Coaches’ roles in facilitating the personal development of Canadian interuniversity student-athletes

by

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the perspectives of coaches on the personal development of student-athletes through interuniversity sport participation. More specifically, the ways in which coaches understand, enable, and facilitate the personal development amongst their athletes were explored. Eight in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both male and female head coaches of Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) programs. A qualitative approach, utilizing an inductive analysis of the data revealed: coaches’ difficulty in defining personal development and articulating the ways in which they facilitate opportunities for athletes’ personal development through sport; a lack of clarity of the methods used to measure athletes’ personal development; and the ensuing ramifications of university sport model reviews which are moving towards a high performance model of sport on athletes’ personal development. Findings from this study contribute knowledge and understanding of a previously little studied phenomenon – the personal development of student-athletes – and the perspectives from a relatively un-explored population, university head coaches. This study’s findings have implications for coach education revisions, sport policy alterations, as well as future interuniversity sport research.
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“If it wasn't hard, everyone would do it; it's the hard that makes us great.”
- Tom Hanks, A League of Their Own
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Chapter 1: Introduction

University is a time to self-discover, to further one’s education and to participate in different experiences that contribute to the student’s educational and personal journey. The educational mission of universities and colleges often focuses on dissemination of knowledge, professional training, expansion of research, and the holistic development of self (Mohanan, 2005). The common belief of university education is that the learning takes place within the classroom; however, enrollment in today’s higher education institutions provides students not only with a classroom education, but also out-of-classroom experiences that contribute to one’s growth (Aries, McCarthy, Salovey, & Banaji, 2004; Howard-Hamilton & Sina, 2001; Kuh, 1993, 1995; Mixon & Treviño, 2005; Potuto & O’Hanlon, 2007). Living in campus residence, conversations with faculty and peers, working on or off campus, participation in institutional governance, involvement in clubs and organizations, and volunteerism (Kuh, 1993, 1995), serve as significant experiences for learning and development outside the classroom. Another important out-of-classroom experience, and the topic of interest of this thesis, is interuniversity sport.

In a national survey of Canadian universities, the key objectives of interuniversity sport were the physical, psychological and emotional growth of student-athletes and the transmission of Canadian culture (Chelladurai & Danylchuk, 1984). The mission statement of Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) is “to enrich the educational experience of the athlete through a national sport program that fosters excellence” (CIS, 2007, p.1). Interuniversity sport is viewed as being consistent with the educational mission of the university because it presents
students with personal and social challenges, encourages them to develop more complex views on personal, academic, and cultural matters, and provides them with opportunities for synthesizing and integrating materials presented in the formal academic program (classes, laboratories, studios) (Kuh, 1995). Miller (2000, p. 1) claimed that interuniversity sport serves as “a complement to formal classroom learning” and a vehicle by which student-athletes navigate important developmental tasks, including personal competence.

The role of interuniversity sport within higher education, however, is highly contested by academics (Danish, Fazio, Nellen, & Owens, 2002; Gould & Carson, 2008; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Jones & Lavallee, 2009; Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, & Jones, 2005). On the one hand, interuniversity sport is viewed as a positive and beneficial contributor to the holistic development and learning of students. Researchers report that interuniversity sport increases outside of school opportunities for student-athletes in the greater community (Mixon & Treviño, 2005), enhances communication between education administrators (Earl, 2004), increases retention and graduation rates (Mixon & Treviño, 2005), and provides opportunities to serve as role models for society in such areas as leadership, work ethic, teamwork, and time management (Pine, 2010). Interuniversity athletics, at its best, is seen to “promote learning, personal development, and the manifestation of desirable character traits. Athletics provide for an educational experience outside of the classroom and for the physical and emotional development of participants” (Pine, 2010, p. 479).
Conversely, critics of interuniversity sport have discussed the negative and debilitating effects of interuniversity sport participation on students’ overall educational experiences in university. Some examples include: hypercommercialism and unscrupulous practices (Earl, 2004; Trani, 1995), movement away from amateurism, commercial interests and unethical behaviours (Trani, 1995), unjustified financial investments in athletic programs (Pine, 2010), social isolation and segregation of athletes from non-athlete peers (Bowen & Levin, 2003; Shulman & Bowen, 2001; Umbach, Palmer, Kuh, & Hannah, 2006), negative academic outcomes (McBride & Reed, 1998; Pascarella, Truckenmiller, Nora, Terenzini, Edison, & Hagedorn, 1999) and exploitation of athletes (Pierce, 2010).

Current findings pertaining to the role of interuniversity sport within higher education, and more specifically, the contributions it makes to student-athlete learning and personal development is inconclusive. It is also important to note that the majority of the existing research on interuniversity sport has been conducted in the U.S. (Aries et al., 2004; Earl, 2004; Eitzen, 1987; Gayles, 2009; Howard-Hamilton & Sina, 2001; Mixon & Treviño, 2005; Pierce, 2010; Pine, 2010; Potuto & O’Hanlon, 2007; Trani, 1995; Umbach et al., 2006; Williams & Pennington, 2006), which has a very different culture of university sport compared to that of Canadian university sport. Therefore, it is unwise to generalize U.S. data to the Canadian interuniversity sport context. Research to-date has focused almost exclusively on the perceived benefits accrued by student-athletes and little attention has been given to the role that coaches play in athletes’ development. As a partial answer to this gap in the literature, my intention was to explore the role of coaches in facilitating personal
development of student-athletes through Canadian interuniversity sport participation. For the purpose of the current study, personal development is defined as: a term that encompasses a range of developmental tasks that contribute to whole person development, which are facilitated through the multiple experiences of an individual. Whole person development includes areas of: psychological, emotional, social, cognitive, moral and personal growth. The ultimate goal of personal development is to achieve status as a contributing, fully functioning member of society (adapted from Gould, Chung, Smith, & White, 2006; Miller, 2000; Trudel, 2006; Weiss & Wiese-Bjornstad, 2009).

**Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perspectives of coaches on the personal development of student-athletes through interuniversity sport participation. More specifically, I was interested in the ways in which coaches understand, enable, and facilitate the personal development within their athletes.

**Organization of paper**

The remainder of this dissertation will be separated into five chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the purpose of higher education and how the goals and values of interuniversity sport fit within it, as well as the multiple experiences of student-athletes and how sport and the role of the coach contribute to these experiences. Chapter 3 discusses the qualitative methods used for this study, including information pertaining to data collection, analysis, dissemination and participant confidentiality. Chapter 4 reveals the study’s findings and results, organized into seven distinct sections. Chapter 5 incorporates the researcher’s interpretations of
the data as well as previous literature to interpret this study’s findings. Lastly, Chapter 6 summarizes the study’s results, its’ limitations, contributions, and recommendations for future research in the field.
Functional Definitions

**Personal development:** Personal development is a term that encompasses a range of developmental tasks that contribute to whole person development, which are facilitated through the multiple experiences of an individual. Whole person development includes areas of: psychological, emotional, social, cognitive, moral and personal growth. The ultimate goal of personal development is to achieve status as a contributing, fully functioning member of society.

**CIS (Canadian Interuniversity Sport):** Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) is the national governing body of university sport in Canada. The CIS comprises most of Canada's degree earning universities and is responsible for overseeing and regulating interuniversity athletics across Canada.

**OUA (Ontario University Athletics):** Ontario University Athletics (OUA) is a regional association under the guidance of the CIS. The OUA oversees and regulates interuniversity athletes in member institutions within the province of Ontario.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The following review of literature will begin with a discussion of the placement and incorporation of interuniversity sport in the educational mission of higher education institutions. Second, the current context of interuniversity sport will be addressed, along with a comparison of its goals and values, with that of university education. Third, the self-reported developmental experiences of student-athletes and the role of the coach in athletes’ sport experiences will be reviewed. Finally, the significance of development through sport will be examined, which will also inform future research in studying student-athletes’ experiences of personal development through interuniversity sport.

The purpose of higher education

Higher education has evolved from a one-dimensional view of education where learning was the result of classroom teaching to a multi-dimensional view of learning as a by-product from both classroom and out-of-classroom experiences (Kuh, 1993; 1995). The purpose of higher education in the 21st century is multifaceted, with an increasing emphasis on personal learning and development through the multiple experiences of the student, extending beyond formal classroom learning (Dickinson, 2000; Kuh, 1993, 1995).

Mohanan (2005) claims there are four interlocking goals of university education: the first is the dissemination of knowledge – assuring that the knowledge of older generations is preserved in the younger generations; the second refers to the training of people, aimed at the production of workers needed for the preservation of society (for example producing engineers, architects, bankers,
doctors, lawyers, etc.); third, the training of researchers is of importance to
institutions of higher education to expand on existing knowledge; finally, the
development and enhancement of the inner potentials of students, which involves
attending to students’ intellectual, moral, emotional, physical, spiritual, cultural and
social growth. Higher education maintains its commitment to knowledge
dissemination and vocational learning, but entwined with these objectives are the
dedication to development of the self. Although traditional forms of education rely
heavily on the teachings that occur within the classroom, the influence of out-of-
classroom experiences on students’ education and personal development are
becoming increasingly emphasized (Kuh, 1993; 1995).

There is growing awareness that what happens outside the classroom – the
‘other education’ – can contribute to positive developmental outcomes (Aries et al.,
2004; Gayles, 2009; Howard-Hamilton & Sina, 2001; Kuh, 1995; Mixon & Treviño,
experiences include participation in co-curricular activities, living in campus
residence, conversations with faculty and peers, working on or off campus,
participation in institutional governance, involvement in clubs and organizations,
and volunteerism (Kuh, 1993; 1995). More specifically, out-of-classroom
experiences such as living in residence, working on or off campus, or involvement in
clubs, institutional governance, and organizations have shown to be related
positively to persistence and satisfaction (Astin, 1977, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini;
1991), gains in social competence, autonomy, confidence, self-awareness, and
appreciation for diversity (Baxter Magolda, 1992; Kuh, 1993) as well as other
aspects of student learning and personal development (Gayles, 2009; Kuh, 1993).

The body of knowledge that examines outside-the-classroom learning experiences is called Experiential-Learning Theory (David A. Kolb). Kolb (1984) suggests that there is an intimate and necessary relationship between the processes of actual experience and education. According to Experiential Learning Theory, effective experience cannot be random; instead, it must be purposeful and specific conditions must be implemented to ensure learning takes place to achieve developmental outcomes.

Experiential learning suggests learners construct meaning and transform their collective experiences into knowledge (Baker, Jensen, & Kolb, 2005; DeGiacomo, 2002; Kolb, 1984; Kolb, Boyatzis, Mainemelis, 2000). However, the theory also claims that learning is not one-dimensional, rather, there are several ways that individuals can learn through experience. Based on research and clinical observations, Kolb et al. (2000) have deduced four basic learning styles- diverging, assimilation, converging, and accommodation. Each of the different learning styles suggests that different environments are necessary in order to stimulate different learning opportunities for all individuals. For example, an assimilating learner prefers readings, lectures, and having time to think things through, whereas, an accommodating learner prefers “hands-on” experiences and involving themselves in new and challenging experiences. Understanding the different learning environments and learning styles of student-athletes provides sport practitioners with the knowledge that learning opportunities must be designed with the different strengths of each person in mind. To ensure optimal learning and development of
all participants, sport practitioners must adjust the sport environment appropriately to meet the learning styles of all athletes.

Successful demonstrations of purposeful experiential education in diverse environments show positive benefits for learning and development, including: increased meaning and relevance to a learning process, a realistic understanding of the phenomenon under study, and the development of improved oral skills, self-confidence, maturity, independence, and the ability to work well with others (DeGiacomo, 2002). Research on experience-based education, such as co-ops, work/study, and interuniversity sport, provide evidence that such experiences are an integral component of an educational program (DeGiacomo, 2002).

**The place of interuniversity sport in higher education**

There is a general assessment that interuniversity athletics support the mission of an institution of higher learning (Holbrook, 2004). For example, Pine (2010) examined the role of athletics within the academy of the institution and whether or not it was aligned with the overarching educational mission of the institution. Pine concluded that universities should consider investing in tuition waivers for student-athletes and by doing so, he suggests, institutions will better acknowledge the educational elements of athletics and will help create a positive academic and campus culture around athletics. In 2009, then president of the University of Washington (now newly elected president of the National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA]) Mark Emmert, went on record that ‘first and foremost, we are always going to focus on our academic efforts. That’s the reason we exist and so while our athletic programs are important and we want to always be
competitive, we are not going to be allocating [resources] from other causes for
athletics” (Pine, 2010, p. 476). Similarly, Chancellor Robert Birgeneau at the
University of California, Berkley, spoke to a related issue and was insistent that
“there should be no doubt that we fully intend to provide [interuniversity athletics]
with continued financial support as long as required to ensure that we remain true
to our tradition of comprehensive excellence” (Pine, 2010, p.476). Higher learning
fosters not only a comprehensive education, but also looks to advance a civil and
sustainable society. In the Canadian context, the statement of institutional purpose,
proposed by the University of Toronto, makes explicit its commitment in ensuring
student education in the broadest sense of the term and enabling students to
contribute constructively to society (University of Toronto Statement of
Institutional Purpose, 2012).

Danylchuk and MacLean (2001) argued that an agreed upon component of an
enhanced education for students includes opportunities in interuniversity sport. It
has been proposed that interuniversity athletics are an integral component of the
mission of the university with elements of learning, teaching, and scholarship (Pine,
2010). Further, it is suggested that they exist in a co-curricular fashion and mesh
well with the goals and missions of the overall university because their emphasis on
“student first, student-athlete second” is reinforced and operationalized (Danylchuk,
& MacLean, 2001). Participation provides experiences beyond the classroom,
making potential contributions to student learning and personal development. Kuh
(1993) interviewed 149 senior university students in the U.S. about the impact of
out-of-classroom experiences on outcomes of college attendance considered
important by students. All students reported personally meaningful changes in one or more areas considered to be important outcomes of college, such as, interpersonal and practical competence, critical thinking, application of knowledge and a sense of purpose. Interuniversity athletics may provide opportunities for the development of these outcomes, which in turn comprise important components of higher educations’ mission toward whole person development.

While it is postulated that co-curricular activities support the educational mission of universities, little is known about which out-of-classroom activities are linked with specific outcomes (Kuh, 1995). Interuniversity sport participation is a special case as it has the largest percentage of participants of any co-curricular activity at the university level. Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) is Canada’s largest sport organization at the university level. The CIS includes over 10,900 participating athletes and it is estimated that these athletes spend 20-40 hours per week in practice or play (Watt & Moore, 2001; Wolverton, 2008). University sport demands a substantial time commitment from its athletes and research is often focused on how participation in and athletes’ time commitment towards sport is a hindrance to their education, as opposed to a contributor. Researchers have devoted effort to the trade-offs athletes experience to participate in sport (Potuto & O’Hanlon, 2007), yet less is known about how this time commitment enhances the university experience. And yet, in the higher education sector, “the centrality of athletics in the life of colleges and universities is undeniable” (Bogue & Aper, 2000, p. 180).
The role university athletics holds within the proposed educational aims of higher education institutions is largely debated. University athletics have been referred to as higher education’s ‘peculiar institution’ because their presence is pervasive, yet how student-athletes maintain proper balance with the demands of their academic program arouses curiosity (Howard-Hamilton & Sina, 2001).

The vast majority of existing research exploring the interuniversity sport context stems from the U.S and the NCAA sport system. There has been very little research conducted with the Canadian interuniversity sport system, and arguably, the two contexts differ substantially. American interuniversity sport is highly integrated into the university’s institutional mission, partly attributed to the monetary profit made from sports; school events centered on sport, and increased institutional pride resulting in greater community support (Pierce, 2010; Trani, 1995). The U.S. sport culture invests large amounts of money into their sport programs with the expectations of performance success in return (Earl, 2004; Pine 2010). This, as a result, has often generated commercialization, consumerism, and exploitation of U.S. student-athletes (Earl, 2004; Pierce, 2010; Sage, 1998). Occasionally, U.S. interuniversity sport has been portrayed as an avenue for profit, rather than for educational purposes. Canadian interuniversity sport, on the other hand, strives to provide the student-athlete, the primary constituent, with quality coaching, facilities, and competition within a philosophical framework of an educational environment (Danylchuk & MacLean, 2001). Fewer dollars are invested into the Canadian interuniversity sport system and athletic scholarships are less financially supported (Danylchuk & MacLean, 2001). A detailed description of
interuniversity sport will be presented in the following section, however, it is important to make explicit the different sport contexts upfront so the described research can be interpreted with this in mind.

A deeper understanding of the interuniversity sport context is necessary to assess its’ compatibility with educational outcomes. The ensuing discussion will examine the goals and values of interuniversity sport.

**Interuniversity sport: Goals and values**

Interuniversity sport has been a part of the university experience since 1852 in the U.S, and 1906 in Canada (Danylchuk & MacLean, 2001). By participating in university sport, student athletes have been privileged with opportunities to compete at one of the highest levels of sport nationally (Danylchuk & MacLean, 2001), create strong bonds with friends who share similar interests (Umbach et al., 2006), strengthen their institutional pride (Aries et al., 2004; Umbach et al., 2006; Williams & Pennington, 2006), and enhance their campus life experience (Danylchuk & MacLean, 2001; Kuh, 1993, 1995).

The goal of interuniversity sport in Canada is to provide opportunities for student athletes to pursue excellence in academics and athletics (CIS mission statement, 2007). It is further claimed that athletic programs on university campuses should remain integrated into the academic mission of the overall institution, contributing toward the important image of quality (Danylchuk & MacLean, 2001). The goal of interuniversity sport is not only to provide a high quality athletic experience, but to foster a high quality academic and university experience as well. Miller (2000) proposed that sources such as formal studies
(Matthews, 1974; Standing Committee for Physical Education and Athletics, 1966), conference proceedings (Taylor, 1986), and task force and commission reports (Final Report of the Task Force on Interuniversity Athletics, 1997) all advocate an educational and developmental ideology within interuniversity athletics.

The Canadian Interuniversity Sport organization claims to provide student-athletes with opportunities to not only earn a degree but also to develop life skills that transfer beyond the realm of sport (CIS, 2011-2012), skills including leadership, teamwork, self-responsibility, and interpersonal communication.

According to the 2007 CIS mission statement, the CIS maintains five values that form the foundation for its role in higher education: (1) quality educational and athletic experience; (2) unity of purpose, respect for autonomy; (3) integrity and fair play; (4) trust and mutual respect; (5) equity and equality of experience. The principles and values of interuniversity sport on university campus are to be embedded within the educational mission of the institution (Danylchuk & MacLean, 2001) and cater to the developmental experiences of student athletes.

The Final Report of the Task Force on Interuniversity Athletics (1997) at the University of Toronto declared, “athletics provide opportunity for self-discovery, social interaction, pleasure, health, and physical, mental and spiritual development, in the context of striving for physical and mental self-mastery” (p.3). Following this declaration, a list of principles to guide interuniversity sport is discussed in the report, including: (i) accessibility for all; (ii) continuum of opportunities; (iii) whole person development; and (iv) an athlete-centered model. Athletics are to provide
opportunities that adhere to these principles, which also support the culture of higher education.

The problem, however, is that personal and/or educational development is not automatic, nor can it be assumed simply by participating in sport (Danish et al., 2002; Gould & Carson, 2008; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Jones & Lavallee, 2009; Petitpas et al., 2005). There is a lack of convincing evidence that the simple act of participating in interuniversity sport results in student learning and/or personal development. The difficulty, as Miller (2000) stated, is that findings to-date have been unable to assert with certainty the developmental role of university sport.

For a host of reasons, scrutiny of interuniversity athletics as a ‘peculiar institution’ has intensified in recent years (Thelin, 1994; Umbach et al., 2006). The developmental value of interuniversity sport has received an abundance of support from some researchers (Aries et al., 2004; Jones & Lavallee, 2009; Miller, 2000; Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, Terenzini, 1996; Pascarella, Truenkenmiller, Nora, Terenzini, Edison, & Hagedorn, 1999; Pierce, 2010; Potuto & O’Hanlon, 2007; Umbach et al., 2006) and harsh criticism from others (Astin, 1993; Benford, 2007; Bowen & Levin, 2003; Eitzen, 1987; Sage, 1998; Shulman & Bowen, 2001).

A review of the literature on interuniversity sport experiences suggests there are both costs and benefits to sport participation. Research on the costs of interuniversity sport participation suggests a negative correlation between sport participation and academic outcomes. For example, competing in interuniversity sport appears to influence athletes’ motivation to succeed academically negatively (Wolniak, Pierson, & Pascarella, 2001). Shulman and Bowen (2001) and Bowen and
Levin (2003) reported that student athletes competing in Division III athletics at Ivy League institutions performed at a lower level academically than non-athletes. Further to poor academic performance, Eitzen (1987) argued that U.S. college athletes have a tendency to enroll in easy courses in easy majors. The ‘clustering’ of majors is seen as a common thread for athletes in big time sports, such as men’s basketball (Case, Greer & Brown, 1987; Eitzen, 1987). Athletes are criticized not only for how poorly they perform in class, but also for choosing courses and majors that offer less of an academic challenge.

Concerns about isolation and segregation of athletes are also well documented throughout the literature. Participation in interuniversity athletics may lead to social isolation, even though bonds between athletes may strengthen, interaction with non-athletes is limited as a result (Umbach et al., 2006; Wolf-Wendel, Toma, & Morphew, 2001). Critics of U.S. university athletics, Shulman and Bowen (2001), argued athletes create an exclusive subculture that diminishes opportunities for personal development.

