Positive Youth Development at a Residential Summer Sport Camp

by

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Abstract

This qualitative research study explored the contextual features such as leaders, setting, and programming that contributed to creating PYD experiences for campers at a residential summer sport camp. Using a case study approach summer camp leaders and camp management were interviewed, campers and counselors in training participated in focus groups and observations were recorded as field notes. Data was analyzed with the aid of NVivo and results were presented using an adapted version of Bronfenbrenner’s Process-Person-Context-Time model, Lerner’s 5Cs of positive youth development, and the 8 settings features as presented by the NRCIM. This camp context was deliberately structured to facilitate leaders’ provision of growth opportunities for campers. Leaders provided opportunities for growth through the development of supportive relationships with a variety of leaders, the presence of positive social norms, and opportunities for skill building. Suggestions for future studies regarding positive youth development and residential summer camp are provided.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Positive youth development (PYD) is a relatively new concept that was introduced into the field of child and youth development in the 1990s. This broad framework has been conceptualized in many different ways, however it is often described as a strength-based approach to youth development (Benson et al., 2006), in comparison to the deficit approaches common in previous years. Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) conceptualized PYD as working with children and youth as resources to be developed, rather than problems to be managed. Similarly, Benson broadly describes PYD as a set of developmental experiences (Benson, Scales, & Syvertsen, 2011), while Lerner and colleagues (2005) argued that all children and youth have the potential to be successful.

Each summer over 10 million children and adolescents attend summer camp (Henderson et al., 2007). Camps may be offered only during the day, they may be residential or overnight for a week’s duration, or even span the entire summer. Some camps may have a specific focus, such as faith-based camps or sport camps, while others may serve specific populations of children, such as youth with disabilities or youth from families with low socioeconomic status. Generally, the summer camp industry subscribes to shared values including fun, personal growth, and skill development (Garst, Browne, & Bialeschki, 2011). Researchers have shown that summer camps are a context in which youth development occurs (American Camp Association, 2005; Henderson et al., 2007; Henderson, Scheuler, Bialeschki, Scanlin, & Thurber, 2007; Thurber, Scanlin, Scheuler, & Henderson, 2007). Although summer camps satisfy many of the conditions required to be considered a positive youth development program (National Research Council, 2002), current research explicitly employing theoretical frameworks of PYD in summer camp settings is limited. Summer sport camps are a viable location to examine the contextual factors such as the setting, leaders, and programming that contribute to PYD opportunities for children and adolescents. Overall, this study addressed the research question: How do the leaders, environment, and programming contribute to PYD experiences for children at a residential summer sport camp? Findings from this research may contribute to the current literature regarding unexplored contexts in which children may experience positive development. This research has the potential to positively influence children’s experiences at summer sport camps through improved hiring and training of leaders for employment in these locations.
Chapter 2
Review of Literature

2.1 Positive Youth Development

In recent years there has been a shift from studying the development of children who are seen as ‘troubled youth’ or who are deemed at risk, termed the ‘deficit view’, to now realizing the potential for the positive development of all children, termed the ‘strength-based approach’ (Benson et al., 2006). Researchers’ focus has shifted to the view that each young individual possesses strengths that can be capitalized upon in order to promote thriving (Lerner, Lerner, & Benson, 2011), which is defined as a healthy process of change that links youth with adulthood, resulting in individuals who will be oriented to serving both self and society (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003). Positive youth development reflects the view that every child has the capacity to experience positive and healthy development and the potential to be successful (Lerner et al., 2005b). This broad framework, termed PYD, is a recent approach to studying child and adolescent development. The ultimate goal of PYD is to develop adolescents who are both healthy and happy, and on a pathway to a positive, productive, and satisfying adulthood (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). From this perspective, children and youth are seen as resources that may be developed (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003) through bi-directional relations with both their broad and immediate contexts and ecologies (Lerner & Castellino, 2002). If thriving is to occur, youth need to engage with their contexts in appropriate and beneficial ways. Developmental systems theory (Overton, 1998) and the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) have been the predominant models used to study child and adolescent development. These two models will be discussed in detail below before describing current approaches to PYD and their application in sport settings.

2.1.1 Developmental Systems Theory

Developmental systems theory (Overton, 1998) describes individuals’ psychosocial development and highlights the importance of the interactions a developing individual has with his/her changing contexts. These relationships are bi-directional, as each aspect has a reciprocal influence on the other (Lerner & Castellino, 2002; Lerner et al., 2011). For example, an individual may have an effect on the contexts in which they are participating, and these contexts also have the potential to have an effect on the individual. An individual interacts with a variety
of contexts on multiple levels - from a broad, sociocultural level to immediate, and even an internal psychological level.

A key assumption of developmental systems theory is the concept of relative plasticity, which refers to the potential for systematic change that exists across an individual’s lifespan (Lerner et al., 2003). This potential for change is seen as a basic strength of human development (Lerner et al., 2011). These systematic changes occur when there are alterations in the contexts in which the individual experiences bi-directional relationships. It is important to note that the individuality and uniqueness of each developing person determines the degree to which this person interacts with his/her changing contexts (Lerner & Castellino, 2002). The potential for systematic changes allows for the identification of specific combinations of individual and contextual characteristics that can lead to positive development (Mueller, Lewin-Bizan, & Urban, 2011). Although these changes may occur throughout the individual’s lifetime, the magnitude of plasticity and vulnerability to change differs across the lifespan (Lerner & Castellino, 2002). As children and youth experience significant amounts of positive and negative change, relative plasticity is thought to be high during this period of time. Thus, it is important that an individual’s developmental contexts are enhanced during these key years to increase the likelihood of positive changes during childhood and adolescence.

2.1.2. Bioecological model

Psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner and colleagues created a bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) as an extension of his original ecological model (1977). The first model simply described the variety of contexts with which an individual regularly interacts to promote human development, while the refined model acknowledged the dynamic interactions that exist among the four contextual levels. At each level bi-directional relations occur with the others, resulting in the interactions potentially affecting all four systems within the model. These levels are seen as structures which are each embedded, or nested, within the next context, ranging from immediate and proximal to the individual, to formal and informal social structures. The bioecological model coincides with developmental systems theory, as it explains four of the primary contexts within which an individual experiences bi-directional relationships, namely the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem.
The primary context is termed the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), and it is the environment most immediate to the individual. An example is the person’s home or school setting. In these contexts the individuals assume roles, such as child or parent, and student or teacher, and thus experience situations based on their role and identity within this environment. The second level of the ecological model is the mesosystem. This level is composed of the interrelations among an individual’s major settings during a specific period of their life. For example, a child’s mesosystem is thought to be significantly different than that during their adult life. A child’s mesosystem (interactions between microsystems) may contain home, school, and their sports team, while during their adult life the mesosystem may be composed of home, work, and church. The exosystem is the third layer which acts as an extension of the mesosystem. The exosystem refers to broader social structures that do not directly include the developing individual, but nonetheless affect the individual’s development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). These structures may be formal and informal, for example media influences or policies implemented in a work setting. Finally, the macrosystem is the most distal to the individual, as the developing person does not interact directly with this level. Regardless, the individual may still be affected by the broad overarching cultural and subcultural ideals, termed the macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The refined model acknowledged that these systems affect change at all other levels of the ecological model. As a result of large overarching societal ideals and concepts, modifications are filtered throughout the exosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem, ultimately affecting the developing individual. For example, a policy regarding day care created at the governmental level (macro system) may influence educational institutions such that they can no longer offer after school care (exosystem), and consequently parents may need to work longer to create income (mesosystem), and as a result a child is left to act as caregiver for their siblings (microsystem).

Upon further refinement of the bioecological model, Bronfenbrenner created the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model (Bronfenbrenner, 1999) to introduce the chronosystem, which refers to the effect an environment’s changes over time has on a developing individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). As a result of this introduction, Bronfenbrenner outlined two specific propositions: human development occurs through multiple reciprocal interactions over a long period of time, and that these interactions are a function of the time period in which they occur (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) explained that child development occurs as a result of complex interactions between the individual and others in the person’s
immediate environment and “to be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended period of time” (p. 996). In the refined model, the ‘process’ refers to transactions between the developing individual and their immediate surroundings, which drive development, while ‘person’ is in reference to the child’s characteristics and variables such as age, sex, and temperament (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). ‘Context’ refers to the environment in which the child is interacting with, while ‘time’ is important as it relates to the length of time an individual spends interacting with the context (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). Essentially the PPCT model acknowledged the importance of time in a developing individual’s experiences and interactions with modifying factors such as process and context.

Taken together, developmental systems theory and the bioecological and PPCT models have served as the theoretical foundations for positive youth development research. The use of PYD as an overarching framework has led multiple researchers to develop a varied vocabulary and set of terms used to classify the characteristics and outcomes of development. Although each approach is unique, five core constructs are often evident within approaches related to PYD. Each definition of PYD includes, in some shape or form: developmental contexts, aspects of the person (the aforementioned concept of plasticity and the child’s developmental strengths), and measures of developmental success (e.g., reduction of high-risk behaviours and promotion of thriving) (Benson et al., 2006). Two popular approaches to conceptualizing and studying positive youth development will be discussed in detail: Lerner’s 5Cs (Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000), and the eight features or characteristics of positive developmental settings presented by Roth and Brooks-Gunn and the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002).

2.2 Approaches to PYD

2.2.1. Lerner and the 5Cs.

One of the most widely recognized approaches to PYD are the 5C’s developed by Lerner and colleagues (Lerner et al., 2000), as an extension of Little’s previous 4Cs framework (1993). Within this view, in order for youth to thrive they must exhibit five characteristics termed the 5Cs: competence, confidence, character, caring (or compassion), and connection. As a result of the acquisition of these 5 qualities, the developing individual is said to display a 6th C – contribution, where the person will in turn feel the need to give back or contribute to their society or context in which they experienced the 5Cs (Lerner et al., 2000).
According to Lerner (2005), competence is the ability to be successful, academically, socially, and vocationally. Confidence is the belief one has in themself, which also takes the form of a positive self-identity. Character refers to an individual’s positive values, integrity, and moral commitment. Caring, or compassion, is the individual’s sense of empathy towards others in their life. The relationships an individual creates within their community and with their family and peers are described as connection (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Although these characteristics may appear differently depending on the situation and context, all five must be present in order for the individual to experience thriving and subsequently contribute to society. For example, if a child experienced significant growth and displayed the 5Cs as a result of participation in a youth soccer league, it is thought that this individual will mature and participate in a similar group in order to contribute to their society in a meaningful way. Child and youth programs that are designed to be contexts for PYD need to ensure that opportunities for participants to develop these 5Cs are widely available (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005).

An important longitudinal study by Lerner and colleagues to examine PYD (termed the ‘4-H study’; Lerner et al., 2005) aimed to examine youths’ developmental trajectories across the second decade of life. Participants in the first wave of this study were recruited from 40 cities in 13 U.S. states and represented many different ethnic, regional, and religious groups. Fifth-grade students who participated in a 4-H youth development program ($n = 1,700$) completed a range of measures that assessed regulatory functioning and goal oriented behaviours, the 5Cs of PYD, the 6th C (contribution), and risk and problem behaviours (Lerner et al., 2005). Overall, results from the first wave of the study revealed support for the 5Cs and PYD (Lerner et al., 2005). Girls reported higher scores on measures of caring, character, competence and connection, and European American and Latino/Latina youth reported higher scores of confidence (Lerner et al., 2005). Youth from families of higher socioeconomic status had higher scores on all constructs except for caring (Lerner et al., 2005). These results were promising in regards to the presence and use of the 5Cs as important developmental constructs for youth.

Results from the second wave of the 4-H study were presented by Jelicic and colleagues (2007). Students who participated in wave 1 of data collection were asked to participate in the 4-H study a year later, in the sixth grade. Items measured in the first wave (the 5Cs and PYD) were used to predict outcomes in three measures: depression, substance use and delinquency, and contribution (Jelicic et al., 2007). Results revealed that in general, students who reported high levels of the
5Cs and PYD in the fifth grade reported low levels of depression, substance use and delinquency and high levels of contribution at wave 2 of data collection (Jelicic et al., 2007). This was one of the first studies to provide longitudinal confirmation of the predicted relationships between the 5Cs and PYD and both negative and positive outcomes. However the authors stated the need for cross-validation of these results in other contexts and with a variety of groups of children and adolescents (Jelicic et al., 2007).

2.2.2. NRCIM and the 8 characteristics.

Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) claimed that a specific definition of what classifies a positive youth development program does not yet exist, although it is important to consider the common elements present in successful youth development programs in order to begin to form such a definition. Roth and Brooks-Gunn, in conjunction with the American National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (NRCIM) (2002), created a list of eight characteristics that need to be present in a youth context in order for it to be considered a positive developmental setting. The previous approach described the individual, while this NRCIM approach focuses on what constitutes a developmental program. The eight characteristics are: physical and psychological safety, appropriate structure, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, positive social norms, support for efficacy and mattering, opportunities for skill building, and integration of family, school, and community efforts (National Research Council, 2002). These guidelines may assist youth program administrators to create settings in which children and youth are more likely to experience thriving.

There is currently minimal research that explicitly examines all 8 characteristics as proposed by the NRCIM, however studies and social policy reports (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2000) published prior to the development of the 8 characteristics offer descriptions of what children and youth need for successful development and the characteristics of successful programs designed to promote youth development. Roth and colleagues (1998) provided a review of evaluation studies of youth-serving programs, although due to the variation in quality of the studies a formal meta-analysis was not appropriate; however, the authors discovered multiple commonalities across successful programs. Fifteen studies were categorized according to program goals: positive-behaviour focused competency/asset enhancing programs (6 programs), problem-behaviour focused competency/asset enhancing programs (6 programs), and resistance skills-based prevention programs (3 programs) (Roth et al., 1998). Many of the evaluation studies within the
first group of programs highlighted the need for supportive relationships between program participants and mentors, as well as opportunities for youth to belong (Roth et al., 1998). Evaluation studies within the problem-behaviour group emphasized the same two program characteristics: supportive relationships via mentoring and opportunities to belong, as well as integration of family, school, and community efforts (Roth et al., 1998). Finally, evaluation of the resistance skills-based prevention programs group provided support for program characteristics of supportive relationships and opportunities for skill building (Roth et al., 1998). This analysis of youth-serving program evaluations adds to the knowledge regarding the specific program and context characteristics required for positive youth developmental experiences. Roth and colleagues observed that successful youth development programs vary widely and additional research should be conducted into the principles supporting youth development programs and the groups of children that benefit from them (Roth et al., 1998).

2.3. PYD and the Sport Context

The definition of PYD, the characteristics of what classifies a PYD program, and determinations of how to measure PYD are under constant review and scrutiny. Although the approaches presented above are subject to revision, these concepts have been examined in sport settings to examine positive youth development opportunities for youth sport athletes. The next section will describe research that has examined PYD in sport using the two approaches described above (the 5Cs and 8 program characteristics).

Although children and youth spend many of their waking hours in school, it has been reported that nearly 2.2 million Canadian children (Corbeil, 2000) and over 35 million American youth (Weiss & Hayashi, 1996) participate in sporting contexts each year during their spare time. Early reports of sport participation revealed that American adolescents spend 4 to 6 hours per week participating in sporting activities (Csikszentmihayli & Larson, 1984), however that number is expected to have increased, as numbers of participation have risen over the years (A. Smith, Green, & Roberts, 2004). Sports are a venue that have attracted attention in the past, as they have been seen as inherently good, and that individuals who participate in sport automatically experience this ‘goodness’. People who subscribe to this type of thinking are termed ‘sport evangelists’ (Giulianotti, 2004), and Coakley (2011) argued that this is an uncritical way of viewing sport and that the theories and models underpinning sport programs should be studied in more detail. Similarly, Fraser-Thomas and colleagues (2005) argued that:
While organized sport has the potential to play a significant role in contributing to youths’ positive development, it is necessary to recognize that positive youth development through sport is not automatic, but to the contrary, is dependent upon a multitude of factors that must be considered when planning and designing youth sport programs. (p. 35)

Thus, youth sport environments need to be explicitly designed to be rich in positive developmental opportunities. Some negative aspects of sport participation have been reported, which include sport-related injuries and eating disorders (Anshel, 2004; Reel & Gill, 1996; Steiner, McQuivery, Pavelski, Pitts, & Kraemer, 2000), excessive pressure to win and athletic burnout (R. E. Smith, 1986; Wankel & Mummery, 1990), and violence and aggression (Colburn, 1986). It is important that factors contributing to PYD experiences in sport for children and youth are explicitly stated to allow youth sport administrators to incorporate these aspects into their programs, with the intention of providing more opportunities for PYD and thriving.

Two important factors in youth sport settings are program design (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005) and the presence of caring leaders (Lerner, 2004). Successful program design addresses youths’ stages of development and provides activities that are developmentally appropriate for the participants (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005). In regards to out-of-school-time programs, researchers have shown that youth will experience more academic and social benefits if activities are voluntary and allow for choice, are characterized by sustained engagement and effort, and present opportunities to build and develop current skills (Lowe Vandell, Pierce, & Dadisman, 2005). In sport settings for underserved youth, climates that are task involving and emphasize improving oneself have been associated with participants’ higher levels of enjoyment and future sport participation (Newton, Watson, Kim, & Beacham, 2006). While studies on motivational climate are common in the field of education (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986; Dweck, 1999), and physical activity and sport (Duda, 2001; Roberts & Treasure, 1992; Roberts, 2001), there is a lack of current research in summer sport camp contexts regarding program qualities and climates.

Lerner (2004) stated that another important characteristic of children and youths’ developmental programs is positive and sustained adult-youth relations, and leaders play a key role in providing positive developmental experiences in youth sport. According to youth, a successful and well-liked coach is someone who is knowledgeable, provides organized training sessions and
technical instruction, and presents many opportunities for skill building (MacPhail, Kirk, & Eley, 2003; R. E. Smith, Smoll, & Curtis, 1978). Researchers have also reported that athletes who played on a team with a trained coach developed higher levels of self-esteem during the course of a season as compared to athletes who played with an untrained coach (R. E. Smith, Smoll, & Curtis, 1979). In a report for the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, Weiss and Wiese-Bjornstal (2009) summarized the important factors involved in promoting PYD in youth sport, stating that “a caring and mastery-oriented climate, supportive relationships with adults and peers, and opportunities to learn social, emotional, and behavioral life skills … are the nutrients for promoting positive youth development through physical activity” (p. 7). This statement reflects the idea that both program design and leaders are key aspects of contexts which contribute to children and youth’s PYD.

In an effort to adapt Lerner’s framework of 5Cs (Lerner et al., 2000) to sport contexts, Vierimaa and colleagues (Vierimaa, Erickson, Côté, & Gilbert, 2012) described what the 5Cs may look like in a sport setting and how they might be measured. Competence in sport is conceptualized as a high level of achievement, performance or ability in three domains: technical skills, tactical skills, and physical skills. Confidence is the belief one has in their ability to be successful in sport. Character may be exhibited through one’s prosocial behaviours (e.g., adherence to the rules of the sport) and avoidance of anti-social behaviours (e.g., deliberately injuring an opponent). The dedication a player has to the team and other teammates’ goals is an example of caring or compassion. Finally, the principle of connection may be applied to the quality of relationships an athlete creates with their teammates and coaches (Vierimaa et al., 2012).

The 8 program characteristics for positive developmental settings outlined by the NCRIM may easily be applied to sport settings, although to date there are few studies which have systematically investigated these characteristics within sport programs. However Côté, Strachan, and Fraser-Thomas (2008) described these qualities in relation to sport contexts and reported that with regards to physical and psychological safety, sport programs need to take place in safe physical facilities and provide an environment in which youngsters feel encouraged and respected (Côté et al., 2008). These programs should be appropriately structured, so that children and youth move from deliberate play to deliberate practice, as their sport skills and desires develop (Côté et al., 2008). Supportive relationships in a sporting environment are key for children’s PYD experiences. These types of relationships could be promoted through a coach.
who enhances players’ psychological, social, and physical growth through sport participation (Conroy & Coatsworth, 2006). Opportunities to belong are found through meaningful inclusion in the team, which is shown through team unity and cohesion produced by an effective coach (Côté et al., 2008). Through appropriate sport programming, children and youth are subject to positive social norms and life skills such as sportspersonship, teamwork, and fair play (Côté, 2002). Coaches should also provide youth participants with support of efficacy and mattering, which can be achieved through structuring their program so that children have the chance to choose their level of involvement, thus providing a sense of empowerment (Mallett, 2005; Vallerand & Rousseau, 2001). Learning experiences are a key aspect of PYD opportunities in developmental sport programs. Opportunities for skill building allow children to grow and develop gross and fine motor skills in an encouraging and supportive context (Côté et al., 2008). Finally, integration of family, school, and community efforts may be seen through parent and coach communication (Côté et al., 2008).

2.4. Summer Sport Camps: A Context for PYD?

Research in the area of PYD and youth sport participation is gaining momentum, and recent topics of interest include: creating appropriate contexts for youth sport involvement (Holt & Neely, 2011), coaches’ intentional programming of transferable skill development (Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008), positive parental involvement with children’s sport participation (McCarthy & Jones, 2007), social development (Holt, Tamminen, Tink, & Black, 2009), and life skill development through sport (Gould & Carson, 2008). However, there is a need for additional research into the role of significant others, including coaches, peers, and parents, in the development of PYD opportunities for children and youth (Holt & Neely, 2011), as well as an exploration of the variety of factors contributing to children and youth’s acquisition of life skills through sport (Gould & Carson, 2008). Research in a variety of sport settings, including summer sport camps, could provide insight into how the PYD frameworks of the 5Cs and 8 settings features may be incorporated into sport contexts to enhance child and youth development. Summer camp is an example of an environment in which children may experience a broad range of PYD outcomes and as such, summer camps are a potentially valuable context for examining PYD.

Summer camps provide attendees with opportunities for development in a range of areas, including physical skills, cognitive abilities, and social relationships. Ullrich-French and
colleagues (2013) investigated youths’ social connection in a summer day camp based on a PYD framework. This four-week program serviced low-income youth, with the aim of promoting feelings of hope and possibility while fostering a healthy active lifestyle (Ullrich-French et al., 2013). Investigators found that during the program, children experienced increases in perceived social and physical competence, in addition to heightened measures of physical and global self-worth (Ullrich-French et al., 2013). Higher ratings of social competence and leader support were positively related to increases in global self-worth and attraction to participation in physical activity; and as participants’ perceptions of social competence increased, there was a corresponding increase in feelings of hope (Ullrich-French et al., 2013). These findings reinforce the notion that children’s connections with others, both caring adults and peers, are important in fostering positive developmental outcomes in sport day camps (Ullrich-French et al., 2013).

In another study examining PYD in sport camp attendees, Jones and colleagues (2011) examined the 5Cs of PYD in a summer sport day camp run by a Canadian university. The aim of this study was to empirically validate the 5Cs in a summer camp context (Jones et al., 2011). Youth participants (n = 258) involved in a multitude of team and individual sports, including volleyball, soccer, track and field, and swimming completed a measure of the 5Cs adapted from Phelps et al.’s (2009) 78-item measure of PYD. This adapted 30-item measure assessed each construct of the 5Cs with 6 items, some of which were modified to be relevant to a sport setting (Jones et al., 2011). Results did not provide support for the 5C model of PYD as conceptual overlap was seen among the five constructs. Exploratory factor analysis revealed the presence of two factors: prosocial values (including caring, character, and connection) and confidence/competence (Jones et al., 2011). Despite the confusion regarding the nature of the 5Cs in sport contexts, researchers agree that there is a need for additional research examining PYD in sport settings (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; Holt & Sehn, 2008).

In addition, Strachan and Davies (2014) used photo elicitation to examine which of the 8 settings features (NRCIM, 2002) were most relevant and important for children at summer day camps. The researchers asked 16 youth participants to take photos during their day camp experience. Youth valued the supportive relationships created between themselves and their sport leaders, as there were 25 photos of leaders and during focus group meetings participants discussed their relationships as important for their summer day camp experiences. There were also 14 photos as examples of skill building and 14 photos that demonstrated support for efficacy and mattering.
Although this research identified that leaders were important for children’s summer day camp experiences, Strachan and Davies (2014) expressed that attention needs to be given to instructors and how they are being trained in order to improve children’s positive experiences while at day camp.

Overall, while researchers have begun to investigate PYD in summer sport day camps, there is no published research to date that investigates PYD in overnight summer sport camps or camps that youth attend for longer periods of time. These camps may provide a valuable context for examining PYD potentially due to the nature of relationships created among campers and leaders during these prolonged and intensive periods of time.

2.5 The Summer Camp Industry

There is a wide range in the types of camps that are available for youth. From day camps and overnight or residential camps, spring break camps and summer camps, religious camps and sports camps, week long camps to summer long camps, the camping industry presents shared values, such as fun, personal growth, and skill development (Garst et al., 2011). As Garst and colleagues (2011) stated, “camp is more than a location or a program; it encompasses the affective, cognitive, behavioral, physical, social, and spiritual benefits that youth receive during and after the camping experience” (p. 73-74). Children have the opportunity for new and unique experiences, often in an outdoor environment, with encouraging and caring staff. Summer is the most popular time of the year for children to attend camp with over 10 million campers each year in a variety of programs throughout the USA (Henderson et al., 2007). Camps may be sponsored by a community’s parks and recreation department, a local church, or not-for-profit youth groups, as well as independent owners and operators (Henderson et al., 2007). Although each program may have individual goals or mission statements, many summer camps share a common vision of providing campers with fun and enjoyable experiences, and in some cases preparation for a successful transition into adulthood.

