outcomes clearly identified and are the proposed steps towards achieving these clearly defined? - Is there consistency in the way the program goals and the program model are described by various partners and stakeholders (including in project documents)? - Do different stakeholders hold different views about the project objectives and how they can be achieved?
Plausibility	- Are the program goals plausible? - Is there evidence from previous research that these goals could be achieved? - Is there a continuous causal chain, connecting the intervention with the intended outcomes?

	How likely is the program to achieve its crime prevention objectives, given the planned interventions and the project lifespan?
Measurement	- Can the critical linkages in the causal chain identified in the program's theory of change be measured? - What are the key indicators of outcomes?
Program Implementation	
Implementation Stage	- Is the program fully implemented already? - Are all components of the program currently operational? - Have there been recent changes in the program model, activities, delivery? - Are some of the program components implemented by a different organization?
Reality	Is the program fully aligned with its own theory of change (program reality)?
Environment	What kind of environment /context does the program operate in and how might this affect the feasibility of an evaluation?
Information and Data Availability	
Project Documentation	Is the project documentation sufficient and available for the purpose of an evaluation?
Baseline and Control Group Data	- Are baseline data available? - How feasible would it be at this stage of the program to collect baseline data? - How feasible would it be at this stage of the program to collect data on a control group?
Operational Data	- Does the agency have an information management system for the program? - Is there a listing of the data available from that system? - What would be required to obtain confidential access to the data for the purpose of an evaluation? - Are the intended and actual beneficiaries identifiable? - Are there records of activities, who was involved, and who participated in each activity? - Is gender disaggregated data available?
Other Data	- What are the data (sources) currently available? - Are these data reliable, complete, and accessible?

	• Can existing data be used to validly measure constructs in the key evaluation questions? • Are data available on environmental factors affecting the program or its outcomes? • Will it be necessary/possible to collect additional information to measure key constructs? How?
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Sources & Further Readings

Davies, R. (2013). *Planning evaluability assessments: A synthesis of the literature with recommendations*. London: Department for International Development, United Kingdom.

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Trevisan, M. S. & Walser, T. M. (2015). *Evaluability assessment: Improving evaluation quality and use*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.