Other critiques made of interuniversity sport, largely stemming from the U.S. literature, include commercialism (Earl, 2004; Sage, 1998; Trani, 1995) and a movement away from amateur ideals through student-athlete exploitation (Pine, 2010; Trani, 1995). Results of the National Survey of Student Engagement (2003) indicate that while unethical behaviours exist within interuniversity athletic programs, they also exist in research laboratories, fraternity and sorority houses, and campus classrooms (Potuto & O’Hanlon, 2007).
At the same time, however, researchers have suggested that student athletes are unfairly advantaged due to their interuniversity sport participation. Some have argued that important skills and qualities are developed through sports, ranging from growth in interpersonal skills, peer relationships and leadership abilities (Astin, 1993; Ryan, 1989), to students’ personal and social well-being (Cantor & Prentice, 1996), and students’ commitment to their academic institutions (Astin, 1993).

The relationship between the success of U.S. football programs and freshmen retention rates as well as graduation rates was explored. Football success was seen to assist the university in attracting higher quality students to campus, which, as a result, predicts higher freshmen retention and graduation rates (Mixon & Treviño, 2005). This knowledge has had effects on institutions’ offerings of scholarships in the form of tuition. Similarly, a U.S. based position paper conducted by Pine (2010) suggests the use of a tuition waiver policy in place of athletic scholarships represents an investment in education, and therefore, a commitment to the institutional mission and educational development of the student athlete.

Additional support for interuniversity sport as a positive experience for student athletes includes exposure to diversity (Miller, 2000; Williams & Pennington, 2006), expansion of opportunities (Mixon & Treviño, 2005), and the development of inclusive and diverse group appreciation (Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001; Wolf-Wendel, Toma, & Morphew, 2001).

Although current literature discusses several positive and negative representations of interuniversity sport, the reports provided above by researchers
are based on theoretical claims primarily, and not on empirical evidence. Furthermore, there is limited research studying the perspectives of the participants – the student-athletes – regarding the developmental outcomes of their interuniversity sport experiences. This approach to understanding the role of interuniversity sport on student-athlete development and learning, as well as the role of the coach in the student-athlete’s sport experience, is important to investigate.

**Student athletes’ self-reported experiences**

Athletes have noted several positive personal growth experiences they have had as a result of their sport participation. When student athletes were asked whether athletics participation contributed to the development of specific skills, they identified the development of leadership skills, teamwork, ability to take responsibility for yourself, ability to make decisions, time management skills, ability to take responsibility for others, and study skills (Miller, 2000; Potuto & O’Hanlon, 2007).

Fraser-Thomas and Côté (2009) provided an understanding of the developmental experiences of elite athletes in sport through a qualitative study of Canadian swimmers. Twenty-two semi-structured interviews, approximately one hour in duration, were conducted with athletes recruited from swim clubs across Canada. Athletes identified the challenging nature of the sport itself and its ability to enhance athletes’ work ethic; they felt the challenge of swimming was a rewarding experience that strengthened their commitment, discipline, and perseverance to the sport.
Specific life skills development is also supported in the self-reports of students in higher education extracurricular literature (Dickinson, 2000). Potuto and O’Hanlon (2007) and Lally and Kerr (2005) further reported that athletes, stemming from both the NCAA and CIS respectively, perceived their athletic participation as a well-rounded educational experience that prepared them for life after graduation. Potuto and O’Hanlon developed a survey that was distributed to student-athletes at eighteen U.S. Division IA universities in 2005. Over 900 surveys were returned that revealed student-athletes’ positive perceptions of their overall college experience. Similarly, Lally and Kerr (2005) conducted in-depth retrospective interviews with four male and four female student-athletes regarding the career planning of university student-athletes. Interview data revealed student-athletes invested in both athlete and student role identities simultaneously and that investing in the latter may allow for the exploration of nonsport career options. Lastly, athletes’ self-reported diversity experiences from participating with teammates of varying ethnicities and cultures (Miller, 2000; Potuto & O’Hanlon, 2007). One of the virtues often claimed for U.S. Division IA athletics is that student-athletes have a rich multicultural experience and interact with a more diverse group of students than do the general student body.

On the other hand, athletes have reported undesirable experiences in sport that may further dilute personal growth opportunities. Student-athletes report experiences of physical exhaustion, mental fatigue, unwanted media attention, and overly-demanding coaches (Eitzen, 1987; Richards & Aries, 1999; Watt & Moore, 2001; Wolverton, 2008). The time demands of student-athletes are used as
supporting evidence for negative self-reports, indicating that the sport commitment is unreasonable, requiring anywhere from 20-40 hours per week of students’ time (Gayles, 2009; Watt & Moore, 2001; Wolverton, 2008). Lastly, alcohol consumption and athletics participation have been found to be correlated positively. When examining athletes and non-athletes from two highly selective Northeastern schools, one an Ivy League university and the other a small liberal arts college in the U.S., athletes reported higher alcohol consumption on weekends when compared to their nonathlete counterparts (Aries et al., 2004). The negative accounts of student-athletes are important to include because they suggest that positive developmental outcomes cannot be assumed simply by participating in sport.

The self-reports of student-athletes have been the focus of much research investigating development through sport participation. Furthermore, reliance on student-athletes’ self-reports to draw inferences about development may be problematic on the basis of social desirability. More specifically, athletes may be inclined to report positive outcomes that are expected to result from sport participation. Additionally as Miller (2000) found, athletes cited many positive outcomes of their sport experience, but were unable to articulate the process by which they acquired these outcomes. Given that positive development is not automatic through sport participation alone, exploring the role of coaches in facilitating the personal development of their athletes may help in advancing knowledge in the area.

Gould & Carson (2008) also recognized that life skills do not inevitably emerge merely from participation in sport. As a result, they conducted in-depth
interviews with football coaches who were recognized for their abilities to teach life skills to their players. Results revealed specific factors that described coaches’ roles in influencing the life skills development of their athletes. The role of the coach in facilitating student-athletes’ development and life skills acquisition will be explored in the following section.

**The role of the coach**

At the interuniversity level, every coach is responsible for the conduct of his/her program, and the success of the athletics program is believed to depend largely upon these coaches (Fingers, 2005). Student-athletes spend approximately 20hrs/week with their coaches (Potuto & O’Hanlon, 2007; Watt & Moore, 2001; Wolverton, 2008); this is often one of their most important adult relationships in sport, and sport researchers suggest we must make better use of it (Grant & Darley, 1993).

Coaches can influence the sport experiences of athletes either positively or negatively; for example, athletes experiencing burnout have cited the coach as a negative influence due to the coaches’ lack of belief in the athlete, extreme pressure, and/or unrealistic expectations (Udry, Gould, Bridges, & Tuffey, 1997). Conversely, a study conducted by Fraser-Thomas and Côté (2009) revealed elite athletes’ positive experiences in sport. Athletes spoke of their coaches’ unflattering belief in them as athletes, which reportedly increased their sense of confidence and motivation. The role of the coach helps shape the sport experience and can play a critical role in both the personal and performance success of athletes.
Coaches must be attuned to and accommodate the commitments of their student-athletes in addition to interuniversity sport. Student-athletes have other responsibilities to attend to outside of sport, including school, family, peers, part-time jobs, etc. Grant and Darley (1993) argued that student-athletes invest so much of their waking lives to reach a particular athletic status, they continue that investment for four years, at which point most then discard their activity of choice and expertise in favour of a second career. Throughout an athlete’s four-year university athletic career, a considerable amount of time is spent with his or her respective coach (Watt & Moore, 2001; Wolverton, 2008). It is the responsibility of the coach to use this time to not only attend to the athletic development of his or her student-athletes, but to ensure they actively develop as good citizens and successfully functioning members of society to be prepared for life beyond athletics and university (Gould, Collins, Lauer, & Chung, 2006; Trudel, 2006).

One suggested way for coaches to better attend to their athletes’ positive growth and development through interuniversity sport is to make sport purposeful. Sport specific conditions should be implemented in such a way for learning and development to occur, and to enable athletes to articulate their development and growth as well. This next section will discuss the importance of learning through one’s experiences, as well as ways in which coaches may make the sport experience intentional and strategic to better enable positive developmental experiences to occur.

**Fostering development through sport**

The development through sport literature has posited that development does
not occur automatically. There is often an unquestioned link between sport and development grounded in the assumption that sport, unlike other activities, has a fundamentally positive and pure essence so that positive changes ensue for individuals simply by engaging in sport (Coakley, 2011). However, many authors in sport suggest that the sport experience/programme cannot be random and that it must be implemented in a way that caters to the goal of fostering athletes’ learning and development. A discussion of experiential learning theory, development through sport literature, and the use of learning outcomes, mission statements and explicit learning will follow to support the idea of purposeful sport.

**Development through sport literature**

“Sports provide sometimes a necessary but never a sufficient experiential basis for producing desired developmental outcomes” (Coakley, 2011, p. 314). Researchers propose that sport must be organized, implemented, and delivered in purposeful ways to achieve development (Coakley, 2011; Gould & Carson, 2008; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Rosewater, 2009). Hartmann & Kwauk (2011) argued ‘development’ has become a fascination in the sporting circles worldwide, yet sport officials, policy makers, and advocates often have relatively unsophisticated understandings of development and the role of sport therein. Researchers in sport have recognized that assuming development through sport is problematic and are now focusing efforts toward structuring the sport context to intentionally foster positive development. In the positive youth development literature, development refers to the creation or the expansion of “personal skills or assets, including cognitive, social, emotional, and intellectual qualities necessary for youth to become
successfully functioning members of society” (Weiss & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009, p. 1).

By this definition, there is congruency between the aims of positive youth development and the educational missions of universities to attend to the holistic development of the individual.

Developmental outcomes are related to and dependent on combinations of factors, including the following: type of sport played, orientations and actions of peers, parents, coaches, and program administrators, norms and culture associated with particular sports or sport experiences, socially significant characteristics of sport participants, material and cultural contexts under which participation occurs, social relationships formed in connection with sport participation, meanings given to sport and personal sport experiences, the manner in which sport and sport experiences are integrated into a person’s life, and changing definitions and interpretations of sport experiences that occur during the life course (Coakley, 2011). These factors play different roles within the sport experience, informing best practices for implementation and delivery of sport programs. For example, sport participation must occur in settings where young people are physically safe, personally valued, morally supported, personally empowered, and hopeful about the future for developmental benefits to accrue (Coakley, 2011). Rosewater (2009) adds to this by suggesting equitable access to high-quality programs and program quality are top priorities that increase the likelihood that youth will participate and reap the benefits of sport. Proposed ways in which to attend to these influential factors concerning development through sport include, but are not limited to:

require school performance reports, explore collaborations with other academically
oriented programs, provide ways for coaches to serve as liaisons to the university, promote peer relationships and peer learning, support capacity for independent decision making, and provide opportunities to teach transferability of life skills learned through sport to other life domains (Coakley, 2011; Gould & Carson, 2008; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Rosewater, 2009). To attain this, the work of coaches, athletes and sport administrators must become unified to produce a meaningful sport experience for the athletes involved.

If sport practitioners (coaches, athletic directors, administrators, etc.) are to be serious about development, Hartmann & Kwauk (2011) believe they need to operationalize the concept of development and construct sport programs and education initiatives accordingly. The role of development in sport is twofold according to several authors: one is that prosocial outcomes and benefits are accrued only under the right or sufficient conditions, with purposefully designed and directed programming; also, that sport programming must be combined with other, non-sport programming and investment if broader developmental goals are to be achieved (Coakley, 2011; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011).

**The implementation of learning outcomes in sport**

The use of mission statements, learning outcomes and explicit developmental goals helps give structure and direction to sport programming. The articulations of university and/or athletic mission statements give direction and serve as a guide for development. Learning outcomes stress the importance of students’ ‘application, understanding, integration, autonomy, development, responsibility, and collaboration’ (Stephenson, 1994). Outcomes represent “what one ends up with,
intended or not, after some form of engagement” (Allan, 1996, p. 99) and further characterize what a learner knows or can do as a result of learning. Learning outcomes offer a viable model for the design of curricula in higher education that shifts the emphasis from input to student learning.

Learning outcomes are specific, articulated benchmarks for assessing quality and efficiency of a program (Maher, 2004). Further, they are used to evoke change in individuals and are a means of describing these changes. Maher (2004) discusses the benefits of learning outcomes, which include: a focus on a student-centred approach, enabling students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves, a link to assessment, a focus on actual achievements of student athletes, the learner is at the heart of the educational process, encouraging learners to be more independent and autonomous, and defines levels of achievement qualitatively (pp. 47-48). Employing learning outcomes into programming allows for flexibility in learning and development, but is informative in nature, guiding individuals throughout the learning process.

In spite of the investments made to interuniversity sport, we do not have a confident sense of what athletes are learning from their experiences.

**Limitations of existing literature**

Although current literature assists in gaining a greater understanding about the interuniversity sport experiences of student athletes, limitations to the research must be recognized.

The majority of researchers have conducted studies within the American interuniversity system, the NCAA (Aries et al., 2004; Earl, 2004; Eitzen, 1987;
Gayles, 2009; Howard-Hamilton & Sina, 2001; Mixon & Treviño, 2005; Pierce, 2010; Pine, 2010; Potuto & O’Hanlon, 2007; Trani, 1995; Umbach et al., 2006; Williams & Pennington, 2006). For example, Canadian researchers Danylchuk and MacLean (2001) believe that in comparison to our ‘sister institutions’ south of the border, “the situation is drastically different... Canadian institutions have and, by a slight majority, continue to reject the offering of athletic scholarships for entering level students” (p.374). Therefore, we cannot claim that the U.S. literature is representative of the Canadian Interuniversity Sport system.

Second, a lot of work has been conducted through quantitative methods. The use of surveys and questionnaires provide student-athletes with self-declarative statements about their experience, to which they are asked the degree to which they agree or disagree with the statement being made (Aries et al., 2004; Potuto & O’Hanlon, 2007; Umbach et al., 2006). By providing athletes with answers to the research questions of interest, a true representation of the athletes’ lived experience in interuniversity sport is missed.

Further, concerns regarding the validity of athletes’ self-reports are contested (Aries et al., 2004; Kuh, 1993; Pascarella, 2001; Umbach et al., 2006). Social desirability becomes problematic when participants feel their experiences are not in line with the researchers’ or society’s views of sport, so they share with the researcher what they believe are desired from them.

The university age range, typically 18-22yrs, has received little attention in the literature regarding development through sport. Most work is focused on youth participation and how youth programs can be implemented to ensure development
(Coakley, 2011; Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003; Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2009; Gould & Carson, 2008; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Rosewater, 2009). Attention to this important stage of young adult’s development is crucial, as university students prepare for careers and life beyond university.

Lastly, the majority of research focuses on the perspectives of student-athletes on their sport experiences and little consideration is given to the perspective and role of coaches in the athlete’s experience. Less is known about the conditions, if any, that coaches implement to help foster learning and development through sport participation. This area must be given emphasis in future research in attempt to enhance the positive developmental outcomes student-athletes may potentially experience as a result of their sport participation.

**Conclusion and future directions**

A university education encompasses classroom and out-of-classroom experiences. Higher education proposes to pass on knowledge, provide vocational training, train research skills and attend to students’ intellectual, moral, emotional, physical, spiritual, cultural and social growth (Mohanan, 2005). Interuniversity sport is aligned with the educational mission of the university through a commitment to the holistic development of student-athletes and the provision of out-of-classroom learning experiences. Current literature indicates however, that interuniversity sport can be positive or negative in terms of student athletes’ learning and development. It is important to recognize that sport in and of itself does not guarantee positive developmental outcomes. Such outcomes require the application of purposeful conditions that help to foster an environment in which
development and learning are facilitated. If interuniversity sport is to be a positive learning and developmental experience for student-athletes, it will require the intentional implementation of specific program features, the dedication and commitment of coaches to their athletes' personal development, and the involvement of all stakeholders in university sport to truly make the experience of the student-athlete a positive one.

There are several gaps in the literature, including the need for: (a) Canadian Interuniversity Sport data; (b) qualitative modes of inquiry; and the (c) inclusion of reports exploring the methods coaches use to support development and learning in sport. Each of these will inform the research questions for the proposed study. More specifically, the purpose of this study is to explore the ways coaches facilitate the personal development of student-athletes through interuniversity sport. A rationale for the proposed research study will be discussed in the following section.

**Purpose and rationale**

This study explored the Canadian interuniversity context and employed a qualitative approach to the inquiry of methods coaches use to facilitate the positive personal development of their student-athletes. This study aimed to fill the gaps in existing literature and to advance our knowledge and understanding of interuniversity student-athletes' positive personal development through sport participation in Canada.

As the large majority of studies regarding interuniversity sport have been conducted within the NCAA sport system in the United States and U.S athletics may
not translate directly to the Canadian setting (Miller, 2000), this study makes an important contribution to understanding Canadian interuniversity sport.

Second, qualitative research is especially helpful for exploring new areas, including in this case how coaches foster personal development in their athletes (Gould & Carson, 2008). Currently we know little about personal development and student learning through university sport from those involved in the experience (Wright & Côté, 2003).

Lastly, because of the extensive time and energy student-athletes commit to sport, the influential relationship coaches have with their athletes at such an important developmental stage for students, and the power and authority of the coach, there was a need to explore the methods coaches use in enabling the positive personal development of their student-athletes.
Chapter 3: Methods

Personal background

The preparation for engaging in a qualitative study often requires self-examination of one's assumptions about the topic under study and research question (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990). This involves considerations of one's personal and professional experiences, further drawing on how these experiences may influence the research process (Miller, 2000).

I have been an active athlete for the majority of my life, playing numerous sports as a child. As a university student, I participated in interuniversity athletics for five years. I spent two years playing in the United States in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and three years playing in Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS).

My experience as an interuniversity athlete has afforded me the opportunity to not only compete at the highest level of university sport across North America, but it has also provided me with countless experiences and life lessons I have carried forward beyond university.

Over the years I have had many influential coaches, each having an impact on my athletic and personal development. I not only learned athletic skills which allowed me to play at the highest level as a youth athlete and university athlete, but learned invaluable personal skills from the efforts of my coaches as well.

As a youth athlete, I was not a standout superstar and lacked self-confidence on the soccer field. My coach at the time recognized my leadership capabilities and drew on this strength to enhance my self-confidence. He asked me to give pre-game
speeches, lead team warm-ups, and eventually gave me a captain position. I was able to transfer the confidence I had gained from my leadership role to my athletic performance. Through the facilitation of my coach, I learned to embrace my weaknesses by utilizing my strengths. I have since applied this knowledge to my education, jobs, and personal relationships.

Contrary to the positive personal development I referenced above, I have also experienced negative personal development as a result of a coach's behaviour. For example, my coach unfairly used his position of power to make me feel guilty for missing a team practice to attend my graduation. I was very young at the time and was easily intimidated by my coach. I felt remorse for attending my graduation and believed, at such a young age, that sport came first above all else. Now that I am a university and youth soccer coach, I am conscious of my position of power and the potential negative influence I can have on my athletes if I wrongfully abuse my position of influence.

I have served as a youth coach in the community for nine years and currently hold a position as an assistant coach at the interuniversity level. This, in conjunction with my athletic experience, has provided me with a deeper understanding of the dynamics of interuniversity sport.

The personal and professional sport experiences in which I have partaken have contributed to my knowledge of sport and interuniversity athletics. My pursuit of research within the interuniversity context has been largely influenced by these experiences. However, as my experiences in sport have been largely positive, I realize it is important to recognize and acknowledge my biases and their potential
influence on my research. I acknowledge that my experience as a student-athlete is not the experience of all student-athletes coming through interuniversity sport.

**Participants**

Current head coaches of Canadian interuniversity athletic teams were recruited to participate in this study. Interuniversity coaches, both male and female, represented both full-time and part-time coaching positions. Lastly, coaches represented both team sports and individual team sports. A rationale for the selection of participants for this study is given in the following section.

According to the CIS, most coaches are certified at the highest level with the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) and represent some of the best coaches Canada has to offer. Head coaches were chosen for this study because they are ultimately the ones responsible for the individual sport programme, its design and delivery.

The inclusion of part-time head coaches was due to the limited number of full-time head coaches in the OUA; for example, currently at the University of Toronto, there are only 11 head coaches across 44 men's and women's teams and 26 sports offered. It was also hypothesized that by including both full and part-time coaches, I could have uncovered discrepancies between the two groups. Perhaps full-time coaches had more time to devote to both the athletic and personal development of their athletes. Part-time coaches may be less integrated into the academic mission of the university and thus more focused on athletic skill development.
In addition to this, full-time head coaches hold faculty positions within some universities. At the University of Toronto, for example, full-time head coaches have academic status within the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education through their roles as physical instructors, tutorial leaders, etc. This link between interuniversity sport and the academic sector of higher education could have encouraged full-time coaches to integrate initiatives centered on whole-person development in their sport programs.

Distinctions between individual and team sport coaching have been well documented in the literature (Baker, Yardley, & Côté, 2003; Lorimer & Jowett, 2009), but little has been done to investigate the role of interuniversity sport coaches across the two kinds of sports.

**Ethics**

Appropriate Ethics Review Protocol application forms were completed, submitted, and approved by the Health Sciences Research Ethics Board (REB) at the University of Toronto. This study was granted REB approval on June 20, 2012 under the protocol reference number of 27782.