2.5.1. Research in camp settings.

Much of the current research in the field has been conducted within summer camps that are accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA). The ACA provides camps in the United States with certification and holds them to more than 300 standards regarding health, safety, program, and management (Thurber et al., 2007). There is a similar association in Canada, the
Canadian Camping Association (CCA), with provincial affiliates such as the Ontario Camps Association (OCA) and the British Columbia Camping Association (BCCA). Although the CCA certifies many summer camp programs in Canada, the ACA is a more widely recognized organization, possibly due to the strong research department and national projects the association oversees.

It is understood that parents may see summer camp as an opportunity for their children to work towards becoming independent while experiencing growth and having fun. Parents send their children to camp aware of the potential influence of camp staff, and parents trust these individuals with their child’s development with the understanding that other adults in a camp setting may be helpful in guiding children in a successful transition into adulthood (Henderson et al., 2007). In an early ACA study (American Camp Association, 1998), researchers found that parents believed the most important benefits of sending their child to camp were: increasing self-confidence and self-esteem, creating new friends, new social interactions, being in a safe place, and participating in fun activities. Following a large national ACA study in 2002 and 2003, Henderson and colleagues (2007) reported parents’ perceptions of youth developmental outcomes at summer camp. Youth development was investigated in four domains: positive identity, social skills, physical and thinking skills, and positive values and spirituality; and development in these domains was measured with ten constructs: leadership, positive values and decision making, positive identity, making friends, spirituality, environmental awareness, social comfort, independence, peer relationships, and adventure/exploration. A comparison of scores from parents’ pre-camp to post-camp survey results indicated statistically significant increases in all ten constructs measured with the largest effect sizes seen for positive identity, independence, making friends, peer relationships, and adventure and exploration (American Camp Association, 2005; Henderson et al., 2007).

Parents were asked to complete the survey again at six months post-camp, and results revealed that although nine of the ten measured constructs declined from immediately post-camp to six months post-camp, only adventure and exploration decreased below pre-camp scores, indicating that at least some of the campers’ developmental gains during the summer camp period were somewhat sustained six months later (Henderson et al., 2007). Leadership was the only construct that continued to increase after the camp experience, as parents perceived additional growth in this construct six months post camp as compared with levels immediately post-camp (Henderson
et al., 2007). Although these results are promising, it is interesting to note that many of the qualities with the largest effect sizes were quite similar to those that the parents previously rated as most important, as reported by the ACA in 1998. It is possible that there may be some reporting bias and parents may report these positive ratings because of their desire for their children to have experienced development in these 10 constructs while at camp.

Building on research examining parents’ views and using the same dataset and participants, Thurber and colleagues (2007) examined staff members’ views of campers’ development. Counselors assessed campers on the second day of camp as well as their final day attending camp, regardless of session length (from one week to eight weeks). Campers were rated in the 4 domains and 10 constructs previously described. Although effect sizes were small or medium for all constructs, largest gains were seen in the domain of physical and thinking skills (American Camp Association, 2005; Thurber et al., 2007). There were no additional gains associated with an extended stay at camp (e.g., beyond one week) and therefore a dosage effect for developmental change while at camp was not supported (Thurber et al., 2007). This study provides some evidence regarding the required length of immersion in positive development contexts to produce positive outcomes. It is possible that due to the intensive amount of time spent in the camp context, campers may experience positive developmental outcomes during a one week stay at camp. Additional research examining the length of time required for PYD experiences at summer camp may contribute to the current knowledge regarding PYD.

Finally, in addition to research examining parents’ and counselors’ perceptions of campers’ growth, during this 2002 and 2003 study the campers themselves also reported their perceptions of their own growth pre- and post-camp (Thurber et al., 2007). Campers perceived personal growth in 6 of the 10 constructs: self-esteem, independence, leadership, friendship skills, adventure/exploration and spirituality (American Camp Association, 2005; Thurber et al., 2007), while negative effects were seen in the construct of peer relationships (Thurber et al., 2007), possibly because of children’s potentially challenging interactions with many children from a variety of environments and cultures. This negative effect was not shown in the measures immediately post-camp to 6 months post-camp, and a statistically significant gain was seen instead (Thurber et al., 2007). The authors suggest that these findings could be due to campers reconnecting with peers once they returned to their homes. Overall, these studies among camps within the ACA revealed that parents, staff members, and campers perceived that campers
experienced growth while attending camp, providing support for summer camps as a context for PYD. However, this research was atheoretical and future studies that examine summer camps as a context for PYD experiences should be guided by foundational concepts of PYD. These studies may then be used to target changes and inform interventions geared towards the provision of PYD experiences for children at summer camp. In summary, Thurber and colleagues (2007) noted that, “accredited summer camps of at least a week’s duration may all provide, to some degree and for most children, the essential ingredients for positive youth development” (p. 251). Although the potential for PYD at a residential summer camp has been discussed, to date there has been no research specifically examining the mechanisms through which campers actually experience growth. This study aimed to fill this gap in the literature.

2.6. Leaders and PYD

Based on findings from previous summer camp and sport PYD research, leaders at summer sport camps may be an important factor in the delivery of positive developmental experiences for youth. The following section will briefly review literature regarding coach leadership, leader training, and leaders in the camp environment which informed the proposed research examining how leaders may contribute to PYD experiences among youth at summer sport camps.

2.6.1. Coach leadership characteristics.

Coaches are a key factor influencing youth sport participation, however there is currently no shared understanding of what constitutes an effective or expert coach in a youth sport setting, which may hinder progress in the field of youth sport and development (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). In light of this confusion, a definition of coaching effectiveness proposed by Côté and Gilbert (2009) may be valuable for guiding research in the field: “the consistent application of integrated professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge to improve athletes’ competence, confidence, connection, and character in specific coaching contexts” (p. 316). This definition of effective coaching incorporates three variables involved in coaching youth sport: coaches’ knowledge, athletes’ outcomes, and coaching contexts (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). Coaches’ professional knowledge refers to their individual sport specific skills and abilities, as well as their knowledge of how to teach children such skills. Although important, and often the emphasis of current popular coach training programs, this type of knowledge alone is not enough to classify an individual as a ‘good coach’. Coaches’ interpersonal knowledge (ability to socially
interact with athletes of varying ages and skill levels) and coaches’ intrapersonal knowledge (capacity for introspection and reflection regarding one’s coaching practice) are two other key elements of a successful coach (Côté & Gilbert, 2009).

An effective coach is also someone who produces athletes who display positive outcomes through their participation in sport (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). Positive outcomes may be seen as Little’s original framework of 4Cs (Little, 1993) or through the more widely recognized concept of 5Cs of PYD (Lerner et al., 2000; Lerner, 2005). Finally, specific contexts of coaching require different leader qualities (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). For example, a youth little league coach would require strengths in the interpersonal domain, while a coach of a national competitive sport team may need stronger professional knowledge. The definition of effective coaching proposed by Côté and Gilbert may be used to create and promote appropriate training programs aimed at producing effective coaches in youth developmental sport settings.

In a youth sport context, coaches are a predominant adult influence and thus have the potential to interact with athletes in what are termed ‘micro-interventions’ or ‘teachable moments’, hundreds to thousands of times a season (Conroy & Coatsworth, 2006). If coaches are trained to increase certain behaviours during these micro-interventions, the likelihood of positive experiences may be increased (Conroy & Coatsworth, 2006). Many youth sport coaches are untrained parent volunteers and Conroy and Coatsworth (2006) argue that the often seen common-sense coaching style should be supplemented with a formal coach training program, such as the Coach Effectiveness Training (CET) program (R. E. Smith et al., 1979). Athletes who play for formally and informally trained coaches (‘training’ via coach-to-coach discussions) have reported more positive outcomes, such as higher levels of self-esteem (R. E. Smith et al., 1979) and increased personal and social skills (MacDonald, Côté, & Deakin, 2010). There is no evidence to support that any type of coach training is detrimental for youth (Conroy & Coatsworth, 2006) and any training, including informal discussions about coaching strategies, is thought to be better than none at all (MacDonald et al., 2010). Researchers suggest youth sport leaders should be taught to increase desirable coaching behaviours that are affirming, supportive, instructional and autonomy-supportive, while reducing or avoiding undesirable behaviours that are punitive, hostile, and controlling (Conroy & Coatsworth, 2006). Thus, investigations of current practices of effective leaders and the ways in which they promote PYD experiences for children will provide researchers with valuable information regarding leader training.
2.6.2. Leaders in the camp environment.

Every summer, more than 1.5 million adults are employed as leaders in the camping industry in the USA (American Camp Association, 2013). Many of these individuals are young adults who are in the stage of ‘emerging adulthood’ (Arnett, 2006), a time when individuals are navigating their identity between childhood and adulthood. Summer camp employment of emerging adults may be ideal for both the staff members as well as the campers, as there is the opportunity for the camp leaders to explore multiple identities, such as adolescent-like silliness and adult responsibilities of care-giving (Johnson, Goldman, Garey, Britner, & Weaver, 2011). The characteristics of emerging adults allow for campers to connect with someone who may share similar interests and be knowledgeable about youth culture, while still being responsible and providing adequate supervision and care (Johnson et al., 2011). While positive development of the campers should be the primary focus of concern, leaders may also undergo their own growth through their experiences as leaders at camp.

2.7. Gaps in the Current Knowledge

While considerable research has been completed regarding PYD, youth sport leaders, and children’s experiences at camp, there is a lack of research that investigates all three areas simultaneously. The summer camp setting is a rich and viable context for children’s developmental experiences, and leaders may be key in creating programs and environments that promote PYD opportunities. Holt and Sehn (2008) reported that a comprehensive and thorough understanding of how developmental programs influence the holistic growth of children is elusive. Researchers have called for additional studies examining the factors associated with the provision of physical activity for individuals at camp (Zarrett et al., 2013) and the specific qualities of camps that result in positive outcomes for participants (Henderson et al., 2007), as well as further research regarding coach and youth sport leader training (MacDonald et al., 2010). This research aimed to address these gaps in the literature. The purpose of this research was to explore the provision of PYD experiences at a summer sport camp and to examine how the leaders, environment, and programming contribute to PYD experiences for children at a residential summer sport camp.
Chapter 3
Methods

3.1. Paradigmatic Position

This qualitative study was conducted from a constructivist paradigmatic position (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Krane & Baird, 2005). Accordingly, a constructivist approach does not aim to change or alter a context or setting, but seeks to find a deep understanding of a natural environment or subject (Sparkes & Smith, 2014; Stake, 1995). Since the purpose of this research was to explore the provision of PYD experiences at a summer sport camp, it was appropriate to adopt a constructivist approach in order to develop a deep understanding of leaders’ facilitation of PYD experiences within a summer sport camp setting.

In regards to ontology, which refers to the nature of knowledge and reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 1994), a constructivist position adopts a relativist or internal ontological perspective. This perspective rejects the notion of one singular, universal and measurable reality. Instead, it is assumed that there exist multiple realities which only take shape in the form of an individual’s unique mental constructions (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). How meaning is created is based on specific modes of interpretation, and thus a different understanding and construction of reality for each individual is revealed through individual experiences.

Epistemology is concerned with the production of knowledge and the specifics of how knowledge is created (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This research was approached from a subjectivist or transactional epistemological perspective. Within this view, the subject or context that is studied is not independent of inquirers and knowledge is co-constructed by the researcher and that which is being investigated (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). In this case, knowledge is situated historically, socially, and culturally (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Knowledge is contextually dependent, and as such, the type of knowledge in one environment may be created and understood differently in another context. That which is considered to be true in current society is not seen as a permanent truth, and may change in upcoming years.

As a researcher in the camp setting, I was a participant as observer. Denzin (1978) explains that full participant observation “simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation, and introspection” (p. 183).
During much of the summer I assumed a role as a coach, which I had previously held at the case site. I took part in the everyday tasks and responsibilities of a coach – caring for the campers, and organizing, planning, and leading sport sessions with my co-coach, while simultaneously completing my duties as a researcher. As I was a multiple year returner, I was familiar with camp schedules, routines, and policies. I was aware of coaches’ ‘down-time’ during the day and throughout the week, and utilized this time to further my research, making observations and field notes.

As I previously held different roles at camp (coach, counselor, driver, and office staff), I understood the challenges associated with transitioning between roles. I did my best to ensure that other staff members saw my work as a researcher as simply part of another role that I held at camp. As many staff members changed roles during the weekends in order to cover for other staff’s time off, I likened my role change to this example. I explained to camp staff that although I was spending part of my summer as a coach, I had other duties and responsibilities to fulfill within my role as a researcher as well. I encouraged and welcomed any questions about my research project and the work that I was completing while at summer camp. As Patton (2002) explained, I was aware of the “tangled web of relationships” (p. 320) that I experienced and I attempted to be “thoughtful about how fieldwork, data quality, and the overall inquiry are affected by these connections and interrelationships, all of which have to be negotiated” (p. 320).

I kept a personal reflexivity journal in which I documented the challenges I faced while transitioning between roles. Reflexivity refers to researcher’s analysis of their position and role throughout the research process (Finlay, 2002); this is a researcher’s self- awareness and acknowledgement of oneself as the inquirer and respondent (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Within my reflexivity journal, I detailed and questioned the subjectivities I held as a previous staff member, specifically one with insider knowledge. I understood that although a constructivist paradigmatic position acknowledges subjectivity, I strived to remain aware of my biases and any pre-conceived notions I had which affected my judgment and interactions with my research participants, as well as my interpretations of findings throughout the research process. I also detailed the dynamics of the relationships created between the interviewees and myself. Any unusual or interesting interactions were noted within my personal reflexivity journal.
3.2. Case Study Methodology

This research employed a case study methodology; specifically, it was an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995). Within an instrumental case study approach, a case site is selected with a previously developed research question in mind (Stake, 1995) and the case is specifically chosen because it is thought to provide insight into the research question, with the aim of understanding a broader topic (Stake, 1995). The summer sport camp chosen as the case for this research was selected because it was believed to provide excellent information and examples of positive youth development at a residential summer sport camp. Findings from this research were unique to the setting, however they may be applied to similar settings such as other residential summer sport camps.

3.2.1. Participants

Following ethical approval of this study from the University of Toronto, camp staff were recruited by announcing the study at a staff orientation meeting. Camp staff were told about the purposes of the study and the study requirements, and interested individuals were invited to contact the researcher to participate. To recruit campers and CITs to participate in the study, the researcher met with individuals upon their arrival at camp and described the study to them and their parents. All participants completed informed consent forms prior to participating in the research; campers and CITs under the age of 18 provided informed assent and parental consent was also provided.

Participants interviewed for the case study included counselors, coaches, extreme campers, CITs, and Master Staff. Counselling and coaching staff ranged in age from 20-28 years old and were primarily international staff. Counselors were from the United States, England, Australia, and New Zealand, while coaches were from the same four countries as well as Scotland, and Ireland. Counseling staff interviewed included 10 new staff and 5 returning staff, whereas the coaching staff interviewed were 7 new staff members and 8 returning staff. Master staff were slightly older and ranged from 25-30 years old and were American and Australian. Campers and CITs were 15-18 years old and were all from the United States.
3.2.2. Case site description.

The case site for this research was a privately owned summer sport camp established in 1991 in the Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania, USA. The camp season runs for nine weeks with 250-300 campers each week. The property covers 500 acres and includes a privately owned lake, two baseball diamonds, two full size soccer fields, many mountain biking trails, a rock-climbing wall, and a high ropes course. Campers stay in 15 lakefront cabins and eat all meals in the dining hall or in the outdoor dining area. Campers have the option to choose from three programs. First, the most popular program was the ‘all-sports’ program, in which children participated in three sport sessions daily (Monday to Thursday), and an introductory session Sunday evening and closing session Friday morning, for a total of fourteen sessions. In the ‘all-sports’ program each of the 12 sport sessions had a unique focus on a different sport such as soccer, lacrosse, mountain biking, or rock-climbing, as well as international sports such as cricket, rugby, or Australian Rules Football. This program was offered all summer long and many children opted to stay for multiple weeks, participating in the ‘all-sports’ program for one week and another program for a second week.

There was also an ‘extreme’ program available for older campers, which focused specifically on building skills such as teamwork and positive sportsmanship, while campers participated in more ‘extreme’ activities such as laser tag and dune buggies. This program was offered eight of the nine weeks of summer, and was always 100% full, requiring waiting lists. In previous years, this summer camp also offered many programs focused on sport specific training and skill development, for example, basketball camp or field hockey camp. These programs became less popular and the only program of this type that remained was the soccer camp, which was offered for only one week during summer 2014. Within this program campers built on their soccer skills and tactics in all scheduled sport sessions. A soccer-specific day camp was introduced in 2014 and included children aged 5-8 who were enrolled in the half-day camp, and children 9-12 who participated in the full day camp. These children were integrated with the other campers who participated in the overnight soccer camp.

3.2.2.1. A week at camp.

In order to understand the schedule of camp, a camper’s experience, and the different roles that leaders had this section will detail what a week at camp looked like for the typical camper.
As children and their families arrived to camp on Sunday afternoon to check in for a week-long stay, they were greeted at the front gate by friendly and welcoming staff. They were instructed to park their car and then proceed to the Fieldhouse to check in and find out their cabin assignments for the week. After completing all the mandatory health forms, the no-cell phone policy form, and canteen registration, campers collected their belongings from their car and walked through camp to meet their counselors at their cabin. While walking through camp, children saw the many smiling faces and friendly waves of staff members in their green check-in camp shirts. If campers had any questions about where they were going or what to do next, staff were happy to answer them.

Arriving at their cabin, campers and their families were greeted by at least two counselors (and occasionally a CIT as well) and were asked a few questions about their previous experiences at camp. As counselors were from all over the world, campers often took this opportunity to ask their leaders a few questions about their home country and their accent as well. After unpacking some belongings, campers went with their families to the waterfront to take their swim test in order to make sure they would be safe to participate in all the waterfront activities throughout the week. Once campers passed their test, they went back to the cabin to say a final goodbye to their loved ones before joining the rest of the campers in the cabin to create a cabin cheer. After check-in was over, counselors brought their cabins to the 4:30pm all-camp meeting where they presented the cheer they had just created. At this time campers were also briefly introduced to the group of coaching staff and other staff members who worked around camp in various capacities. At 5:00pm they then went to have dinner in the dining hall, which gave them an opportunity to chat with their cabin mates and get to know one another.

The evening activities included a sport session and a recreation session. At 6:30pm, campers were dropped off at their team meeting spots where they met their two coaches for the week and teammates of the opposite sex. Coaches took their teams of campers to different locations around camp where they spent the hour and a half session playing get-to-know-you games and outlining the rules and expectations for their group. During this time counselors attended their weekly training meeting where they worked through any general announcements and engaged in educational and ongoing training activities. Campers returned to their meeting spots to be picked up by their counselors at 8:00pm and at this time the evening recreation session began. The canteen opened and campers were able to buy snacks, play on the activity decks (foosball, ping
pong, and shuffleboard), and socialize with their friends before returning to their cabin to have a campfire and s’mores with their counselors. At the Sunday evening campfire, counselors not only established expectations and guidelines with their campers, but also began to form close individual relationships with each camper. Campers then got ready for bed and lights were out by 10:30pm.

Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday were all very similar days. Campers began their day with breakfast at 8am and then attended sport sessions with their coaches from 9:15am-11:45am. These sessions included traditional sport sessions such as soccer, basketball, and football, as well as other activities like mountain biking, rock climbing at the rock block, low ropes, jetskiing and banana boating. Lunch was served at 12:00pm, followed by a camp-wide recreation event during which campers participated in challenges to gain points towards the ‘cabin of the week’ competition. From 1:00pm-3:00pm campers had ‘free’ recreation time where they were able to socialize with friends while playing at the waterfront, beach volleyball courts, basketball courts, and activity decks. During this session counselors were responsible for the campers, while coaches attended their weekly training meeting. The second sport session of the day ran from 3:00pm-5:00pm, followed by dinner, and a third sport session from 6:30pm-8:00pm. The evening recreation session began with another camp-wide challenge to gain points for cabin of the week and free recreation time until campers got ready for bed and lights out at 10:30pm.

Wednesday was the sleep-in day, followed by cabin photos in the morning and brunch at 10:45am. The first sport session began at 11:00am and ran until 1:00pm, when a snack was served and afternoon recreation time began. At this point the schedule returned to normal, with a second sport session 3:00pm-5:00pm, dinner at 5:00pm, and a third sport session 6:30pm-8:00pm. The Wednesday evening recreation was a camp-wide dance with all campers and counselors in a cabin wearing a similar outfit associated with the theme of the week, such as Superhero Week or College Sports Week. Coaches also dressed up, occasionally in group outfits and at other times with similar outfits to their campers’ cabin.

Thursday evening recreation session was the final recreation session of the week, during which campers competed in the final event to win cabin of the week. At this time, points were tallied and cabin of the week was announced. The winning cabin received special privileges to go to the canteen line first to buy snacks and won a free pizza party at the end of the evening.
Friday morning marked the final sport session, during which campers played a variety of different games that were short in duration and required minimal equipment. At the end of the session coaches provided each of their campers with certificates of achievement and cards with individualized comments. The awards sessions was divided into junior and senior divisions, during which coaches announced four award winners for each team: Most Valuable Player, Sportsmanship, Most Spirited, and Coaches’ Choice. All 12 teams were then brought together for the presentation of the team of the week award, after which campers returned to the cabins for check-out and parent pick up. Some campers stayed for weekend programming, which mainly consisted of free recreation time, a camp-wide entertainment session, movie, dance, and sport session. During check-out, campers were able to socialize with others and to go to the canteen before the programming for the following week began.

3.2.3. Data Collection

A total of 15 counselors and 15 coaches participated in start of season interviews. All 15 coaches participated in end of season interviews, while one counselor chose not to participate in a second interview, for a total of 14 end of season counselor interviews. Due to a hard drive crashing, only 13 end of season counselor interviews were transcribed. At the beginning of the season, counselor participants ranged in age from 20-24 and coaches were 22-28 years of age.

The primary source of data was interviews with staff members. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at the onset of the season (early to mid-June), as well as at the end of the season (mid-to late August). An interview guide was created for the purpose of these interviews, however interviews were loosely structured in order to create a conversational tone and to allow for probing questions to pursue different lines of inquiry as they arose (Patton, 2002). Initial interviews included questions regarding staff members’ goals for the summer season, any steps they may take to achieve these goals, staff members’ expectations of campers’ development, and predicted challenges they would face during the summer months (see Appendix A). In addition to these questions, returning staff members were asked to provide reflections of their experiences during previous summer(s), including specific instances of success or challenges with campers at the case site. Coaches were also asked to describe their focus during sport sessions (e.g., skills, tactics, fun). During the end of the season interviews, staff were asked to reflect on the summer and describe specific instances in which they witnessed examples of children’s positive
development. Returning staff members were asked to compare and contrast their experiences during the summer with those in the previous summer(s).

Additional data were collected through interviews with Master Staff (camp administrators/owners) and focus groups with older campers and CITs. Interviews with Master Staff focused on a variety of topics including overall camp mission statement and philosophy, programming goals, inherent qualities and previous experiences of staff members, and continuing education of staff while at camp. Focus groups occurred with older campers enrolled in the ‘extreme’ program. Participants were asked to describe their perceptions and experiences of personal growth and development while at camp. Some questions dealt with specific interactions with counselors and coaches, and campers may be asked to describe qualities and characteristics of leaders they found to be most desirable or undesirable. Returning campers were asked to reflect on previous summers and memorable leaders from camp. Focus groups held with CITs included questions regarding experiences of personal growth and development as a camper as well as the transition from camper to leader and what that entailed. Interview length and transcript length are detailed in the table below.
### Table 1. Overview of data collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Length (min)</th>
<th>Length (pages)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coaches</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early camp (n = 15)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late camp (n = 15)</td>
<td>Range: 30 to 69 min. ((M = 51\text{ min.}))</td>
<td>Range: 11 to 26 pages ((M = 18.3)), 274 pages total</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Range: 14 to 27 pages ((M = 18.4)), 239 pages total</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Focus Groups</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIT (n = 8)</td>
<td>Range: 70 to 73 min. ((M = 71.5\text{ min.}))</td>
<td>39 pages each, 78 pages total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior campers (n = 16)</td>
<td>Range: 27 to 43 min. ((M = 34.5\text{ min.}))</td>
<td>Range: 22 to 28 pages ((M = 25.3)), 101 pages total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Staff (n = 3)</td>
<td>Range: 25 to 45 min ((M = 35\text{ min.}))</td>
<td>Range: 11 to 15 pages ((M = 13)), 36 pages total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total = 57 participants**

### 3.2.4. Observations and Document Collection

Throughout the summer months, observations were collected and recorded via field notes. Observations described the situation observed, included factual descriptions of the setting and individuals involved, as well as the meanings of the interactions (Patton, 2002). These observations also included anecdotes from personal interactions with other staff members or campers, interactions (both verbal and nonverbal) witnessed between staff members or between staff and children (Patton, 2002), direct quotations from staff members or campers, or descriptions of examples of positive youth development. Upon witnessing these situations, field notes were recorded in a journal as quickly as possible, so as not to risk forgetting potentially important details (Patton, 2002). Training documents were also collected for analysis. During a
ten-day orientation period, a staff handbook was distributed and discussed at length with counselors and coaches. Following general training and discussion regarding camp policies and objectives, staff members were divided into role-specific groups. At this point, staff members were provided with additional handbooks outlining their role, what it entailed, and expectations for interactions with children and other staff members, both during working hours and non-working hours. These handbooks were both be collected for content analysis to examine whether staff training materials appeared to cover information related to PYD.

3.2.5. Data Analysis

Data analysis was completed with the assistance of NVivo computer software. The early stages of data analysis began with an inductive thematic analysis, followed by a deductive analysis using Lerner’s 5C framework and the NRCIM 8 setting features. As Patton (2002) explained, researchers use inductive qualitative analysis to interact with their data to discover patterns and themes relevant to the topic of study and research question. In this case, the aim of using inductive analysis was to become familiar with the data and to identify sensitizing concepts which allowed for the selection of an appropriate framework with which to deductively analyze the data. Lerner’s 5C framework was identified as appropriate to analyze campers’ growth, and specific examples and stories of campers’ experiences were analyzed and coded according to the 5Cs. The NRCIM 8 settings features were used to provide a framework with which to analyze the process of providing children with opportunities for growth and the creation of the context in which campers’ and staff growth experiences were made possible.

After initial inductive analysis, individual interviews with counselors, coaches, and Master Staff members and focus group interviews with CITs and campers were deductively analyzed within the 8 settings features framework in order to identify sub-themes. First cycle coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) occurs when a researcher examines the data for the first time and categorizes information broadly into codes. In this study, first cycle coding was used to initially place data into the 8 settings features. Relevant information was then subjected to second cycle coding, in which the researcher examines the data more closely and categorizes it into more meaningful and specific sub-themes (Miles, et al., 2014). In this study attention was directed to ensuring that all sub-themes were clearly identified and related to the 8 settings features. Field notes and documents were also deductively analyzed using the 5Cs and the NRCIM’s 8 settings features.
3.2.6. Trustworthiness Criteria

Trustworthiness was enhanced through the prolonged engagement in the research setting, participant checks (Mayan, 2009) and as Finlay (2002) suggests, a reflexivity journal (see below). Prolonged engagement requires a researcher to spend a considerable amount of time in the setting in order to avoid making grand claims based on limited exposure to the context (Mayan, 2009). Patton (2002) suggests that the amount of time required is not a prescribed amount, but rather it depends on both the purpose of the study and the questions being asked. Similarly, Creswell (2013) presented a list of eight strategies for validation in qualitative research. The eight strategies include: prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer review or debriefing, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, rich, think description, and external audits. Creswell (2013) suggests that researchers much engage in a minimum of two of these strategies in a study in order to increase the quality of their results.

As I spent a continuous two and a half months engaged in the research setting as participant as observer and asked a variety of questions, this was an indicator of trustworthiness for the study. Participant checks, often referred to as member checks, occur when the research verifies their developing interpretations of the data with the participant (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In this study, participant checks occurred at the end of counselors’ and coaches’ second interview. At this time I had previously listened to the first interviews and noted emerging themes, which I presented to the counselors and coaches as a wrap-up question in the final interviews. I asked interviewees if they agreed with my interpretations or if there were any other major themes that had been omitted. All participants agreed with my interpretations and some expanded on my early analysis of the first interviews.

Stake (1995) presented a checklist of 20 criteria to critique a case study report, while Creswell (2013) incorporated many of Stake’s (1995) initial criteria to develop six questions readers can ask to determine if a case study is of high quality. Although researchers have varying opinions as to what determines a good case study, there are a few similarities. A good case study provides a clear identification of the case with rich description, assertions and generalizations are only made if the interpretations are made with sufficient evidence, and the researcher is reflexive and acknowledges their position, intention, and biases in regards to the case study. Within the current research the bounded case was clearly identified as a residential summer sport camp located in
Pennsylvania with data collected in the summer of 2014. The camp was described in detail and a week in the life of a camper was presented in order to provide the reader with an insight into the camp environment. In the following section results will be presented based on data from varied and multiple sources, including staff interviews, senior camper focus groups, and initial training documents. All assertions were rooted in the data collected and generalizations were not made without clear evidence from participants. I maintained a reflexive journal throughout the research process, documenting my ideas and opinions; I did my best to acknowledge the influence of my biases on the process of data collection and analysis; however it is never possible to completely remove your opinions and experiences from the research process, as will be discussed later. Nevertheless, within this study I sought to satisfy the requirements for case study research presented by Stake (1995) and Creswell (2013).
Chapter 4
Results

To simplify the presentation of the results, the themes are structured using Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model (1977) and the Process-Person-Context-Time model (1999). The PPCT model is used since it includes a consideration of time as a factor for individuals’ development, and the issue of time and how it may influence a campers’ development was an important aspect of the results of this project. The PPCT model typically begins with a description of the Process of development at the individual level, followed by a description of the Person in terms of the characteristics of the child which may contribute to development, and then a consideration of the Context within which development occurs, concluding with a description of the Temporal aspects of development. This model has been adapted within the present thesis: First, findings pertaining to the Person are described with regards to the growth that campers experienced at camp. These person-level findings are categorized in terms of Lerner’s 5Cs (2005): competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion, as well as evidence for the 6th C, contribution. Secondly, the Process by which leaders provided children with opportunities to experience growth will be presented within the NRCIM’s 8 settings features framework (2002). This interpretation of the concept of Process highlights the interactions between campers and leaders (e.g., between the developing individual and their immediate surroundings) which contributed to opportunities for growth. Thirdly, the Context will be described to identify the camp environment and the management’s facilitation of the 8 settings features, and to indicate how the context enabled leaders to promote opportunities for growth among campers. Finally, the results section will conclude with a discussion of the concept of Time and how it may affect a child’s growth while at camp. Figure 1 presents a visual representation of the results section.
During their stay at camp many children experienced growth in a variety of ways. This section will present perceptions of growth reported by counselors, coaches, campers, and CITs, framed within the 5Cs framework: competence, confidence, connection, character, caring/compassion, and the 6th C of contribution.

4.1.1. Competence

Through participation in a variety of sport sessions campers could try a variety of different activities, including international sports such as cricket, rugby, and Australian Rules Football. During each session campers developed basic skills, and for those who had previous experience, expand on the skills they already had. Counselor 9 explained the growth she felt she saw in her young female campers when she said:

My kids last night did not want to play soccer at all – they stink at soccer or whatever. They came back last night and we had a soccer ball and they were kicking around the soccer ball like they were experts. I think they definitely learn how to try different things. So they’re playing cricket this session and just being open to different things that we offer here and that’s definitely pushed in sport sessions so that’s nice too.
Coach 7 explained she felt that in some cases children came with a desire to push themselves and improve on their skills. He recalled a conversation with a camper who was participating in the soccer specific program:

I was chatting to a girl in soccer … just started talking to her and I was like ‘you should challenge yourself tomorrow and kick all left foot.’ And she’s like ‘oh I did that today’ and so I asked her ‘why?’ And she goes ‘well my right foot is my strongest foot so just trying to work on my left foot.’ And I said ‘oh yeah! Do it again tomorrow!’ And she said ‘nah, it’s World Cup, I wanna win!’ … that was just one girl, she just gave herself her own little mission. The whole day she was using her left foot to strength it up.

Campers did not discuss competence during the focus group interviews, however brief references were made to their sport experiences at camp. When asked what they learned at camp, Camper 13 said, “obviously sports,” and camper 11 agreed, saying. “I always explain to my friends that I’ve never tried cricket or rugby before I came here and now I have pretty much done almost every sport.” While these comments were not direct references to becoming competent in sport skills, they illustrate how campers were aware of learning about different sports and trying new activities at camp.

CITs did not discuss competence in regards to sport skills but instead discussed their personal experiences as campers in regards to becoming competent in certain life skills. CIT 1 discussed how camp taught her how to manage her money in the canteen, while CIT 2 explained how she overcame difficulties with a speech impediment saying:

I used to really … st- st- st- … like that, really bad. And then after I came here, public speaking … I was so shy, I was scared what people would think of me. And then I just grew out of it coming here since you have to talk so much, introduce yourself to a bunch of people … I still have it a little bit – it’s never going to go away but … I’ve grown out of it so much, I would stutter in every sentence and I feel like [camp] has gotten rid of it.

4.1.2. Confidence

This was the second most common characteristic of the 5Cs discussed by the leaders (22 counselors and coaches). Campers had the opportunity to develop confidence by becoming comfortable in the camp setting, making new friends, or pushing themselves outside of their comfort zone. Coach 6 discussed the progression of a camper who was homesick throughout the week saying:
… first session when he was bawling his eyes out, wants to go home … you know he’s probably out of his comfort zone and by … Friday he was asking to stay an extra night because he didn’t want to go home … It was great to watch him grow and he’s just got more confidence in himself. He realized that he could do things on his own without mum and dad. He stepped out of his comfort zone and tried something different and in the end he loved it.

While this was a broad description of a child gaining confidence by moving outside his comfort zone at camp, Counselor 12 provided her opinion of campers who challenge themselves on the rock climbing wall:

I think they gain a lot of confidence and … I want to say self-worth. They just … it radiates from them, they … get so happy that they’ve … actually done something and they’ve accomplished it. Some kids just cry … throughout the whole thing, but those kids that actually do it come down and high five the coaches and say ‘yeah! We’ve done it!’

Leaders often discussed how it was common to see campers begin the week as quiet and reserved children but typically mid-week would ‘come out of their shell’. A few participants talked about this phenomenon and why they felt some campers experienced this. Camper 9 said:

Maybe it’s weird coming into some place like this after being in a place where you have to be something, so they don’t know how to act, but once they figure it out, I feel like everybody … comes out at some point.

CITs also discussed their personal experiences at camp and how they gained confidence to try something new, confidence in interactions with others of the opposite sex, and more general self-confidence. CIT 8 discussed how leaders at camp impacted her confidence saying: “… as well as having the confidence to go and do something new. I think that … the counselors here and just the staff in general … really provided me with the building blocks to learn those things.”

This camp had a ‘no fraternizing’ rule and campers were not able to date or become romantically or sexually involved with others at camp. CITs 6 and 8 discussed this rule and their interactions with boys at camp, saying:

CIT 8: It’s helped me so much. This has helped me so much with college.
CIT 6: … I just got out of a sport session and I look a mess, I am sweaty.
CIT 8: And if they still want to talk to you –
CIT 6: I had guys coming up talking to me and still wanted to be my friend and wanted to hang out with me … It must not all be about looks, it must mean I actually have a good personality, maybe [laughed].
CIT 8: And that taught me when I was older, respect your body. Don’t have guys pressure you into doing things because … I made so many guy friends here and it’s because of my personality and I know that. And I think that it’s really important.

Through their experiences interacting with boys in an environment where sexual activity was not permitted, the female participants gained confidence in current and future interactions with members of the opposite sex.

CITs also discussed their experiences at camp as allowing them to gain self-confidence. CIT 6 described a particularly challenging time during which she experienced high levels of self-doubt when applying for the CIT program recalling a conversation with her counselor:

… I was bawling my eyes out … and I was like ‘I’m never going to get it! There’s nothing special about me’ and she said ‘you don’t … see yourself how we see you. You are such a special person, there’s no doubt about that. You are going to get this. You are going to become a CIT because every single person here sees something special about you.’ I feel like camp helps you realize … that you are important … I think it helps you find out what it is that makes you shine.

Through this discussion with her counselor, CIT 6 gained confidence in herself and her self-worth was positively impacted. CIT 4 described a similar lesson he learned as a camper:

One big thing was really just be yourself. Honestly that was a huge thing for me … when I was young I was … a shy chubby kid. That’s who I was when I was younger and the counselors always brought the real me out of myself … I had [coach] for 5 years as a coach and he’s still my role model as a counselor today. He really helped me out, getting me out of my shell. When I come here I can do whatever. I can dress in crazy clothes … I can do crazy things, I can dance like whatever and no one judges me. But at home, it’s very different and I try to bring those mentalities back home with me, even to my friends, to college with me now.

This CIT illustrated how he gained confidence in himself at camp with the support of a coach. He explained how he continued to use the experiences at camp in his current life with his friends at college to maintain his self-confidence.

4.1.3. Connection

Connection was the most commonly discussed characteristic of the 5Cs with 23 leaders and all camper and CIT focus groups emphasizing the social growth and connections with others that campers experienced. Social growth included learning to make new friends, helping other campers integrate into camp life, and creating long-lasting friendships.
Coach 8 discussed a group of campers who came together from home saying how she thought they learned “… the ability to mix and bond with new people even though they came with such a big group … They came with 8 boys but by the end of the week the whole 20 people in the group were best friends.” Counselor 7 discussed a camper in the extreme group who was attending camp and participating in the same group as her ex-boyfriend, with whom she registered for camp while they were still together and had only recently split up with. Counselor 7 said:

She did not want to be here – did not even like looking at him and did not want to talk to us [about it]. Then to see her … thrive, make friends over the last week, to then be sad that they were leaving. To then … on Sunday, take on the leadership role of ‘oh we only have two new girls coming into the cabin, let me make sure they feel comfortable when they get here’ and kind of taking them under her wing, it’s cool to see that.

Counselor 7 explained how she felt this camper created new friendships and ultimately became a leader and initiated positive social experiences for other campers.

Campers discussed that a possible reason why children progressed in their social skills was the no cell phone policy. Campers said that although they don’t like it, they felt that it was a good policy because “it makes people more focused on other people than themselves” (Camper 10). This policy meant that campers talked to one another and made new friends as they were not able to stay in contact with friends from home while they were at camp.

Campers were asked if their favourite part about camp changed as they got older, and one camper discussed the types of friendships he made saying:

Camper 8: Your younger years you’re more focused on just playing sports you’ve never tried before and just going to have a fun time. But as you get older, you start making closer and closer friends and you stay in contact all year when you’re not in camp. You just get an opportunity to learn so much about your cabin mates and your teammates.

These participants explained that as they got older and spent more time at camp, campers began to experience different kinds of social growth as they were able to connect with peers on a different level and created friendships that were maintained outside of camp. When asked what camp meant to him, he continued to explain that the social skills he learnt at camp were transferred to his home life saying:
It’s meant an amount that I can’t really quantify because I think the entire experience has rubbed off on me so much. It’s so much easier now to see somebody in school that you’ve never really talked to before and go up to them and start a conversation with them, just be a more outgoing person.

In another focus group Camper 11 described a similar type of growth saying:

... you’re open to other people. Before I came to camp, if there was just someone sitting there, I may not have come up to them. But there could be someone here during rec time and I’ll just go and sit with them and introduce myself. And before camp I never would have done that.

As similar comments and anecdotes were present in each of the camper focus groups, it was evident that many campers felt they experienced growth in social skills and the ability to interact with a variety of different people. This type of growth transferred to other aspects of their lives as many campers discussed instances where they became friendly with their peers at school and in their hometown after their experiences at camp.

The CIT focus groups presented many of the sub-themes previously discussed however participants also emphasized that the friendships created at camp had the potential to last for a long time afterwards. The social connections individuals experienced as campers may have had an effect at that current point in time, however on occasion they also blossomed into long-lasting friendships. When asked how to describe camp to someone who had never been, one focus group participant said: “I would say you meet amazing people that you’ll never forget and you will have experiences that will change your life” (CIT 2).

4.1.4. Character

Leaders discussed the desire for campers to become better people with good values and strong character. Coach 8 said “that’s what you want – you want to send ... good citizens out in to the world to be decent human beings.” Coach 7 felt that “obviously at sport camp they’re learning good values in sport” and Coach 5 expanded on this when she said:

... the [camp] ideology, it’s … a lot different than the way that most people run their sport sessions or their coaching sessions. Obviously some - most sport coaches are there to teach skill but at the same time … there’s still a lot of emphasis on just making sure the kids are being better people by the end of the week. And while you get that sometimes with coaches [outside camp], I think that you always get that at camp. And so … the focus is on … making sure that the kids are behaving and getting along and just knowing
what the right thing is to do … that’s the focus of the week and it just happens that they get to play sports the whole time.

Although the children played sports at camp, the focus was not on creating professional athletes but rather on developing better people that were able to positively interact with others in many areas of their lives. Counselor 11 discussed one child’s two-week stay at camp and what Counselor 11 perceived to be his transformation from being concerned only about himself to helping others in the cabin:

… he wasn’t doing everything for [camper with special needs] but he was helping out and I … never would have thought that. It was just … the first week all he cared about was talking about this expensive pair of shoes he’s got and all these … just his privileged lifestyle he’s got. But by the second week, he was a good kid.

It seemed that while leaders felt they witnessed and could describe campers’ growth in character, at this point in their lives campers were less able to understand their own experiences in this domain. Camper 2, who was a four-year camper, said that he did not think camp taught him anything or that he had grown during his time at camp. He said “I dunno … I don’t really learn … I just like to come here for a good time,” while Camper 3 explained “I think I might grow and develop … when I’m here – but when I get home, it’s … back to normal,” which illustrated the challenges associated with providing campers opportunities to transfer their growth experiences to their home lives.

Alternatively, some long-term campers described their experiences at camp as having a large impact on who they were as people. Camper 5 described the impact of his camp experiences when he said “it’s … helped me grow as a person more than anything else in my life.” He continued to discuss how he transferred his experiences at camp to his home life and how they made him a better person:

I feel like one year at [camp] you get the sportsmanship but now at this point … I don’t just do that at camp. That’s how I live my entire life. Just because … I’ve been here for so long, it wouldn’t make sense for me to do it here and not do it anywhere else.

Many campers described their experiences at camp as helping them to build good sportsmanship, which refers to the ethos of playing sport with fairness and respect. This may be seen as a quality of an individual who has good character. Campers discussed the ‘theme’ of camp, or the overarching goals, including “getting involved, being upstanding”, “accepting”, “helping out”, and “being a team” (Camper 9 & Camper 11). Although campers were aware of what the goals
of camp were, it was not clear that they were able to articulate their own experiences of growth in these areas.

CITs were more eloquent in describing their experiences of growth, including growth in character, during their time at camp. CIT 5 recalled an experience she had during her final year at camp. She told a story about a camp-wide dodgeball game during which she was publicly recognized for her displays of good sportsmanship, which was something she attributed to her experiences at camp. Regarding the leader who recognized her sportsmanship she said:

... she stood up certain kids and I was one of them. She was like ‘these people, they would always clap when they got out [to recognize the opposing player’s success], even if they weren’t 100% sure they got out’ ... they always tried to teach us lessons.

Later in this interview, CIT 2 concluded “… doing this and having you asking us … all of us talking about this really made me realize what [camp] is and how it’s impacted all of our lives. It seems that although campers and CITs did not explicitly say that they built character at camp, CITs were better able to describe their experiences as ones that changed their lives, shaped them as individuals, and helped them learn valuable life lessons. These life lessons may be identified as part of an individual’s character.

4.1.5. Caring/compassion

Leaders described campers as having experiences that contributed to the development of caring and compassion for others. For example, Coach 5 described development she felt she saw in some campers who had behavioural challenges and were disruptive to the group at the beginning of the week, saying:

… they just realized how much more fun it is when you … listen to other people and you get along and you work as a team. They understood the value of just being there for each other and realized that … no, you don’t have to stand out in a big group because when you’re all putting each other first, then everyone gets an equal share of it.

Counselor 3 described a difficult situation in which one camper’s best friend had committed suicide a few weeks before the summer camp season, during which they were scheduled to return. She explained that two of the other campers attended the funeral service to support their friend “…which in itself is just amazing, that the friendships that are made here are that strong over one week that they would go and support their friend in that … horrible time.” As these campers developed strong relationships with the other girls during their time at camp the
previous summer, they cared for them and their wellbeing and felt that they should support their friend during a time of need.

In the camper focus groups there was not much evidence for campers’ awareness of the development of caring or compassion during their time at camp, however a few general comments were made regarding this developmental outcome. Camper 15 discussed how he felt camp changed him, saying:

It made me appreciate people more because I only get to see them once a year and once I’m here … it really gives me the feeling that I’m glad to know certain people.

Camper 8 discussed the types of things he felt camp taught children, saying “… every year you sort of reiterate the same thing … be respectful to everybody, be kind, have fun, that sort of thing.” It seemed that while campers themselves did not discuss many of their own experiences of growth in caring and compassion, they understood that camp was a place to learn to be respectful and appreciate others.

CITs discussed their own experiences of growth in caring and compassion as campers and witnessing their peers’ experiences of growth in this domain. CIT 4 said he learned:

How to treat people equally … [discussing interactions with a peer with special needs] I just remember learning just in that few weeks that it’s just … you really have to treat him so well. We always tried to involve him with everything. The whole cabin would just try to pick him up and keep trying to push him to do stuff and it just, it really is a humbling experience – having a camper like that.

The same participant continued to discuss growth he felt this peer with special needs experienced, saying:

I think [camp] just showed him that people don’t really care about your disabilities … I still talk to him and you can just see how he’s matured … he tried to apply for the CIT position but unfortunately he didn’t get it but … he was so respectful about it. He talked to me ’cause I applied the same year. He was like ‘I’m so proud of you for getting it, congratulations.’ And it showed that he really cared and he was very responsible about it.

This anecdote showed that through his experiences at camp and integrating with a variety of people, it was perceived that this camper learned how to respect others and their accomplishments, regardless of his own situation. CIT 6 considered how campers may develop an awareness of others during their time at camp:
CIT 6: Maybe he had a kid like [camper with special needs] in his cabin and he learned … not everybody is the same. That’s going to stay with him for the rest of his life. Or maybe he had two foreign counselors and he realized, ‘hey, people are different all over the world, that’s fine’ and that will stay with him for the rest of his life.

During their time at camp, children had the opportunity to develop a sense of awareness and respect for others who were different from them. Although this development may have been a more general sense of compassion for others, there were also specific instances where CITs witnessed examples of campers displaying caring and compassion for their peers. CIT 2 recalled one instance saying:

… this past week I had a camper who I had my very first year as a CIT … my first year she was a really sassy girl, she had a bad mouth. But this year … since it’s her third year … you can see them, how they change. She was helping out girls who were homesick. She would write little notes to me and she’s like … ‘[camper] is feeling a little homesick so I was trying to help her out, I hope that was okay.’ So she goes out of her way to do something. It’s … how she’s changed, her first year she would never have done that. And now … when I see her develop – it’s just a great feeling.

During her time at camp this child seemed to develop a sense of compassion for others and wanted to help other campers through challenging times.

### 4.1.6. Contribution

Contribution was evident among CITs as they described their reasons for wanting to become a CIT. Without prompting, CITs said “… I honestly love being able to work with kids and help them … have the same experience that I did. That’s really rewarding” (CIT 8), and “… this was my safe place. This was where I could get away from everything and I just wanted to give that chance to another camper” (CIT 6). These comments showed the impact camp had on many CITs and how it shaped their desire to give back to the camp itself, as well as to create positive experiences for other children.

Contribution was also seen among children who were current campers. Counselor 8 discussed some senior female campers who were applying to become CITs when she said:

… all these girls that have been so impacted by here and by it’s positivity and the values that it stands for … I think end up being better people at home and come here … as such good kids. And want to come back to give that experience to others.
Coach 1 discussed how he felt some children contributed by helping other children while still a camper themselves, saying:

… the best is when you see someone … we talk about supporting each other and then someone actually goes out of their way and then stands up with a kid, another camper – a camper and a camper and they’ve either helped them with a technique, saying ‘you’re doing this wrong’ or not doing it wrong but ‘you can do this’ or you know, to cheer them up.

These examples illustrate how some children began to display contribution in different forms while they were still a camper, to put into practice the lessons and values they learned at camp.

Although it was not discussed at length, current campers were also aware of their ability in the extreme camp group to contribute to help shape younger campers’ experiences:

Camper 10: It makes it more like a role model thing.

These senior campers were aware of their status as role models for younger campers, they had multiple years of previous experience at camp where they had opportunities to develop competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion, and were thus in an ideal position to give back to camp and take the next step in becoming a leader for other campers.

Camper 11 expanded on contribution saying:

I think it’s a lot about what you learn, you then pass on … So everything over the four years I’ve been here, if I want to become a CIT I could then pass it on to other campers … I think it’s important because when campers come here … they, especially new people, they don’t know the place, they’re … they could be lost, but you’ve been here for so long that you know all the … places to go, things to do, ‘oh during rec time we go to the blob’, things like that. And you could give them helpful hints along the way.

Support from other senior campers and CITs allowed new campers to feel comfortable in the unfamiliar environment and to begin to experience a wide range of growth experiences similar to those the campers before them experienced.

4.2. Process: Leaders’ Facilitation of PYD

Although the overall camp structure and environment was developed in previous years and reinforced each summer through program replication and pre-established camp rules, it was the leaders that had a primary role in creating the feel and ‘vibe’ of the camp each season. Within the
PPCT model, the leaders facilitated the process of creating growth experiences for campers. Evidence from leaders will be presented within the NRCIM 8 settings features framework (see Appendix B).

4.2.1. Physical and psychological safety

The environment of this particular residential sport camp was described as safe and welcoming for all campers. Many leaders highlighted the fact that no matter who campers were, they were welcomed and supported in all that they did. When asked about their roles, counselors referred to a phrase discussed during orientation – ‘in loco parentis,’ meaning ‘in the place of parents.’ They acknowledged that they needed to create a welcoming and friendly environment and that their duty was to ensure the campers’ safety during their time at camp. Counselor 2 explained: “it’s a safe environment, a place for them to be themselves.” Coaches also perceived that leaders were there to ensure the campers’ safety both physically and psychologically. Coach 5 described camp as positive and said “it’s a happy place. They come here, they get to do what they want. It’s a safe place so they know that … they’re going to be safe with their counselors and coaches. They’re going to be respected.”