A letter of information was provided to participants with background information regarding the purpose of the study, a description of what is involved in the research study process, an explanation of the voluntary nature of participation, issues regarding confidentiality and anonymity, and notes concerning compensation and potential risks and benefits of participating in the study. The letter of informed consent is located in Appendix A.
Although financial compensation was not offered in return for participation in this study, it was anticipated that the participants would gain a better understanding of the role coaches play in enhancing the personal development of interuniversity athletes. Otherwise, there were no direct benefits as a result of participants’ involvement in this study. There were also no perceived risks to participation in this study.

**Pilot work**

The pilot work completed prior to the start of the study’s data collection served the purposes of refining the interview questions and providing a learning tool for the researcher. After obtaining ethics approval from the Health Sciences Research Ethics Board (REB) at the University of Toronto, four pilot interviews were conducted. Two participants were interuniversity level assistant coaches, but also former university athletes as well. Each of the two participants had been coaching for more than two years at the CIS level. The third participant was the head coach of a CIS women’s basketball program for more than 30 years. The final participant had been the head coach of a CIS football program for one year. The purpose of this pilot study was to evaluate the effectiveness and accuracy of the study’s interview guide, as well as to provide an opportunity for the interviewer to practice interviewing, questioning, data collection and analysis. Participants were invited to make suggestions, comments and/or recommendations regarding the language, flow, and effectiveness of the interview guide; however, few suggestions were made following the pilot interviews. Interviews were conducted as if they
were formal interviews, a letter of consent was signed by each of the participants, and all ethics procedures were formally adhered to.

**Sample size**

A sample size of eight interuniversity sport coaches was selected to participate in this study. Previous research suggests sample saturation is achieved when data adequacy is achieved and no new information is obtained (Morse, 1995). Qualitative studies using interviews conducted in interuniversity sport or exploring coaching practices have used sample sizes ranging from 6-12 (Bloom, Schinke, & Salmela, 1997; Miller, 2000; Poczwardowski, Barott, & Henschen, 2002). To ensure a well-rounded and comprehensive sample of coaches from Canadian interuniversity sport, coaches were selected from a variety of CIS sports from across Ontario. No more than three coaches from the same interuniversity sport were selected to participate in this study. In addition, no more than four coaches from the same university were included in the sample.

**Procedures**

The next several sections will discuss the procedures for recruitment, interviews, data analysis, member checking, confidentiality, and dissemination of information.

**Recruitment**

Head coaches of Canadian interuniversity sport teams were contacted and selected to participate in this study based on their familiarity and experience with the phenomena under study – coaching Canadian interuniversity athletes. A purposive method of sampling was used for this research study. Purposive
Sampling has been used in qualitative research involving the recruitment of coaches (Headley-Cooper, 2010; Poczwardowski, Barott, & Henschen, 2002). Purposive sampling involves selecting research participants based on their knowledge and understanding of the phenomena under study (Streubert Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). The most important guiding principle is maximum variation; that is, researchers seek to include people who represent the widest variety of perspectives possible within the range specified by their purpose (Higginbottom, 2004; Koerber & McMichael, 2008). Purposive sampling better allowed for a more comprehensive sample of coaches and subsequently, a more thorough understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Coaches were recruited from a wide variety of CIS programs within Ontario University Athletics (OUA); this better allowed for a well-rounded sample of coaches and maximized sample variation. I searched for names and contact information of coaches via university athletic websites (e.g., www.varsityblues.ca) or the OUA website (www.oua.ca). Once a comprehensive list of coaches’ names and emails were gathered, I then contacted them via email asking about their interest in participating in this research study. I attached a letter of information to the initial email outlining the purpose of the study, a description of what participants’ involvement would look like, an explanation of voluntary participation, considerations of confidentiality and anonymity, information regarding compensation, risks and benefits, as well as contact information for both the researcher and supervisor involved in this project. The letter of information can be found in Appendix B.
A total of 80 coaches were contacted via email and only eight coaches responded expressing interest in participating in the study. The first round of emails (approximately 40 emails) went out in November 2012. Perhaps the timing of these emails was not ideal for coaches working with fall sports, as they were likely wrapping up their seasons and participating in CIS championship tournaments at the time. Thus, responding to an email regarding participation in a research study may not have been a priority for these coaches. It wasn’t until the second round of emails was sent out in mid-December 2012, early January 2013, that coaches began responding to the recruitment email. A total of eight coaches responded and agreed to participate in the study. After coaches confirmed their participation, the researcher and participant arranged a time, location, and method to best conduct the interview. The letter of informed consent was emailed to participants before the interviews took place to allow them the opportunity to review it before coming to the interview. At the time of the first interview, I briefly reviewed the letter of informed consent and ask the participant to sign it, to ensure they understood the necessary information regarding the study. This final step indicated the interview was ready to begin.

Intervews

The goal of the interviews was to encourage coaches’ personal expression and to identify perceptions and themes relating to how coaches facilitate the personal development of their student-athletes. As noted above, efforts were made to conduct all interviews in a comfortable, convenient, and private location.
Previous studies examining the roles of either coaches or student-athletes in the interuniversity sport context have employed quantitative approaches (Aries, McCarthy, Salovey, & Banaji, 2004; Mixon & Treviño, 2005; Potuto & O’Hanlon, 2007; Umbach, Palmer, Kuh, & Hannah, 2006). This study employed a qualitative approach. Qualitative inquiry suggests the researcher commences his or her study with a mind open to the possibilities of the data and the perspectives of the subjects (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). This research study used in-depth interviews in order to advance the literature and provide the perspective of participants, which in this study were interuniversity sport coaches. Côté (1993) argued that the "in-depth interview is one of the most valuable techniques for truly understanding the richness of another person’s perspective" (p. 52).

In addition, this study aimed to use a semi-structured interview guide (refer to Appendix C) to obtain descriptive, diverse, and thorough information regarding the phenomenon under study. The interview questions served to guide discussion with coaches, however, interviews also allowed for open exploration and conversation to create a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

Interviews were conducted in person or by telephone depending on the geographical location of each participant. Interviews lasted approximately 30-80 minutes in length. Interviews began with introductory comments to give context to the interview, remind the participant of the purpose of the study, the structure of the interview, and that the interview would be digitally recorded for research purposes.
Each interview began with general questions inquiring about each participant’s coaching history. Examples of questions include: How long have you been coaching in the sport? What are some of your major accomplishments and/or rewards as an interuniversity coach? And, what characteristics describe you as a coach? Following this, more specific questions were then investigated, such as, what do you hope your athletes will take away as a result of their interuniversity sport experience? What experiences and/or opportunities do you feel are provided by interuniversity sport for student-athletes’ personal development? Do coaches have a role to play in facilitating or enabling these experiences or opportunities for personal growth? And, how do you measure or assess this form of student-athlete development? If necessary, I asked participants to further explain or clarify a point they were trying to make using probes, such as, can you explain that further? Can you give me an example? Or, why do you think that? In concluding each interview, I thanked each participant for his/her time and interest in furthering this area of study and asked: Do you have any additional questions or comments you would like to make on the issue? This allowed them the opportunity to elaborate on any point they felt was important to the study that I may not have recognized, therefore, adding breadth to the interview and improving upon the knowledge of the researcher in moving forward with subsequent interviews. The complete interview guide can be found in Appendix C.

Data analysis

After completing each individual interview, digital recordings were transcribed verbatim. Any identifiable information pertaining to the participant
was eliminated from the transcribed text (i.e. name of coach, names of student-athletes, etc.). Data analysis began following the final interview. For this research study, inductive and deductive approaches were employed.

An inductive approach “includes the voices of the participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature” (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). Although this research does not focus on a specific problem, it focuses on the topic of personal development through interuniversity sport, in which inductive analysis holds pertinent value to the uncovering of data that emerges from transcribed interviews. The inductive approach followed a ‘bottom-up’ approach where meaning units were first created, then further translated into categories, and finally those categories analyzed into higher order themes (Côté, Salmela, & Russell, 1995).

Following an inductive data analysis, the higher order themes were then analyzed deductively. Deductive reasoning is a theory testing process, which commences with an established theory or generalization, and seeks to see if the theory applies to specific instances (Hyde, 2000). Using the extensive literature review the researcher had done in preparation for this research study, proposed theories from the literature were analyzed against interview transcriptions to test for possible connections.

The coupling of both an inductive and subsequent deductive approach to the analysis of data strengthens this research study’s findings because it is argued that the findings of qualitative enquiry are tentative until they are tested (Hyde, 2000).
**Member checking**

Member checking is the “most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). Member checking involves asking participants to evaluate and provide feedback about the accuracy of the researcher’s understandings (Bloor, 1997). Following interview transcription, each participant was asked via email to participate in member checking.

The purpose of member checking served many purposes (Lincoln & Guba, 1991). Member checking checked for correctness of the researcher’s understanding of what the participant was trying to communicate. Also, participants were sent an electronic copy of their interview transcription and were invited to review it and provide any additional comments or clarifications on the topic or research project. Lastly, it allowed the opportunity for the participant to go on record as having agreed with the researcher’s interpretations.

**Confidentiality**

The anonymity and confidentiality of this study’s research participants was respected and upheld throughout the project. Access to data was permitted only to the researcher and thesis supervisor. All data, written notes, audio recordings and written transcripts were kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s office or at her home. Any information containing names of the participants, or identifiable data were removed from storage boxes and folders. The information will be retained for a maximum of two years, at which point it will then be discarded securely.
**Dissemination of the study’s information and results**

Upon completion of this thesis, a summary of group research results will be presented and made available to participants if they are interested. By presenting results through group research, confidentiality and anonymity of results will be protected.

The findings of this study inform conference presentations regarding coaching practices and interuniversity sport, as well as form the basis for knowledge translation and transfer of information to the greater coaching community.
Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) coaches’ perspectives on the personal development of student-athletes through interuniversity sport participation. More specifically, I was interested in the ways in which coaches understand, enable, and support the personal development and learning of life skills amongst their athletes. This study contributes to current research by exploring an area of non-athletic development among a previously unexamined population, Canadian university student-athletes. In addition, this study enhances our knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon – the personal development of student-athletes – from the perspectives of CIS head coaches – whose views have not been explored previously.

Data were collected from eight male and female head coaches from CIS teams across Ontario University Athletics (OUA). Five universities and six different sports were represented by the participant sample. Through in-depth semi-structured interviews, coaches shared their viewpoints on the multiple experiences provided to student-athletes through university sport participation, including the ways in which coaches help facilitate and enable opportunities for personal development.

Results of an inductive analysis of the data revealed important information regarding: the qualities and characteristics that embody university sport head coaches, coaches’ understanding of what personal development is, coaches’ perceptions of opportunities provided by university sport for personal development, the influence of coaches on athletes’ personal development, ways to measure this form of non-athletic development, and the challenges presented by
high performance sport culture in terms of its influence on university sport model reviews.

Direct quotes along with the researchers’ interpretations of the findings are included in the presentation of the results. Participant quotations have been selected specifically because they best illustrate and support the point being made by the researcher. In order to uphold participant confidentiality and anonymity, the names of coaches and athletes have been replaced with pseudonyms, and information such as the names of university institutions, university sport teams, as well as any other personally identifiable information have been omitted.

This chapter has been divided into seven sections, the first of which addresses the characteristics of CIS head coaches. The second discusses coaches’ perceptions of personal development and then, their perceptions of personal development through sport. The next section explores the influence of coaches on athletes’ personal development followed by the methods coaches use to assess athletes’ personal development. The methods employed to assess coaches in this area of development will be reviewed and the final section addresses the challenges presented by the high performance sport culture on athletes’ personal development.

**Participant Profiles**

**Alice.** Alice is the head coach of the university team she once played for when she was a student-athlete. She also played for the national team in her respective sport throughout her university degree. The national team took Alice away from interuniversity sport, and it wasn’t until her national team didn’t qualify for the Olympics that she returned to university sport. An injury, along with a well-
timed opportunity to coach at the university level, are what led her to transition from student-athlete to coach. Coaching is now Alice’s full-time job and she considers ‘watching her athletes become incredible people’ one of her greatest enjoyments from coaching. Additionally, Alice loves the challenge(s) and the reward(s) of interuniversity sport, which has kept her in coaching for several years.

**Cindy.** Cindy is fairly new to coaching, more particularly, to coaching in interuniversity sport. The majority of her coaching experience has been with youth camps and youth development programs. She is a former national team athlete as well as a former interuniversity student-athlete. Cindy is a full-time coach who believes that being able to teach athletes and bring out the best in each person is even more important than winning gold medals. Her experience on the national stage of sport, as well as at the interuniversity level, have taught her that coaching is a work in progress and that there is always learning to be done in the position.

**Mary.** Mary has a very accomplished coaching resume, as she has coached: youth, interuniversity athletes, national team athletes, and Olympic athletes at several Olympic games. Mary began coaching in her respective sport with the national team in 1994 and has been a part of the program, on and off, ever since. She has been awarded CIS coach of the year two times and OUA coach of the year close to twenty times throughout her interuniversity coaching career. In addition to her coaching experiences, Mary was an interuniversity student-athlete. Mary self-reported that she was a mediocre athlete, but she felt that being a great coach isn’t solely dependent on an impressive playing career. She believes in a caring team
environment and will say that her athletes are just as much a part of her 'extended' family as her athletes consider her to be a part of theirs.

**Michael.** Michael is from a family with a long history in sport and describes coaching as the “family business.” His mother coached at the interuniversity level, along with his father, and both he and his sister played as interuniversity student-athletes. Michael transitioned to coaching once he graduated from university. Since then, Michael has travelled across Canada pursuing his dream of coaching. He is now the full-time head coach of an interuniversity program and believes coaching is not just about making athletes, it’s about getting better people out into society.

**Paul.** Paul began as an interuniversity student-athlete and then pursued professional sport for a few years, which afforded him opportunities to play sport in Europe and North America. Upon his return to Canada, he began as an assistant coach at the interuniversity level, which soon gained him the full-time head coach position of the program. Paul considers his short transition from playing CIS sport to coaching as, “very fortunate.” Paul loves coaching university athletes because he enjoys watching them develop and believes coaching is the closest thing you can do to playing the sport.

**Sam.** Sam is a part-time head coach, as he holds a full-time job outside of the university setting. Sam is the only participant who was not an interuniversity sport student-athlete. However, Sam was a member of the national team program, in his sport, for over ten years. He began his coaching career at the interuniversity level when he was asked to come in, on a part-time basis, and help develop athletes’ skills. Over the years, this led to Sam taking over the program as head coach. In addition to
coaching at the interuniversity sport level, Sam coached with the junior national team. This experience afforded Sam the chance to travel internationally with the team, including the opportunity to be the assistant coach at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Sam has won several CIS national championships throughout his career. He is both an accomplished athlete and coach.

**Sandra.** Sandra competed as a high school athlete as well as an interuniversity student-athlete in her respective sport. She believes it was her experience as a student-athlete that led her to an assistant coaching position with the team. After one season as an assistant coach, Sandra left interuniversity sport to pursue her own athletic career. She returned years later and is now the head coach of the program. Sandra’s coaching position is part-time, however, she holds an academic position with the university as well. Despite the fact that the two positions are not interrelated, Sandra believes being on campus and, therefore, more accessible to her athletes is “a bonus.”

**Steven.** Steven’s playing career began in youth sport and was proceeded by college level sport. His coaching history mirrors his playing history; he began working with youth athletes, progressed into a head coach at the college level, and is now the full-time head coach of an interuniversity sport program. University sport is Steven’s passion and believes it is unlike professional sport because university sport aims to make sport enjoyable for the athletes. Steven coaches at the interuniversity level because he enjoys giving back and jokes that, “it keeps me young.”
Characteristics of CIS head coaches

This section describes the self-reported characteristics of the participants in this study. University head coaches discussed their personal experiences as a university student-athlete, qualities that they perceived characterized them as both “a player’s coach”, and a “performance-centred coach”, and their difficulties in finding a balance between the two. A discussion of each area follows.

Former interuniversity athlete. The opening question to the interview asked coaches to share their coaching history with the researcher, including personal experiences in their respective sport, as well as the influences which led them to their current coaching position. Seven out of eight coaches interviewed had been student-athletes at the university level and referred to these experiences: “I started as a varsity athlete at [this university]...” (Sandra) “So I was a varsity athlete for a few years...” (Alice) “And I played at [this university], I finished my degree at [this university] as well” (Cindy).

Participants’ experiences as former university student-athletes contributed to their pursuit of coaching in three different ways. The first influence was a positive student-athlete sport experience. Steven explained,

I have to admit it was always my passion... I played college, much more enjoyed the college [experience] over the [club sport experience]... I was kind of the guy who went to school, originally, to just play [sport]. It’s the only reason I got through school... until I grew up and matured and sort of found something that I liked.

Second, a group of participants felt it was because of their involvement as a university student-athlete that they were able to secure a coaching job at the same level. Sandra demonstrated this point by sharing, “... I was an athlete in high
school... but I [competed for the varsity] team and that kind of led me into a coaching position with the varsity team." Similarly, Mary explained,

I [played sport] here... At the end of the 80s I started working more with the [head coach] – he coached me my last year. When he would go out of town, he didn’t have an assistant at the time, so he would ask me to cover his workouts... so I would cover his workouts... and then [the athletic department] knew they wanted to hire another coach in 1990 and he said apply because it looked like they wanted to hire a female coach... so, we [now] work well together.

Alice also had a similar experience,

So I was an athlete here for a few years and then I left and went to the national team... I came back and I hadn’t finished my degree so I came back and continued playing, they had another part time coach at that time. I tore my ACL that year, so I was in a cast and all sorts of stuff... I wasn’t going to go back to the national team because I wasn’t ready and the athletic director at the time here said 'you know, nobody is coaching our team right now, would you do it on a part time basis? You know, I think you’d be good'.

Lastly, participants discussed the role of their university coach in influencing their decision to pursue a career in coaching. Steven recalled his university coach and explained,

... This is kind of a great story. Last night I was recruiting, and the coach of the [team] was my first college coach. He’s the reason why I have any schooling or I’d probably be in a factory somewhere, probably. You know, either that or a Zamboni driver! I was headed in the wrong direction in life, school and a university coach turned me around and I love giving back.

Participants’ responses regarding their coaching history often began with anecdotes referring back to their experience as university student-athletes. Their anecdotes, for the most part, suggested a positive experience, which impacted their decision to pursue coaching.

_A “player’s coach.”_ Participants expressed personal coaching philosophies that emphasized the importance of involving athletes in the decision making process
(Cindy), treating athletes as equals (Steven), and supporting athletes in both their athletic and academic endeavours (Sandra).

Cindy provided an example of how she strove to be an, “athlete-centred coach.” She included the athletes in the design of team rules by empowering her captains and assistant captains to oversee team meetings where the players “basically make their own rules.” Cindy explained, “I think it’s important if they set the rules, they need to follow them and they need to make the consequences... you know, it’s their team as well and they’re just as important in the decision making.”

Sandra believed in being inclusive, supportive, and positive with her athletes. She believed in the development of the athlete and did not believe in rejecting athletes as illustrated by the following quote:

This year we had a girl that switched over from the wrestling team, we have a good [wrestling] team here, so you know she’s dedicated and that she works hard, and she deserves to be on that team. She was our [worst athlete] by far, and I didn’t want to cut her out because she led such a good example and had such an excellent work ethic, contributed positively to the team...

Sandra emphasized her respect for the personal aspects of the student-athlete and the value she placed on the non-physical aspects of athletes. Steven agreed and believed that showing respect for athletes can be done through the language one uses and the types of conversations one has with athletes.

I try and respect the players’ needs away from the rink as much as possible because they are maintaining the needs of the team. I try and respect the players, I try not to use the word ‘grind them’, I don’t believe in intimidation. I believe in them as an equal and try and have intellectual conversations with them.

Coaches have referred to themselves as people who put the needs of the athlete at the forefront of their program, and place importance on the development
and equal treatment of each student-athlete. In the context of university sport, however, the pressure to produce and sustain a winning program reportedly affected the coaches’ views of themselves as a ‘player’s coach’, a theme that will be explored in the next section.

**In pursuit of excellence.** “I’m a guy about excellence. I’m not about development, I want to coach athletes to excel” (Sam). When Sam described himself, he highlighted that he was a coach looking to carry forward a tradition of excellence, which in this case refers to winning. Sam was the only coach who was not a former university student-athlete, however, Sam began playing with the Canadian national team, for his respective sport, at the young age of 17 and was involved with the national program for 12 years. With national level experience, Sam explained, “… I had the opportunity to bring things back and... I got a lot of exposure to the international flavour, so it obviously helped enhance my knowledge of the game....” Sam had carried forward a mindset of performance excellence to interuniversity sport, which is evident in his anecdote:

...When we went into the season our goal was to go undefeated and to win an OUA banner and to win a national title. I believed we had a special enough group that it was a legitimate goal. We lost in the pool match, and it was a trying time, and it was a roller coaster in that the girls were hosting, so we had the pressure of trying to be in the final. The university is hosting, they expect big things, the girls, you know, they cried and they were happy, we had the whole gamut of emotions in that one week of the CIS [championship tournament]. We go to the finals and I think we got to the point where I think we just didn’t have enough.

Alice also spoke about her history with the national program in her sport and compared this experience with university sport. Alice described, “At the international level... you have to win, and how you do it doesn’t matter... so it’s
different. It's professional at that stage and here [university sport] it's not.” When Alice was asked to describe herself as a coach, she referred to herself as, “... demanding”, and explained herself by stating, “... I have high expectations... and I'm competitive.”