4.2.2. Appropriate structure

In this summer sport camp setting youth leaders had a variety of different opportunities to structure the programs, activities, and social interactions for the developmental levels of cabins and teams, as well as for individual campers within these groups.

4.2.2.1. How leaders implemented appropriate structure

Leaders provided appropriate structure by structuring activities to include campers with special needs, choosing age appropriate activities for their groups, and by engaging in appropriate social interactions with campers.

4.2.2.1.1. Inclusion of campers with special needs

Although this summer sport camp was not specifically designed for campers with special needs, it was not unusual for children with developmental or physical disabilities to attend camp. As discussed previously, these campers also had opportunities to experience growth at camp. One camper who had ADHD and other behavioural issues attended camp for a few summers and he
returned the past season for two weeks. His counselor discussed choosing activities for the group based on their appropriateness for this specific camper, and whether they would be suitable for his cognitive abilities and attention level. In order to integrate him into the group socially, Counselor 11 played simple card games with the campers until the child with ADHD began to engage with other campers. By showing the group that this camper could be social and interact with the others, the leader then implemented more challenging activities for the group, including this camper with special needs. Coaches had the additional task of facilitating sport sessions that were inclusive of campers with physical disabilities. Coach 1 said “last week we had a ... girl that ... had struggled with sight. So we adapted stuff, we did blind sports, just trying to encourage everyone [to participate]”. By structuring the session with activities that were inclusive for every child on this team (blind sports) and by encouraging all campers to participate, this leader appeared to understand the need to include all the campers and provide opportunities for belonging within the team.

4.2.2.1.2. Age appropriate activities

Throughout the interviews it was clear that many counselors understood the importance of selecting games that were appropriate for different age groups. Counselors appeared to understand the need to assess a group’s maturity when choosing how to structure their activities. Counselor 7 said “it just changes I think based on the kids too, even having the same age you just kind of feel how they are as campers and work kind of to what they like and what they need.” Counselors discussed that an activity played with the youngest group of campers would not be interesting or engaging for an older group. For example, if an activity that was suited for older campers was played with a younger group, children may not understand the instructions and they may stop paying attention and instead begin to distract the other campers, creating a challenging situation for the leaders.

It was also important to allow campers choice in order for them to be successful. During week 3 of the camp season, observations were made of Coach 1 with a camper who was scared of heights at the climbing tower. The coach cheered him on, was supportive, and provided the camper with options to complete the course based on his ability level and his emotional state. He told the camper that he could finish the medium challenge wall, he could move to a less challenging wall, or he could ask the staff to belay him down to the bottom. The coach provided multiple options and encouraged the camper to do what was best for him. Through this
observation, it was clear that the coach understood the importance of providing individual campers with choices in activities based on their abilities and needs.

4.2.2.1.3. Appropriate social interactions with campers

Counselors were constantly engaging in interactions with campers throughout the day and these social interactions needed to be appropriate for the development of the child. Counselor 7 explained how she gauged the type of interactions required with different campers: “You could have the most mature 9 year old that wants nothing to do with you and give them their freedom, and then you could have the most immature 15 year old that needs all the attention.” Leaders informally assessed each child’s needs and determined ways to interact with them that were sensitive to their developmental needs and maturity levels.

Most of the social interactions between coaches and campers occurred on the walk to and from fields and activities. Through observations of Coach 11 interacting with campers of different ages throughout the summer, it was clear that she asked younger campers simpler questions (e.g.; What’s your favourite sport?) to engage them in conversation, while she asked older campers to expand on their responses, ensuring each type of conversation was appropriate for the campers’ developmental levels.

4.2.2.2. Why leaders implemented appropriate structure

Appropriate structure was used to prevent behavioural issues, to promote developmental outcomes, and to provide campers with a sense of enjoyment.

4.2.2.2.1. Prevent behavioural issues

Counselors were not primarily responsible for campers during sport sessions throughout the day however they still needed to keep campers occupied during downtime between sessions and activities. Many counselors were prepared with quick games and activities that were easy to explain so that campers were engaged and did not become distracting to other groups or create behavioural management challenges for leaders. Counselor 6 discussed how she would play “even a quick game of Look Up, Look Down, just so you’re not waiting around and sitting there.” Using these activities allowed leaders to focus on other reasons for appropriately structuring their activities, such as promoting developmental outcomes and fostering a sense of fun and enjoyment for campers.
4.2.2.2.2. Promote developmental outcomes

Coaches discussed the importance of selecting activities that would foster developmentally appropriate outcomes and goals. Depending on the campers’ physical abilities and maturity levels, the goals of the session changed. Coach 6 said:

I think with the little kids, you’re definitely looking at the little things … you’re trying to promote sportsmanship, you’re trying to promote teamwork … just in the general sense of playing as a team and working with people, I think with the older kids its more about learning to do that and linking that with life and working in … the real world … Just bigger picture for the older kids.

4.2.2.2.3. Promote a sense of fun and enjoyment

Coaches had the responsibility of developing and selecting games and activities to play with their team throughout three daily sport sessions. Coaches perceived that at summer camp it was important that the activities engaged campers on both a physical and social level and that these sessions were not structured like a traditional physical education class with multiple drills and relays. The coaches discussed that summer camp was a different environment to school and therefore sport leaders needed to:

… just make stuff different. Don’t just play the same games you play again and again. If you do, just twist them, make it so they think they’re playing a different game … just do stuff that’s … makes it interesting for them, just make stuff a bit … different, don’t make it like a PE lesson, don’t … just let them be silly, just let them have a laugh. (Coach 12)

4.2.3. Supportive relationships

This feature was discussed by all the counselors and coaches. It was clear that the leaders at camp understood the importance of creating an environment of supportive relationships in order to help children thrive and succeed. Sub-themes within this feature were: facilitating campers’ relationships with each other, making connections with individual campers, and the distinction of friendship versus respect and authority. There was also evidence that the campers’ relationships with counselors were stronger than their relationships with coaches; however coaches had the opportunity to support campers outside their comfort zones.

4.2.3.1. Facilitating campers’ relationships with each other

This theme was discussed both by counselors and coaches. Some counselors explained that on occasion they used outgoing campers as facilitators to create friendships for more reserved or
shy children. Counselor 3 described an instance where a camper’s parents described their teenage daughter as anxious and unwilling to come to camp. The counselors tried to help facilitate her relationships with others:

… there was another camper who was by themselves and … we kind of tried to match them up together, also talking to some of the campers who were very outgoing … 6, 7 year campers who really knew the place and were just stellar campers … we decided to talk to some of the campers and say ‘[camper] is by herself … think about how you would feel if you were here alone and … we know that you are … the best person to show her what camp is all about’ – just using the other campers to help her into the group … was really effective. (Counselor 3)

As some campers may not have been immediately socially accepted within the group coaches also made attempts to facilitate campers’ relationships with one another in their teams. Coach 5 explained, “if a girl is ‘weird’ and not getting along with the kids, it’s a matter of going out of your way to find some way for that camper to make a connection with someone.”

Leaders also used the scheduled activities in the extreme program to facilitate stronger bonds between campers. This program focused on team building activities and events, such as competing against the coaching staff in a dodgeball game and an end of the week campfire where campers were able to share their experiences at camp and how these experiences affected other areas of their lives. Campers often became emotional sharing their feelings and experiences with each other in this intimate setting. As a result, they created strong bonds with one another throughout the week and often maintained these friendships outside of the camp environment. These emotionally sensitive activities would not be appropriate for younger campers’ maturity levels and therefore were only included in the program for older campers.

4.3.2.2. Making connections with individual campers

Counselors and coaches both discussed how they tried to make connections with individual campers. Counselor 3 explained:

One of my goals is just to make their experience special so trying to really have one on one time with all the kids or at least be with each of them having conversations each day so they know that I value them as a part of the cabin.

As counselors spent a significant amount of time with campers during unstructured time, they had more time to speak with each camper individually and get to know them on a personal level.
As much of the time that coaches spent with campers was occupied with sport and activity instruction, these leaders did not have as many opportunities to engage in conversations with campers and to get to know them personally. Coach 4 explained his strategy to do so:

I always try and make an effort, say even within the Sunday session [first session] to walk with them individually, each on the way to the session or at the meeting spot. Just ask simple things like what sports they play, where ya from, are you going on vacation … it takes the edge off things. Cause they’re going to be nervous to meet you as well so they don’t know what to expect from you. If they see that you’re approachable and they like you then they’re gonna wanna do that [speak with you] … I know a lot of people probably do that as well and it just seems to work for me.

Although leaders tried to develop individual connections with campers, they also reported some challenges with doing so. Coach 4 explained how he faced challenges in his last week of coaching: “this week I don’t think they respect me as much as the older kids and it’s harder for me to… to discipline them - not discipline, but to get them to listen.” He explained that he was working with younger campers and he found it challenging to create a close relationship with them since he was not used to interacting with campers of that age and therefore he was facing difficulties maintaining a sense of control with the group. It was clear that the coaching staff understood the value and importance of the close, personal connections that they created with campers and how these relationships were beneficial for campers and leaders.

4.3.2.3. Friendship versus respect and authority

Some leaders, especially those who worked with older campers, explained that they found it challenging on occasion to maintain the distinction between creating a friendship with their campers and establishing their authority or gaining respect from their campers. Counselor 8 was identified by staff as someone who was successfully able to find a balance between being friendly with her campers while still maintaining an authoritative role. Many people admired her ability to gain campers’ respect quickly and keep control of the group while still acting crazy, silly, and weird with all campers. Counselor 8 expanded on this concept when she explained her counselling style:

I am a very laid back counselor that still enforces all the rules within a very friendly manner. I like to… become… friends with my campers pretty early on and just show them that I’m here to have fun and… to be weird. But in a way that I still get respect and [I] play that line pretty carefully. I don’t let much slip by and they know that.
4.3.2.4. **Stronger counselor-camper relationships than coach-camper relationships**

Coaches and counselors both discussed that counselors may have had the ability to create stronger relationships with the children than the coaches. Counselor 4 explained why she felt this might be:

… just because we have that freedom at like, 10pm right before lights out to talk to them and just get to know them as human beings. It’s not that the coaches can’t or won’t … I think it’s just they’re not given that opportunity to sit down and formally get to know them on like a basic level, like their favourite colour, their dog’s name, all that random stuff that makes the kid happy that you know.

With this stronger connection, the counselors may have had the ability to more positively influence their campers. Coach 3 explained how he felt that “you’re going to be able to positively influence a child the better a relationship you have with them. And I think the counselors always have the best relationships.” As coaches were responsible for planning and instructing sport sessions they did not have as many opportunities to interact with campers and develop strong connections with them during unstructured time as the counselors may have done, however coaches seized other opportunities to create supportive relationships, such as being there for campers as they moved outside their comfort zone.

4.3.2.5. **Supporting campers outside their comfort zone**

Camp was a challenging time for many children as they were faced with opportunities to move outside their social, emotional, and physical comfort zones. This may have included moving outside their social comfort zone by meeting new people and making new friends, moving outside their personal comfort zone by becoming more independent from their parents and doing things for themselves, or even leaving their physical comfort zone by trying new games and activities. The most common example was moving outside their physical comfort zone by trying new games and activities, such as at the waterfront and climbing tower. Only coaches discussed this theme, possibly because counselors were not with campers during sport sessions, when campers typically faced their fears in these locations. Coach 9 said:

[You see it] at the climbing tower all the time … kids will get halfway up and they’ll look down at you and be like … ‘I wanna come down’. And then you have to be like, ‘don’t you think you can go a little bit further?’ [They respond] ‘not really …’ but they always do and they always finish it … I remember a girl coming down and … saying ‘thank you
so much’ and in her evaluation writing ‘[coach] was super supportive and helped me up the rock wall,’ which obviously was something she remembered a week later, so … pushing you out of your comfort zone is something that you do remember and you will take with you.

### 4.2.4. Opportunities to belong

The NRCIM (2002) described ‘opportunities to belong’ as an environment in which children feel free to be their own, individual self. Counselors and coaches highlighted the fact that any and all children, regardless of their sporting ability were accepted at camp. Counselors mostly discussed accepting children’s differences, while coaches related this concept to sport sessions.

This camp selected a theme of the week to guide all events and activities throughout the week during which all cabins identified as a specific group within the theme. Counselors were given the flexibility to select a group that they felt suited the cabin of campers they had. For example, during ‘Pro-Sports Week’ most cabins chose a sport such as baseball, football, or hockey, while Counselor 9 discussed her cabin’s choice to be the ‘spelling bee.’ She said:

> I think it was how we definitely introduced the week. So we said we were going to do something different so right off the bat, in a deeper meaning if you want to really think into it, were doing something different and we were accepting ‘oh it’s okay to be different.’

This counselor wanted to ensure that all campers felt accepted, even if some of the girls didn’t fit in to the traditional conceptions of the Pro-Sports theme of the week. Many coaches discussed opportunities to belong in relation to campers’ self-belief and sense of belonging not only at camp, but in the broader world as well. Coach 11 said, “I definitely want them to feel ... to believe in themselves. To know that they can be who they want to be.”

### 4.2.5. Positive social norms

The feature of positive social norms refers to the concept that an example of what is socially accepted in a specific environment should be present (NRCIM, 2002). This residential summer camp was sometimes referred to as a ‘bubble’ which contained different social norms than those in other environments. As some campers, specifically first-time campers, may not have been aware of what the socially accepted behaviours were in this particular environment, it was important that there were multiple examples of these social norms available for all campers. Counselors and coaches both identified three sub-themes including: teaching and reinforcing
good behaviours, including publicly acknowledging these behaviours and providing positive reinforcement and praise, and staff acting as role models for campers. It is important to note that all references to positive social norms are based on the idea of campers’ and leaders’ social modelling of appropriate behaviours.

4.2.5.1. Teaching and reinforcing good behaviours

Counselors discussed the need to explicitly teach positive behaviours early on in the week, such as saying ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ to food service staff, respecting other campers’ property, and cleaning up after yourself in the cabin. If campers were not explicitly told the rules and expectations at camp, they would not have been aware of when they were behaving inappropriately. Counselors explained that they often strategically identified well-behaved campers as exemplars to remind misbehaving campers of what was expected. The hope was that the campers would shift their behaviours to be in accordance with what was socially accepted at camp: Counselor 4 explained this technique:

If I do have a problem with something that somebody’s doing, I call on the kid who is doing something right, like ‘thanks for X, Y, Z’ so that way I don’t have to say ‘no don’t do that’ [to the misbehaving camper]. I’m being conscious of who is doing what I need them to do right now and thanking them for that.

By focusing on campers’ strengths rather than weaknesses and publicly identifying displays of good behaviour, this counselor used a fundamental principle of PYD.

Coaches also understood the need to explicitly discuss positive behaviours. Coach 6 said:

I think that’s probably our role, to promote those sorts of behaviours that we want to see them develop. I think that’s one of the most important parts of the session, to finish, debrief, break it down. When you’re really trying to teach them sportsmanship, highlight someone: they took themselves out of the game, it was really good to see.

This coach understood that teaching positive social norms was most effective when he spoke with the group about what the norms were and how they were displayed in a session. By making specific and public comments identifying children who were displaying these behaviours, leaders felt that campers’ attention was directed towards the positive behaviours displayed and that campers were then more likely to behave in similar ways. Coach 3 explained:

Sportsmanship’s a big one. We always - I always try and not call them out for bad sportsmanship, praise them for good sportsmanship. So rather than sit them down at the
end and say ‘your sportsmanship was bad,’ sit them down and say ‘there’s a couple of people out there showing really good sportsmanship. If we could all bring it up to that level that would be amazing.

These comments highlighted characteristics reflective of PYD, in that strengths and positive behaviours were reinforced and highly regarded while negative behaviours were de-emphasized.

Leaders also had the opportunity to explicitly state to campers when they were behaving poorly, although this was not common and it typically occurred with older campers, especially those who had been to camp in previous summers and were aware of the social norms expected in this environment. Counselor 8 was observed speaking with a group of older girls on the way back to their cabin. She said: “I know you guys are friends and that’s how you act at home but you are setting a terrible example for the little kids and you can’t be doing that.” The counselor was reminding the campers of their statuses as role models for younger campers. They were not punished for their poor behaviour but instead reminded of the expectations as returning campers.

4.2.5.2. Staff as role models

Many staff were aware of their status as role models for campers and understood that at all times campers were looking to them for cues as to what the socially accepted behaviours were.

Counselor 7 described the role staff played in modelling social norms:

We play a huge role I think. In the way we carry ourselves, just how we are as people that people tend to look up to others and act based on what they see and so I think that says a lot … I think it’s us.

Coach 10 discussed that due to the fact that staff were hired internationally and with a range of previous life experiences, in this specific camp environment all children could identify with a staff member. He explained how he felt all campers came to understand how to behave at camp:

It’s obviously to do with the leaders that are here. I think there are diff – there are a lot of leaders that are here. A lot of very, very good role models that get selected as being staff members. They’re not all the same sort of role models, I think it shows the kids that you can be your own sort of person, but you don’t have to be … A, B, and C. You can be Z and you can still be a good person or a good leader.

4.2.6. Support for efficacy and mattering

This feature emphasizes the importance of ensuring every child felt that they were an important and respected member of the group (NRCIM, 2002). Within this camp setting, each camper was
a member of two distinct groups: a cabin and a sports team. The respective group leaders had many opportunities to facilitate a sense of efficacy and mattering for all campers. Within the leader interviews two sub-themes emerged: counselors and coaches provided campers with specific roles and the informal and formal recognition of campers’ appropriate behaviours.

4.2.6.1. Providing campers with special roles

Although counselors did not routinely play large games or activities with their cabins, they selected children to participate in twice-daily camp-wide recreation events during which one and four campers from each cabin had the opportunity to participate in a challenge to gain points for their cabin. Some counselors used this opportunity to provide specific campers with support for efficacy and mattering. Counselor 6 explained, “let’s say someone seemed kind of left out or seemed kind of upset about something, whatever number they guess I’ll be like ‘oh yeah, that was it! You get to do it!’” She continued to describe that other campers became more social with the event participant and included them in the group more, thus providing the camper with additional support from their peers.

Coaches described this sub-theme in relation to how they organized their sport sessions, more specifically by using team-building activities to ensure that all campers were contributing to their group and providing some campers with leadership roles within these activities. As explained by Coach 9, these games were ones that “… you actually physically and emotionally cannot win … without someone else’s help. You need everyone on the team.” Coaches used these games as tools to provide the group with a sense of unity and to give each camper a feeling of importance within the team. Coach 2 said, “I do like to impress on my teams that everyone has something to give. And everyone … no mater how big or small their contribution is … the group or the team would not be the same without everyone in it.”

4.2.6.2. Informal and formal recognition of appropriate behaviours

Support for efficacy and mattering was also developed through more formal, structured rewards for campers’ displays of positive behaviours. Rewards included the presentation of the flag after each session to the ‘stand-out camper’ as well as the camp-wide presentation of awards for ‘sportsmanship’, ‘most spirited’, ‘MVP’, and ‘coaches’ choice’ for each of the 12 teams at the end of the week. Coach 13 emphasized that leaders should have selected a variety of campers for
these recognitions, as the formal, public reward would encourage the camper to repeat these behaviours.

It’s good to reward kids that aren’t the obvious choice. Because if they’re the obvious choice, they’re doing everything right, then they will more than likely get praised often. But if you see a couple of kids who ... are in the background and they’re doing it here and there, but you know you can get them to do better ... if you reward them, then automatically they’re going to do it more and more.

Counselors did not have the same opportunity for formal recognition of campers’ behaviours, however they often verbally praised campers for positive behaviours, thus supporting children’s sense of efficacy and mattering. Counselor 11 described his experiences with a camper with special needs, who, he felt, after two weeks was beginning to display socially accepted behaviours: “He was leading the chants, he made up his own cheer… which was really good and we gave him loads of positive praise for that.” The counselor’s praise may have allowed this camper to feel that his contributions to the group (e.g., making up a group cheer) were important and mattered to the overall camp experience for himself and others in his group.

4.2.7. Opportunities for skill building

Summer camp was an environment where children had many chances to build a variety of skills or learn transferrable lessons. Although counselors and coaches both discussed how they attempted to create these skill building opportunities for their campers, it seemed that coaches had a much larger role in providing these potential opportunities for campers’ skill building. Coaches discussed creating opportunities to learn life lessons, developing sportsmanship and teamwork, developing physical or sport skills, and opportunities for self-improvement or identity discovery, while counselors only discussed life lessons and self-improvement or identity discovery.

4.2.7.1. Life lessons

Counselors often described life lessons in regards to social growth and interactions between campers. Counselor 6 discussed an instance when one camper was being left out of group conversations and she and her co-counselor made the conscious decision to “wait half an hour and see how it played out … to see if she sticks up for herself … and learn how to [engage with the group].” If the camper had been unsuccessful, the counselor explained that she would have
stepped in to remedy the situation although ultimately, the child managed to engage with the

Coaches, however, discussed life lessons learned through sporting experiences and how they had

Coaches identified this sports camp as a place where campers could learn to lose gracefully, which was a valuable lesson that may be applied to other areas of their lives. Coach 7 explained:

I like to tell them at the end of the day it’s a game … you can win a game, it’s great, it’s fun. You can lose a game, but when you lose you gotta learn from what mistakes you’ve made or learn from a better team.

He told his campers that when you lost, it was an opportunity to reflect on what happened and to better yourself as a player and a team. Losing gracefully was possible when athletes were able to positively work with their team and display sportsmanship.

4.2.7.2. Sportsmanship and teamwork

As coaching staff worked with the kids during sport sessions, they had more opportunities to help campers develop sportsmanship and teamwork. A returning coach, discussed the importance of the coaches’ roles within the team when he said:

…it probably comes back to the coaches, you know providing those opportunities to help them learn their skills - their sportsmanship, putting an emphasis on it at the start of the week and really promoting it throughout the week. I think if [coaches] slack on that, the kids aren’t going to know what they’re working towards and as a result probably won’t get anything out of it. (Coach 6)

The quote supports the notion that the sport leaders needed to make their expectations of behaviour clear at the beginning of the week and select games and activities that provided the campers with opportunity to display these positive behaviours throughout the sport sessions.

4.2.7.3. Physical or sport skills

Campers had a wide range of skill levels in each sport at camp and coaches created their programs and sessions accordingly. Coach 11 explained how she felt that some campers learnt new sport skills during their time at camp:
… the older kids, they tend to be a lot more focused on [the coaches] actually teaching them the sport and the skills cause they want to learn, and the younger kids may struggle with the basic skills like actually catching a ball.

She mentioned that in these cases, it was important to work individually with campers so that they received specific instructions on how to improve their basic sport skills.

At this camp coaches were encouraged to create games of their own to play with their groups. Coach 1 and Coach 8 were observed playing a version of ‘Quidditch’ with their campers and as many campers did not have previous experience playing a game of that sort they were consequently developing new physical skills together.

4.2.7.4. Self-improvement or identity discovery

Leaders also helped to facilitate children’s self-improvement or identity discovery while at camp. Counselor 11 witnessed a child’s social growth when he described a situation in which a camper was staying for two weeks in his cabin and in the first week the camper acted as a poor role model for other campers. The counselor recounted a conversation he had with the camper before his second week:

I was like ‘look mate, we can put you in another cabin with the older kids and you’d be the youngest one. A lot of the younger ones here, they look up to you and you’re fully aware of that.’ And he said ‘no no no, I’ll just stay in this one.’ So I was like ‘right okay, well just keep in mind how you are the oldest here and a lot of them look up to you.’ And then the second week, he started to help using that figurative role that he had.

This anecdote supports the concept that counselors had the chance to shape a child’s opportunity for self-improvement by reframing their thoughts surrounding a situation. This counselor explicitly told the camper that he had the potential to be a leader for other campers and that he hoped he would use this opportunity to act as a leader, and subsequently the camper behaved more appropriately the following week.

Coaches felt that the campers’ potential for self-improvement or identity discovery was related to the way the sport sessions were structured and presented. Coach 1 explained how a leader’s coaching style shaped the types of opportunities provided to the campers. He explained that if coaches used a self-discovery teaching style by asking campers questions and leaving them to discover responses on their own, the potential for growth was increased. Coach 1 said:
...the older ones, you always kind of try to help them self discover things. They are the older learners, you want them to try to push themselves, help discover who they are by using leadership roles, help them communicate, do different things in situations where they can learn... a new experience.

Leaders also discussed that campers had the opportunity to attend to camp and experiment with or discover different aspects of their identity. Counselor 7 explained:

You’re raised with the same group of people until you’re 18 years old and once you’re kind of pegged as [a type of] person, it’s harder to break out of that mould. Whether or not that’s what you fit or that’s what you want to fit. And I think camp is a great place to ... try out who you want to be and ... build off that so that you could kind of go home and become that. Because some kids come here with 20 friends, others come here with none and sometimes it’s nice for them to kind of, not know anyone but try it out.

When prompted about why some campers felt able to do this, Counselor 7 explained: “I think it’s the environment that the staff kind of uphold and foster the positivity of everything, that people feel comfortable enough that they can do that.”

4.2.8. Integration of family, school, and community efforts

Summer camp, and specifically a residential summer camp, may be seen as a community unto itself with the child’s multiple youth leaders acting as important adults in this child’s life. Some leaders attempted to provide campers with opportunities to think of how they could integrate their camp experiences and their experiences from camp into their everyday lives at home, although this was challenging for some. This included for example, positively reinforcing the child’s successes at camp and identifying how the camper could transfer their new skills to other programs they participated in or in their social interactions with peers at school.

Coaches expressed their desire for campers to take the skills and values they learnt during sport sessions and to apply them in their everyday lives at home. As sport leaders seemed to have more opportunities to witness campers’ displays of teamwork, sportsmanship, and respect throughout the activities during sessions, five coaches described instances of integration of family, school, and community efforts. Coach 3 said:

It shouldn’t end here! I don’t want kids to say ‘oh you know, this is one week out and then I’ll go back to how I normally am.’ Take things like respect, sportsmanship, inclusion ... take all that back with you and just don’t, don’t turn it off.
This specific camp did not have a parents’ visitation day, however counselors said that they often discussed campers’ activities with their parents upon pick up. Some counselors explained the importance of making notes of each child’s achievements throughout the week so that they were better prepared to share these with the campers’ parents. Counselor 9 provided a story about a young female camper who won a camp wide recreation event. She explained:

… she was saying how she’s the youngest sibling and all her siblings are older, they’re in college and sometimes she feels like … when you’re that younger sibling and all your siblings are in college, you get away with a lot more and she just felt like her parents didn’t pay attention to her. So when I told her mom [about her daughter’s accomplishment] and her mom was ... paying attention to her and all that stuff, that was a warm feeling just because … it was like a good little win moment for her cause she got to show off in front of her parents.

4.3. Context: Management Facilitation of PYD

Master Staff had a role in developing the context of the camp to enable the leaders to deliver positive developmental experiences for campers. This was done by reinforcing the positive atmosphere over time, through initial staff training, and through the continual development of staff program/meetings (CDOS). Results in this section are presented regarding Master Staff facilitation of the 8 settings features, drawing on data from counselors, coaches, three Master Staff interviews (two Athletic Directors, one Staffing Director), and training documents. See Appendix C for an outline of the 8 settings features and sub-themes for this section.

4.3.1. Physical and psychological safety.

As previously mentioned, a guiding statement for the role of the leaders was given to all staff at the beginning of the summer training - ‘in loco parentis’, meaning ‘in the place of parents.’ The Camp Director often referred to this phrase throughout the summer, discussing how as caregivers at camp, the expectation was that campers would be returned to their parents in as good a condition or a better condition than when they were dropped off. This phrase served to remind staff to ensure that they provided a physically and psychologically safe environment to support campers’ growth and development as well as their own growth and development. Sub-themes include the provision of campers’ physical and emotional safety, the prevention of social cruelty and mental abuse, and a safe environment for staff to grow.
4.3.1.1. Campers’ physical and emotional safety

In order for children to experience opportunities for growth, it was important that campers were in a physically safe environment, away from any dangerous situations. Athletic Director 2 explained that physical safety was the foundation of a learning experience for campers when she said: “Safety is the number one priority … being able to balance having fun and being safe while learning lessons.” Within training documents it was also evident that the camp directors felt safety was extremely important. On the first page of the staff handbook it said: “[Campers] are our customers to please, to make happy and keep safe.” A few pages later, it continued to say: “… we are … all aiming for the same goal of providing our campers with a safe and great experience.” Within the Staff Code of Conduct and Rules, the first rule was “Follow all camp rules and enforce all camp rules” with a second rule of “Safety”: “Place the campers’ safety and well-being first at all times. Staff members must understand that our campers’ needs for health, safety, and happiness come first!” Similar statements regarding campers’ physical safety occurred multiple times in the counselor and coach handbooks. It was clear that campers’ physical safety was the foundation for growth and learning experiences for all campers that attended.

Some campers experienced emotionally challenging times in their home lives, either before they attended camp or during their time at camp. The leaders said that the camp environment provided children with a safe haven or a place for them to escape from what was happening in their home lives. For example, Counselor 7 discussed one camper whose mother passed away from cancer while she was at camp and Counselor 10 explained another situation where a camper’s best friend died while he was at camp, both of which were challenging situations for the campers.

One camper typically attended each summer with her best friend and this current summer the two were going to be participating in the ‘extreme camp’ for the second time together. Unfortunately a few weeks before the summer began her best friend committed suicide. After some deliberation, the camper decided to attend camp without her friend. All staff members who would be working with her, and those who knew the girls from previous summers, were made aware of the situation. Coach 2 worked with her one week and he described the situation:

… someone who has had … such an atrocious thing happen to them but be able to come here and just be normal for two weeks, um … every session that we had in the all sports field, she’d go up to the tree and she would be there for a little bit and she would come
join the group. We were made well aware of her situation and everything like that but... just... again, that comfortable environment - that environment where you’re safe... no matter what’s going on outside of camp, you can come here and you just are. It’s a really nice thing.

As the camp directors were aware of what this camp meant to the camper and her friend, they arranged to plant a tree at one of the sports fields in her memory. As Coach 2 described, when this camper’s group went to the field, she would go and spend some time at the tree before joining the group. This was a safe place for her to spend time healing and remembering her friend. As this camper was leaving, she wrote a letter to her “camp family.” The following is an excerpt from the letter:

I was worried I wouldn’t be able to enjoy my time here without her, but as soon as I got to check-in all of my fears were gone. [Camp] has this amazing way of allowing kids to leave all their problems behind for a week or more and to just be happy. It is quite clear that my hometown is not the ideal place to be right now. It has been very stressful and overwhelming at times. There are no words to explain what being at [camp] did for me in just two weeks... For the first time in weeks I found myself genuinely happy. Without camp I believe that would have taken me a lot longer to do. This may sound cheesy but at camp I was able to start the healing process.

Coach 2 also highlighted the feeling of comfort that he felt this camper in particular, as well as other children experience at camp. Some campers may need that feeling of comfort to take time away from issues in their home lives, while others may appreciate it as contributing to an environment where they feel safe to be themselves and try new things.

4.3.1.2. Prevention of social cruelty and mental abuse

The prevention of social cruelty did not simply occur, rather it was outlined in the staff handbook and reinforced by Master Staff to the leaders and subsequently to the campers. Within counselor and coach handbooks there was a two-page section on social cruelty, outlining four types of social cruelty (physical, verbal, emotional, and cyber-bullying), why it occurs, how to identify it, and how to prevent it. This specific knowledge was important for staff who were working directly with children, however there was also a section in the handbook for all staff members on the topic of mental abuse. The handbook outlined what mental abuse is, how staff could take action in preventing mental abuse, and the damaging effects of mental abuse, stating: “As staff you must be aware of how easy it is to hurt and scar a child with words. The wounds that don’t bleed are always the most damaging.” When asked why children felt comfortable to experiment with different personalities and roles at camp, Athletic Director 1 responded:
I think it’s just easier because nobody’s allowed to make fun of anyone … we encourage people to do different things … kids generally just think it’s a safe place to try out different things and … know that they’re not going to be judged or anything like that. And if they are, then it’s handled appropriately by staff.

### 4.3.1.3. Safe for staff growth

Camp was also a safe environment for staff to develop new skills and try out different coaching or counselling techniques. As Coach 3 said:

> I’ve been far from perfect this summer but any time I feel like I mess up I’m not worried about repercussions because I’ll have a chat with someone and then we can move on … It’s to a level where obviously you take on board what they’re saying without feeling intimidated.

This coach felt safe to discuss his shortcomings or challenges with others including his superiors and was not afraid to make mistakes and try new games and activities. Furthermore, coaches were often encouraged to create different games for the campers’ to play and were told that if the game was unsuccessful, the next steps were to think about where it went wrong and how it could have been more successful. There were never any negative consequences if a new activity or game was unsuccessful for the campers. It was important for staff to feel safe to try new things so that they could continue to create new and exciting sessions for campers, especially for returning campers. If a child had attended camp in previous summers, although the experience would be different with new peers and leaders, games and activities in sessions needed to be different as well, in order to provide more opportunities for campers’ growth and skill development.

The Master staff promoted campers’ physical and emotional safety, the prevention of social cruelty and mental abuse, and a safe environment for staff to grow, which in turn facilitated leaders in promoting physical and psychological safety.

### 4.3.2. Appropriate structure

Within interviews with Master Staff, coaches, and counselors, as well as document analysis, there was evidence for three sub-themes within the feature of appropriate structure: session structure, camper characteristics, and progression for campers and staff.
4.3.2.1. Programming and session structure

Programming and session structure also contributed to creating growth experiences for campers. There were specific routines established at camp which provided campers with responsibilities, including cabin cleaning in the morning and preparing for and attending sport sessions. Counselor 11 explained that although the leaders helped to facilitate the tasks, expectations for campers were engrained in the camp structure based on years of leader feedback and program refinement. He said:

… you provide that structure, because you write up the chore list and they follow it … you turn the lights out and you go to sleep. It’s nothing that I’m doing, it’s just the rules that are set, the ideas and … what previous people and previous feedback said - that’s the best way of dealing with the kids is to… set out these plans and the meeting spots. It’s not my idea to give them the meeting spot, it’s [camp]’s. So it’s … the engrained … normal things that happen here, I think that’s like, the perfect … way of making sure that they’re … being able to go home much more responsible and confident young adults.

Within the coaching handbook there was a list of “Coach Responsibilities” including “ensure that the activities are suitable for the age, experience and ability of the campers.” Athletic Director 1 explained that when sessions were structured to suit the group’s needs, to use the time for activities that promoted growth, and to include a variety of games and activities, campers had a more positive experience. As the Master Staff were responsible for overseeing all programming and scheduling sessions, it was important for them to recognize the different sessions that provided opportunities for growth for the campers. She continued to explain the importance of coaching staff appropriately using sessions in order to provide campers with opportunities for growth and supporting them in coaching them to the best of their abilities, saying:

… when I see that kids are having free time or you’re just sitting there chatting with them and it’s supposed to be a structured session, it tells me that … we gave them the wrong age group or they’re just not suited for that and they can’t figure it out.

This director understood that coaching staff needed to be supported in their work and provided with optimal conditions to facilitate sessions so campers could reap the benefits and experience opportunities for growth.

Coaches also referred to the different structure of the camp programs that allowed for campers’ developmental growth. Coach 4 discussed the growth experienced by a few older campers:
I also think it was [extreme camp program] that changed them too. That helped them develop as ... kids - that they got to sit around, talk to people, be a bit more mature. They got to ... let their personality out, whereas I think [sports program] is great, it gives kids confidence but [extreme camp program] just pushes them that little bit more. It gives them that bit more space to be freer, if that makes sense.

4.3.2.2. Camper developmental stages

As previously discussed, in order for campers to have had the best possible experience their leaders needed to interact with them in appropriate ways and provide them with appropriate activities for their developmental level. Staff were provided with continual support from their superiors on how to work with children of different ages and maturity levels. Observations were made of the week 8 counselor meeting, during which staff were asked to reread a section of their handbook. At this point in the season, many counselors had switched age groups and they were working with an age they were unfamiliar with, and the leaders read the “Camper Characteristics” reference section of the handbook and engaged in a group discussion of strategies to work with campers of different ages. Within this section of the handbook, children were categorized according to developmental stages (corresponding to ages 6-9, 9-12, 12-14, and 14-16), with a description of the typical physical, mental, and social characteristics of children at these developmental stages. The handbook also provided suggestions for staff actions (such as helping campers aged 6-9 apply sunscreen and bug spray, or understanding that campers aged 14-16 were usually capable of managing their own hygiene and illnesses). Also included were suggestions on campers’ needs regarding active play and rainy day play. These reference sections and the group discussion were one method for Master Staff to educate staff on campers’ unique needs at different ages and maturity levels and provide staff with suggestions for creating an optimal environment for camper growth.

4.3.2.3. Camper-to-staff progression and training

For summer staff, initial training was very thorough as the Staffing Director explained:

… our extensive training that we do with the staff, so it’s an 11 day training. Most camps pack it into 1 or 2 days and I know a lot of day camps in the area condense it into half a day. And I truly believe that we need to set out staff up for success in order for our campers to be successful … we expect the same from our staff that the staff expect from their campers.
It was important for the directors to initially spend time preparing their staff for working with the campers and prepare them for as many situations as possible. The training continued throughout the summer as Counselor 1 explained:

I’m glad they have continuous training here and that they do [with us] … and I know that the coaches do it as well … we have folders, we have information, we have questions we have to answer [in bi-weekly journals], as well as CDOS meetings to talk about what we’re doing. ’Cause I think if we didn’t have that, we’d get very … lost and not continue staying on the direction that we need to go with the summer.

The support that was provided to counselling and coaching staff prompted them to continue to challenge themselves to grow and become better staff who provided campers with positive experience that allowed for growth and development while at camp.

Many staff continued to return to camp for multiple summers. Athletic Director 2 discussed the value of staff members challenging themselves in the years they returned. She said that it was important for them to “… find things to do here that keep it new for you, whether it’s a new role or you take initiative on something else … so it’s not just going through the motions anymore.”

Athletic Director 1 also explained how Master Staff had a role in working in conjunction with returning staff to promote additional growth for them, saying:

I think it also comes down to when we starting doing pre-camp chats before you get here and saying ‘this is what we expect of you and if you feel like you can’t do it, then don’t come.’ And it’s definitely worked, I think it’s definitely put people on the right foot saying that ‘… if you’re still a coach, we will give you a bit more responsibility, but if you feel like you’re going to be bored, which is going to cause you to veer off track or set bad examples for other people, then don’t come, or think of things you can do,’ ‘cause there’s only so much you can do for someone without them wanting to do it themselves.

This camp had a very clearly developed progression program for campers who were interested in becoming staff members. Campers often initially enrolled in the sports program, and when they were at least 15 years old were able to participate in the extreme camp program, during which they typically developed teamwork, communication, and leadership skills. If they were interested, campers could apply to the CIT program at 16 years old. At this point coaching and counselling staff were asked to review campers’ applications and provide comments on campers’ involvement in the program. If campers were selected to become a CIT, they participated in a training weekend before camp began, and then worked for two weeks for two or three summers.
Their performance was reviewed by Master Staff and if they felt that the CIT was a good staff member, they were then asked to become a full-time summer staff member.

CITs were provided with additional training and responsibilities as they progressed through the training program and this process allowed for continual communication and feedback on their progress. Athletic Director 1 (who had progressed through the program as a camper, CIT, counselor, coach, and now was a part of the Master Staff) explained: “… when I was a CIT I was still a child and you just learn so much responsibility I think … that’s the big one, being in charge of campers.” Each experience, as a sports camper, an extreme camper, during CIT training, and each summer working as a CIT provided individuals with opportunities for growth as they were developmentally ready to experience them. The entire program for staff development, from camper to returning staff member and beyond, provided the individual with support to grow and become the best leader possible for campers, with the end goal of providing campers with a positive learning experience during their time at camp.

Overall, the camp scheduling and programming, session structure, camper developmental stages, and progression for campers and staff enabled leaders to promote positive developmental experiences among campers. The appropriate structure that existed within the camp setting enabled leaders to focus on inclusion of campers with special needs, creating age appropriate activities, and engaging in appropriate social interactions with campers in order to minimize behavioural challenges and promote developmental outcomes.

4.3.3. Supportive relationships

This feature was previously discussed in relation to how leaders created supportive relationships with campers, however the Master Staff discussed these types of relationships more broadly, as well as the supportive relationships created between staff at all levels. Leaders also discussed the relationships that campers created with their peers during their stay at camp. This section will describe the context of leader-camper relationships broadly and camper peer relationships.

4.3.3.1. Leader-camper relationships

Relationships that campers created with coaches and counselors were of the utmost importance because these supportive relationships provided a foundation for campers’ growth experiences.
Within the coach handbook this was outlined in the section titled “Your Role and Responsibilities” saying:

We want the participants to be able to feel comfortable in taking a safe chance or attempting something they have never tried. Give good vibes and be positive! Support all campers and allow them to reach higher goals and explore their abilities.

When discussing the impact of camp on children’s lives, Athletic Director 1 provided an explanation as to why some campers may have been more affected by their experiences at camp than others were, saying:

I would have to say it’s outside social settings or the way they’ve been brought up. I mean rich kids definitely just … without generalizing, they have everything, so this place isn’t … usually as amazing. But at the same time, they may not have that emotional connection at home like they do get here. And then kids that are not well off are the ones that just … love it here and are grateful that they get the week to come here.

This quote suggests leaders felt that some campers might have benefitted from stronger emotional connections or bonds with their leaders, as they might not experience these types of connections at home. While some campers may have enjoyed the activities and peer interactions, others campers may have placed more value on the close supportive relationships they experienced with their leaders.

Although there was a focus on leaders creating supportive relationships with campers, occasionally this was challenging for leaders to achieve, and campers had negative experiences while at camp. For example, a young boy with special needs had been attending camp for multiple summers. Many leaders as well as the camp directors felt that this camper had been making gains in regards to his independence and social development, and in particular, his interactions with other campers. In his earlier years at camp, leaders needed to be by his side for most of the day, encouraging him to interact with his peers and try the activities available at camp. During the summer the study took place, this camper was staying for two weeks. Leaders commented that he was relatively independent during his first week and was often seen playing cards with his peers and participating in sporting activities. The camper was due to leave on the Saturday morning of his second week; however, Thursday night around 11pm, one of his counselors entered the office and asked to speak to the camp directors. Counselor 2 explained that the camper was very agitated, shouting in the cabin, and threatening to pack his bags, leave camp, and begin walking home. The camp director went to the cabin and managed to calm the
camper down for the evening, however the next morning Counselor 11 was seen sitting with the camper outside the all-camp event, engaged in a deep conversation. The camper’s parents were called that morning and by lunch hour the camper had left to go home, leaving one day before he was meant to. Although this situation was not common, this was observed as an example of a leader attempting to develop a supportive relationship with a camper; however, the leaders were unable to support the camper to make it through the two-week period. It is not clear why the camper chose to leave, but in some cases children faced challenges while at camp and leaders were not able to appropriately support them in difficult situations, and they may have found it challenging to develop supportive relationships with all campers.

4.3.3.2. Camper-peer relationships

Campers’ relationships with peers could be created in a variety of locations and situations. Counselor 7 explained, “…there’s a chance for it all, does that make sense? You could have the deepest conversation in the canteen or … walking to a sport session. And … it allows them to choose when they want to [engage in conversation].”

In regards to the camp environment or structure, the concept of supportive relationships created with other campers was the most prevalent of the 8 features as it was discussed by 14 of the 15 coaches interviewed. When asked how children grow at camp, Coach 15 said he felt growth was most often seen when campers were “… trying new things and learning new skills in a supportive environment surrounded by friends that they’ve made.” Positive relationships with peers meant that campers felt able to try and push themselves outside of their comfort zone and try new activities without fear of failure. This type of support was witnessed in week 3 when a camper was trying to face their fear of heights at ‘the blob’. He spent a significant amount of time at the top of the tower trying to convince himself to jump by saying things such as ‘I need to try’ and ‘I want to do it’. This camper’s teammates were swimming in the lake below and cheering him on by saying ‘you can do it!’ At this point the camper still chose not to jump on to the blob however he mentioned that he appreciated the support from his peers. Later that week this camper attempted again to face his fear of heights, this time at the trust fall section of the low ropes area. This activity required him to stand at the top of a platform approximately a metre and a half off the ground and allow his peers to catch him. Again he stood on the platform for a few moments before deciding not to do it and stepping down. His teammates were encouraging nonetheless and said ‘good try’, ‘nice effort’, and ‘don’t worry, you’ll get it next time’. Even
though this camper did not complete the trust fall, he developed supportive relationships with his peers throughout the week, which were evident when they cheered him on in a variety of situations that were challenging for him.

Campers also described a collective supportive environment present at this camp. The camper whose friend committed suicide was perceived as benefitting from this environment. Coach 8 said:

I think that her two weeks here… was the best thing that could have happened to her … Socially she was… around different people… who knew the situation but didn’t necessarily know the girl … She was in a different setting where she could feel comfortable and I guess maybe spiritually it was - it started the healing process for her. I think that, us ... and the [extreme camp] group in particular - it was a really strong, solid support system that I don’t know that she would have necessarily got at home, coming specifically from her words, herself. And I know that she appreciated what [camp] was about.

Coach 8 highlighted the support system this camper had with her extreme camp group as being beneficial for her, and something that she may not have had the opportunity to experience anywhere else. Although this camper may have had a tragic event occur, when she came to camp she felt she was surrounded by caring individuals who were able to appropriately support her and begin the healing process. This was an example of a camper with a negative experience who appeared to benefit from receiving support and who expressed that she experienced positive outcomes as a result of her time in the camp environment.

4.3.4. Opportunities to belong

This feature was evident in three ways: through the accepting atmosphere of camp, leaders’ responsibility to facilitate the positive environment and ensure all campers felt a sense of belonging at camp and through providing an atmosphere of belonging for leaders themselves.

4.3.4.1. Accepting atmosphere of camp

At this sport camp, feelings of positivity and inclusion created an environment in which all campers were free to be themselves. These types of sentiments were evident during the orientation period amongst Master Staff and leaders, and reinforced with leaders and campers throughout the summer. Opportunities to belong was the most prevalent of the 8 features within the camp environment as it was discussed by 11 counselors. As Counselor 3 explained:
… they might come off as weird or strange back at school … depending on where they’re from or the school they go to, but a lot of things here are just … those kind of traits … we really respect and value everybody’s individuality and we … want them to be themselves and we want them to be able to be who they are and feel comfortable and the fact that no counselor or coach would ever say that they didn’t like someone or that they thought that they were strange or anything like that.

This counselor explained that within the camp environment, the staff as a whole appreciated each child and their individuality.

Within the camp environment, each child was respected and valued, regardless of their situation. There were many campers that attended who had special needs, whether they had life threatening allergies, were diagnosed with ADHD, or had a physical disability. In some cases special arrangements were made to ensure the camper was adequately cared for, however there were also situations in which the camper benefitted most when they were treated like any other child at camp. Coach 2 discussed a camper who experienced high levels of anxiety:

… a kid who has always been told that he’s got an anxiety problem is going to be anxious. A kid who comes to camp and not one word is said about anxiety and he’s just able to be a kid… all of a sudden he’s out of his shell and having a ball, I think it… definitely means a lot to a kid - to come here for a week and be able to do that … and [that] doesn’t happen anywhere else.

As every child was accepted at camp, it was not unusual for campers with special needs to be integrated into cabins and teams. After her son returned home, his mother wrote to the camp thanking the staff for treating her son like any other child and she also thanked the camp directors for creating an environment in which her son was accepted and felt like he belonged regardless of his issues with anxiety.

4.3.4.2. Leaders’ responsibility to facilitate the environment

The training documents discussed providing opportunities for all campers to belong in the section on mental abuse, stating:

It is easy, if not accepted, to make fun of people, call them names, or yell at them and demean them if they are different or unique … it takes great attention and supervision on your part to make sure child-to-child abuse does not happen. This is vital!

This statement showed how the Master Staff wanted to ensure that all children had a place at camp. The counselor handbook continued to explain the “no D zone” policy:
What is the “No D Zone”? No D’s mean no demeaning, disrespecting, diss’ing, diminishing, etc! If campers pick on, tease or belittle one another, self-esteem is going to go down the toilet; not to mention that it can ruin a camp experience.

This policy served to reinforce in leaders’ minds their role to monitor campers’ behaviours to ensure an environment in which all campers felt they belonged and were safe. The Staffing Director explained her perception of how campers felt when staff enforced this policy:

… as soon as they step onto these camp grounds, they know that they’re the best person that they can be here because they feel fully supported and that they can be themselves and never feel like they’re going to be judged in this environment … I think [this camp] does a fantastic job at embracing the different personalities … and by no means are we a camp that specializes in special needs or any behaviour issues but we have campers that come through here that do have those issues and they’ve tried camps that specialize in that but they succeed at our camp because the staff are so accepting and therefore the kids see it’s okay, and the other campers are real accepting of those different individual personalities as well.

4.3.5. Positive social norms

Camp directors made sure to impress upon their leaders that they were role models for the campers in all aspects of their behaviours including their dress, attitudes, and actions. Older campers were also seen as role models for the younger children who attended camp. As this was a sport camp, there was an emphasis for both staff and campers on the sportsmanship and teamwork throughout camp, especially how the leaders displayed this sportsmanship and how they encouraged it from campers.

4.3.5.1. Staff as role models

One of the major themes present in the staff handbook was the reinforcement of staff members’ status as role models for the campers. In the early pages of the staff handbook under “[Camp] Expectations” it stated: “staff should epitomize what is acceptable in proper speech, conduct, values, and morals.” Within the following section, it continued: “Remember that children copy you” and a few pages later: “All staff are viewed as role models. We set a positive example for our campers.” The staff handbook continued to reinforce the message of staff as role models when it stated:

Many of the non-verbal ways that we communicate to our peers can be improper for children because they simply do not have the emotional tools to separate intentional from unintentional, serious from playful and so on … Remember you will set the tone as the adult, you are the role model, and you are in charge.
Athletic Director 2 explained the types of people that were employed at camp and the role they played in displaying a positive disposition at camp, saying “any summer camp staff for the most part, they’re outgoing, they’re friendly, they’re open mined. And I think that will rub off on the kids as well while they’re here.” A variety of individuals with unique personalities were employed at camp. Speaking to the wide range of staff members hired, the Staffing Director said:

I think we do a really great job of choosing different staff that are going to identify with all our different campers and [we’re] not looking for all your alpha male super sporty personalities. We’re looking for that real depth and breadth of personality.

Athletic Director 2 expanded on this by saying “… we always could use a few more goofballs to show people that camp is as exciting and silly as it is because of these people.” When a wide variety of personalities were present at camp, children might identify with one of these staff members and recognize how they displayed positive social norms in the camp environment.