Throughout the interview with Mary, she spoke often about her family and the influence of her strict mother. Mary attributed her “bad cop” reputation with her athletes to her childhood. Mary made the link by explaining,

I'm tougher. I think I was brought up with a very strict mother and my father sort of deferred to mom, but we [other coach and I] balance each other out because [the other coach] is the no rules guy and I'm the rules person. [He is] the good cop and I'm the bad cop most of the time...

Participants discussed their past experiences and how they had shaped and impacted the coach they are today. It was evident through the interviews that the coaches were trying to balance the duties of being a tough, demanding, competitive coach, while caring about their athletes and putting the needs of the student and person above athletic pursuits.

**Conflicting values of a head coach.** Alice suggested living in a “conflicted balance” referred to managing the personal development of the athlete as a person, as well as simultaneously, facilitating the development of the athlete. Alice explained, “I think I care about the athletes incredibly, I think I care about their development...”, but at the same time Alice stated, “... But yah, I'm tough and I'm demanding and I'm competitive...” It is the role of the coach, as suggested by Alice, to find a balance between these two endeavours. Sam stated, “Yeah, for me it is about [athletic] excellence...”, but then later said, “…To see [the athletes] grow... that for me is the biggest thing.” Mary, similar to Sam, cared about athletes’
personal development through university sport. Mary explained her greatest accomplishment as a coach at the university level was: “I like seeing them grow... that’s one of my favourite things... I like seeing them come in as first years, raw, and leaving in 4th, 5th, 6th or even 7th year and seeing what they’ve grown into.” She emphasized, “It’s seeing what they turn into, it’s the whole process....” At the same time, Mary was highly committed to the athletic success of her athletes. Following her previous comment, Mary said, “Just as importantly, [coaching is] about putting kids on the world student games [Canadian] team.” Sam and Mary cared equally about athletes’ experiences of athletic excellence as well as personal development through university sport.

Despite the perceived conflicts between personal and athletic development, there was a general consensus among the participants that the personal development of their student-athletes is important. Michael noted, “I jumped at doing this study because it fits philosophically with where I’m coming from....” The next section of this chapter will discuss coaches’ perspectives of personal development and their articulations of what it looks like in the context of interuniversity sport.

**Conceptualizations of personal development**

Coaches described their perceptions of student-athletes’ personal development and identified three defining characteristics: success in the classroom, sense of accomplishment, and learning of life skills.
**Athletes’ academic success.** Coaches attributed grade point averages (GPA), the attainment of a degree, and, the overall success of their athletes in the classroom, as indicators of athletes’ personal development.

When discussing with Cindy how she assessed the personal development of her female athletes, she declared, “I ask how they’re doing academically... I write down notes on how they’re doing academically... if we see them doing better in school, that’s a good [sign]...” Other coaches shared similar viewpoints as Cindy; Paul said, “We certainly discuss [personal development] as a coaching staff... and it’s through the academic meetings we have and the one-on-one meetings [that] we discuss those things and try and point them in the right directions....” Interviews with coaches suggested there is a positive correlation between achievements made in academics and student-athletes’ personal development. The policy of the Athletic Department at Steven’s university stipulates that a team GPA and a team’s ability to graduate student-athletes were linked to athletes’ personal development. When discussing the conversations his athletic department had around the area of student-athlete personal development, Steven explained,

I am responsible for the overall team’s GPA. So what [the athletic department] want to see is, they want to see that the team is graduating athletes... the new Athletic Director hired me; I am responsible to recruit [and] make sure the [team] GPA gets to at least a B average and we’re graduating athletes.

Following this statement, Steven went on to say, "[My university] has done an unbelievable job of spending money in good areas and creating an infrastructure. One area is the academic area... every varsity athlete gets free tutoring. So they’ve created this, we now have a full-time professor; he has seven mentors and twenty-
two tutors under him." From Steven’s interview, it appeared that the academic success of student-athletes is a concrete way for coaches and athletic departments to talk about athletes’ personal growth.

The outcome of earning a degree was also illustrative of personal development. Paul thought, first and foremost, his student-athletes were at university to earn a degree; furthermore, that the journey of earning a degree exemplified personal development. Paul explained himself by sharing a story of one of his former student-athletes,

We had an athlete who definitely had a tougher time... sort of [not] following the message of the program... and this definitely translated in the classroom as well. He definitely struggled in his first few years... he sort of locked horns with whomever he dealt with and in his third year, he took five classes in each semester and succeeded basically because his back was up against a wall. Being there on graduation day with his parents was something that was very special, you know. His mother said that she never thought that this day would be possible... so the evolution of the person we saw... now he’s got a degree.

Furthermore, Steven believed being hired, post-university, was a positive sign of personal growth. Steven said, “I want them to be hirable” and believed that an indicator of a successful program, in terms of its’ commitment to supporting athletes’ personal development, is whether or not those athletes are being hired post-graduation. Steven stated, “[this university] and [that university] have done an incredible job in enhancing the athlete. I can say that by the success of the program, the marks those kids are getting and [because] those kids are getting hired.” Steven strongly believed that getting good grades, a university degree, and a job post-university, were indicators of personal development.
The emphasis coaches placed on academics was evident through such comments as, “We put academics first... we do our best to help them succeed in school” (Cindy), “… first and foremost the reason [student-athletes] are here is for a degree…” (Paul), and “… you’re not here to [play sports]. School comes first” (Sandra). Michael completed the point by stating, “… If [it is] not important to the coach, then I don’t think it’s necessarily going to happen just by accident.” Michael’s comment suggested that coaches play a part in helping enable athletes’ personal development.

In addition to academic performance, coaches defined personal development by a sense of accomplishment, to be discussed in the next section.

*Sense of accomplishment.* A term referenced by coaches throughout the interviews, regarding characteristics that best define athletes’ personal development, was accomplishment. Mary talked about the development of self-acceptance and gaining a clear sense of self as being crucial to athletes’ personal growth and development. Throughout Mary’s 15yr+ coaching career with her university team, she has witnessed athletes’ individual battles with realizing and accepting who they are and personal growth experienced as they navigate these conflicts. For example,

*We had a boy come out almost two years ago now and he came out to the two captains first and then he came to have a meeting with me and it was a great meeting. He said, ‘I have something to tell you’ and the captains had already told me, but I didn’t say anything until he came in, you know. So, he starts talking to me and I said, ‘I know’ and he was one of the captains on our team, too, so it was wonderful... Some of the people in the office said, ‘oh we have to promote this!’ and I said, ‘you’re not promoting this!’ What because he is a gay captain? Leave it alone, you know. I said, ‘when did you know?’ because I find it fascinating and he said, ‘about when I was 11 years old I knew I wasn’t normal’ and he was sitting right there and I banged on the desk and I...*
said, ‘NEVER let me say you’re not normal again!’ and he burst into tears and said, ‘thank you so much’.

Mary went on to say,

We’ve had kids come out and we had two boys who haven’t come out yet. You’re about 80% sure they are, they just have to be ready with it themselves... There were a couple of guys who were a bit homophobic, but when he came out it was kind of like, ‘hey, it’s ok’. Like, ‘so you’re gay! You’re gay! That’s just one facet of you, like I don’t care. Like get on the [court and play]. Shut up and [play]. Whether you’re green, yellow, gay, you know, Jewish, whatever! Who cares, it’s just one part of you. So, to get them to learn self-acceptance.

Likewise, Alice recognized the importance of accepting who you are and explained,

“I hope that they can have a clear sense of who they are, be able to stick up for themselves in any setting, whether it be a relationship setting or a job... That they can confront any challenges, in any aspect, that they have tremendous strength and courage....” Michael tied together the points made by Mary and Alice by expressing,

“It’s really about just the process of being true and honest with yourself, and it’s a skill that [coaches] want you to have when you leave. It can be hard, but I think athletics can really do that....”

These findings show that coaches perceived athletes’ accomplishments, whether they be graduating university or finding true self-acceptance, to be indicators of personal development. Additionally, coaches identified the learning of life skills as a component of athletes’ personal development.

**Learning life skills.** During the interviews, the coaches were visibly comfortable discussing the term ‘life skills’. Participants identified several transferable life skills that they hoped their athletes would take away from their experience in university sport, and in some cases, some coaches felt these skills
could only be afforded to those people who participate in sport. According to Michael, “The ability to have a conversation, to have a difficult conversation, is something [that] if you don’t play sports, it’s possible to avoid completely.” Steven agreed; he stated, “… I think the ability to speak. You can be the greatest student you want, but you still have to go to the job interview and be able to communicate your ideas clearly and concisely and you have to have social skills... and I really believe that my [athletes] will develop social skills.”

A life skill identified frequently by coaches was the acquiring of time management skills. Both Alice and Mary recognized the multiple commitments their athletes had and believed the ability to balance is essential, especially managing the time demands required of sport. Alice believed it was a necessity for her athletes to learn to manage both their athletic and academic commitments. She explained,

... The students here are fascinating. It’s amazing in my mind that they can manage the time that they have... they fill in their academics, and their study time, and their eating time, and their everything time and then they look at it and say ‘wow’! There’s no time in there! [Laugh]

Mary added to this by sharing,

I think [our sport] because it is extremely time consuming, [the athletes] are forced to organize themselves and at the beginning of the year we give them a template and say ‘mark in all of your classes, and mark off which workouts you plan to attend, and yes that might change, but they commit to that and they know that three times a week we have [workouts].

In addition to the ability of student-athletes to learn to time manage, coaches believed their players learned work ethic (Sandra), accountability (Paul), leadership (Sam), and teamwork (Cindy) through sport. Sam spoke to the learning of leadership when he shared this,
Decisions have to be unanimous. I allow the captains to make the decisions; our rule is if it gets to me then that’s it. That’s the final say. That’s the rule and that’s the way it’s going to be. So you have to come up with something so that everyone’s happy and it teaches [the captains] to compromise and to lead and it teaches [the captains] to make decisions that are good for the team, not just good for you and your friends. That’s an example of where leadership would come in...

Sam also discussed how learning to operate within a team is fostered through sport. He was the only participant who did not have the experience of being a student-athlete in university and admitted he was envious of the student-athlete sport experience because of all the practical skills it provides – including the opportunity to learn to operate within a team. Sam explained,

[Learning] to deal with all kinds of people... the good athletes, the bad athletes, the good coaching and the bad coaching... how are you going to deal with that? How are you going to work in a team concept? Those are things that I really feel that you’ll get first hand experience [with] through sport...

Paul believed it was essential to support this generation of student-athletes and to help them gain the skills needed to adapt to everyday demands. Paul shared his thoughts, “I think that maybe as this generation evolves, they’re not quite as prepared as past generations in [terms of] their life experiences, so it’s important to provide [the necessary skills]...” From this perspective, not only were the learning of life skills important to the overall personal development of student-athletes, but so were the experiences and opportunities provided through sport for student-athletes to acquire these life skills, a topic to be addressed in the next section.

**Opportunities for personal development provided through interuniversity sport**

A primary focus of the interviews was the *how* question – how do athletes experience personal growth and development through their sport experience? Four
themes arose from the interviews that addressed this question: dealing with adversity, the opportunity to be a part of a team, sport itself, and the contributions of athletic departments. Each of the findings will now be discussed in their respective order.

**Dealing with adversity.** Head coaches claimed that despite the structured format of university sport, including game schedules, practice schedules, etc., it is the unplanned occurrences that facilitate opportunities for athletes’ personal development. Coaches often used anecdotes to illustrate their thoughts. For example, Alice shared,

> I think also inadvertent things that occur. So this year as an example, we had one athlete who got hit by a car, we had another athlete whose friend was shot and killed at a bar, we’ve had two other athletes who’ve had major concussions and so it’s managing these things, which are really horrible things that happen, but also really great opportunities for discussion.

Alice continued this train of thought and stated, “... Sometimes the best pieces come that aren’t planned.” She recalled one time in particular,

> You know you go somewhere and you get stuck in an elevator, we got stuck in an elevator before our first league game. So we’re waiting to play the game and I’m thinking this is going to be really interesting. Now you’re bringing out the people who are incredibly claustrophobic and everyone is going to react differently when they get out of there and they panic and what are they going to do? ... They stayed in there for an hour because 16 of them jumped in the elevator, and then we had to play.

She wanted to elaborate on her point, so she went on to describe another time,

> In 2010 we got into an accident before the quarterfinals at [the Canadian Interuniversity Sport Championships]. We were on our way to practice that morning and we got t-boned, and everyone reacts differently, but it was okay. So it’s then these pieces that do a really interesting thing, how do you cope with these things?
Steven shared another example of an inadvertent event that the average athlete must learn to adapt to. He said,

Here’s a very good one for my athletes – coaching changes. To be able to adapt, that’s a skill and I can guarantee every one of us [coaches] had a different style and a different mentality... Under each and every [coach] they had to perform, there were high performance standards and under each [coach] they were being judged...

Although the athletes in the above examples found themselves in tough situations, which may potentially create opportunities for personal development, it was unclear as to how the coaches knew the athletes were learning or developing personally from the situations.

Sometimes, as Alice suggested, the pieces that come to your program are unplanned. Alice explained her point through the example of a non-recruited, transfer player who ended up having a profound impact on the rest of the teammates. Alice discusses this specific example in the following section which will describe coaches’ perceptions of the ways in which belonging to a team can provide athletes with opportunities to experience personal growth.

**Being a part of the team.** Some athletes’ university sport experiences involve the opportunity to work within a team environment. Mary argued that her sport, “even though it’s an individual sport, it’s a real team sport....” Mary believed having a close-knit team has taught her athletes to care about their teammates and to think about others, not just themselves. Mary explained,

... Our team is really close and I think that’s because the men and women train together. A couple of men and women have even lived together in the houses and stuff like that, and everyone looks out for one another. On Thursday morning, people will look around and they see me doing the attendance and I’ll say ‘is anyone not here?’ and they say ‘yep, these three’ and they’ll go and call them or text them. One time, last year, it was a big
meet and one of our top guys wasn’t there and one of our captains put his clothes on and he ran over to [his teammate’s dormitory] at 6am in the morning and he got him out of bed...

Mary went on to share another example,

... It’s a really close team and they look out for one another. They will come to me and say, ‘[Coach] you better keep an eye on her, she’s crying’. Ok – thank you! And you just go over [and say], what’s going on? They do care about each other… we do tell them, you have to care about each other – these are your teammates!

When asked how her athletes learn life skills, Sandra referred to belonging to a team. Sandra believed that a caring team environment could impact the self-growth of individual athletes positively and further explained,

Well I think they learn these skills from being a part of a team. So for example, the shy, quiet, introverted person learns that their team environment is a place where they can be open and come out of their shell and once they figure out their place on the team and where they fit, they kind of step back and listen to the daily banter that goes on and they feel comfortable to jump into that banter and that chit chat, or whatever is going on.

In another interview, Michael discussed the impact veteran players can have on younger athletes. When asked how athletes learn life skills or how personal development can be cultivated within university sport, he said, “I think it’s mentorship... [From] older athletes on the team.”

Coaches spoke at length about the facilitation of growth and the learning of life skills through having a caring team environment with players who mentor and look out for one another. A rationale of how athletes’ personal development is facilitated from sport practitioners outside of the immediate team is discussed in the next subsection, which focuses on the contributions of university athletic departments.
Contributions of university athletic departments. Leadership starts at the top with the support and guidance provided by athletic departments for student-athlete development. However, the contributions of most of the athletic departments referred to in this study were in the form of academic support and/or financial support. Steven explained that at his university, “[Athletes] have work study halls right now... kids who are on probation have to report to the work-study and have to be monitored to make sure that they’re doing work. That’s just been implemented this year....” This has happened at Paul’s school as well. Paul explained,

What we’ve done at our school is we have mandated a study hall for first-year student athletes. We have a program they’re all required to take tutorials on note-taking, writing essays and things like that and if they show, after their first year, that they have succeeded academically, they are not required to take study hall. If they show that they need a little bit more help, then in their second year they are still required to take study hall... although these young people are mature, they still need structure and they still need support. So we focus, basically the day they get here, on the academic side and I think as a university level coach the door has to be open for their life experiences... and academic issues.

Paul believed supporting the athlete academically communicated that a coach was both open and proactive in facilitating life experiences for his athletes. Furthermore, funding was being allocated to areas of athletes’ academic support. For example, after Steven mentioned the implementation of a full-time professor, mentors, and tutors for aid in athletes’ academics, he said, “It’s all new within the last three years. They spent a ton of money on that, you know.”

Similar to areas of academic support, participants talked about support programs available for students to help them financially. Since student-athletes’ time is taken up by school and sport commitments, it doesn’t leave them a lot of
time to hold a part time job, explained Cindy. When Sam was asked if he could think of any ways in which his university supported athletes’ personal development, he stated, “Yeah, you know listen, we have opportunities for them to work so they can make money because that’s a big worry for them.” Sam went on to explain why he felt opportunities to work were such a contribution to athletes’ personal growth: “Finances should never be a reason why you can’t play sport. So that’s the first part.” Mary also explained that, “A lot of [my athletes] don’t ever have summer jobs because they train all summer. They have little jobs here [at the university], some of our top athletes lifeguard here or they teach lessons for a few hours.” Mary provided an example of an athletic program facilitating the acquisition of a job for one student-athlete:

We had one boy... he wanted to make a change, he got his degree in Marketing and [the program was contacted by a football organization] asking, ‘Hey, do you have anybody who would want to do this?’ and we said, ‘Yeah, I might’. Guess what? In 48hrs this boy moved from [across the country] to work with [the football organization] and so... we can help facilitate jobs.

As important as it was to provide opportunities and support for athletes’ academic growth and financial stability, the direct link between these spheres with athletes’ personal growth is blurred, an observation that will be explored in the discussion.

Most frequently, participants attributed the contribution of “sport itself” to athletes’ personal development. A discussion of how sport, in and of itself, contributes to athletes’ personal development ensues in the final subsection.

“Sport itself.” Coaches attributed the nuances of sport itself as catalysts for personal development. When asked about the opportunities Alice believed were afforded through sport (for personal development), she referred to the game itself:
“I think just in isolation, the game or training itself is incredible because they are constantly confronted with challenges.” She then provided an explanation as to why she felt that way,

The opponent provides a challenge, my teammate provides a challenge, and how do I respond to this challenge? What do I think about this challenge, you know? If I’m not rising to the challenge, then how am I processing it and how am I responding to it? What am I doing? Just the game itself...

Alice went on to say,

So that’s just training right... how to have healthy competition... because you’re competing with your teammate, you’re fighting for the same position on some level. Recognizing that when she presents a challenge, I have to rise to it and then she presents it higher, and I have to rise to it again so we get better. So, I think is the game itself or training, you know, pushing people to that place where they are at the brink. Do they take the step or do they retreat or do they fall or what do they do?

Similarly, Sandra saw the nature of university sport as an opportunity for athletes to learn and develop: “You need pressure to perform, and athletics provides you with that opportunity.” Paul expanded on Sandra’s point by stating,

Well sport provides the opportunity for them to be vulnerable and be asked to basically give their best and at times they may not even be good enough in terms of results, but they are out there in front of people and at times they’re failing and at times they’re succeeding and they are learning to deal with that as they move forward.

The participants reported that the nature of sport itself contributed to athletes’ personal development regardless of the coach.

The interview with Michael suggested that because these athletes are competing at the highest possible level within university sport in Canada, the nature of competitive sport is at the centre of all of this. Michael stated, “Well the idea of competition is at the heart of all of this. So just the idea that you’re competing against somebody else, I mean, that opens the door for everything.”
When asked what opportunities exist in sport that help facilitate the personal development of athletes, coaches provided justifications as to why they felt sport, in and of itself, contributed to athletes’ personal development; however, absent in their responses were any experiences facilitated and implemented by themselves that helped enable and support this form of athlete development. It was only once the researcher asked if the participant believed they, as coaches, played a role in facilitating experiences for their athletes’ personal development did they begin to discuss their influence. The next section addresses a primary focus of this thesis; it will discuss the reported influence of coaches on the facilitation and support of athletes’ personal development through interuniversity sport.

**Influence of coaches on athletes’ personal development**

Once participants were prompted to talk about their role and the influence they have in the facilitation and support of athletes’ personal development, three themes arose: recognition and importance placed on athletes’ personal development, modeling and mentoring, and building relationships and reflection. Each of the subsections will be discussed now.

**Recognition of athletes’ personal development.** Michael explained that it is up to the coach to put together a framework around personal development and that by doing this, it places importance on personal development in the eyes of his athletes. Michael said,

Well, I think coaches do, I don’t want to say all of it [laugh], but coaches put the framework together in order for [personal development] to be able to happen. If it’s not important to the coach, then I don’t think it’s necessarily going to happen just by accident. It might, but I don’t think it’s likely.
Michael went on to say, “So, to understand what situations to put kids into is an important thing as a coach.”

Participants emphasized ‘student first, athlete second’ and the importance of defining what student-athlete success really means, so that the athletes have a clear understanding. Sandra said, “One thing I say to all of the athletes is, ‘you’re here to go to school, you’re not here to [play sport].’ School comes first.” Cindy added to this by commenting that success is not defined by a championship at the end of a season, but is defined by how student-athletes have learned and grown throughout their participation in university sport.

Alice stated, “It’s important that we care about the athletes” and went on to say,

I always felt comfort in knowing that the educational component of the [interuniversity] sport experience was an important piece and that [athletic] success was kind of a bi-product of the educational component. I mean I’m competitive and I want to win and all that kind of stuff... but we also want to [personally] develop these athletes.