Master Staff also informed returning staff members that they were in a leadership position and they were expected to display positive social norms for new camp staff. When new staff members witnessed how returners were behaving, the Master Staff hoped that they would adopt these behaviours themselves and thus become role models for all the campers. Counselor 8 discussed her role as a returning staff member:

… I think I had to display … at least a certain leadership or a certain reference point for other staff to abide by … so that they could get an idea of what’s expected of them. I guess one of my strong points is hopefully having been able to do that without … expecting too much from the staff or coming off as … obnoxious or a know it all. It was just trying to lead by example and do the best that I can to … be a good counselor and just hoping that rubs off on other staff.

The summer during which the research took place was a challenge for incoming male counselors as there were no male returners in this role to display positive social norms. This meant that although the returning female counselors attempted to act as role models and display the positive social norms of camp, the male counselors may not have identified with them, and on occasion acted inappropriately (i.e., made inappropriate jokes with campers and socially excluded other staff). This may not have occurred had there been male role models for them to follow. Coach 4 said:

I think the boys struggled with not having … a role model as in having a returner, a returning counselor in the group … and I think then obviously it gave a chance for people
to step up and be that person. It could’ve went one way: you wanted to be the role model who is a good role model and does things properly, or is gunna stand up to be the cool kid at the back of the class. And it went the cool kid at the back of the class.

Unfortunately it was clear in discussions with Master Staff that although there were a few successful male counselors, overall they felt this group of male counselors did not display the social norms expected in regards to their attitudes and behaviours throughout the summer.

4.3.5.2. Campers as role models

Similar to the concept of staff acting as role models, older campers had the ability to influence younger campers in their behaviours. Counselor 2 said:

… especially if they’re older kids we will be like ‘the younger kids will be looking…’ Try and like, say that they are.. well not say that they are, but they are role models to the younger kids. If they are kicking the shuffleboard pieces, chances are the younger ones will kick the shuffleboard pieces ... do you know what I mean? If they’re messing around then the younger kids are going to copy, that’s just nature.

Campers’ status as role models for younger campers was established in the camp environment as a result of verbal reinforcement from camp staff.

Older returning campers were in an especially unique position, as they had opportunities to transfer the behaviours and values they learned while at camp into other areas of their lives. In some instances there were stand-out returners who were identified as role models for all campers, including older campers. Coach 5 described campers that return for multiple years:

You start to notice that too with like the 7 or 8 year campers and just their attitude is the reason they’ve been coming back for so long. It’s ’cause they’re awesome campers, they love this place, they love what it stands for and they really embody what this place is all about in relation to sportsmanship, teamwork and all of that stuff translated for them in the real world afterward.

As these campers had the opportunity to take what they learned at camp and incorporate it into their lives back home, they became examples for other campers to look up to and emulate. As Coach 5 discussed, sportsmanship and teamwork were key qualities promoted at camp, which many campers integrated into their home lives after leaving camp.
4.3.5.3. Sportsmanship and teamwork

Within the coach handbook, one of the responsibilities listed was to “encourage, emphasize, and insist on fair play and good sporting behaviour within the sessions.” Following this statement was a section specific to sportsmanship which stated:

You, as the coach are the one who sets the tone at the sports sessions. Not only do you have to serve as a role model, but you must insist on good sportsmanship from your campers. By permitting poor sportsmanship in your group, you are hurting our campers and cheating them out of positive life lessons … As a coach you are expected to … lead by example in demonstrating fair play and sportsmanship to all players. Never cheat, play unfairly, or show unsportsmanlike values. The campers are learning from you at all times.

The handbook continued to provide examples of sportsmanlike behaviour, which coaches were expected to positively reinforce, and unsportsmanlike behaviour, which coaches were meant to discourage.

The counselor handbook had similar statements, including a section on good sportsmanship for the Cabin of the Week competition. It stated:

As in all types of competition, we, as counselor role models, MUST show excellent sportsmanship! DO NOT boo another cabin! Do not heckle the judges! Do not challenge the rec department to a death duel! Always applaud and congratulate winners, just like we would wish our campers to do on the field to another team!

Through these training documents, the role coaches and counselors played in demonstrating and encouraging good sportsmanship on behalf of their campers was impressed upon them.

Campers had the opportunity to develop their sportsmanship throughout sport sessions as well as during camp-wide recreation events. Counselor 11 discussed the values promoted at camp when he said:

There is a huge emphasis on sportsmanship and making sure every camper, no matter if they’re… the worst at … the task that they’re doing, they always feel that they … themselves are [doing their] best. They always feel that they are doing good.

Coaches expanded on the concept of sportsmanship and discussed that campers had the ability to develop and display their sportsmanship in sessions with their own team, as well as in sessions where they play against another team. Coach 5 said:
During the field sessions when they’re playing the games and kind of getting their competitiveness and their egos tested a little bit, their sportsmanship [is] tested a little bit. Where they have to address those situations where they might want to be bad sports but they see that it’s not okay and then they kind of mature a little bit then.

Teamwork was a quality that was highly valued and promoted at camp. It was most often developed during sport sessions in teambuilding activities, however it was also inherent in the cabin of the week competition for campers. When children participated in the twice-daily recreation activities for the cabin of the week competition, not only did they have to work with one another for some events, but campers were expected to support their team as audience members. Counselor 2 described the value of the cabin of the week recreation events when he said: “I think that they… appreciate the importance of a team … and if they’re not in the event then they will get behind the team, so they… know that it’s not just the one [camper].” The cabin of the week events promoted a sense of group unity and prompted campers to support their cabin members during these times.

Coaches explained that during sport sessions campers of all abilities had the opportunity to develop teamwork, which was a quality that was valued in other areas of life. Coach 8 said:

... if they don’t play sports at home - I mean this is a sports camp, but if they don’t play sports at home, they come here and they experience it: teamwork, communication, all this stuff that you need to actually function in the real world. They’re actually given an opportunity to … develop it, to test it out.

4.3.6. Support for efficacy and mattering

This feature was seen in three main ways: through the inclusive atmosphere of camp, staff members’ support for children’s feelings of efficacy and mattering, and through Master Staff’s support for staff members’ efficacy and mattering.

4.3.6.1. Inclusive atmosphere

Although leaders had a role in promoting an inclusive environment for all campers, this was also dependent on the campers and how they treated one another. Campers acted in inclusive ways not because they were told to do so, but rather because it was what was expected at camp and promoted through social norms. Counselor 12 explained:

... it’s an unwritten thing that you are to include everybody. Not just as counsellors - campers do it too. You do get those cliques but when you get them all together … they
work together. They don’t just leave one person out like you would … not that you _would_, but you do see it in schools and stuff like that. It’s just not like that. You include everybody and you make sure they all participate.

As campers included one another in activities and did not leave others out, this allowed for each child to feel that they mattered, were an important member of the group, and that they were respected by their peers. While the previous quote reflected the inclusive atmosphere of the camp, Coach 3 described a particularly quiet and reserved camper who did not seem as if she would be able to make it through the week. He explained how he felt that she came to feel comfortable at camp:

I don’t think it’s anything we did, I think it was just being in this environment and knowing that she was safe among friends … It was something we identified with the counselors but again, I wouldn’t say we said ‘right, here’s how we’re going to do it, deal with this.’ I think it was just the kind of … how involved she felt … everyone included her during the cabin stuff … obviously we included her in sessions. She felt safe.

Coach 3 explained that he believed it was the overall environment in which everyone included this camper in cabin activities as well as sport sessions that allowed her to feel that she was an accepted and important member of the group.

4.3.6.2. Support for children’s feelings of efficacy and mattering

The staff handbook emphasized with staff their role in providing opportunities to promote campers’ sense of efficacy and mattering. The coach philosophy was to:

Create a positive learning environment for campers that encourages fair play, good sportsmanship and also gives every camper the opportunity to walk away feeling like a winner. Coaches will provide all campers with the necessary skills, knowledge and confidence to give each camper the opportunity to be successful and perform to their maximum potential.

This section was later followed by a piece on camper awards, within which it said: “… take this seriously. Do not choose favourites; choose those who deserve the awards.” With guidance from the Master Staff, leaders were aware of the importance of ensuring all campers felt that they mattered in the group and to their leaders.

4.3.6.3. Support for staff members’ feelings of efficacy and mattering

The first page of the staff handbook stated:
You have all been hired to become part of this little microcosm we call camp because of some unique ability that you have or a personality trait that we feel is special. Not everyone can do this job and not everyone is cut out for it.

The use of this statement and the location of it on the first page of the handbook was to reassure new staff that they were at camp for a good reason: because they had something special to contribute to the staff and campers and to show them that the Master Staff recognized that they were all unique and special. The Staffing Director explained how everyone was important in making the camp function. She said:

… going back to the staff, we always … really do focus in orientation to ensure that everyone does feel part of the team and I think for our bigger teams like the coaches and counselors, it’s very easy. But so much of our camp comes from the ‘miscellaneous staff,’ so whether it’s the recreation, photographers, office … support staff, food service … if anything they’re our bigger focus because that’s what makes up everything else. ’Cause if there were no photos, the parents would be upset. If there were no rec activities there would be no Cabin of the Week. Obviously if there was no maintenance, nothing would get fixed. So I think it’s obviously that bigger picture and bigger circle, but it’s really important for us to make sure everyone is feeling part of that team.

She described the Master Staff’s desire to ensure that every single staff member was aware of their role and how they fit into the overall functioning of the camp.

Counselors in particular described the support for efficacy and mattering that they received from the Master Staff. A first year counselor, Counselor 1 said:

… it’s nice to get little ‘warm fuzzies’ and different things like that, ’cause then you can … you never think that other people are paying attention to the work that you do and then when you … get those little things that tell you that other people are taking notice of the good things you’re doing … that’s really cool.

‘Warm fuzzies’ were small notes, often accompanied with a treat, that were given to staff to praise them for the great work they were doing, for example, taking an extra moment to help a camper or other staff member who was in need. These small tokens of appreciation allowed staff members to feel that what they were doing mattered to the Master Staff. A returning counselor explained the additional support for efficacy and mattering she received the past summer, saying:

… this summer I’ve been told … I think I’ve had a lot more communication with [my supervisors] and those types of people and a lot more positive communication from them of how I’m doing. So I’ve got a lot more praise this summer, which has just helped me tremendously and I’m the type of person that needs that. So it was nice to hear that from people higher than me that I was doing a good job. (Counselor 9)
With additional support for efficacy and mattering, staff were assured that they were doing good work and that it was being recognized. This recognition prompted staff to provide campers with support for their own efficacy and mattering by providing campers with special roles and formally recognizing appropriate behaviours. In this way, the experiences of the campers appeared to benefit from the leaders receiving support for efficacy and mattering from the Master Staff.

4.3.7. **Opportunities for skill building**

The staff handbook outlined the purpose of the camp saying: “[camp] exists for one reason … to educate, enrich and expand the experience of people. We believe we have two programs here; first and foremost is children. The second program is for our staff.” This camp prided itself on the fact that there were opportunities for skill building for campers as well as staff. Master Staff felt that while campers were learning new sport skills, the camper program was designed to foster the development of life skills and to provide campers with opportunities to move outside their comfort zone, while the focus for staff was primarily on the development of skills for use in a working environment.

4.3.7.1. **Sport skills**

As campers attended three sport sessions daily, they engaged in a total of 14 different sports or activities during their time at camp. Coach 11 said: “I think … it’s a good solid amount of time that they’re getting in the sport sessions to be able to grow and develop or even learn about a new skill or sport.” For those campers that never played the sport before, one session may have been long enough to develop basic skills, while those campers who had previous experience in the sport where given the opportunity to refine their skills in the sport and potentially progress even further.

4.3.7.2. **Life skills**

The objective of the sports program on the first page of the coach handbook stated:

The objective for this program is to provide our campers and staff with a safe, fun, and challenging curriculum that will enhance their camping experience, promote healthy lifestyles, encourage sportsmanship and the value of participation, and educate them physically and mentally through a sports medium.
A distinction between specific life skills that each program was meant to develop was
established in the handbook. The goal for the sports program was to develop sportsmanship,
leadership, and good communication, while the extreme program was meant to develop
teamwork, leadership, and decision-making skills. The Staffing Director expanded on this by
saying:

… our brand or our philosophy is the traditional summer camp with an emphasis on
sports but really for us, we’re not building Olympic athletes. The sports method is purely
the fact that we’re teaching them leadership and the life long skills through sports.
Whether it’s the sportsmanship on the field or wherever it may be … it’s the chats in the
cabin at night time … it’s playing flag tag out in the fields or it’s the rec events, whatever
it might be, I think … every facet of their lives really is tested and is encouraged at camp.
Here, they really do get the chance to practice those skills that they do learn at home but
also in a very supportive environment.

Within this statement she emphasized that although campers were playing sports and learning
new sport skills, the focus was primarily on the life skills and transferrable skills that were
developed at camp and could be implemented at home.

4.3.7.3. Skill building by moving outside campers’ comfort zone

Campers had the opportunity to build a variety of skills when they were presented with chances
to move outside their comfort zone, whether that was their physical or social comfort zone.
Counselor 5 explained a common occurrence for some campers at the rock block when she said:
“I’ve seen growth in terms of they have overcome fears and stuff. Like… I’ve seen kids, first
session on a Monday come up and be … absolutely petrified of going down, but then come
Tuesday rec time, are going up down, up down, and so … that’s like, actual overcoming fears.”
Coach 8 said:

… in those early couple of days where they are outside their comfort zones, if they don’t
know anybody, or if they do, whether they are actually going to challenge themselves to
put themselves out there with different people or whether they are just going to stay in
their comfort zone and hang with the people they came with.

By moving outside their social comfort zone and interacting with peers they had never met,
campers had the opportunity to build new social skills. Although campers’ moving outside their
comfort zones was previously discussed in relation to leaders’ support provided during this time,
as a result of the environment and context at camp, campers were given the opportunity to move
outside their comfort zone in a variety of different ways.
4.3.7.4. **Skill development for staff**

Staff members also had opportunities to build skills, starting in the initial training period and they had multiple opportunities to develop and practice their skills working with children in informal settings as well as the formal instruction of games and activities. Counselor 7 said:

… I think I probably learned the most … at camp … interview skills and being able to roll with the punches. Yeah, a kid just vomited all over the kitchen table … just gotta deal with it and go with it. I think those are things that you’re going to have to do in real life, everything is not going to be cookie cutter and down to the plan, and so I think camp has really taught me that and just to work well with others. I think I’m going to have to do that in life and work as a group.

While counselors typically dealt with more unexpected circumstances, coaches had opportunities to learn different teaching techniques that could be used in their work at home. Coach 3 explained his reason for coming to camp:

… the way I looked at this summer is … I was looking at this as my education, rather than going to a university or a college … I don’t feel there’s anything better. You couldn’t learn how to do this in a classroom in my opinion. So that’s why I’m here, just to learn about … camp and how it works … and see a different culture of children other than the ones I’m used to teaching – see the differences and work with different kids just so that when I go home, I’ve got a broader range of experience to pull from.

Leaders’ training began the day they arrived to camp and lasted throughout the summer. The Staffing Director discussed how she ensured that staff members were absorbing the information learned during the initial training period saying:

I think putting things into practice. I think it’s very easy to sit and open up a handbook and have everything written on paper, but unless you do the scenarios, unless you actually physically get out there and do it, it’s very easy for the staff to just be the yes man and say yes we understand.

In order to develop the skills being taught, the Staffing Director felt that leaders needed to apply them in practical situations and see how these skills could be used. She described the value of continual skill development for staff, saying:

… from a staffing perspective our mission would be to retain and develop the skills of our staff continually throughout the summer and no matter how busy we are, how crazy it gets throughout the summer, to continue to develop staff and their skills and to ensure that they’re happy and that they feel supported.
This continual training was evident during weekly coach meetings. Leaders were pushed by their superiors to try new things and think outside the box, and at each weekly meeting different coaches were asked to present a new game or activity they had developed. New activities that were presented included “The Hunger Games”, “Holy Grail”, and “James Bond” which all used a variety of equipment and could be played in multiple locations around camp. When coaches were pushed to develop their creativity and invent new activities, the campers ultimately benefitted from new experiences and opportunities to develop their own skills.

Leaders were also prompted to reflect on their experiences at camp by responding to bi-weekly journal questions, including questions such as “are you the role model you set out to be at the beginning of the summer?” and “what are you doing differently in your coaching from the previous year?” One question specifically targeted leaders’ reflection on the transfer of skills they had learned at camp asking “what will you take away from [camp] that you can implement in your life at home?” As Master Staff created the journal questions, and read and responded to them bi-weekly, they were actively promoting leaders’ self-reflection and awareness of their growth and the skills they had built during their time at camp.

4.3.8. Integration of family, school, and community efforts

As previously described, this camp’s focus was to provide children with opportunities to learn new skills that they were able to take home and integrate into their daily lives. This section will describe the transfer of life skills, the idea of the camp staff as one team or community, including staff supporting each other and the reciprocal nature of staff support with the Master Staff, as well as the camps’ partnership with parents.

4.3.8.1. Transfer of skills

Leaders discussed the opportunities campers had to transfer the skills and values learned at camp to their home lives. Although the amount of time spent within this setting may have had an effect on campers’ developmental experiences and outcomes, leaders felt that during a minimum one week stay at camp, children always learnt something that could be implemented in their daily lives at home. Counselor 8 said:

I think it’s … enough to start a process that they can definitely bring back home with them and [it] can definitely kind of open someone’s eyes and change their mindset …
think the more time you spend here the stronger it gets but … I definitely think it’s enough to at least place that spark of this kind of mentality and positivity in someone.

This leader felt that within this short stay, the camp’s positive atmosphere and values became ingrained in campers and that they took this outlook and attitude with them to incorporate into their home lives.

4.3.8.2. Staff as one team or community

This camp emphasized the ‘family’ aspect of the staff. In the beginning pages of the handbook, a staff hierarchy was presented, placing campers at the top as the most important, with the staff below. The explanation of the hierarchy stated: “You should also notice that it isn’t very elaborate. That’s because we are all equals and dependent on one another.” The following page stated: “At [camp] we function as a family. We watch out for each other, and we strive to make sure everyone around us has a good day. Everybody’s behaviour through their actions and words affect one another.”

Leaders also understood the importance of working with others as a team to create a positive experience for campers. Counselor 1 explained:

… every single person has a different counselling style and that’s the biggest part of it. The fact that we switch co-counselors every week … you could think you know everything that there is to do with that age group of how to counsel in that cabin, but you have to take the ideas of other people and the way they work as well. And that’s the only way that you’re going to have a good week is if you … work together and find a balance between different people’s counselling styles.

In addition, Coach 5 explained her focus from the start of summer:

… I’ve definitely had a strong focus from the start on making sure that I was learning from other people and seeing what everyone else had to offer … you can obviously always learn more out of every time you coach with someone else … or see a different staff member interact with a camper, I learn something different … you can always grow more.

These examples displayed the willingness of counselors and coaches to work with others to improve their own leadership and provide the best possible experience for the children under their supervision and care.
As the entire staff functioned as one team, there was discussion of the reciprocal nature of the interactions between staff members in order to improve the camp programs and the experiences of campers who attended. Coach 1 explained:

… the people above us, they just do a fantastic job I think … keeping us motivated, keeping us fresh … the feedback as well, I don’t think I’ve worked anywhere else where you get as much feedback. Every session after session, [our supervisors] always have a tip or a piece of advice to throw your way depending on how your session went. They take that time to talk to all of the coaches which, if you added that up throughout the summer, it would be a lot of hours … I just don’t feel like there’s anything I couldn’t take to those guys. They’re just so open and approachable. Definitely working with not only the people around me, but the people above me, it’s been a real highlight.

While this quote provided evidence for leaders feeling supported, the Staffing Director explained how and why the Master Staff felt the need to support their staff:

… in order for us to be successful, I feel that we have to make sure our staff are happy. So everything that we do that’s above and beyond, whether it’s the weekly journals or the weekly CDOS, the staff surprises, the little notes on their bunks, whatever it might be … unless our staff are happy then they’re not going to be doing their best for the kids. For our campers, they’re not coming back to see the directors, they’re coming back to see their counselors and coaches and that’s what’s really important for us and really one of our founding philosophies – making sure our staff are happy in order for our kids to be happy.

She continued to explain that the staff who were considered by the Master Staff to be the most successful were those who realized that the supportive relationship between leaders and Master Staff was a two-way relationship. She explained what was needed in a returning staff member:

I think one of the main things from a staffing perspective when considering staff to return is them being on our side … unless you’re really buying into [camp]’s philosophy and who we are and our mission, then there’d be no point in having you as a returner ’cause I think that for us, I view our returning staff really as an extension of the leadership team and I expect them to be on our team. So if a scenario came up that was concerning or was a red flag, we would expect that staff member to come and tell us that. And if that staff member wasn’t on our team or didn’t feel … want us to know things, I think that would be a real break in communication for us … and whether it’s a coach, a counselor, a food service staff … they need to be back here for the right reasons.

This provided support for the overall ‘family’ environment of the camp. The way in which supportive relationships were fostered among Master Staff and leaders enabled the promotion of campers’ relationships with one another, the connections with individual campers, and the development of friendship while still maintaining authority and respect. Ultimately the ‘family’
environment of the camp aided the provision of a context in which leaders could support campers moving outside their comfort zone. If Master Staff and all other staff members were working in conjunction to support one another, then there was an increased likelihood that optimal conditions would be created for campers’ experiences of growth and development while at camp.

In order to provide the best possible experience for campers, the entire staff worked as a community and frequently communicated about specific campers’ wellbeing and the steps that could be taken to provide them with a more positive experience. This included counselors, coaches, health centre staff, food service staff and Master Staff ensuring that the campers were all properly emotionally and physically cared for. The coach handbook included a section titled “Partnering with Counselors”, stating:

It is extremely important that coaches and counselors communicate with one another about their campers. If a camper is struggling in the cabin or at session, all staff will be better able to handle the situation because they are all on the same page.

Both counselors and coaches received direction from Master Staff to have a mandatory meeting with one another for a short check-in before and after each session. During this time the leaders would share any issues they were having with campers, including behavioural issues and homesickness, and discuss the next steps that would be taken to ensure the campers who were experiencing challenges were supported appropriately. After the brief post session meeting, coaches were expected to check in with the Athletic Directors to again discuss any issues that occurred during session and to provide an update on campers who were experiencing challenges. The Athletic Director was then responsible for relaying this information to the Resident Life Director if need be and to make a decision regarding if and when to involve parents.

4.3.8.3.  Partnering with parents

Some campers experienced challenges during their time at camp including behavioural issues (e.g., being disrespectful towards leaders and other campers or issues living with peers), homesickness, and difficulties with feelings of anxiety. These issues were best handled with support from parents and the counselor handbook included a section titled “Partnering With Parents” which stated: “occasionally you may need to call a parent, either to let them know that their child is homesick, and/or to ask for some suggestions on how to help their child.” As it was included in the handbook, the directors at this camp recognized that campers faced challenges
that leaders may not have been able to deal with alone and that the best way to move forward was to be in contact with the child’s parents.

Although the typical method of partnering with parents was when the camp reached out for support, there were instances where the parents made contact with the camp staff, specifically through thank you letters. Oftentimes leaders and Master Staff were unaware of the outcome of children’s experiences at camp, however parents often recognized the changes that their child made during their stay. Athletic Director 1 discussed parent letters saying:

… what reaffirms it is when we get those letters from parents, that although we may not have seen it, they’ll be like ‘what did you do to my kid? They’re totally different!’ And those are nice because then you truly know that they did change or something’s changed in them that if their parents, who know them so well, say it, then there’s definitely something that’s changed.

4.4. Time

The final section of the PPCT model is time. While it is clear that more hours of contact time with leaders in programs contribute to positive outcomes (Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2002), there is equivocal evidence regarding the length of time children need to be engaged in a setting in order to experience positive developmental outcomes. Similarly, camp staff had divergent opinions regarding the amount of time necessary for campers to experience positive outcomes from their stay at camp. When asked if a one-week stay was enough for campers to experience positive development, Counselor 7 said:

I think it is … I think so. Because camp is so jam packed … Yeah, you’ll learn a lot in a three week, four week camp, but they don’t move at as fast of a pace, so the pace is slowed down, if that makes any sense … here, you’re doing so much that … it’s like packing four weeks into one.

This counselor discussed that as a result of the busy schedule at this location, campers were always engaged in activities. She compared this to other camps when she explained that as a result of the pace at this camp children were provided with many more opportunities for growth.

Coach 6 was not as certain that a one-week stay was long enough for campers to experience positive development. He said:

I think you can definitely get a lot out of a week … but at the same time, I think the more time you spend here, the more you’re going to develop. Every week you know a different
coach and a different counselor and fingers crossed, you’re going to learn something different from each one. Or just continue to learn and develop what you’ve learnt from the previous week … so I think, definitely one week is enough to learn stuff and grow, but I think the more they’re here, the more they’re going to get out of it.

While Coach 6 felt that one week was enough to start a campers’ development, a longer stay might have been more beneficial because each leader taught different things and in different ways. If campers stayed longer than one week, they had more opportunities to experience different leadership and teaching styles, which may have resulted in different learning outcomes.

It seemed that Master Staff were more hesitant to make sweeping statements about all campers and their experiences of growth. Athletic Director 1 said:

I think it definitely depends on the kid … sometimes it’s evident and all it takes is just … some interaction and then sometimes I think that … it would definitely take longer, or it’s definitely a struggle and you see really small [changes].

Athletic Director 2 felt similarly, but as she had worked at multiple camps, she expanded on the differences between camps that offered one week stays and those that spanned the entire summer. When asked what differences she witnessed between the two types of camps she said:

I think it’s actually a pretty big difference when it comes to … what they get out of their … personal growth. Because here, they’re only here for like 5 nights, 5 or 6 nights, so the first few nights they’re just getting used to it and then by the end they’re starting to … get into it. But in other places because they are there for so long and less change over [of campers], you have other activities. You have a girls’ campfire where you talk about issues that will come up or a boys’ campfire … so I think it teaches you different lessons and you get into more of a routine in that way when you’re at a place longer.

On the contrary, she also presented the benefits of a camp stay that was shorter in duration:

I think it depends on the kids. Some kids aren’t ready to go away for 8 weeks … it’s hard for counselors to go away for 8 weeks! So I think … at a time period like one week at this camp, it’s good for the campers that need to do one week at first … I think they still grow and become more confident, learn new sports … but I don’t think it’s to the extreme that it is when you’re here for 4 weeks or 8 weeks.

For some children who were not developmentally ready or mature enough to spend half a summer or a full summer away from home and their families, a camp that offered a one-week stay such as this camp may have been more appropriate. This allowed the child to have experiences separate from their family and to gain an understanding of camp life before committing to a much longer camp experience.
Although the Staffing Director had not worked at other camps, she presented a similar opinion as Athletic Director 2 when she said:

I think there’s … pros and cons to both. I think that … certainly if a camper was at this camp for longer, they may have … a bigger impact, but not necessarily at a different camp. And I think that definitely comes down to a camp’s individual philosophy and again the training, all those sorts of things … but you might get the same impact at our camp that you do at a four week camp or you might get less. I think it really is camp specific, but having said that – in general, having been in the industry for long enough, I think overall most camps would have a very positive impact on kids, but I think it does vary.

This statement reflected the impact that staff training had on campers’ experiences. The Staffing Director felt that if the camp had a good philosophy which was reinforced to staff members through training, and filtered through to influence their interactions with campers, the children would be more likely to have a good experience. If this was not the case, the qualities of campers’ experiences may have been compromised.

Current and past campers also debated the role that time played in campers’ experiences of growth. In one CIT focus group, participants discussed a one-week stay as enough for children to experience growth:

CIT2: I feel like coming for one week changes you dramatically … we only used to come for a week…
CIT4: Yeah, I don’t… think it matters. I mean [camper] came for six weeks at a time and I came for 10 years … and [other camper] only came for four and we’re all very similar. We’re all very responsible …
CIT2: It’s like [camp] shaped us.
CIT4: I just, I don’t think it really matters how long you came, you can still have such a small experience and still feel that growth…
CIT1: I don’t necessarily think a week is enough time for something to really rub off right then and there but … so it might not be right away … but you learn things here and you might not use them or even realize that you’re using them, but eventually they come in handy … so you might not consciously realize that you learned something in a quick week here, but you might use that stuff in the future … So I think everybody leaves here with something different. Even just games, kids come home and play these new games and that’s something you learn at camp.

Campers also provided their opinions on how the length of time spent at camp affected campers’ experiences of growth. Camper 8 said, “I feel like one week is absolutely effective. My first eight years were one week, but I feel like two weeks maximizes that to an extent.” Similar to Counselor 7’s comments on the fast pace of the camp, one group of campers discussed how their time spent at camp felt longer than it actually was saying:
Camper 9: … we were talking last week about this. At other camps it’s like you need six weeks. And it’s like you have to go through all six weeks to get the feeling and learn everything. But here, all of it is packed into one week but it’s not too much.
Camper 10: Yeah, it’s only four days but it feels longer than four days.
Camper 12: Yeah, it feels like a month – it feels so long!

Counselor 7’s remark and this conversation between campers illustrated that leaders and campers both felt that this camp in particular was an intensive experience that allowed campers many opportunities to experience growth, which may not have been possible at other camps.
Chapter 5
Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This research was a qualitative case study of a residential summer sport camp which sought to explore the factors contributing to PYD experiences for campers. Much of the current research in PYD and sport is focused on the development of transferable skills (Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008), life skills (Gould & Carson, 2008), and social development (Holt, Tamminen, Tink, & Black, 2009); however there is a need for additional information regarding the role of significant others in children’s PYD experiences (Holt & Neely, 2011). This research used theoretical frameworks to explore how leaders create contexts for PYD at a residential summer sport camp. The main findings were in regards to how leaders created opportunities for children to experience PYD, how the Master Staff management team and the context of camp affected campers’ experiences, and how the concept of time influenced the type of growth and development campers displayed. These findings have theoretical importance in relation to Bronfenbrenner’s PPCT model (1999), Lerner’s 5Cs (2005), and the 8 settings features (NRCIM, 2002), as well as applied implications for leaders working with youth in summer camp and sport settings.

5.2. Theoretical implications

Data from this study was analyzed broadly within the PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner, 1999), with use of Lerner’s 5Cs (2005) to guide analysis of campers’ experiences of growth, and the 8 settings features (NRCIM, 2002) to guide analysis of the provision of growth experiences to campers and the context in which these experiences are provided. Although these frameworks have been used to examine positive youth development among athletes in competitive sport contexts, there is no research to date that has used these frameworks to investigate children’s growth while at a residential summer sport camp.

5.2.1. Campers’ growth

The results of this study indicated that leaders, CITs, and campers perceived that many campers experienced growth in a variety of domains during their time at camp. Earlier studies (e.g., ACA, 2005; Thurber et al., 2007) were not theoretically based and investigated growth within four
domains (positive identity, social skills, physical and thinking skills, positive values and spirituality). Thus, the current study builds on previous research by employing a theoretical basis to guide the analysis. This contributes to the current knowledge in the field, as theoretically-based studies can help researchers to identify mechanisms and strategies for promoting PYD among youth. Theory-based research such as this illuminates where knowledge is lacking and what types of research will be beneficial to advance the field of positive youth development in sport and camp contexts.

Within the current study, participants’ perceptions of growth were analyzed within the 5Cs framework of PYD (Lerner et al., 2005). Although researchers have investigated growth among youth at a daily summer sport camp (Jones et al., 2011), to date there is no published research using this framework to investigate children’s growth while at residential summer camp. Jones and colleagues (2011) attempted to measure the 5Cs at a daily summer sport camp and found support for two factors: pro-social values (including caring, character, and connection) and confidence/competence. Their results also provided support for a collapsed characteristic of confidence and competence as there was insufficient evidence for the two constructs separately. In contrast to the study by Jones et al. (2011), the current research provided evidence for all 5Cs among campers at a summer sport camp. There are two plausible reasons for these divergent results. First, the context of the residential sport camp could have contributed to campers experiencing different forms of growth compared to youth at a daily sport camp, as in the Jones et al. study. In this case study, leaders were in contact with campers twenty-four hours a day, and there may have been increased opportunities for positive growth experiences and greater potential to develop the 5Cs. Campers were constantly engaged with different types of leaders within a setting which emphasized providing opportunities for growth throughout the campers’ stay, there were ample opportunities for campers to experience growth in a range of areas. Furthermore, the presence of two distinct types of leaders (counselors and coaches) may also have contributed to the finding that campers appeared to experience growth in all five domains within Lerner’s 5Cs framework (Lerner et al., 2005). Counselors may have been more focused on promoting social growth (e.g., connection) or promoting confidence during recreation sessions and downtime in the evenings, while coaches may have been more focused on the development of campers’ confidence and competence in sport sessions. While growth may have occurred in certain domains at different times or locations at this residential sport camp, the combined efforts from counselors and coaches campers may have been better supported to
experience growth within all 5Cs. Thus, the context of the residential summer sport camp and the presence of multiple leaders to provide opportunities for growth may have contributed to the finding that campers appeared to experience growth in competence, confidence, character, caring (or compassion), and connection.

A second reason that these results differed from those of Jones et al. (2011) could be due to the different methodological approaches of the studies. Jones and colleagues (2011) used a quantitative measure to investigate growth in the 5Cs, while this project used a qualitative case study approach with interviews and focus groups, and participants in the current study may have had the opportunity to reflect on and describe their experiences differently. In addition, Jones et al. (2011) used a 30-item measurement tool adapted from Phelps et al.’s (2009) original 78-item measure of PYD in sport. The short version of the measure had not previously been used in a sport setting and this adapted measure may have contributed to the discrepant findings. This issue also highlights the need for additional empirical research and the development and testing of measures to assess growth in sport settings. Vierimaa et al. (2012) proposed a framework to measure PYD and children’s growth in terms of their competence, confidence, connection, and character. This measurement tool should be used in conjunction with other current established tools to contribute to a holistic understanding of children’s PYD within sport (Vierimaa et al., 2012). With additional theoretically-based qualitative and quantitative studies investigating PYD and sport, researchers may gain a deeper understanding of how to provided beneficial experiences to youth in sport.

Campers who graduated from the program and became CITs reported that their experiences as campers contributed to their own growth, and it appeared that that these individuals were exhibiting examples of connection, the 6th C within Lerner’s framework. According to Lerner (2005), when an individual experiences growth in each of the 5Cs, the result is that the individual will experience contribution, which refers to giving back to the self, family, community, and civil society. Overall, it appeared that campers and CITs reported growth within the 5Cs, and this contributed to the development of contribution among the older campers and CITs, providing support for Lerner’s model of positive youth development. Although each CIT discussed their experiences of growth while enrolled in the camper program, CITs were still young adults and in future studies it may be beneficial to investigate whether they continued to experience growth in the 5Cs during their time as CITs. While the results are limited to this case study, researchers
may use this information moving forward to identify if growth in all 5Cs is evident in other residential summer camps, or if this is a specific and unique environment in which growth is possible in all 5Cs, and whether older campers do in fact experience contribution as they spend more time in the camp setting.

5.2.2. Campers versus leaders’ perceptions of growth

In the current study counselors and coaches discussed specific examples or situations in which campers of all ages grew during their stay, while CITs reflected on both their own positive growth experiences at camp as well as growth they witnessed in the campers that they worked with. Many campers who participated in focus group interviews also commented on their own and others’ experiences of growth while at camp. This study builds on previous research (e.g., ACA, 2005; Thurber et al., 2007) examining leaders’ perceptions of children’s growth while at camp. As this study took into account the different perspectives of various participants, including two different types of leaders, previous campers, and campers themselves, these individuals were each able to provide their perceptions regarding the types of growth that campers experienced.

Since counselors and coaches worked with campers in different capacities and at different locations around camp, the types of growth they perceived among campers were different. Previous studies in residential camps (ACA, 2002, 2003; Henderson et al., 2007) have reported growth for campers in four domains: positive identity, social skills, physical and thinking skills, and positive values and spirituality. Within these studies it was not clear what types of leaders (i.e., general counselors or sport leaders) were reporting growth in each of the domains. The current research showed that while both types of leaders discussed the types of growth that occurred, counselors focused more predominantly on campers’ acquisition of life skills such as manners, respect and independence and coaches discussed more cases of growth in sportsmanship, teamwork, and sport skills. As counselors were responsible for campers during mealtimes and downtime when activities were not as structured, it is likely that counselors encouraged these positive values and independence in the children during those times. This is contrary to coaches who were responsible for campers during structured sessions when there were specific goals for the session and expectations to encourage and facilitate opportunities to display good sportsmanship, teamwork, and sport skills. As coaches often planned their sport sessions and had desired outcomes for their group, it is possible that they were consciously providing the opportunities for development for campers and positively reinforcing examples of
the qualities when they were evident among campers. It may be important to separate the types of leaders and the growth that they witnessed, as campers may have been provided with unique experiences that prompted growth in different domains depending on the leader that interacted with the camper or facilitated the activity. This brings up an additional methodological point that different leaders may describe varying forms of growth depending on their role as well as their level of involvement and interaction with campers. As many leaders may describe different aspects of growth it is important to include multiple perspectives, such as the leader, parent, and camper perspective, when attempting to assess camper growth in future research.

Contrary to previous research (ACA, 2005; Thurber et al., 2007) in which negative effects were seen for campers’ perceptions of peer relationships, growth in connection was the most frequently reported construct by senior campers in this study. This may be because the data from the ACA (2005) study and from Thurber and colleagues (2007) was collected immediately post-camp and six months post-camp, presumably while campers were at home. Conversely, participants in the current study were interviewed only while at camp. Although many of the senior campers interviewed were returners and spent the year in between camp sessions at home, their perceptions of social relationships may have been different as they were currently engaged in the environment in which they often made friends quickly and easily. This may have had an effect on participants’ reflections of social growth and connection with peers and their opinions as to whether the gains in this construct are maintained throughout the year while they are not at camp. Additional studies may investigate campers’ perceptions of social interactions with peers while at camp, immediately post camp, and multiple times throughout the year before returning to camp the following summer.

5.2.3. Camp setting features

The context of the residential summer sport camp was structured in a way that provided growth opportunities for campers, in particular due to the supportive relationships with a variety of leaders, the presence of positive social norms in the form of role models, and many opportunities for skill building. To date there are few studies that have investigated sport contexts using the NRCIM 8 settings features, although Côté, Strachan, and Fraser-Thomas (2008) identified what these features may look like in a sport context. The results from this study provided support for the 8 settings features in a recreational or non-competitive sporting environment. Results from this study may have more of a widespread application as more children are likely to participate in
sport programs that are non-competitive in nature and encourage sport participation for all, rather than programs that focus on the development elite young athletes. Evidence from this study may be used to inform the development of other recreational sport programs.

This study is one of the first to investigate the 8 setting features within a residential summer camp program. Although findings demonstrated support for all of the 8 settings features, the least frequently discussed feature in this case study was that of integration of family, school, and community efforts. This may be due to the fact that this camp offered one week sessions and many children often returned to their families after this short stay, and as such there were not many opportunities for parents and significant others to be involved in the various camp programs in this case study. This is unlike other residential summer camps where children may stay for 4 or 8-week programs and parents can attend visitation days at various points throughout the summer. Thus, there may have been limited opportunity for the integration of camp programming with the campers’ families due to the structure of the camp setting. Despite this limitation, counselors reported taking notes of campers’ achievements and successes throughout the week in order to reduce parents’ potential concerns about being uninvolved in their child’s camp stay and to try and incorporate the transfer of skills from the camp setting to the campers’ home life. Counselors could discuss children’s strengths, tell stories, and share specific, individual comments with parents as campers were picked up. With increased communication between leaders at camp and children’s caregivers, it is possible that parents would be able to reinforce and aid in the transfer of skills and values learned at camp to children’s everyday lives. Future research should focus on different strategies to facilitate connections between children’s residential camps and their family, schools, and communities, particularly at short term residential camps. In terms of applied implications, one suggestion arising from this finding is that summer camp leaders and staff should emphasize the integration of the campers’ experiences to their home lives through deliberate interactions with parents on pick-up day.

The residential and overnight aspect of the camp meant that important developmental events may have occurred in the evenings during the camp recreational events and competitions as well as during downtime. While the context appeared to be quite casual for campers, it was clear that the overall programming of the evening was intentional to allow youth to interact with their peers and leaders in a relaxed but supportive environment. Camp administrators may use the 8 settings features in the creation of their daily and evening programming and training in order to create an
optimal process to facilitate youth development. Leaders may apply the 8 settings features to the creation of the context or environment in which youth are supported in growth experiences during all times at camp. Results from this research may inform future studies to investigate residential summer camp programs within an 8 settings features framework and the processes and contexts they facilitate to provide campers with opportunities for growth.

As this study focused on residential summer sport camp, the differences between day and residential camp deserve further elaboration as they may have contributed to the findings. Residential camps differ from day camps in a few distinct ways. Campers in an overnight camp do not return to their homes and families at the end of the day, but rather they continue to participate in camp programming in the evenings and early mornings. This means that they are constantly surrounded by camp leaders as well as peers and may have more opportunities for growth experiences compared to children attending a day camp. As they do not return home to their families at the end of the day, residential campers do not have the comfort of being with parents, but instead are left to personally deal with any challenges they had throughout the day, which may include physical (e.g., climbing up the rock wall), social (e.g., making new friends), or emotional (e.g., missing their family and home) challenges. In a residential camp setting, campers may have to reflect on their experiences without the influence of their parents or other family members, and campers are instead forced to deal with these difficulties on their own or with the support from their camp leaders. For some children this would be a challenge and a novel experience. At residential camp children may also develop a new sense of independence, not only in dealing with their own thoughts and feelings, but also in making decisions (e.g., what to wear for the day, what meal to choose in the dining hall, or how to spend their canteen money) and caring for themselves and ensuring their own wellbeing. Residential camp is a setting for children to have their own experiences independent from their families, which may initiate new forms of problem-solving, support seeking, and coping.

A strength of this study was that it examined not only campers and leaders’ perceptions of growth experiences, but the case study methodology also permitted an examination of the entire camp setting in delivering PYD experiences for campers. This study incorporated individual and focus group interviews with campers, CITs, leaders, and management. It also took into account observational data and training documents that explained the creation of the context and overall camp environment and setting. This research also situated the findings within theories of positive
youth development to describe how many factors worked in conjunction to contribute to the provision of PYD experience for youth. The way in which the Master Staff led orientation for new and returning staff utilizing training documents influenced the overall environment that those leaders created, which served to shape the many interactions each leader had with individual campers. Each of these interactions led to a unique residential summer camp experience for every child and ultimately different opportunities for PYD and growth experiences. To date there has been no published research adopting a case study approach to investigate PYD experiences for youth at a summer camp, in particular at a residential sport summer camp. Findings from this study contribute to the current knowledge of PYD in the residential summer sport camp environment and may prompt researchers to investigate specific aspects or elements of this research in additional detail.

5.3. Time and the concept of growth

There is currently no established length of time children must participate in a setting or program in order to experience PYD. In the current study, some senior campers acknowledged their camp experiences as those that produced change and growth while others did not, and it is unclear at what point campers themselves are able to understand their experiences at camp as those that produced growth. Furthermore, long-term campers (i.e., those who stayed for multiple weeks, or the two ten-year campers interviewed) appeared to be better able to articulate growth experiences whereas shorter-term campers (i.e., one week stay or campers who returned for only a few years) were not. Additionally, campers who had more experience with the extreme camp program and participated in team building activities and campfire discussions reported more growth experiences than those who were new to the program. These findings present a few discussion points related to growth, processes of reflection, and duration of stay at camp.

Some senior campers acknowledged that they had experienced growth during their time at camp, in particular returning campers and those that stayed for multiple weeks at a time. This may be due to the fact that they had more opportunities for growth at camp simply because they had spent a significant amount of time in the environment, as compared to their peers who only stayed for a week or only attended one or two years. As well, campers who were able to return for multiple years were often older than those that did not return and therefore had additional time to reflect on their experiences, implement the skills and values learned at camp in their everyday lives, and were also more mature. Those campers were perhaps able to better
understand what they experienced at camp as developmental experiences, or those that produced change. Both counselors and coaches discussed that although they felt that campers changed, some believed that the campers themselves would not realize or understand the change until later when they used the skills they had learnt at camp.

Furthermore, throughout interviews with campers and CITs it was evident that the CITs were better able to articulate their experiences of growth. This may be due to the fact that they had more opportunities to apply the lessons and skills they learned while at camp once they returned to their everyday lives. Some of the lessons were considered life lessons and pertained to experiences that CITs faced as young adults, such as self-respect and interactions with peers of the opposite gender. Many of the CITs had also participated in the extreme camp program for older campers where reflection time was structured into the program, in the form of an end of the week campfire. Similarly, many extreme campers who were participating in the program for their second or third time often discussed more instances of growth while at camp, perhaps due to the campfire reflection time that was built into the program, or due to their reflections throughout the year while they were not present at camp. A few of the senior campers interviewed were participating in their first year of the extreme program and had yet to take part in the Thursday evening campfire where many campers shared stories of their experiences while at camp. This campfire discussion may have prompted self-reflection and allowed them to recognize the changes that occurred during their time in the program. Listening to other campers’ stories may have allowed them the opportunity to reflect and acknowledge similar changes in themselves.

Structured periods of reflection, such as the end of the week campfire for the youth enrolled in the senior camper program, may accelerate growth or prompt campers to recognize the growth they experienced during their time at camp. When campers discussed personal experiences and were emotionally vulnerable, this may have made their peers feel comfortable to reflect on their own experiences of growth and to share with the group. Often many children in the extreme group were returning campers and had time to apply the skills and values learned at camp in their home-lives before going back to camp again the following summer. This period during which many campers might have applied the skills and values learned at camp in different ways, may have encouraged them to reflect on their experiences in the program and acknowledge them as those which facilitated growth and development. Future longitudinal studies that follow campers
from their initial week of residential summer sport camp to their final years as campers, and if possible to their time working as a staff member, will be beneficial. This will help to identify the different types of development that may be experienced at various ages and maturity levels, as well as forms of growth possible as returning campers and potentially as staff members.

5.4. Additional practical implications

Findings from this study present a few practical implications for sport programs as well as summer camps. The 8 settings features may be used at a macro level to inform training practices for coaches of non-competitive and recreational youth sport leagues, they may be implemented at a micro level at individual residential summer sport camps, at a macro level regarding ACA policies, and they can be used to advise leaders on how to encourage children to move outside their comfort zones in order to experience growth.

The 8 settings features may be used explicitly in coach training for sport programs in order to facilitate growth for children. As Conroy and Coatsworth (2006) argued, current coaching programs based on the common-sense approach to coaching must be implemented in conjunction with a more formal training program. They discussed that leaders interact with youth hundreds to thousands of times a season in teachable moments (Conroy & Coatsworth, 2006) and coaches must be trained how to make these interactions positive and growth promoting. Within training programs leaders can be provided with specific examples of what the different settings features may look like and how to implement the features in their programs. If coaches are provided with examples of what the 8 settings features look like as well as suggestions on how to facilitate these settings features within their own organizations, they may be more likely to incorporate this framework into their existing programs. In particular, administrators and coaches should direct attention to different ways to facilitate the integration of parents, schools, and community efforts. If local sports programs are able to incorporate these significant others with the participants, it may be possible to encourage the transfer of a variety of skills and values, including life skills. If youth sports administrations place importance on the facilitation of the 8 settings features in their programs, this may aid in the creation of a positive and supportive environment in which youth feel safe to experience growth and development.

Many camps that have an orientation period for staff often do not allocate much time on instructing leaders how to intentionally create a welcoming and supportive environment that
encourages and facilitates growth for all. It would be beneficial to include this information in the initial training period and reinforce it throughout the summer during ongoing training. An explicit discussion of the 8 settings features during summer camp orientation and how these features could be implemented may serve to create more opportunities for development for both campers and staff. If leaders are aware of what the 8 settings features are, counselors may be more likely to intentionally implement the features in their interactions with campers and coaches may utilize the features in their programming and sport instruction and facilitation.

As previously discussed in regards to the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) and the PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner, 1999), distal factors at the macro-level such as accreditation requirements related to positive youth development, staff hiring practices, and staff training can have an indirect but still important influence on the developing child. Thus, it may be beneficial for national camp organizations such as the ACA to consider findings from this study with regards to the accreditation process for camps in the United States. The ACA may consider including accreditation standards concerning the curriculum used within summer camps to explicitly emphasize strategies for promoting positive youth development in staff training and materials. It may be valuable for camps to prioritize staff screening and hiring processes, as well as focus on employing individuals who have previous training or experience working with children in developmental settings that promote positive outcomes. Distal factors concerning the camp context which may influence campers’ development also include establishing positive social norms among staff members, and thus camp administrators may seek to include standards for minimum numbers of male and female returning/senior staff members in order to ensure the philosophy and values of a specific camp are promoted for new staff members. Standards regarding training practices using the 8 settings features and how to implement them in camps may also serve to facilitate positive growth experiences for campers.

A unique finding of this study is in regards to how leaders created supportive relationships with campers, specifically by supporting them to move outside of their comfort zone. As previously discussed, this may be supporting campers to move outside of their social, emotional, or physical comfort zone. Leaders at this particular camp created close personal relationships through asking questions and making connections with individual campers, and they used supportive and encouraging words to help campers push themselves outside of their physical comfort zone. In
addition, some leaders also attempted to help facilitate social relationships between campers, which served to aid campers who may have felt uncomfortable trying to make new friends. The types of social interactions leaders engaged in differed depending on campers’ developmental and maturity level. If campers were not very developmentally mature, leaders engaged in more basic interactions and conversations, using simple terms and encouragement. If campers were more developmentally mature, leaders often were able to create stronger relationships and thus encouraged campers to participate in activities that pushed them further outside their comfort zones. Finally, leaders encouraged campers to become more independent and complete tasks, such as making their beds, cleaning their cabin, or getting prepared for session on their own or in a small group. Leaders wanted to ensure that campers knew that since their parents and families were not there, they needed to care for themselves and ensure they were becoming more independent, however if there was an issue, their leaders were there to support and help them if need be. Researchers and practitioners may benefit from future studies that investigate the processes involved in supporting children outside their social, emotional, and physical comfort zones, particularly in a residential summer camp setting. Leaders in youth development settings will benefit from additional knowledge on how to best support children to engage in experiences outside their comfort zones.