Alice believed the personal development of athletes should be an implicit component of interuniversity sport. Sam stated that if athletes’ personal development was important to coaches, that they must actively identify and grasp opportunities for athletes’ learning and development:

I think [as a coach] you’re going to get so many opportunities to teach something [to athletes] that you have to grasp it. Well, you have to identify it first and then grasp it... put them in a situation and it comes down to belief as to whether you think they’re going to get better at it [or not]

Prioritizing athletes’ personal development and setting the precedent that it is an important component to the interuniversity sport experience was discussed by some of the participants. However, when participants were asked how they, as
coaches, influence the personal development of their athletes, the primary response was: leading by example and mentorship. The next subsection will discuss how coaches model and mentor their athletes to help facilitate personal development.

**Modeling and mentoring.** When prompted about the role participants played in facilitating opportunities for personal development, they provided several illustrations of how they model the way for their athletes. For instance, “I think leading by example” (Sandra), “… and be a mentor to them” (Steven), “I still think of coaches as mentors, I still think that’s the biggest thing” (Michael). Michael provided an example of how he believed he mentored one of his athletes:

> I had a conversation with an athlete the other day. [Our school] speaks to elementary schools about success... I really wanted her to go [speak]... I thought it would be good for her to go and get out of her comfort zone and speak to 150 kids and present her thoughts to those kids

Michael stated that although mentorship could come from other athletes on the team, the mentorship that comes from coaches has a larger impact. Michael said, “I just think where [athletes] learn to place importance on things is where their coaches place importance on things.”

Similarly, Steven believed coaches could influence their athletes’ personal development through mentorship. Steven explained,

> The biggest problem I deal with is getting [athletes] to think by themselves. In [youth sport], they are told when to get up, where to be, what to do, what time to get on the bus, and what time the lights are out. My biggest job [as head coach] is to get [athletes] to do that on their own and to make good decisions. I think that’s pretty important... I’m not going to tell you when to study, but you have to study... we practice from 4:30-6:30p.m., well you eat between 3-4p.m., then you need to study from 7-10p.m. ... I’m not going to do that, and that’s where I think I can coach them a little bit and be a mentor to them. Give them the tools to support that and where to find information...
In addition to mentoring athletes, leading by example was commonly cited amongst the participants. Sandra believed coaches influenced their athletes’ personal development primarily through leading by example. When asked how coaches were involved in the facilitation of athletes’ personal development, Sandra said,

Well I think leading by example. I know that some coaches [play] their athletes when they’re injured, you know – do this or don’t do anything at all. There is no alternative.... Some coaches I know train their athletes when they are injured and I don’t think that teaches them anything. Also, if you’re inflexible that teaches them to be inflexible- my way or the highway kind of thing. So I think it’s leading by example.

Sandra expanded on her point stating that sometimes coaches can set negative examples, which may inhibit athletes’ personal development.

A lot of times there are coaches who allow negative atmospheres to carry on.... Those [athletes] will learn something [after they have left] that environment and reflect back on it, but when they are in that environment I’m not necessarily certain that they are growing in a positive manner if that’s the culture that the [coach] is encouraging. So, yes, I think it’s mostly lead by positive example.

Alice agreed with Sandra that coaches could influence the personal development of their athletes in both positive and negative ways. She explained,

I think [coaches] can influence in good and bad directions... for sure they have an opportunity to influence if they want to... how they teach the athletes to train, to work, to cope in stressful situations and not just to cope, but to lead through a stressful situation. So how [coaches] cope is something that [athletes] will take forward and whether [coaches] know it or not they could be providing great examples or horrible examples. I think [coaches can] help [athletes] grow personally.

Alice suggested that coaches should be acutely aware of the behaviours they model because, whether intentional or not, athletes learn from the actions and examples of their coaches. Participants suggested that in addition to modeling and mentoring,
they influenced athletes’ personal development through building relationships and reflection. The last subsection will now present those findings.

**Building relationships and reflection.** Coaches attributed their ability to build relationships with their athletes, as well as opportunities for reflection, as vehicles of influence for athletes’ personal development. Participants stated, “... Building relationships [with athletes]” (Alice), “... you overcome [barriers to personal development] by building relationships [with athletes]” (Sam), “[My athletes] know I am there and I have dealt with everything [of concern to my athletes]...” (Mary). Since her athletes come from all over Canada, she discussed the necessity of supporting her athletes because they may not have anyone else.

Alice agreed with Mary and said, “... It’s all about building relationships. You have to build relationships with the staff, the staff have to build relationships with the athletes... so it’s about building trust... finding ways to build relationships and build trust within [those relationships].” Alice believed she inherently built trust with her athletes through her appointment as full-time head coach.

I think an investment in full-time leadership is important because I think that with full-time leadership you can have someone who pays attention to more than just the x’s and o’s [of the athletes]... So it has to be both pieces... I think full-time leadership and a [coach] who works really hard to build relationships [with athletes].

Within the relationships coaches form with their athletes, Sam discussed the importance that he places on being honest with his athletes as a way to facilitate their personal development.

As a coach this is where that question of inhibition comes in, if you lie to [an athlete] and you string them along and you don’t tell them where they stand then you are in fact inhibiting them because you are in fact telling them something that is not true. So that is what I have learned... tell them the way
it is and let them make the decision... So as a coach you have the responsibility to tell the [athletes] why you are making the decisions you’re making. Now, not all coaches will agree with that philosophy, they don’t feel like they owe that to the athletes. I do. That’s my philosophy. For me, it helps with [athletes’] personal growth.

Similarly, Cindy stressed the value of being honest with her athletes. Cindy explained,

I’ve got players who haven’t played in games, but they’ve been on the bench and stuff and I talk to them more often [than athletes who play] and say ‘you’re making our team better, in practice you’re making our team better by how supportive and positive you are on the bench.’ I think it’s so important to be honest with [athletes] and not say ‘you’re going to play’. I let them know at the beginning of the season, ‘I don’t see you playing much this season, you can practice with us and play in exhibition games, but I don’t so much see you playing.’

Michael and Sam also discussed that they spend a lot of time in reflection, both with and without their athletes. Michael discussed a program at his school that gives his athletes the opportunity to speak to elementary school youth about success. Michael explained that the important piece of this experience is the time spent in reflection with the athlete afterwards. Michael said,

To know [as a coach] what area [athletes] need to grow in, then to put them in that situation. Afterwards, for [the athlete] to come in and talk about it and reflect on it. Well, how did it go? How was this part of it? What did you think of this? The reflection part of it and debrief of [the experience], I think that’s where they learn...

Sam, on the other hand, believed it was important for coaches to individually reflect on athletes’ experiences of personal development. Sam said, “I spend a lot of time with reflection, I think if you don’t reflect, it’s hard for [coaches] to get better.”

According to Sam, it is the process of reflecting that helps strengthen his relationships with his athletes and in turn, athletes’ personal development.
The next section looks at the methods coaches utilize in measuring and assessing the personal development of student-athletes.

Methods employed to assess the personal development of student-athletes

It was apparent that the assessment/evaluation of this form of non-athletic development is not well understood and the majority of participants admitted that they do not even attempt to assess their athletes’ personal development. Coaches discussed a sense of intuition as their primary method of measuring athletes’ personal development, as well as the feedback provided from informal and formal conversations they have with athletes and other coaching staff. These three areas will now be explored in further detail.

Intuition. Athletes’ personal development is not always visible and can take a period of time to evolve and become apparent, according to several participants. Alice explained, “I think that personal development is so difficult to figure out how to measure, [that] people are paralyzed with it.” She rationalized her thinking by stating,

And the intangibles are not something that [coaches] can grab a hold of, right? How do you know this person has integrity, that they have trust? So, I think one of the best assessments is where are the [athletes] five years after they’ve left sport, ten years after they’ve left sport? What are they saying about their sport experiences five or ten years later?

Likewise, Sam stated that his only measure of how much each athlete had developed as a person was to compare the person he/she was as an incoming first year athlete, to the person he/she had become as a graduating, fourth or fifth year athlete.

My fifth year [athletes], this was the first year I recruited [athletes], and I had them for their five years. I recruited these [athlete], I went to their schools and I met up with them and said, ‘Hey I want you to come to [my university].’ The [athletes] graduating this year is my crew. I’m not saying they’re
different than everybody else, but they’re different than everybody else [Laugh]. I saw them from the beginning, I envisioned them a certain way. You know, and I’ll give you an example, there was a kid I recruited, I saw her being a big time stud... When I see her from the first day that she came in [to university] to the way she is leaving now, I know it was a [success]...

Alice explained that her passion for coaching comes from watching her athletes develop. She said, “So yeah, I really enjoy it; every year is different even though you have the same athletes. I could have 80% of the same athletes and it’s a whole new year because they all just grow a little bit.” Similarly, Mary acknowledged that personal development is something experienced over your career as an athlete and something she as a coach cherishes. Mary stated, “They change all the time... [The job] is exhausting, but to watch them develop, that is why [I coach], it’s not just about athletics.”

The above remarks challenge the coaches’ previous statements that personal development is intangible and invisible. Paul confirmed this when he said, “I like seeing them develop.” These statements suggest that coaches observe developmental changes and therefore there must be more concrete ways to assess personal development than through intuition alone. One of the more concrete methods of assessment suggested by coaches was the conversations they have with their athletes. The next subsection will explore the ways in which coaches used informal and/or formal conversations as a method of assessing athletes’ personal development.

*Informal and formal conversations.* Coaches described times before and/or after training or competition when they could interact with their athletes. Mary described having conversations with her athletes outside of training and
competition for the purposes of encouraging growth of a person's identity beyond their athletic identity. Mary shared a story about one of her female athletes in which she had discussed with her the importance of being a woman and, not just an athlete.

My poor little Sophie... she never learns to be a girl, she always wore boy clothes. I wondered if she was gay... I said, 'Sophie you have a job to do' and this was about two years ago and she goes, 'what?' and I said, 'you have to go buy some bras' she said, 'what do you mean? I have bras' I said, 'no you have sports bras, you're going to go out and buy a real bra and you're going to come back and show me your bra' and she goes, 'I have to buy a lacey bra?' I said, 'I don't care what colour it is, it could be black it could be blue, it just has to be a girl bra'. So she comes in and she says, 'look!' I said, 'I just want you some days being a woman, being something other than a t-shirt and sweats'. There's nothing wrong with that, I wear it half the time, but you have to be able to be something different. I want you to be a woman sometimes, you know, because you are a woman.

Rather than communicating directly with his athletes, Paul discussed the personal development of athletes with his coaching staff: “We certainly discuss it as a coaching staff as the person develops... we discuss those things and we try to point [the athletes] in the right directions.”

However, not all coaches use informal conversations as a way to assess their athletes' personal development. One of the most common forms of communication used by participants was a formal meeting with his or her athletes. Coaches most often implemented one-on-one formal meetings with players to check in on their academics. Michael stated, “Well, I mean, my goal with every single one of [my athletes] is to, at some point, during an individual meeting (we have at least 3 individual meetings a year)... to just talk about the personal side, so what’s going on with you in this regard in school....” Additionally, Cindy explained that in her one-on-one meetings with her athletes, “I ask how they’re doing academically... I write
down notes and [track] how they're doing academically... just to assess how each of them are doing individually throughout the season.” For Cindy, tracking her athletes’ academic progress was one way to tangibly measure how her athletes were growing and developing as a person. Likewise, Sandra pointed out that although she believed measuring athletes’ personal development based on academics was a clever method, she generally refrained from it because she coached an individual athlete sport team. She explained what this meant by saying, “in terms of academics, generally individual sport athletes perform well academically anyway. It’s in our make up, I guess [Laugh].” In place of academic-centred chats, Sandra focused on the discussion of sport-related goals as a way to assess personal development.

[We discuss in meetings] what they will do over the winter, spring, and summer to improve to meet those goals. A lot of them are performance based, some of them are: I want to keep a training log, or I really like the mental training aspect of it... So it’s just that kind of anecdotal feedback that I use to measure whether the season was effective or not... they all know that they can come to me one on one and we can work on a training plan.

She went on to say, “I suppose the only way that I track [personal development] is I meet with each athlete at the end of the season and we basically go over what they thought about the season, what their goals are and how they’re going to get there.” Sandra demonstrated difficulty disconnecting the athletic development from the personal development of her athletes. Participants’ inabilitys and/or uncertainties about how to measure this form of development are highlighted in the next subsection.

“I don’t measure it.” A major challenge for coaches appeared to be articulating an understanding of how to measure the personal development of their
student-athletes. Two noteworthy findings emerged from the interviews: first, all of the participants acknowledged that they do not measure personal development; and second, that the participants do not know how to measure it. As an example, Sandra stated, “As far as thinking ‘how can I better the athletes outside of athletics?’ I’m not sure that I cognitively or consciously think of that. Yeah, no [I don’t]! [Laugh].” Additionally, when asked if he tracked or measured this form of development for his student-athletes, Steven confirmed, “I do absolutely nothing on that” and went on to say, “I do think it would be valuable. With everything I’m trying to do with the program, I haven’t even thought of it....” These quotes were representative of the findings from the other coaches, namely that there was a lack of intentional thought around ways to enhance or measure this area of development.

Further to this, even if coaches had given thought to this area of development and, subsequently, ways to measure it, the majority of coaches admitted, “... I wouldn’t even know where to start to track that” (Steven). Similarly, Cindy explained, “If we see different kinds of attitudes that aren’t in line with how we want [our team] to be seen, or if they are out of line with any of our [team] values... we would address those. But I don’t know how they would be so measureable.”

Michael supported Steven and Cindy in his comment:

No, I don’t track it. I don’t know how to track it I guess. I don’t have a system, I haven’t broken it down and said ‘I want them to improve on these four areas and then I’m going to say the levels of competencies for time management, for example. It’s just kind of, I don’t know, it gets to where it gets to I guess.

Likewise, Mary and Cindy acknowledged, respectively, “Not track, no. I wouldn’t say so” and “I don’t know, I guess it can’t really be graded.”
When asked if and how they assessed the personal development of their athletes, Paul and Sam made assumptions. Paul said, “No, I wouldn’t say that we measure it on paper” and Sam recounted, “You know, I don’t have an actual grid of it.” Paul and Sam’s responses suggested the assessment of personal development implies written documentation, which has not been suggested to be a necessity in the assessment of personal development. As stated earlier, Alice suggested a plausible reason for Paul and Sam’s difficulties when she said, “I think the personal development [of athletes] is so difficult to figure out how to measure, I think people are paralyzed with it.”

Together, these findings suggest a lack of intentional thought about ways to assess personal development, thus leaving it to chance. The next section explores the methods employed by the athletic departments of the participants’ respective universities, to assess coaches’ achievements with respect to athletes’ personal development.

**Methods employed to assess coaches**

An investigation of the ‘methods’ used by athletic departments, as discussed by the participants, will be presented in the following three subsections.

**Coach evaluations.** A common form of coach assessment used at the interuniversity level was feedback and/or coach evaluations completed by a coach’s respective players and/or athletic department. At Sandra’s university, she explained her athletic department’s involvement in her evaluation as, “The Assistant Athletic Director goes over our coach evaluation [completed by the student-athletes] with us so that the information is shared.” Michael, similarly, described
that his players completed evaluations of his coaching, but that a trial coach
evaluation method was being tested at his university this upcoming year.

This year, there’s a student who is doing a master’s in, I think, coaching
leadership, and they’re going to use his study with athletes as part of a
[coach] evaluation tool. I don’t know how much it’s going to count or
whatever, but the athletes fill something out and say something about what is
their preferred leadership style, what is the current leadership style they are
going and that sort of stuff... It’s kind of bizarre to me because it’s still a
student doing a thesis on it so...[Laugh] I think it’s a huge conflict, there’s a
bit of a personal connection there, so...

In Michael’s scenario, he had recognized and expressed a lack of legitimacy present
in the evaluation tool and felt it wouldn’t be indicative of his performance or specific
to his athletes’ experiences of personal development. This was of concern to
Michael because of the personal repercussions he would face if this evaluation does
not yield a positive result.

[The Athletic Director and I] do talk about this in our end of year meeting. I
get a personal review done and then I either get a raise or cost of living
increase or something, kind of a 'state of the union' from the program. One of
the areas is ‘did your athletes experience personal growth’ or something like
that... it’s a bit fuzzy.

Michael admitted it is unclear as to what is meant by ‘athletes’ experiences of
personal growth’ and how he is being assessed. Paul’s athletes also evaluated his
coaching: “Yes, part of my evaluation is based on the student-athlete experience and
I think that’s important. [The findings] are not shared directly, I guess it’s shared
with me in summary, but I don’t get to see the individual evaluations, which is fine
by me.” Paul confirmed that his athletic department assesses his influence on
student-athletes’ personal development, but Paul found it unclear as to what aspect
of the overall student-athlete experience was being assessed and what criteria was
being used for personal development. From Paul’s understanding of his assessment,
it was not explicit as to whether this evaluation encompasses the personal development of the athlete or just the athletes’ overall enjoyment of their interuniversity sport experience.

Another form of coach evaluation was based upon players’ academic reports. Sam explained,

The university’s expectations are: your grades better be proper to play sport. It’s a privilege to play the sport, so the university has their rules and I think that the coaches are held accountable by the Athletic Director that you don’t have kids coming [to university] and failing out or kids struggling in your [sport] program. They want to make sure the coaches are responsible to the athletes’ [academic progress].

Likewise, Michael commented, “[The athletic department] talks about [measuring personal development], but I don’t know how they measure that outside of what are [the athletes’] GPAs...” Interestingly, coaches themselves even evaluated the success of other coaches on the merit of athletes’ academic success. For example, Steven stated, “[University X] has done an incredible job at enhancing the [whole] athlete. I can say that by the success of the program, those kids are getting hired and because of the marks those kids are getting.”

According to the participants therefore, evaluation methods that included areas pertaining to athletes’ personal development were unclear, and academic performance was used as an indicator of personal development.

The next subsection will examine the assumptions made by athletic departments, particularly those made by the athletic director, that coaches implicitly support athletes’ personal development.

“*It’s just a given.*” A common sentiment expressed by the participants was that personal development of student-athletes was not something explicitly
assessed by the athletic department, but it was still an expectation of them. Cindy described,

Even in my job description... it is my job to develop good student-athletes. I don’t think in so many words, [for example] you need to do this you need to do that, but I think it’s important to the university that all the student-athletes are led down the right path and given direction so they develop.

Cindy elaborated,

I think that we haven’t had many issues with students not representing the university with respect and class and it’s very important at the beginning of the season that we talk about representing not only the university but also ourselves and our team. So you know there isn’t a specific set of guidelines...

When asked if Cindy thought her athletic department did a good job at communicating its expectations of Cindy regarding this area of student-athlete development, Cindy answered,

... For me it’s a given that that’s what my job is to do. Even meeting with the Athletic Director, she makes it very clear what is expected upon me being hired... She doesn’t require us to meet on an ongoing basis, but I think... maybe no news is good news [Laugh]. I think that she has a lot of confidence in our decisions and, until now, she’s supported everything we’ve done with the team... so I think she did a good job of making [her expectations] clear.

For Cindy, her Athletic Director had paid lip service to the importance of athletes’ personal development and expected Cindy, as part of her formal contract, to pay due diligence to it. When asked if Cindy and her staff have their own explicit expectations for their athletes’ personal development, Cindy responded,

I wouldn’t say specific goals, I think these things, I think it’s more so that if we see a problem that we’ll address the problem, or if we see different kinds of attitudes that aren’t in line with how we want us to be seen basically, or if they are out of line with any of our values, or things we’ve spoken about for our program, we would address those, but I don’t know how they would be so measurable.
Likewise, when Mary was asked if her athletic department placed importance on athletes’ personal development through sport, she stated, “No, not at all. They know different teams and different coaches are good at it.” The difference between Cindy and Mary was made clear when Mary explained her own expectations around the personal development of her athletes. Mary declared, “Oh no, [my expectations] are made explicit. [My athletes] know the expectations, we tell them that they are representing [their university] and that they are representing themselves as well.”

Mary, subsequently, described some of the specific expectations in detail, for example, the players are to be polite, as well as always respect the community when they are travelling or on road trips.

Some of the participants discussed a perceived contradiction around the messages that athletic departments portrayed regarding personal development of athletes. Alice explained, “they do pay lip service to the whole ‘we care about people’. I mean, they are people and we do care about them, so they will say that. Um, but in the end I get a sense that the success is measured on [athletic] performance....”

Sandra stated that her university emphasizes that it is the responsibility of the coach to prioritize the personal development of student-athletes. Sandra said, “I guess it isn’t mandated that we must... I think generally, as a coach... however we can assist [athletes] in getting better and bettering themselves we will do it and we do, do it.”

The absence of evaluations on coaches’ contributions to the promotion of athletes’ personal development will be addressed in the final subsection.
“I don’t get assessed.” A common finding was that these coaches reported they were not assessed on their contributions to athletes’ personal development. A third of the participants claimed that they were not evaluated on this aspect of their job responsibilities or if they were, they were not aware of it. When asked if her athletic department evaluated her regarding this responsibility Alice declared, “You know, not really.” However, Alice added, “There isn’t anything explicit, to be honest. We fill out a form that just says all the things that we’ve done [around the promotion of athletes’ personal development] and then they look at it. So, you know, it’s unclear.”

Michael problematized the expectations athletic departments have of coaches while neglecting to provide them with explicit support. Michael argued, “I don’t know how they measure that… what are the actions, what are the steps?” Michael argued there needs to be more clarity around the expectations of athletic departments around the area of personal development and the methods that will be used to assess coaches in this area.

Michael spoke more about the lack of support provided to him by his university institution. Michael explained, “The university as a whole, I don’t think they know we exist to a certain extent, if that makes sense. I don’t think they really know what’s going on, that’s a whole other issue.” Michael argued that the lack of support and recognition received by his institution, in his opinion, only devalues personal development.

It was suggested by Alice that, “In the end, you know, I get a sense that success is measured on [athletic] performance....” The precedence placed on
athletic performance, winning, and athletic prowess will be explored in the final section. More specifically, the impact of high performance sport culture on the support, legitimacy, and prioritization of personal development within university level sport will be discussed.

The influence of the high performance sport culture

Interuniversity coaches acutely felt the pressures associated with high performance sport. Participants discussed how high performance sport culture penetrates the university sector and challenges the legitimization and prioritization of student-athletes’ personal development through sport.

This section explores the difficulties participants experienced when working within a high performance sport culture. Included in this section will be discussions of the importance of winning and the implications of this priority for the personal development of athletes, as well as coaches’ feelings about the recent trend of university sport moving more and more towards a high performance model.

“It’s all about winning.” The pressure put on coaches to win championships remains a top priority. Steven admitted,

Basically, at the end of the day, if I don’t win games and create a successful program, I can [recruit] all of the [smart athletes] I want and I can do all of the fundraising I want, but I’m not going to be the coach. It’s tough when you’re putting your life in the decisions of 19-23 year olds [Laugh], right?

Steven talked about the possible repercussions associated with not producing a winning team, which may include losing his full-time position and sole source of income. Steven explained that his full-time position does not require him to have any academic responsibilities with the university, so fear of not producing a successful team in league standings would leave him out of a job. Alice explained
that success is not necessarily measured on winning the league, “but you do need to be in the top half [of the standings].”

The job of head coach entails a lot of administrative work to ensure the athletes can be successful in the sport arena. Cindy, a full-time coach, explained, “I mean, it’s very busy and it requires a lot of time with recruiting and fundraising and ordering equipment and things like that...” Cindy admitted that the duties required of her to attend to her athletes’ athletic performance sometimes leave her with little time to attend to her athletes from a personal standpoint.

I don’t know if I can give everybody the time that they need, it’s very difficult for one [person] to deal with 25 people from different places all across Canada... because at the end of the day there’s so many other things to worry about. To be able to really give everybody, individually, the time that they need, I mean I have an open door policy if anybody has any problems at any time, they can come see me, call me, text me, they have my cell number, my email. So I try and make it as open as possible, but the time is tough.

Michael discussed issues, not from the coaches’ stance, but from the athletes’ perspective. He explained the difficult position student-athletes are in as they juggle the time demands required of being a student and the time needed to devote to sport. Michael stated, “The amount of time they need to be an elite athlete... it just doesn’t leave you with enough time.” In this discussion, Michael referred to the demands of school placed on the athlete and its’ infringement upon a student-athlete’s time spent evolving as an elite athlete. Both Steven and Sam agreed that it is understandable that athletes devote so much energy and time to sport because “…this is the best [level of sport] they are ever going to play...” and athletes are merely a by-product of high performance sport culture because “this experience forces you to be elite, right, because you are with the best.”
Several participants compared the CIS sport model to that of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in terms of the balance, or lack thereof, between winning and personal growth through sport. One coach said, “I mean, the whole NCAA model has nothing to do with personal growth. I think the American system is about competition and I think that’s it. I don’t think there’s another value it’s based on.” Despite a general consensus among the participants that the NCAA is not the ideal model for facilitating and promoting athletes’ personal growth through university sport, Michael believed the CIS is not the ideal model either. Michael stated, “I don’t think the CIS is the model... I do think in Canada, we’re too far on the other side where performance isn’t enough or isn’t given enough emphasis.” It is evident from Michael’s statement there are CIS coaches who believe insufficient emphasis is placed on winning.

Alice discussed her experience and history as a winning coach and how this has translated into respect and credibility from her colleagues in sport. Alice explained,

To be honest, even as a coach I recognize because I’ve been successful as a coach in terms of wins, that I’m more credible to my colleagues who do equally as good a job at coaching and developing athletes. [However], if [less successful coaches] talk about the personal development of athletes then nobody listens because they haven’t won. So I find that troubling and so I think if someone is going to listen to what I’m going to say then I’m going to say a lot about these other pieces because they won’t listen to [less successful coaches] if he or she hasn’t won.

This quote highlights the necessity of winning in determining a coach’s credibility in general and in discussing the promotion of athletes’ personal development more specifically. Additionally, Alice discussed her love of university sport because it
differs from the national sport stage in terms of what is truly important. At the national stage, Alice explained,

... If you are successful then [national level sport] will say [personal development] is really important. But if in fact you personally develop, you’re not getting money from Own the Podium, from Sport Canada, or any sponsors, unless you win. So you have to win and then they worry about the personal development.

The last subsection of this chapter will address participants’ views on their respective university’s sport model revisions and the ensuing repercussions for athletes’ personal development.

*Trends with university sport model reviews.* Participants made mention of changes to their athletic programs that are currently underway, which are looking to invest more money and resources into the establishment of a more high performance sport program. High performance sport has been described, by The Conference Board of Canada (2006), as: sport engaged in by elite athletes who achieve, or who aspire to achieve, or who have been identified as having the potential to achieve, excellence in World Class competition. World Class competitions for high performance sport include the Olympic games, Paralympic games, World Championships, Commonwealth games, and Pan American games, among others. It excludes professional sport. The primary objective of high performance sport is the preparation and support of elite athletes.

Sandra explained that her university athletic program is undergoing a “massive strategic plan” that will be facing a referendum soon, which will hopefully result in bringing the program more money. She went on to state that it is a 3-5 year plan and a lot of the planned revisions hinges on the referendum. In reference to the
focus of this strategic plan on athletes’ personal development, Sandra said, “So, once we get this money and the strategic plan moves into effect, we will be looking at the development of the athlete outside of athletics and performance.” Sandra suggested this area of development is not receiving attention in her current university sport model and it will take financial resources to pave a way forward for the promotion of it. Interestingly, the dependency on money for the enhancement of athletes’ personal development was articulated not only by Sandra, but by Michael and Alice as well. These participants perceived the lack of funding to be hindering the support of this area of development in sport. Michael confirmed his standpoint by saying, “Financial barriers...well, I mean, there’s a bunch of things we would do with [athletes’ personal development] if we had more money...” A shift towards high performance sport will unfortunately cause, “[some] teams to be cut basically” (Sandra), but will allow for more money per student athlete and ultimately improve current support for athletes in spheres outside of their athletic development.

Mary reported that her university athletics program is undergoing a sport model review as well and said, “There is a lot of work to be done.” Mary was frustrated by the sport model review because she thought that her understanding of what ‘high performance’ was incongruent with the understanding being articulated by her athletic department.

They’re saying, ‘Oh we want to go to a high performance [model]’ well, define high performance because your definition is different from this and if you want to go [towards a high performance model] then we need to start doing some of these things. [For example] supporting the athletes in different ways, it’s not just about what happens on the court, track, rink, pool.
The meaning of high performance to Mary, personally, is a level of sport that focuses on the athletic and personal excellence of the athlete, whereas, the direction of the athletic department appeared to be towards enhancing athletic accomplishments only.

Alice had a strong, yet conflicted, opinion of high performance sport. Alice stated, “I mean I hate high performance sport on some level because I think it’s horrible and I think we do damage to the athletes and leave them as empty vessels, but I think the potential of the system is that it can be so fulfilling and so rich and all those things.” Alice’s’ athletic career, at both the university and national stages of sport, have permitted her first hand knowledge and experience with the values of high performance sport. Although Alice admitted, “... I like the university setting because it values [the development of the person]”, she still feared what the transition to a high performance sport model might mean for athletes’ personal growth and maturation.

I think a [high performance] culture is one that you need to win to be successful. I think that’s a huge barrier. I think no matter how much I care about my athletes or how much people care about development, the thing that overrides it all is you have to win.

Alice made a thought provoking comment on the issue when she said,

I think the whole world of sport doesn't see personal development as something really important, it’s cool, it’s a great thing, but it’s really not important. So if you are putting emphasis on that, then you need to be given support that that’s the right thing to do because everywhere you go they’re saying they won, they won, they won! She’s good because she wins. You’re constantly in this world, so there needs to be some level of support that says this is important and what do you need and how can we help you and that is great that you’re taking care of that, that’s great.
Alice argued that we live in a world of sport where winning, exclusively, is celebrated. She argued there is a need for the support of communities of people who celebrate the personal development of athletes equally as much as winning. A sport model review, at an elite level of sport, provides an opportune time for athletic departments to take a stand and help fill this supportive role.

**Summary of interview findings**

The coaches expressed some conflict with respect to their roles. On one hand, coaches described themselves as a player's coach, a coach who is athlete-centred, supportive, and inclusive. On the other hand, coaches also discussed their desire for excellence in sport and self-reported qualities that characterize this pursuit – competitive, tough, and demanding. An analysis of the data suggested that each of the participants expressed characteristics from both aforementioned pursuits – the personal development and athletic excellence of athletes.

Coaches’ conceptualizations of personal development revealed the following defining characteristics: athletes’ success in the classroom, sense of accomplishment, and learning of life skills.

The opportunities coaches believed were available through interuniversity sport for personal development included: experiences dealing with adversity, the opportunity to be a part of a team, sport itself, and the contributions of student support services provided by athletic departments. Interestingly, only once coaches were probed about the role they themselves play in facilitating athletes’ personal development did they articulate examples. Coaches’ reports included: recognition
and importance placed on athletes’ personal development, modeling and mentoring, and building relationships and reflection.

When coaches were asked if they assessed athletes’ personal development, the answer was a clear “no.” Coaches discussed a sense of paralysis when it comes to putting together an assessment tool for athletes’ personal development. For the handful of participants who self-reported that they do assess athletes’ personal development, they described using intuition as well as formal and informal conversations with athletes to conduct an evaluation.

Similarly, athletic departments do little to evaluate athletes’ personal development, or the work of coaches on athletes’ personal development. Participants discussed that few athletic departments perform coach evaluations, and some do not assess coaches on athletes’ personal development at all. Data suggested that athletic departments perceive coaches’ efforts towards athletes’ personal development are a ‘given’ and do not require assessment.

Lastly, the interview data exposed the influence of the high performance sport culture on the personal development of athletes in interuniversity sport. The participants addressed a shift to a more high performance model with differing views about whether this shift would facilitate or hinder student-athletes’ personal development.

A discussion of the main findings will be presented in the next chapter.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Findings from the current study revealed that coaches have difficulty articulating what is meant by personal development, and the ways in which they help support and facilitate personal development through sport. Furthermore, coaches reported that their university athletic departments did not have explicit expectations of coaches in the area of athletes’ personal development. Coaches also identified an absence of evaluation methods employed by both themselves and their athletic departments that concentrated on athletes’ personal development. Lastly, coaches discussed the benefits and challenges presented by university sport model reviews, as well as the ensuing influences of a high performance sport culture on sport models.

The current chapter is divided into five main sections. In the first, I review the mission of higher education and propose a disconnect between this and the mission of interuniversity sport, with specific reference to the importance placed on athletes’ personal development. In the second section, I propose that coaches’ own interuniversity sport experiences as student-athletes negatively correlate with their ability to articulate what is meant by personal development, as well as their ability to articulate methods of facilitating personal development through sport. Then, I address the hypothesis that coaches’ full-time and/or part-time statuses yield diverse results in regards to coaches’ support of and influence on athletes’ personal development. In the fourth section, I address the potential implications of current sport model reviews for athletes’ personal development. Finally, in the fifth section,
I share my vision for the future of interuniversity sport with a focus on personal development.

**The missing link between higher education and athletes’ personal development**

Dickinson (2000) and Kuh (1993, 1995) described the overarching purpose of higher education as multidimensional, with increasing importance placed on students’ personal development through experiential learning. In the Canadian context, higher education institutions make explicit their commitment to enabling students to contribute positively to society (University of Toronto Statement of Institutional Purpose, 2012). Canadian interuniversity sport reinforces the commitments of higher education through its pledge to enrich the educational experiences of the athlete (CIS mission statement, 2007). However, findings from the current study illustrate a disconnect between the missions of higher education and Canadian university sport programs. More particularly, there are incongruencies between the mission of higher education and support of this mission through university athletic departments and individual sport programs.

Participants reported that an implicit mandate of university sport programs is to advance athletes’ personal development. Personal development, for the purposes of this study, is defined as: a term that encompasses a range of developmental tasks that contribute to whole person development, which are facilitated through the multiple experiences of an individual. Whole person development includes areas of: psychological, emotional, social, cognitive, moral and personal growth. The ultimate goal of personal development is to achieve status as
a contributing, fully functioning member of society (Gould et al., 2006; Miller, 2000; Trudel, 2006). As evidenced by coaches’ narratives, athletic departments conveyed a lack of explicit interest in athletes’ personal development. The consequences of this are reflected in coaches’ lack of purposeful integration of initiatives centred on athletes’ personal development.

Several explanations for the above-mentioned implication deserve consideration. First, it is possible that because athletic departments view personal development as an embedded element of the university sport experience, the need for explicit expectations around this area of development are unwarranted. However, this theory is not supported by existing literature. Current research denotes that positive developmental outcomes, including character building and the learning of life skills, cannot be acquired through sport participation alone (Coakley, 2011; Gould & Carson, 2008; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Rosewater, 2009).

Second, university athletic departments do not make clear through mission statements, listed objectives, and/or department values, the specific and explicit pursuit of personal development through sport. For example, the mission of University of Waterloo athletics is, “To provide exceptional, diverse, and well-supported recreational and high performance interuniversity sport opportunities for students within a collaborative environment that fosters the achievement of one’s individual potential” (http://www.varsity.uwaterloo.ca, 2013). It cannot be assumed from this statement that athletes’ personal development is what is meant by ‘achievement of one’s individual potential.’ Furthermore, included in a list under Waterloo’s athletic department ‘values’ was: maintain balance (athletic, academic,
personal) in pursuit of excellence. Excellence is not defined in this statement and it is unclear whether personal development contributes to a player’s ‘excellence’ or if it is a component of a player’s ‘excellence’. It is difficult for coaches to have a clear understanding of what personal development is in the context of sport if athletic departments’ expectations and objectives around this area are vague.

In addition, athletic departments do not clearly articulate their expectations of the roles coaches should play in facilitating personal development for athletes. There are several real disadvantages to this. Umbach, Shwager, Frensch, & Gaschler (2012) found that explicit expectations play an important role in influencing an individual’s behaviour. This research suggests that coaches may not be implementing and delivering effective strategies specific to athletes’ personal development because it is not expected of them. If it is not expected of coaches, then coaches may neglect to incorporate initiatives centered on personal development into the design and operation of their sport programs. The articulation of explicit expectations within athletic departments, as well as communication of these expectations to coaches, is required in order for more purposeful and effective integration of personal development initiatives into sport.

One of the consequences of not having explicit expectations of coaches in the area of athletes’ personal development was that coaches do not allocate time and effort to the creation of a plan specific to this objective. Coaches explained that personal development was an important piece of their sport program, however, there was an inconsistency between these statements and coaches’ purposeful planning to achieve these goals. Coaches described creating: team tactics, team
goals, practice plans, as well as strategies to win games and championships for their upcoming sport season, which is consistent with previous research findings that coaches spend a considerable amount of time dedicated to sport-specific preparation (Carter & Bloom, 2009; Voight, 2002). However, none of the coaches allocated the time to construct goals, an explicit plan, or a framework for the purposes of integrating personal development into sport. The participants in the current study valued athletes’ personal development in principle, but could not articulate what it is or how to integrate it into sport.

The work of Angela Maher (2004) indicated that learning outcomes could act as a benchmark for assessing the quality and efficiency of personal development in sport. Learning outcomes illustrate a commonality with defining characteristics of personal development. Learning outcomes define “… a change in people as a result of a learning experience” (Watson, 2002, p. 208). Similarly, personal development is the result of ongoing learning opportunities that contribute to the making of the individual (Lerner, 2004; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). One way to redress the absence of learning outcomes specific to personal development in sport programs is for academic practitioners and university sport coaches to collaborate and mentor each other in a mutual effort to produce learning outcomes specific to personal development. Learning outcomes would enable sport programs to express student-athlete achievement beyond the narrow scope of sport skill development (Maher, 2004). For example, Alice explained that unplanned learning moments were a primary contributor to athletes’ personal development. This perception is confirmed by Maher (2004), who believes unplanned moments for learning can be
extremely important in the educational process by encouraging deep learning in student-athletes. Coaches can learn from unplanned moments as well, as they encourage athletes towards creative thinking and problem solving (Schon, 1991). As a result of this information, a future learning outcome could take the form of: student-athletes will develop the ability to problem solve and critically think their way through conflict(s). So, in the event of an unforeseen conflict or problem, the coach may encourage the student-athletes to work through it independently or as a team and draw generalizations between such situations and those encountered commonly in other walks of life.

Contributions from academic practitioners and/or university academic departments who have a working knowledge of explicit learning outcomes and their contribution to classroom learning, could be valuable to the work of coaches in enhancing the personal development of athletes through sport. The design and explicit delivery of a framework specific to athletes’ personal development would address: the explicit learning outcomes intended for student-athletes, as well as how coaches can help facilitate these outcomes through sport. Having an explicit framework, with the previous details outlined, may help improve the consistency among: what is proposed by higher education, what is expected of athletic departments, and what is being implemented and delivered by coaches, in regards to athletes’ personal development.

Maher (2004) concluded that creating a learning environment in which athletes are empowered to take responsibility for their own learning, guided by explicit learning outcomes that are clearly linked to assessment, could enhance the
overall educational process. Making personal development through sport more purposeful through the use of mission statements, articulated expectations, and explicit learning outcomes may not only enhance athletes’ experiences of personal development through sport, but may also aid in coaches’ and athletes’ abilities to understand and better articulate this form of development through sport as well.

**Coaches’ roles in athletes’ personal development:**

**How are knowing and doing related?**

Each participant in this study, with the exception of one, had the experience as a university student-athlete in Canada. Coaches talked about how much they had learned from sport and the life lessons they took away from the university student-athlete experience. For example, coaches described learning: how to deal with people from different walks of life, having respect for others, self-responsibility, how to room/live with someone, how to travel, how to prepare oneself, how to win and lose, how to rebound from getting cut, etc. Coaches claimed that sport participation has benefitted their careers, relationships, education, and overall quality of life, which is consistent with existing literature on the transferability of life skills learned through sport to other areas outside of the sport context (Barton, 2012; Gould & Carson, 2008; Jones & Lavallee, 2009). Despite these findings, coaches lacked the ability to confidently articulate the ways in which they helped to support the personal development of their athletes. This was surprising given the coaches’ personal experience as student-athletes and their self-reported stories of learning and development through sport. This finding has similarities with the study conducted by McCallister, Blinde, and Weiss (2000) who indicated that
coaches might be socialized to believe sport facilitates positive developmental outcomes, but that coaches may not be implementing strategies that accomplish these outcomes.

A critical question that arose from the findings was: how are coaches’ experiences, reportedly gained through their university student-athlete experience, related to their ability to facilitate and support it as a coach? Work done around ‘declarative knowledge’ addresses a similar question: how are knowing and doing related? The work of researchers in the field of declarative knowledge in sport (Elferink-Gemser, Kannekens, Lyons, Tromp, & Visscher, 2010; Giacomini, Soares, Santos, Matias, & Greco, 2011; Williams & Davids, 1995) provides important insight into plausible answers to the above question.

Declarative knowledge refers to factual information that is conscious, can be stated verbally, and is knowledge that we are aware of and can express clearly (Baumard, 1999; Williams & Davids, 1995). In a study conducted by Williams and Davids (1995), 48 participants of different soccer skill levels, as well as observers of the sport, were selected to determine whether or not training and playing soccer promoted the acquisition and retention of specific declarative knowledge about the sport more so than mere observation. Williams and Davids hypothesized that declarative knowledge would be developed more effectively in highly skilled soccer players who participate in the game. Results showed that the highly skilled soccer players demonstrated superior declarative knowledge regarding certain aspects about the sport than did spectators of the sport. These findings suggested that knowing and doing are related. Declarative knowledge explains, in part, how the
participants in this study came to learn about personal development from their experience as student-athletes ("knowing") and how they should be able to articulate an understanding of personal development as coaches ("doing"). The work of Williams and Davids implies that the participants’ student-athlete experience, and subsequent personal development gains from university sport, should give them enhanced declarative knowledge about personal development; this was not supported by the findings of the current study.

Coaches had difficulty articulating a description of personal development despite their history as university student-athletes. Participants attributed athletes’ personal development primarily to life skills development and academic performance. The vast majority of research to-date conducted on development through sport, or personal growth through sport, focuses on athletes’ development of life skills (Camiré, 2012; Gould & Carson, 2008; Gould, Chung, Smith, & White, 2006; Gould, Collins, Lauer, & Chung, 2007; Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008; Pierce, 2010; Potuto & O’Hanlon, 2007). Personal development, however, is not synonymous with life skills development and/or academic development (Gould et al., 2006; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Rather, it is the outcome of multiple learning opportunities that, together, construct the development of the individual (Lerner, 2004; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

Coaches often identified athletes’ GPAs as a primary indicator of personal development. It is theorized that the coaches in this study assessed athletes’ personal development based on success in the classroom because it is observable and measurable. Current studies examining personal development have used
academic progress and/or success as a measure, but these lack legitimacy in their correlation with personal development (Barna & Brott, 2011; Gilbert & Trudel, 2000; Hughes & Marsh, 2000). Furthermore, the correlation between personal development and GPA does not address the impact of sport or the coach’s influence on athletes’ personal development through sport. The research findings from this study suggest that coaches lack declarative knowledge regarding athletes’ personal development, which challenges Williams and Davids’ documented theory that knowing and doing are related.

Similarly, coaches over-emphasized athletes’ acquisition of life skills to be representative of personal development. Life skills are defined as “those internal personal assets, characteristics, and skills such as self-esteem and hard work ethic that can be facilitated or developed in sport and are transferred for use in non-sport settings” (Gould & Carson, 2008, p. 60). Coaches appeared much more comfortable providing examples of the ‘life skills’ they believed were fostered through sport than they did verbalizing examples of ‘personal development’. This suggested coaches had difficulty with the concept of – ‘personal development’. Coaches discussed several examples of life skills, including: leadership, self-confidence, time-management, conflict resolution, and accountability. Life skills development has been the primary focus of previous research in the development through sport literature (Gould & Carson, 2008; Gould et al., 2006, 2007; Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003; Holt et al., 2008; Petitpas et al., 2005) and has received much more attention and emphasis in the sport community than has the term ‘personal development’. Lack of research and lack of conversation within sport communities
focusing on athletes’ personal development through sport may be contributors to coaches’ discomfort in discussing personal development, which consequently, may have inhibited their ability to articulate examples of personal development aside from life skills development. Despite this, coaches did demonstrate declarative knowledge of life skills development when they provided explicit examples of what athletes were learning through university sport participation specifically.

In addition to coaches’ difficulties articulating a comprehensive understanding of athletes’ personal development, coaches exhibited difficulty connecting the role of the coach with the facilitation and enablement of personal development inside of the sport arena. One way a coach could facilitate personal development through sport would be by assigning athletes leadership responsibilities in practices. For example, rotating the athletes who organize and lead team warm-ups would give each athlete the opportunity to enhance their leadership capabilities all while working in a team environment. The transfer of leadership development gained through sport to the work force could then be made explicit by the coach. Giacomini et al. (2011) explored the associations between declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge. Procedural knowledge is knowing how to do something and ways to do things (Sahdra & Thagard, 2003). Giacomini et al. claim that knowledge progresses from declarative to procedural. This theory was confirmed by the data from the current study.

Coaches did not demonstrate superior declarative knowledge of personal development and showed even more difficulty articulating how they helped support athletes’ personal development through sport. When participants were asked how
they helped facilitate and support athletes’ personal development, none of the participants described how they enabled opportunities for personal development using sport as the medium. For example, coaches explained mentoring their athletes, being truthful, building trusting relationships, and the importance of defining student-athlete success as personal and performance excellence. Some coaches described how they identified and grasped learning opportunities to enhance athletes’ personal development, but all of the examples described facilitating personal development without using sport as the vehicle for learning. Coakley (2011), as well as other colleagues (Danish et al., 2002; Gould & Carson, 2008; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Jones & Lavallee, 2009; Petitpas et al., 2005), argue that sport in and of itself is insufficient in facilitating positive developmental outcomes. Only with coaches’ purposeful implementation of specific conditions conducive to development, are positive developmental outcomes made possible through sport participation. This study’s findings illustrate that coaches lack the procedural knowledge as to how to facilitate personal development through sport.

Ryle (1949) introduced procedural knowledge as the ability to do something and Reber (1989) explained this kind of knowledge is interchangeable with ‘implicit knowledge’ – unconscious knowledge. Coaches’ knowledge of how to intentionally integrate opportunities for personal development into sport illustrates that their knowledge of this phenomenon is not yet at the conscious level. This suggests that coaches must consciously work to facilitate opportunities for personal development through sport instead of assuming they will occur naturally.
Giacomini et al. (2011) propose that declarative knowledge precedes procedural knowledge, a theory that was reinforced by this study. The current findings reveal that coaches’ lack of knowledge of the ways in which to facilitate personal development through sport is indicative of their lack of knowledge of what personal development is.

In order for coaches to better articulate and make explicit the influence(s) they have in the facilitation of athletes’ personal development within the arena of sport (doing), they must first learn what personal development is (knowing). Werthner & Trudel (2006) claim that coaches’ past experiences as university student-athletes enhances their declarative knowledge of the sport experience (also supported by Cregan, Bloom, & Reid, 2007; Erickson, Coté, & Fraser-Thomas, 2007; Gilbert, Coté, & Mallett, 2006). However, Carter & Bloom (2009) found that coaches’ expertise is not dependent on past athletic experience, but that coaches gain expertise from other sources including: long-term interest in sport, studying kinesiology and physical education at university, and through observation of other expert coaches.

**Full-time vs. part-time head coaches: Does it matter?**

Current literature has explored the lack of integration between the academic sector of higher education and university athletics, primarily within the American sport system (NCAA) (Lawry, 2005; Libby, 2007; Sanger, 2011). The majority of research takes the perspective of academics infiltrating athletics (Benjamin, 2004; Graham, 2012; Knorr, 2004; Libby, 2007). For example, Libby (2007) describes the ways in which academic faculties try to penetrate the university sport system
because faculty members feel disconnected from university athletics. A series of panel discussions, involving participants belonging to American university academic faculties, discussed issues such as: how and whether faculty members should be involved with the sports programs at their campuses; how professors and academic instructors could collaborate with coaches and sports administrators to enhance athletes’ educational experiences through sport; and how to maintain an educational component amongst athletes’ experiences in high-profile athletics programs (Libby, 2007). Absent in current literature, however, is a discussion of how interuniversity sport can infiltrate the academic sector of the university to enhance athletes’ personal development through university sport.

In the Canadian university sport context, several coaches have formal job responsibilities in both the athletic and academic sectors of their respective university institutions. In the current study, the participant sample represented both full-time and part-time head coaches, comprised of six and two coaches, respectively. Of the six full-time head coaches, two participants discussed that they held official positions within an academic faculty at their university as a stipulation of their full-time coaching position in university athletics. The other four participants said that faculty work was not a formal requirement of their coaching employment. Further, part-time coaches were not integrated into the academic sector of their respective universities. Full-time and part-time coaches were included in this study purposefully because it was hypothesized that each respective group would yield distinct results. In particular, it was anticipated that full-time head coaches would be more integrated into the academic sector of the university
than would part-time coaches, and, that this link between interuniversity sport and the academic faculty of higher education would encourage the integration of initiatives centered on whole-person development in the sport programs.

First, findings revealed that full-time head coaches were more integrated into the academic sector of the university than were part-time coaches. Full-time coaches from this study held positions, such as: academic eligibility advisor, course instructor, and teaching assistant. Consistent with the literature, full-time head coaches are more likely to hold dual roles (academic and athletic) in the university setting (Lumpkin, 2002; Sage, 1987).

Second, findings showed no discrepancies between full-time and part-time head coaches and their subsequent integration of personal development initiatives into sport. A study by Carter and Bloom (2009) explored the coaching knowledge and success of six Canadian university sport coaches. This group of coaches had been coaching in Canadian university sport for over five years and all had winning records greater than .500 while a head coach of the program. Coaches stated, through semi-structured open-ended interviews, that an important piece of any university sport program success is athletes’ personal growth. Coaches also articulated an understanding of the similarities they perceived between academic instructors and sport coaches and believed that in order to be successful in coaching, you had to have excellent teaching skills. Coaches’ involvement in academic faculties could potentially expose them to: course content, research, lesson planning strategies, and learning outcomes specific to personal development (Wood, Wood, & McDonald, 1988), thus enhancing coaches’ knowledge and
understanding of how to better facilitate initiatives centred on athletes’ personal development through athletics. Although the second hypothesis was not supported in the current study, previous research has indicated that a coach’s association with the academic sector of the university can have positive implications for a coach’s implementation of initiatives centered on personal development in sport. For example, Wood and colleagues (1988) suggest that academic courses contain a greater and richer potential for student development than they have been recognized for, and that the collaboration of and integration of coaches into the academic sector of the university can generate further awareness, understanding, and integration of the goals of student personal development across the university campus – reaching both the academic classroom and sport context.

The efforts of university academic departments and athletic departments reflect independent rather than mutually integrated programs to achieving students’ personal development (Wood et al., 1988). Through coordinated efforts of academic faculty members and interuniversity sport coaches, personal development could be pursued through a mutually agreed upon framework, therefore, providing both academic instructors and university sport coaches with the knowledge and tools necessary for student/student-athlete personal development.

It was also theorized that full-time coaches would have more time to devote to both the athletic and personal development of their athletes compared to part-time coaches. However, findings reported that all coaches perceived a lack of time as a barrier to supporting athletes’ personal development.
Based on the work of Bloom (2002), university sport coaches were found to work over 50 hours a week. Participants in the current study described some of the duties that fill up their work days, as including: training sessions, practice planning, equipment ordering, correspondence with athletes, and correspondence with other staff and sport administrators. Some coaches perceived personal development as something needed to be facilitated outside of practice time, which placed further demands on their time. For example, coaches discussed implementing such things as: seminars, mentorship opportunities, and public speaking courses to aid in facilitating athletes’ personal development. What coaches did not consider is that personal development can be integrated into practice plans and training sessions, and exist within the arena of sport, rather than as an add-on to sport (Lumpkin, 2011; Thompson, 1995; Wooden & Jamison, 1997). For example, coaches can help facilitate personal development by encouraging athletes’ to cope with adversity through the implementation of unfavourable situations. Creating a situation in soccer training where athletes are down a goal and have 5 minutes left in the game to score requires athletes to work together as a team to overcome an unplanned obstacle. Coach John Wooden, a highly respected basketball coach in the NCAA, is known not only for his winning record at UCLA, but for his ability to foster personal growth and development in his players. A former athlete of his, Bill Walton, describes his coach in saying,

[What] he taught us on the court – teamwork, personal excellence, discipline, dedication, focus, organization, and leadership – are the same tools that you use in the real world. Coach showed us how these skills are transferable. He wasn’t just teaching us about basketball, he was teaching us about life (Wooden & Jamison, 1997, p.vii)
To achieve this, researchers suggest that coaches must organize, implement, and deliver practice plans, training sessions, and sport-related experiences, in purposeful ways to achieve personal development (Coakley, 2011; Gould & Carson, 2008; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Rosewater, 2009). For example, the participants expressed the importance they placed on recognizing and grasping opportunities for athletes’ personal development, however, the contexts of these opportunities were all outside of sport. For example, Michael described an athlete’s experience of personal development when she participated in a school mentorship program and gave a speech about success to elementary students. If coaches were to integrate ways to achieve personal development through sport, the misconception that there is ‘not enough time’ for personal development would no longer be a barrier. Holt et al. (2008) looked at how youth learned life skills through their involvement in high school and found that it was based on how coaches structured the sport environment. Holt explained, “No student-athletes reported that they learned initiative directly from playing on the soccer team. Rather, it seemed that they expressed initiative through soccer... the coach created a structure for youth to display these qualities, rather than specifically teaching these qualities” (p. 294). Thompson (1995) also offered strategies for building “character” through sport, which included: establish rituals and procedures; use trigger words and actions as a reminder of behaviours that should be repeated; praise the character of athletes publicly; set specific goals that are measurable, attainable and timely; show respect by listening; utilize teachable moments to reinforce values; and make sport enjoyable.
Coaches in the current study perceived lack of time as a barrier to the support and facilitation of athletes’ personal development in university sport. An opportunity to highlight personal development, as one of the primary pursuits of university sport programs, may be made possible through sport model reviews, which many Canadian university athletic departments are currently undertaking.

**Sport model reviews**

Danylchuk and MacLean (2001) predicted that Canadian interuniversity sport would face new challenges through the early stages of the 21st century. One of these challenges, made evident through this study, is the review and reconfiguration of current university sport models. The data indicated that many Canadian university sport programs have already completed, or are currently going through sport model reviews. At the forefront of many sport model reviews is a movement towards a high performance sport model, which entails: fewer CIS teams, fewer CIS athletes, improved resources for select sport programs, and increased funding for athletics. Furthermore, at the heart of many sport model reviews is the objective of winning more OUA and CIS championships.

High performance sport can be defined as: sport engaged in by elite athletes who aspire to achieve excellence in World Class competition. World-class competitions for high performance sport include, for example, the Olympic games, Commonwealth games, or Pan American games, but excludes professional sport. The primary objective of high performance sport is the preparation and support of elite athletes (The Conference Board of Canada, 2006). According to research conducted within the NCAA in 2011, 1.2% male basketball players, 0.9% female
basketball players, 1.7% football players, 11.6% male baseball players, 1.3% male hockey players, and 1.0% of male soccer players, will make the transition from university sport to professional sport. These statistics are consistent with the beliefs of the coaches in the current study, as coaches perceived that very few, if any, CIS student-athletes would go on to play for Canadian national teams and/or make professional careers out of sport. Therefore, the implementation of a high performance sport model into the university context may not result in its desired outcome: more athletes at the national/international stage of sport.

The current state of university sport model reviews moving towards high performance sport standards does not reflect Danylchuk and MacLean’s belief that, “...university sport in Canada will remain as a reinforcement of amateur sport firmly embedded within [a]...participant-focused, educational environment” (2001, p. 377). However, there are several plausible implications resulting from current university sport model reviews.

First and foremost, if athletic departments decide to move sport programming towards a high performance model of sport, this may result in further marginalization of the pursuit of personal development through university sport. More importantly, the personal development of student-athletes may suffer from the repercussions of a high performance sport model because of its implementation into the university sport setting. Coaches discussed that a sport model review in favour of high performance sport would result in fewer CIS teams and subsequently, fewer participating CIS athletes. Coaches explained that this was necessary in order to provide increased resources, funding, and concentrated efforts to those CIS teams
and athletes on the path to national and provincial championships. In 2010-2011, the CIS reported that 10,913 student-athletes participated in CIS sport across Canada (www.english.cis-sic.ca, 2013), which is a dramatic increase from the 9953 student-athletes who competed in CIS sport in 2001-2002. Eliminating participating student-athletes from interuniversity sport will take away from the progress the CIS has made in the last 10 years towards providing opportunities for more athletes to participate in university sport.

A statement of principles and purpose, from an intercollegiate athletics task force report from the University of Toronto (1997), stated, “Athletics provide opportunity for self-discovery, social interaction, pleasure, health, and physical, mental and spiritual development, in the context of striving for physical and mental self-mastery… For many students, alumnae and alumni, some of our most enduring knowledge has been gained during the engrossing challenges of sports” (p.3). Extrinsicating student-athletes from CIS sport in the pursuit of championships and athletic excellence is overlooking the purpose of interuniversity sport participation, as proposed by the University of Toronto. A high performance sport model would aim to decrease the number of student-athletes in interuniversity sport, thus leaving fewer students to benefit from personal development through sport. High performance sport models that are focused on providing more opportunities to fewer athletes should consider the ramifications this will have on the personal development of those athletes who are extricated from CIS participation.

Danylchuk and MacLean (2001) accurately predicted that, “financial pressures will play a major role in the evolution of how sport is managed and
delivered to university students” (p. 377). Coaches discussed increased funding as one of the advantages of moving to a high performance sport model. Coaches perceived this as a positive aspect of their sport model reviews, and coaches believed increased funding would better support athletes’ personal development.

From their perspective, personal development would be enhanced through paid sport psychologists, seminar workshops, and other experiences outside of the sport playing field. Participants did not appear to see personal development as something occurring through coaches or through the sport experience itself, but instead, something that happens outside of the work of coaches. Research indicates, however, that specific contextual factors are prerequisites for positive developmental outcomes, which include coaches having and using an explicit philosophy in sport programs (Coakley, 2011; Hellison, 2003; Trulson, 1986). For example, the application of a coach’s philosophy that discourages running up the score on another team during a game can teach his or her athletes respect for others, humility, and discipline. It is essential for coaches to acknowledge the influence they have on athletes’ personal development within the sport arena, as this may also absolve the need for increased funding for interuniversity sport programs to better support athletes’ personal development.

A second argument can be made regarding the adverse effects of increased funding (due to high performance sport) on athletes’ personal development. Increased funding to university athletic programs across the OUA will perpetuate Canadian university sport across Ontario as a “big-business” (Danylchuk & MacLean, 2001; Smith, 2012), and athletes’ personal development will risk the inevitability of
becoming of secondary concern to coaches. The goal of university sport is participant-oriented, not consumer-oriented (Danylchuk & MacLean, 2001), however, the duress of producing a championship team, given the increased financial investment in sport programs, may prompt coaches to further sideline athletes’ personal development. Coaches from the current study discussed the benefits of having increased funding for individual sport programs and its potential for enhancing athletes’ experiences of personal development; however, coaches will likely face many challenges that are associated with increased funding that they must be cognizant of to maintain athletes’ personal development as a primary pursuit in university sport.

Sport model reviews moving more and more towards a high performance model can, on one hand, threaten and further marginalize athletes’ personal development through sport. However, on the other hand, there are also opportunities presented by this scenario that may allow for athletes’ personal development to be highlighted through the re-birth of a new university sport model.

A coach from the current study explained that her conceptualization of high performance sport included the enhancement of athletes’ personal development through sport participation. The 21st century design of a high performance university sport model that defines high performance sport as a combined pursuit of athletes’ athletic development and personal development would highlight not only university sports’ commitment to the educational mission of the university (Final Report of the Task Force on Interuniversity Athletics, 1997; Miller & Kerr, 2002), but to the growth of Canadian university sport as well.
In order to achieve this, explicit action steps must be incorporated into revised sport models that are specific to the enhancement of athletes’ personal development through sport. A facilitator with expertise in personal development could help educate and empower coaches to integrate different learning and developmental opportunities into sport programs (Miller & Kerr, 2002). Additionally, a curriculum specific to whole person development that challenges athletes’ intellectual, physical, and social development would serve as an explicit guideline for coaches to utilize in sport programs (Gould et al., 2006; Final Report of the Task Force on Interuniversity Athletics, 1997; Trudel, 2006). Due to coaches’ reports that their athletic departments currently do not provide them with explicit expectations or guidelines around athletes’ personal development, this would be an improvement to current university sport models.

An implication of the above would be the reconfiguration of the responsibilities and roles of university sport coaches and sport administrators. This would include, for example, the new responsibility of coaches to purposefully organize competitions and training sessions to develop the athlete on all levels (technical, tactical, psychological, personal, and physical) (Trudel, 2006). It may also include the responsibility of coaches to submit an annual framework to the athletic department that outlines the learning outcomes, action steps, resources, and methods coaches will be utilizing in their efforts to better support athletes’ personal development through sport. After all, “coaches and administrators have responsibilities that extend beyond the athletes’ role as athletes into making
contributions to the long-term development of athletes as mature, well-adjusted, contributing members of society” (Miller & Kerr, 2002, p. 150).

A sport model review that endorses the pursuit of athletes’ personal development alongside athletes’ athletic success, will demonstrate a progressive movement in Canadian sport culture. My personal visions for the future of interuniversity sport in Canada, based upon the existing literature and findings from the current study, will be shared in the last section.

**The future of interuniversity sport**

Managing the challenges presented by Canadian sport culture is important to the positive growth of Canadian university sport in the new millennium (Danylchuk & MacLean, 2001). Sport administrators who are leaders in the reconstruction of university sport models acutely feel the pressures placed on university sport by the university administration and Canadian sport culture, that is, to retain elite athletes in Canadian university athletics, to produce better quality national team prospects, and to win national titles. I argue that the design of an ideal university sport model should align athletes’ personal development alongside the pursuit of athletic excellence in high performance sport. By doing so, Canadian university sport will not only be the driving vehicle of change for Canadian high performance sport culture, but it will also assure interuniversity sport stays firmly embedded in the mission of higher education.

Participants in the current study demonstrated through their excerpts that the pursuit of athletes’ personal development and athletic development were separate entities. Coaches stated that attending to the athletic and personal needs
of the athlete required living in a conflicted balance between the two. This conceptualization has seen some support in the literature (Benford, 2007; Bowen & Levin, 2003; Eitzen, 1987; Sage, 1998; Shulman & Bowen, 2001), but has also been refuted by other sport researchers (Amirault & Orlick, 1999; Danish & Nellen, 1997; Miller & Kerr, 2002; Orlick, 1998). However, if university sport is to make a positive contribution to athletes’ personal development and athletic development, as Miller and Kerr suggest, we need to eliminate the current bifurcation between athletics and personal development.

One possible solution is to create a sport curriculum, under a regenerated sport model, that posits personal development and athletic excellence both as vehicles that drive the success and achievements of the other. Interuniversity sport is a unique entity, given that it operates within an educational setting where there is access to research, expert knowledge, and exceptional resources that sport programs outside of the university setting may not be privy to. With the collaborative efforts of sport researchers and experts in the fields of sport psychology, sport sociology, and lifespan development (Coakley, 2011; Danish & Nellen, 1997; Miller & Kerr, 2002), a curriculum could be appropriately devised that pays dividends to both the athletic and personal development and success of Canadian student-athletes. I propose that university athletics can learn from the advancements of the field of education; where an explicit curriculum specific to the developmental needs and outcomes of students are designed, articulated, and delivered in a purposeful way that positively contributes to students’ learning (Maher, 2004). I propose that a way forward is to implement a curriculum specific
to athletes’ personal development into university athletics that envisions athletic excellence and personal development as co-existing in a high performance sport setting, and as envisioned by Miller and Kerr (2002), “where appropriate personal and athletic development occur within the sport experience” (p. 145).

I also recommend that Canadian interuniversity sport programs collaborate with Canadian positive youth development sport programs and initiatives. Much more research has focused on the positive development of youth through sport (Coakley, 2002, 2011; Dworkin et al., 2003; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Hellison, 2003; Holt et al., 2008; Weiss, 2008; Weiss & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009) than it has on the positive development of university students through sport (Aries et al., 2004; Howard-Hamilton & Sina, 2001; Miller, 2000; Potuto & O’Hanlon, 2007). Due to the abundance of development of youth through sport research, linking with youth sport initiatives and/or positive developmental youth programs can strengthen and positively contribute to university sport initiatives. Danylchuk and MacLean (2001) affirm that the CIS must work proactively developing linkage and partner relationships in the greater sport community to work toward effective collaboration in the pursuit of positive development through sport.

In addition, to realign the major focus of interuniversity sport with the academic sector of higher education I propose that head coaches be eligible for tenure. This is a proposition that has been both positively and negatively debated in the literature (Ballinger & Crawford, 1999; Holmes, 2011). As a solution to resolve this conflict, I recommend that as a part of a coach’s tenure position, he or she should hold both athletic and academic responsibilities. In this way, a coach’s
tenure would contribute to the academic integrity of higher education, whether it is through roles as an academic counselor, teaching assistant, or faculty teaching position. It is imperative that the mission, purpose, and goals of higher education and athletic programs are congruent (Howard-Hamilton & Sina, 2001) and making coaches eligible for a joint academic/athletic tenure position is one way of achieving this.

Further, based on the findings from this study, participants lacked declarative and procedural knowledge regarding athletes’ personal development. I recommend that athletic departments implement a coach education program specific to athletes’ personal development. If coaches are expected to contribute to athletes’ personal development, they will need education addressing what personal development is and examples of how to integrate opportunities for personal development through their sport programs. Providing coaches with the tools and knowledge about how to facilitate and enhance athletes’ personal development through sport will enrich the Canadian student-athlete sport experience for future student-athletes.

Canadian interuniversity sport has the opportunity to redefine what it means for an athlete to participate in a Canadian university sport program. One of the challenges university sport faces is to articulate and make explicit its commitment to athletes’ personal development. An opportunity to make explicit what is meant by high performance sport, more particularly, where personal development fits into high performance sport, is made possible through the review and reconfiguration of current interuniversity sport models. Prioritizing athletes’ personal development,
however, will entail “a major shift in the thinking and actions of sport leaders... such changes would make sport much more congruent with the needs of the athletes and also respond to demands of society in the 21st century” (Lombardo, 1999, p. 5).

Coaches are important leaders in sport and can help drive the change needed for athletes’ personal development to take priority in the university sport setting.

The future of Canadian interuniversity sport requires, first, the collaborative and unified efforts of all stakeholders involved – from athletic directors and coaches, to academic instructors and sport practitioners. Second, a framework specific to how athletes will learn and experience personal development through sport is necessary to make explicit the educational purpose and outcome(s) of interuniversity sport programs. Third, the shift of current university sport models toward a high performance model of sport presents the opportunity for the evolution of high performance sport culture. The design of a high performance sport program that prioritizes the joint pursuit of athletes’ athletic and personal development will yield a sport environment that is developmentally appropriate, as well as provide a platform from which performance excellence can be pursued within the context of athletes’ overall health and well-being (Miller & Kerr, 2002). Further, making coaches eligible for tenure positions within the academic and athletic sectors of the university will promote the collaboration of academics and athletics within higher education institutions. Finally, to support the role of the coach in this process, coaches will need education on how to facilitate athletes’ personal development through sport.
The pursuit of these recommendations makes the next era of CIS sport a competitive, enriching, and rewarding one for future student-athletes.
Chapter 6: Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore coaches’ perspectives on the personal development of athletes through interuniversity sport. Of particular interest were the ways in which coaches facilitate, support, and enable athletes’ personal development. This study concentrated on the Canadian interuniversity sport context, employing a qualitative investigation of the perspectives of CIS head coaches from the OUA. One of the most prominent findings was coaches’ misconception of what is meant by personal development and further, a lack of acknowledgement of the coach’s influence on athletes’ personal development within the sport arena. The implications of these findings, together with existing literature, were discussed previously in detail.

The coaches from the current study discussed diverse perceptions of athletes’ personal development through sport, some of which were supported by existing literature and some that are inconsistent with current research. Coaches’ difficulty in articulating what is meant by personal development, their difficulty making explicit their influence in athletes’ personal development, and the ensuing challenges presented by high performance sport in the university context all provide important insights into the implications and possible limitations of the current study, as well as suggestions for future research.

Coaches discussed their own student-athlete university sport experiences and the subsequent personal development they acquired because of this involvement. However, the findings from this study revealed that coaches could not accurately articulate the personal development experienced by student-athletes,
despite their own previous student-athlete careers. Many coaches perceived personal development as, primarily, the learning of life skills. In addition, coaches also attributed personal development to academic success and personal accomplishment, rather than to a wide range of learning opportunities that athletes experience that, together, enhance one’s personal development.

Participants in this study did not explicitly articulate or identify the impact of the coach on athletes’ personal development until they were asked directly. Only then did coaches reveal their influence on athletes’ personal development through mentoring, leading by example, placing importance on this area of development in sport programs, and building relationships with athletes. Absent in coaches’ responses were examples of how the coach can infiltrate opportunities for personal development inside of sport, rather than as an add-on experience to sport.

In addition, coaches discussed the potential fallouts from sport model reviews that are currently plaguing the CIS. The implication of many sport model reviews is a movement towards a high performance model of sport. Coaches had a wide range of perspectives on this topic. Some coaches believed increased funding and fewer athletes, which are consequences of a proposed high performance model, meant a better opportunity to facilitate personal development into university sport programs. On the other hand, another group of coaches believed a more pronounced emphasis on winning/championships would further demote the value of personal development through university sport.

The ramifications of current sport model reviews will no doubt be seen in the promotion and importance placed on athletes’ personal development through sport.
The future of the CIS and athletes’ personal development is not only in the hands of sport administrators and athletic directors, but lies within the responsibilities of coaches as well. A progressive sport model review, where athletes’ personal development is of equal importance alongside sport success, requires a united effort amongst all sport practitioners, as well as coaches’ purposeful integration of initiatives specific to personal development through sport.

**Implications.** The findings from the current study have implications for: coach education curricula; Canadian university sport and Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) sport policies; and CIS sport programming and evaluation.

The CAC is a world leader in coach training, education, and certification and National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) workshops serves as the foundation for sport development in Canada (Misener & Danylchuk, 2009). However, recent revisions to coach education curricula categorize the university sport coach as a ‘Competition Coach’ and situate them in ‘train to compete’ and ‘high performance’ coach education workshops (www.coach.ca, 2013). These workshops are a part of the NCCP proposed by the CAC, which aims to develop athletes from grass roots sport to the international stage of competition (www.coach.ca, 2013) – and educate coaches along the same path as well. Rugby Canada states that the content in a ‘Competition Coach’ workshop primarily focuses on the technical and tactical elements of the game, including analyzing the performance of players and teams (www.coach.rugbycanada.ca, 2013). If university sport coaches are being educated through a high performance curriculum, where there is seemingly less priority placed on athletes’ personal development, it is not surprising that CIS
coaches are not able to articulate and operationalize different opportunities for athletes to experience personal development through university sport participation. Absent in coach education courses is a module or course component on how to support athletes’ learning and positive personal development through sport. Principles and practices surrounding athletes’ personal development, for example characteristics of personal development and how coaches help facilitate opportunities for personal development through sport, should be integrated into experiential coaching courses to better prepare coaches to actualize this learning with their athletes. To help in achieving this outcome, Canadian sport organizations must revisit and re-evaluate current coach education curricula, as well as reassess current policy initiatives.

A current policy initiative developed by the CAC is the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model (www.canadiansportforlife.ca, 2011). The motive behind this model is to put more Canadian athletes on the national stage of sport competition; however, only a small percentage of Canadian university athletes go on to compete for Canadian national teams. Incorporating corresponding stages of athletes’ personal development alongside their projected stage of athletic development would create a more holistic LTAD model that assisted in developing fully functioning members of society, rather than exclusively pursuing the development of high performance athletes.

Lastly, CIS programming should include a framework, specific to athletes’ personal development, that coaches can use and implement into their sport programs to make this form of development more purposeful. It would be beneficial
for professionals with training in student development to design and direct these programs in athletics (Carter & Bloom, 2009; Libby, 2007) and, subsequently, work in conjunction with coaches to deliver them. In this way, athletes’ personal development will become actualized within CIS sport environments rather than simply a label in CIS and OUA documents. Having an explicit framework also lends itself as criteria for evaluation purposes. Implementing personal development content into student-athlete evaluations of their sport experience will help to gauge the effectiveness and success of such frameworks.

The limitations presented by this study will be discussed next.

**Limitations.** Limitations associated with the design and completion of this study must be acknowledged. At the outset, this study explored the lone perspective of coaches on the phenomenon of interest. Athletes’ perspectives of personal development were not included in this study because of the over-representation of athletes’ views in existing literature (Dickinson, 2000; Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2009; Gayles, 2009; Lally & Kerr, 2005; Miller, 2000; Potuto & O’Hanlon, 2007; Watt & Moore, 2001; Wolverton, 2008) and coaches’ subsequent under-representation. Therefore, it is difficult to determine if the perspectives of coaches on athletes’ personal development are congruent with athletes’ perspectives of their personal development. Future studies could benefit from the inclusion of both athletes and coaches in assessing athletes’ personal development that takes place via interuniversity sport participation.

This study also limited its’ inclusion to CIS *head* coaches only, excluding assistant coaches. This was because head coaches are often responsible for the
design and implementation of their university sport programs; therefore, it was hypothesized that head coaches would be better able to speak to areas relating to athletes’ personal development than assistant coaches would be. However, it is possible that the personal development of athletes is a responsibility of the assistant coach in university sport programs and the limiting criteria of this study neglected to include the perspectives of assistant coaches.

The mode of using email for recruitment purposes was chosen because it was a time and cost effective way of reaching out to the greatest number of head coaches across the OUA. The value in using email was so that coaches could voluntarily offer their interest in participating in the study, or pass on the opportunity without fear of negative ramifications (i.e., negatively perceived by peers for lack of interest in participating in a study about athletes’ personal development). However, the decision to contact participants through email may have inadvertently created a bias in the participant sample. Each participant in this study believed the personal development of their athletes was important to sport, and also, that the coach had a role to play in facilitating and enabling opportunities for athletes’ personal development. There was not one coach who did not value the personal development of their athletes. Therefore, it may have been that only participants who had positive perceptions of personal development chose to respond. The hypothesis that some coaches would articulate, “No, I do not believe athletes’ personal development is important or that the coach plays a role in athletes’ personal development” was refuted.
The use of interviews as the exclusive method of data collection for this study was also a limiting factor. There were no additional methods employed to assess the validity of coaches’ interview statements. Coaches described examples of athletes experiencing personal development within sport, but without the researcher’s first-hand observation or testimonials of athletes themselves, there were no measures employed to validate coaches’ narratives. In future research, attempts should be made to include secondary methods of assessment to provide validity to the data. For this study, methodologies such as researcher observation and/or interviews with athletes could have been employed.

Suggestions to redress the limitations of the current study will be suggested in the last section.

**Suggestions for future research.** Given the paucity of research that has examined the Canadian interuniversity sport context and/or coaches’ perspectives on athletes’ personal development, the explorative nature of this study and its findings forms the basis for future research in this field.

The inclusion of athletes’ views on their personal development through university sport participation and the influence of their coaches would be of benefit to future research. Since this study was examining the personal development of athletes, future studies would achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon if they were to include athletes’ accounts of the influence of the coach on experiences of personal development.

As suggested by the participants, it would be beneficial to include a sample of retired interuniversity athletes. Coaches from the current study proposed that
athletes’ personal development could be more easily examined five or ten years after their university sport career. Retired athletes have been used in previous research in similar fields of study. Research in this area could benefit from a longitudinal research study design where the researcher observes a group of coaches and their respective athletes throughout their university sport career. Upon athletes’ retirement from university sport, semi-structured interviews with athletes’ would provide athletes the opportunity to reflect on the learning and personal development they experienced through their university sport participation and that they also believed was facilitated and enabled through the work of their coaches. Questions could include: What and how did you learn from your university sport experience? What and how have you transferred these things from your university sport experience to your life outside of sport? Do you believe your coach(es) played a role in facilitating your personal development? If so, how?

The development of youth through sport literature suggests that coaches should be purposeful in the delivery of opportunities for athletes’ personal development through sport. Coaches often develop practice plans or sport-specific agendas for the competitive sport season/year; however, coaches do not have a similar framework for athletes’ personal development. An interesting expansion on the current study would be for a research team to design and implement a framework specific to athletes’ personal development and have coaches deliver it throughout a season/year/period of time. Following the intervention phase, semi-structured interviews would provide coaches the opportunity to reflect and speak to
the successes/failures, strengths/weaknesses, and victories/challenges of having an explicit framework specific to athletes’ personal development.
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Appendix A: Letter of Informed Consent

Title of Research Project: Personal Development of Student-Athletes.

We are requesting your participation in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. Please read the information below, and feel free to ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding to participate and before signing the document.

1. Study Objective:
   The purpose of this study is to better understand coaches’ views on the personal development athletes experience as a result of being an interuniversity athlete.

2. What is involved?:
   If you decide to participate in the study you will be asked to meet with the researcher assistant to discuss your experiences as an interuniversity coach. The interview will be held at a time and place that is mutually convenient and will take between 30 and 60 minutes.

3. Statement of Confidentiality and Disclosure of Information:
   With your permission the interview will be digitally-recorded so as to not miss any information. Please be assured that the information you provide will be kept confidential at all times. Consistent with the conduct of human research studies, the data will not be available or revealed to anyone outside of the research team. The interview data will be destroyed six months after the conclusion of the research project.

   Following the interview the researchers may use quotations from the interview in the write up of the study but be assured that your identity will remain anonymous through the use of a pseudonym and the elimination of any identifiable information. No personally identifiable information will be disclosed.

4. Potential Risks of Participation:
   There are no perceived risks to participation.

5. Potential Benefits of Participation:
   It is possible that you will gain a better understanding of the role coaches play in enhancing the personal development of inter-university athletes.

6. Compensation:
   There is no financial or other compensation for your participation.

7. Voluntary Participation and Early Withdrawal:
   Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from this study at any time by notifying the researchers. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions during your participation in the study.
8. Right to ask Questions:
As well, please feel free to contact the researchers below at any time if you have questions regarding your participation in this study. You may decline to answer specific questions at any time.

Supervising Professor:
Gretchen Kerr, Ph.D.
Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education
University of Toronto
Email: gretchen.kerr@utoronto.ca
Phone: 416-978-6190

Researcher:
Jenessa Banwell, B.P.H.E, M.Sc. Candidate
Email: jenessa.banwell@utoronto.ca

Volunteer's Informed Statement of Consent:
This is to certify that I consent to and give permission for my participation in this program of investigation. I have read this form and understand the content of this consent form. I have been able to discuss the complete protocol with the researcher, and all my questions have been answered fully to my satisfaction. I understand there are no perceived risks or benefits of participation. I understand quotations may be used in the research write-up but my identity will remain anonymous through the use of a pseudonym and the elimination of any identifiable information. I am also aware that should I, at any time during my participation in this study, have any further questions I can contact the researchers listed below. I voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

☐ I consent to participating in this study  

Research Volunteer:

_________________________________________ Date: ____________

(signature)

_________________________________________(print name)
Appendix B: Letter of Information

Title of Research Project: Personal Development of Student-Athletes.

We are requesting your participation in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. Please read the information below, and feel free to ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding to participate and before signing the document.

1. Study Objective:
   The purpose of this study is to better understand coaches’ views on the personal development athletes experience as a result of being an interuniversity athlete.

2. What is involved?:
   If you decide to participate in the study you will be asked to meet with the researcher assistant to discuss your experiences as an interuniversity coach. The interview will be held at a time and place that is mutually convenient and will take between 30 and 60 minutes.

3. Statement of Confidentiality and Disclosure of Information:
   With your permission the interview will be digitally-recorded so as to not miss any information. Please be assured that the information you provide will be kept confidential at all times. Consistent with the conduct of human research studies, the data will not be available or revealed to anyone outside of the research team. The interview data will be destroyed six months after the conclusion of the research project.

   Following the interview the researchers may use quotations from the interview in the write up of the study but be assured that your identity will remain anonymous through the use of a pseudonym and the elimination of any identifiable information. No personally identifiable information will be disclosed.

4. Potential Risks of Participation:
   There are no perceived risks to participation.

5. Potential Benefits of Participation:
   It is possible that you will gain a better understanding of the role coaches play in enhancing the personal development of inter-university athletes.

6. Compensation:
   There is no financial or other compensation for your participation.

7. Voluntary Participation and Early Withdrawal:
   Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from this study at any time by notifying the researchers. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions during your participation in the study.
8. Right to ask Questions:
As well, please feel free to contact the researchers below at any time if you have questions regarding your participation in this study. You may decline to answer specific questions at any time.

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Appendix C: Interview Guide

Coaching History:
1. Please tell me about your coaching history?
   a. What sport do you coach?
   b. How long have you been coaching in the sport?
   c. What is the sport and team you are currently coaching?
   d. How long have you been the coach of this current position?
   e. How long have you coached in the interuniversity sport system?
   f. What led you to coach at the interuniversity level?
   g. Do you hold a part-time or full-time coaching position?
   h. What characteristics describe you as a coach?
   i. What are some of your major accomplishments and/or rewards as a interuniversity coach, if any?
   j. Can you describe the association(s) you have with the academic mission of the university, if any?

Personal Development:
Preamble:
Sport at the university level is widely believed to enhance the athletic development and physical skill acquisition of athletes, however, but we know less about the non-athletic development or personal growth that occurs as a result of athletes’ participation in interuniversity sport. This is the area I would now like to focus on.

2. What do you hope your athletes will take away as a result of their interuniversity sport experience?
   a. Other than sport skills, what personal or transferable life skills do you hope your athletes learn and develop as a result of their sport participation?
   b. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of a mature, veteran student-athlete on your team after 5 years of participation in interuniversity sport?
      i. In an idea world, what do you hope your graduating players take away from sport?

3. What experiences and/or opportunities do you feel interuniversity sport provides student-athletes for personal growth?
   a. Can you describe a specific example?
      i. In this specific example, how is personal growth enabled?
      ii. Who is involved?

4. Do you think coaches have a role to play in facilitating or enabling these experiences/opportunities for personal growth?
   If yes:
   a. In what ways are coaches involved in these experiences?
   b. In what ways do coaches enhance these experiences?
      i. How do you assist or help in these experiences?
   c. In what ways do you think coaches perhaps inhibit these experiences?
If no:
  a. Please explain.

**Methods:**
1. Does your university of athletic department have expectations for personal development or talk about this area of development? If no, proceed to (i). If yes, proceed with the following:
   a. What are they?
   b. What is your opinion of these?
   c. What do you believe are the strengths of these? Weaknesses?
   d. In your opinion, how do these expectations support the personal development of your athletes?
   e. Is it explicit coaches have a role in this form of student-athlete development? If so, what does that look like?
   f. Do you use these in your sport, if so, how?
   g. Do you receive any support from the university or athletic department in promoting, facilitating, or implementing these expectations into practice?
   h. Are you assessed based upon your role in promoting athletes’ personal development?
   i. Do you have your own set of expectations/standards/goals about the personal development of your athletes?
      i. Please describe.
2. Is there a program/university you think supports this form of student-athlete development the best? Or, what would an ideal program look like that best supports the personal development of athletes?
   i. What are the characteristics of this program?
   ii. How can you tell, from an outsider’s perspective, that this program is effective in supporting student-athletes personal growth?
3. Is there a program/university you think is the least effective in supporting this form of student-athlete development?
   i. What are the characteristics of this program? What makes it not effective?
   ii. How can you tell, from an outsider’s perspective, that this program is ineffective?
   iii. In what ways do you think it can be improved?
4. Do you have ways of measuring, assessing, tracking and/or evaluating the personal development of your athletes?
   (Examples if necessary: individual meetings, academic progress reports, etc.)
   a. Can you please provide an example?
   b. How do you know your athletes are acquiring life skills, experiencing personal growth, etc.?
5. What are the barriers, if any, to supporting athletes’ personal development?
   a. Can these barriers be prevented? If so, how?
   b. How can coaches help minimize the barriers that exist (if any)?
6. Are there any aspects of student-athletes’ personal development that you think are hindered by interuniversity sport participation? Please explain.

7. Why do you coach university sport?

Concluding Questions:
1. Thanks for taking time to participate in this study, do you have any additional comments you would like to add?
2. Do you have any additional questions?
Appendix D: Follow-up Probes

1. (In talk about the learning of life skills through sport) In what ways do you see these skills transferring to other areas of life beyond sport and outside of university?

2. (When participants were asked what features their university institution implemented to better support the personal development of its’ student-athletes, coaches often referred to areas they felt would be beneficial, but were not currently a part of their sport program) If you were to paint a picture or describe an ideal program that supported and helped to facilitate the personal development of student-athletes, what would it look like and what characteristics would describe it?

3. (Suggested as the underlying question to this area of study) Why do you coach university sport?