5.5. Limitations and future research

One limitation of this study concerned the camp setting and the clientele attending the camp. Many campers who attended the camp were from families with a high socioeconomic status and it might be argued that the children who attended this camp were not in need of positive developmental experiences compared to children who attend other camps or who were involved in other youth programs. Indeed, researchers have promoted sport as a valuable setting for promoting positive developmental outcomes among low-income youth (e.g., Ullrich-French & McDonough, 2013). Although children from wealthy families are more likely to have had opportunities to previously try the different activities that were available at the camp, they may not have had the opportunity to develop close and supportive relationships with adults in their lives, or they may lack other opportunities for growth despite their higher socioeconomic status. More generally, it is difficult to argue that youth from higher socioeconomic status households do not ‘need’ positive developmental experiences during their childhood and adolescence, and it is not clear whether youth from higher and lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to
benefit from different PYD experiences. However, summer camp may have the resources to provide the different types of support that campers need, at the time that they require it. Future research may help to identify ways in which children with a wide variety of needs can be provided opportunities for growth. Nonetheless, the findings from this study should be regarded with caution and may not generalize to other campers or settings with a more diverse sample in terms of socioeconomic status.

Secondly, within this study there was conceptual overlap between the terms growth and development. As no distinction was made within the interviews and the terms were often used interchangeably, it became unclear which term participants were referring to in their responses. Many participants expressed difficulty in separating the two terms and identifying them as different. In addition, some participants presented examples of each that were not consistent with their definition of that term or did not align with others’ definitions of the terms. Although the two terms are quite similar, distinctions can be made between their original definitions and implications. Traditionally the term growth refers to physical, measurable changes in an individual until maturation, while development referred to psychological, emotional, and social changes. It has become a challenge to distinguish between the two terms as they have also been used interchangeably in a variety of fields, including within psychology. For example, the term ‘post-traumatic growth’ (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004) does not refer to physical changes, but instead psychological changes an individual experienced after a traumatic event. As the terms are used in a variety of fields in different ways, it was difficult for participants to identify the changes and positive outcomes they were describing on behalf of the campers and themselves.

It is important for youth leaders to have a clear understanding of what the terms ‘growth’ and ‘development’ mean so that they are able to promote each appropriately and provide sufficient opportunities for children to experience development and growth. Researchers must also agree upon and consistently use definitions for these terms in published literature in order to prompt future research in the field of children’s growth and development. Future studies may benefit from an explicit explanation and definition of each term and what its use implies. This may help to eliminate confusion on behalf of participants and clarify what type of experience they refer to when describing benefits youth experience in programs.
There were also some challenges present regarding the use of observations and field notes. As there was no structured observation guide used, I did not reflect on the type of observations I would be making prior to immersion in the setting. Although I attempted to vary my observations of participants, locations around camp, and positive and negative experiences, it seemed that most of my observations were of positive interactions between campers and staff, as well as observations of coaching staff. This may be due to the fact that negative experiences were not as frequently seen around camp as they typically occurred in more private or secluded locations. For example, if a camper was homesick and crying, his or her leader would likely have taken them to the office to have a discussion with the Resident Life Director, who would then make a decision on whether or not the camper should phone home. These types of interactions would not be in a location where the campers’ peers would be witness, but rather in a more private area or ‘hidden’ from others for the campers’ sake. In addition, as I was working alongside coaches throughout the summer it was easier for me to observe them interacting with campers and staff, as compared to counselors. Future studies would benefit from a structured observation guide to reduce inconsistencies in observations and field notes.

As a participant as observer and an individual who had previously worked at the camp for multiple years, additional challenges were present in the current study. Although I maintained a personal reflexivity journal, documented my thoughts and feelings throughout the summer, and attempted to acknowledge my preconceived notions, my own biases were still present. It was impossible to remove myself from my previous experiences and my knowledge of the residential summer sport camp context and the case site in particular. Even though insider knowledge of the camp and organization was beneficial to present a broader, more holistic view of the case, my previous understanding and experience as a coach shaped my analysis and may have allowed me to view the data from the coaches differently than that from the counselors and Master Staff. This may have presented an issue in the form of either overrepresentation of themes from the coach perspective or underrepresentation of themes from the counselor perspective. I may have subconsciously discussed themes that I personally felt were more relevant based on my previous experiences and unknowingly dismissed themes that I did not feel to be as pertinent. Results from future case studies with researchers who are new to the summer camp industry will contribute to a broader understanding of the factors contributing to children’s PYD experience in this context.
Finally, although this research undertook a case study approach with a wide variety of participants, parents’ views were not represented in the findings. Interviews with parents and guardians may have helped to provide a more holistic view and broader understanding of the factors contributing to children’s PYD experiences at residential summer sport camp. Although parents were not present at the camp during the time the interviews took place, it may have been possible to contact them for phone or video interviews regarding their child’s experiences at camp, their perceptions of their child’s growth while at camp, and their views on what may have contributed to or hindered their child’s experiences in the residential camp environment. Future case studies will benefit from interviewing as many important adults in campers’ lives as possible. Focus groups with CITs and senior campers also presented a few challenges as participants may have been more likely to report overly positive experiences in the presence of their peers (e.g., social desirability bias). Although the issue of confidentiality was discussed and participants were encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings, it may be that participants chose to discuss only their positive experiences at camp. There is also the issue of self-selection, meaning that the participants who volunteered to participate in the study were likely those who had positive experiences to share. Future studies in this area should take this into consideration when recruiting participants for focus groups and should attempt to recruit individuals with a variety of experiences, both positive and negative.

It is important to consider that positive growth may not occur for all individuals at camp and some children do not have positive experiences in this setting. The focus of this study was on positive youth development, however there were some negative case examples identified which suggested that residential camp experiences were not universally positive for all campers. This raises the question of whether camp perpetuates a narrative of growth as being positive or valuable for all individuals and how this may affect the public perception of a summer camp experience. It is also possible that different types of development may occur for individuals at day and residential camps, and some individuals may benefit more from experiences at camp depending on their personalities and willingness to accept a camp’s philosophy and values and to participate in all that the camp has to offer. For example, a camper who is reluctant to try different activities and meet new people may experience different outcomes than someone who is open to pushing themselves outside their comfort zone and participate in all camp activities. Future researchers exploring children’s experiences at camp may look into which types of individuals benefit from different types of day vs. residential camp programming (i.e., is there an
ideal fit for a positive camp experience?), who is missing out or do not have positive experiences and why, as well as whether camps promote certain types of growth or development for certain individuals.

Additional research will be valuable in this field of study and continued exploration of what constitutes a program that facilitates positive youth development will be beneficial. A detailed investigation or review of current programs that promote youth development will help in the identification of specific qualities and characteristics that compose such programs. Furthermore, research that investigates in additional detail each of the 8 settings features and how they may be implemented to create a context that encourages youth to participate in developmental opportunities will contribute to the knowledge in this field.

Exploratory studies that are theoretically based, in particular using Lerner’s 5Cs (2005) and the 8 settings features (NRCIM, 2002), will be useful as they will provide an understanding of how to move forward in the field of PYD. Although the current study used an adapted PPCT model to focus on the transaction between campers and their leaders in promoting positive development experiences, additional studies that consider developmental processes and camper characteristics (e.g., personality) using the original PPCT model would also be useful in this area. With additional investigation it may be possible to identify what type of growth is most common at residential summer sport camp and what type of growth is least common and must be the focus of future research. A study with pre- and post- camp interviews with first time and returning campers will be valuable to establish whether or not campers themselves feel that they have developed or experienced growth while at camp in that current year. Furthermore, studies employing interviews or quantitative surveys to measure growth prospectively with the aim of examining whether growth is maintained or can be built upon in subsequent summers will be beneficial.

Experimental studies applying the 8 settings features in camp or non-competitive sport contexts would be useful to identify ways to appropriately structure sporting environments and programs to facilitate the most opportunities for children’s growth. For example, an intervention that tests different ways to integrate family, school, and community with children participating in a sport program, such as a parent-child soccer game multiple times throughout a season or school-based fundraisers for the soccer program, will help to discover ways to employ the 8 settings features
for beneficial PYD outcomes for children. Results from future studies may be used to inform recreational community sport programs as well as many types of camps including day or residential, and general or sport camps. Ultimately with additional research of this type, modifications can be made to both sport and camp programs that will further progress the field of PYD.
Chapter 6
Conclusion

There is currently limited research in the field of PYD and in particular, PYD experiences at residential summer sport camp. Therefore the purpose of this study was to explore the contextual features such as leaders, setting, and programming that contributed to creating PYD experiences for campers at a residential summer sport camp. This study aimed to answer the question: how do the leaders, environment, and programming contribute to PYD experiences for children at a residential summer sport camp?

This study employed an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) approach within a constructivist paradigmatic position (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Krane & Baird, 2005). I acted as participant as observer (Denzin, 1978) while I conducted interviews with a total of 57 participants, including counselors, coaches, senior campers, CITs, and Master Staff. I also collected observations in the form of field notes, initial and ongoing training documents for analysis. Interviews, field notes, and training documents were inductively and deductively analyzed using Lerner’s 5Cs (2005) and the NRCIM’s 8 settings features (2002) as guides.

Results were contextualized within Bronfenbrenner’s PPCT model (1999). Evidence was found for each of the 5Cs as discussed by Lerner (2005), which were presented as the person feature within the PPCT model (1999). Participants discussed connection as the most frequently experienced C for campers, while competence was the least often described in interviews. CITs all explained their reasons for returning to camp as wanting to give back to camp and to provide campers with experiences similar to those they had as campers. This was interpreted as being indicative of displaying contribution.

The 8 settings features (NRCIM, 2002) and sub-themes were all discussed within the process aspect of the PPCT model in regards to how leaders provided campers with opportunities for growth. The 8 settings features and ensuing sub-themes were then discussed within the context aspect of the model, specifically how Master Staff and the camp environment facilitated a context in which campers are able to grow and develop. Specifically, camp staff promoted PYD experiences through developing supportive relationships with campers, appropriately structuring sport sessions for developmental levels and abilities, displaying positive social norms, and
providing campers with a physically and psychologically safe environment in which to experience growth.

Finally the element of time was discussed with a focus on leaders’ and campers’ perceptions of the length of stay required in a residential summer sport camp in order to experience growth and development. While some leaders felt that growth was seen in campers within a one-week stay, other leaders were less certain whether this was an appropriate length of time in order for children to experience changes. Similarly some campers and CITs were able to articulate their camp experiences as ones that prompted growth, while others were unsure if they had grown during their stay at camp. Furthermore, interviews with Master Staff did not show consensus on the most beneficial length of stay for campers. While some Master Staff felt that one week was enough to promote development, others did not agree.

In conclusion, this study builds on previous research by drawing attention to type of growth children experienced at residential summer sport camp, the process in which opportunities for growth were provided for campers, the way in which a supportive and welcoming context and culture was developed at camp, and the length of time a child stayed immersed in the camp experience. Examining positive developmental experiences in a summer sport camp setting contributes to our understanding of how leaders can effectively deliver experiences that promote positive growth among children. With additional studies and knowledge in this field, researchers and practitioners will be better equipped to design and implement theoretically based programs and training for recreational youth sport contexts and leaders. This can facilitate and encourage more positive developmental opportunities for all youth.
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Appendices

Appendix A – Interview guides

Pre-Camp New Coach/Counselor Interview Guide

Pre-Interview Information: I am interested in learning about youth development experiences at summer camp and the leaders that facilitate this development for campers. I am interested in your opinions and thoughts, and there are no right or wrong answers to any questions I will ask. If you don’t know how to answer a question or you choose not to answer, that is ok. If you so choose, you are free to stop the interview at any time. I will also be completing interviews near the end of the summer camp season. I will be conducting these interviews with the same individuals who completed the pre-camp interviews. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and nothing bad will happen if you withdraw. If you decide that you do not want to complete the end-of-camp interviews, that is ok. Once the interview is completed, a ‘fake name’ (pseudonym) will be used so that you cannot be identified in the future, and I will not share your answers with anyone associated with camp. Do you have any questions?

Staff member written consent form – staff members will be asked to sign and read the consent form prior to beginning the interview.

Ice-breaker/background information

1. Why did you decide to apply to camp?
   a. Why as a coach/counselor?
2. What type of experiences do you feel prepared you for working at camp in general?
   a. Specifically as a coach/counselor?

Perceptions of leader characteristics and training

3. What do you feel will be the most important characteristics for working at camp?
   a. Specifically for a coach/counselor?
4. Are there any characteristics an employee should NOT have?
5. Do you think coaches and counselors differ in terms of personality? (describe/explain)
   a. What about in terms of leadership? (describe/explain)
6. What kinds of things do you think are important to include in staff training?
   a. Specifically for coaches/counselors?
Goals and challenges for the summer

7. What are your goals for the summer?
   a. How will you work towards meeting them?
8. What kind of challenges do you think you will experience this summer?
   a. How will you deal with them?
9. *Question only for coaches:* What will be the focus of your sport sessions?
   a. Will it change depending on the age and group of children?

*Question only for counselors:* How will you prepare for recreation events?

   a. Will this change depending on the age and group of children?

Youth development

10. Do you think campers may experience any changes over the week while they are at camp?
    a. Mental, physical skills, emotional?
11. How do you think these changes occur while at camp?
    a. e.g., What kinds of things/factors contribute towards children experiencing these kinds of changes?
    b. Are there any things/factors that might hinder or prevent these kinds of changes from occurring among some children?
12. What role do you think summer camp plays in these kids’ overall growth and development?
13. What role do you think you play in these kids’ overall growth and development?

Wrap-up: Is there anything else you would like to add?
Pre-Camp Returning Coach/Counselor Interview Guide

Pre-Interview Information: I am interested in learning about youth development experiences at summer camp and the leaders that facilitate this development for campers. I am interested in your opinions and thoughts, and there are no right or wrong answers to any questions I will ask. If you don’t know how to answer a question or you choose not to answer, that is ok. If you so choose, you are free to stop the interview at any time. I will also be completing interviews near the end of the summer camp season. I will be conducting these interviews with the same individuals who completed the pre-camp interviews. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and nothing bad will happen if you withdraw. Upon analysis of data, a ‘fake name’ (pseudonym) will be used so that you cannot be identified in the future, and I will not share your answers with anyone associated with camp. Do you have any questions?

Staff member written consent form – staff members will be asked to read and sign the consent form prior to beginning the interview.

Ice-breaker/background information

1. Please describe your coaching/counseling style.
   a. How is it different depending on the age of the children?
2. What do you feel were your strengths in previous years?
   a. Weaknesses?
3. What is the best/most enjoyable/your favourite part of your job at camp?
   a. Worst/least enjoyable/least favourite part?

Perceptions of leader characteristics and training

4. What were the characteristics you admired most in other coaches/counselors in previous years?
   a. Why?
   b. Do you possess any of these characteristics?
5. What were the characteristics of coaches/counselors you worked best with?
   a. Why/how did these characteristics complement those you possess?
   b. What about the characteristics of coaches/counselors you did not work well with?
6. How do you think coaches and counselors are different in terms of personality?
   a. What about in terms of leadership qualities?
7. What kinds of things do you think are important to include in training for sport leaders?
   a. Why are these things important?
8. What do you think are the most desirable characteristics of coaches?
   a. Least desirable?
   b. Most desirable of counselors?
c. Least desirable of counselors?

Goals and challenges for the summer

9. What were your goals in previous years?
   a. How did you meet them?
   b. What are your goals for this summer?
   c. How will you meet them?
10. **Question only for coaches:** In previous summers, what was your focus during sport sessions?
    a. Did this change based on the age or group of children?

**Question only for counselors:** In previous summers, how did you prepare for recreation events?
    a. Did this change based on the age or group of children?

Youth development

11. What kinds of things do you think campers learn from coaches?
    a. What do you think they learn from counselors?
    b. What do you think they gain from the team of the week competition?
    c. What do you think they gain from the cabin of the week competition?
    d. How do you facilitate this?
12. In previous summers, did you see children develop? If so, what kind of development?
    a. Social, physical, mental?
    b. Can you provide examples?
13. How do you think these changes occur while at camp?
    a. e.g., What kinds of things/factors contribute towards children experiencing these kinds of changes?
    b. Are there any things/factors that might hinder or prevent these kinds of changes from occurring among some children?
14. What role do you think summer camp plays in these kids’ overall growth and development?
    a. What role do you think you play in these kids’ overall growth and development?

Leadership

15. Do you feel you will have a leadership role with the new coaches for this summer?
    a. (if yes): How are you going to be a leader for new coaches this summer?

Wrap-up: Is there anything else you would like to add?
CIT Focus Group Question Guide

Pre-Interview Information: I am interested in learning about youth development experiences at summer camp and the leaders that facilitate this development for campers. I am interested in your opinions and thoughts, and there are no right or wrong answers to any questions I will ask. If you don’t know how to answer a question or you choose not to answer, that is ok. If you so choose, you are free to stop the interview at any time. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and nothing bad will happen if you withdraw. Upon analysis of data, a ‘fake name’ (pseudonym) will be used so that you cannot be identified in the future, and I will not share your answers with anyone associated with camp. It is important to understand that what is said during this focus group is confidential. In order to make everyone feel comfortable to discuss their thoughts and feelings, we should not be discussing what occurs in today’s group with others afterwards. Although I am encouraging each participant to keep this information private, I cannot guarantee that today’s focus group will not be discussed afterwards. Do you have any questions?

Staff member CIT written consent form – as staff members, CITs will be instructed to sign and read the consent form prior to beginning the interview.

Ice-breaker/background information/camp experiences

1. Tell me about your experiences at camp.
   a. How long were you a camper?
   b. What program(s) were you involved in?
   c. Why did you originally come to camp?
2. What kinds of things did you take away from your experiences as a camper?
3. As a camper, what types of things did you learn from your counselors?
   a. From your coaches?
4. Why did you want to apply to be a CIT?

Growth and development

5. Do you feel that your experiences at camp have taught you anything?
   a. What kinds of things do you learn about at camp?
   b. Is it different each year?
   c. Can you provide me an example of something you learned and how?
6. Some people say that they feel they grow or develop as a person when they are at camp. Do you think that is true for yourself?
   a. How so? What type of growth?
   b. Can you tell me about a specific example where you felt you grew or developed as a person?
7. What kinds of things might help a camper grow and develop at camp?
   a. Do you think the length of time that a camper is here makes a difference? (e.g., if someone is here longer, would they experience more development than someone who is only here a week? Or can a camper who is here a week have the same growth as someone who is here longer?)
   b. Do you learn different things with counselors vs. coaches?

Camp culture

8. If I asked you to describe camp to a friend who has never been, what would you say?
9. When I say ‘Team Green’, what do you think of?
10. Everyone has had different experiences at camp. Please provide an example of a great experience.
    a. Why is it so memorable?

CIT experiences

11. What is the most challenging thing about becoming a CIT?
    a. Least challenging thing?
12. What is the best part about becoming a CIT?
13. How do you differentiate your role as a CIT from your place as a camper?
    a. How do you deal with the new responsibilities as a CIT?
    b. How do you navigate your role with your co-counselors?
    c. When you help at sport sessions?
14. Returning CITs: what was the most important thing you learned during your first year as a CIT?

Perceptions of leader characteristics

15. What do you think are the characteristics that make a good counselor?
    a. A good coach?
    b. How are you incorporating these things into your role?
16. What advice would you give to incoming CITs?

Wrap-up: Is there anything else you would like to add?
IX Focus Group Question Guide

Pre-Interview Information: I am interested in learning about youth development experiences at summer camp and the leaders that facilitate this development for campers. I am interested in your opinions and thoughts, and there are no right or wrong answers to any questions I will ask. If you don’t know how to answer a question or you choose not to answer, that is ok. If you so choose, you are free to stop the interview at any time. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and nothing bad will happen if you withdraw. Upon analysis of data, a ‘fake name’ (pseudonym) will be used so that you cannot be identified in the future, and I will not share your answers with anyone associated with camp. It is important to understand that what is said during this focus group is confidential. In order to make everyone feel comfortable to discuss their thoughts and feelings, we should not be discussing what occurs in today’s group with others afterwards. Although I am encouraging each participant to keep this information private, I cannot guarantee that today’s focus group will not be discussed afterwards. Do you have any questions?

Camper written consent form – campers will be instructed to sign and read the consent form prior to beginning the interview.

Ice-breaker/background

1. Tell me about your experiences at camp.
   a. How long have you been a camper?
   b. What program(s) have you been involved in?
   c. Why did you originally decide to come to camp?
   d. If you do, why do you return to camp each summer?
2. What is your favourite part about camp?
   a. Why?
   b. Has this changed over the years?

Growth and development

3. Do you feel that your experiences at camp have taught you anything?
   a. What kinds of things do you learn about at camp?
   b. Is it different each year?
   c. Can you provide me an example of something you learned and how?
4. Some people say that they feel they grow or develop as a person when they are at camp. Do you think that is true for yourself?
   a. How so? What type of growth?
   b. Can you tell me about a specific example where you felt you grew or developed as a person?
5. What kinds of things might help a camper grow and develop at camp?
   a. Do you think the length of time that a camper is here makes a difference? (e.g., if someone is here longer, would they experience more development than someone who is only here a week? Or can a camper who is here a week have the same growth as someone who is here longer?)
   b. Do you learn different things with counselors vs. coaches?

Coaches and counselors’ influence on growth/development

6. How do you feel the counselors help you grow?
   a. What about the coaches?
   b. Any examples?

Leader characteristics

7. Do you think counselors and coaches are different kinds of people?
   a. Differences in personality?
   b. Differences in leadership?

8. What do you think makes a great camp employee?
   a. A great counselor?
   b. A great coach?
   c. A great youth leader?
   d. A great IX leader?

9. What characteristics did your all-time favourite counselor possess?
   a. Your all-time favourite coach?

10. What do you think are undesirable characteristics of leaders?
    a. Undesirable of counselors?
    b. Undesirable of coaches?

11. What do you think it takes to become a good CIT?
    a. How do you think these CITs become good counselors/coaches?

Wrap-up: Is there anything else you would like to add?
First Year Coach/Counselor End of Season Interview Guide

Pre-Interview Information: This is a follow up interview to the one you completed prior to the beginning of the official camp season. As a reminder, I am interested in learning about youth development experiences at summer camp and the leaders that facilitate this development for campers. I am interested in your opinions and thoughts, and there are no right or wrong answers to any questions I will ask. Again, if you don’t know how to answer a question or you choose not to answer, that is ok. If you so choose, you are free to stop the interview at any time. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and nothing bad will happen if you withdraw. Upon analysis of data, a ‘fake name’ (pseudonym) will be used so that you cannot be identified in the future, and I will not share your answers with anyone associated with camp. Do you have any questions?

Ice-breaker/background

1. Please describe your coaching/counseling style.
   a. How is it different depending on the age of the children?
2. What do you feel were your strengths this summer?
   a. Weaknesses?
3. Do you remember what your goals were for the summer? (if no, then remind them what they said in the first interview)
   a. Do you feel you met your goals?
   b. If so, how did you meet them? If not, what are some of the reasons you did not meet them?
4. Question for coaches only: What was your focus in sport sessions?
   a. Why?
   b. How do you facilitate it?
   c. How did the children respond to this?

Question for counselors only: How did you prepare for recreation events?

   a. Did this change depending on what type of event it was?
   b. How did the children respond to this?
5. What is the best/most enjoyable/your favourite part of your job at camp?
   a. Worst/least enjoyable/least favourite part?

Staff characteristics

6. What are the characteristics you admire most in other coaches/counselors?
   a. Why?
   b. Do you feel that you possess any of these characteristics?
7. What were the characteristics of coaches/counselors you worked best with?
a. Why/how did these characteristics complement those you possess?
b. What about the characteristics of coaches/counselors you did not work well with?

8. How do you think coaches and counselors are different in terms of personality?
a. What about in terms of leadership qualities?

9. What do you think are the most desirable characteristics of coaches?
a. Least desirable?
b. Most desirable of counselors?
c. Least desirable of counselors?

Staff training

10. What kinds of things do you think are important to include in training for sport leaders?
a. Why are these things important to include?

Perceptions of campers’ growth/development

11. During the course of the summer did you see children develop in any way? If so, what kind of development?
a. Social, physical, mental?
b. Different types of development depending on age of children?
c. Do you feel that length of time at camp plays a role? (can also rephrase: some people might think that a week isn’t enough time for kids to experience any development or growth while at camp – what do you think?)
d. Can you provide examples of situations where you felt you witnessed the campers’ growth or development?

12. What did you learn about child development this summer?
a. What do you think facilitates this development among campers? (e.g.; programming, environment, or leaders?)
b. What do you think may hinder this development among campers?

13. Did you plan for positive developmental experiences for the campers during sessions?
a. Why or why not?
b. What type of experiences did you plan? (e.g.; any examples of activities that you felt contributed to campers’ development?)

14. What do you hope campers gained from being a part of your team/cabin?
a. How did you facilitate this?
b. What kinds of things do you think campers learned from coaches this summer?
c. What do you think they learned from counselors?

Final Question

15. What did you learn about yourself this summer?

Wrap-up: Is there anything else you would like to add?
Returning Coach/Counselor End of Season Interview Guide

Pre-Interview Information: This is a follow up interview to the one you completed prior to the beginning of the official camp season. As a reminder, I am interested in learning about youth development experiences at summer camp and the leaders that facilitate this development for campers. I am interested in your opinions and thoughts, and there are no right or wrong answers to any questions I will ask. Again, if you don’t know how to answer a question or you choose not to answer, that is ok. If you so choose, you are free to stop the interview at any time. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and nothing bad will happen if you withdraw. Upon analysis of data, a ‘fake name’ (pseudonym) will be used so that you cannot be identified in the future, and I will not share your answers with anyone associated with camp. Do you have any questions?

Ice-breaker/Background

1. Please describe your coaching/counseling style.
   a. Did your coaching/counselling style change from previous summers?
   b. Is yes, how so?
   c. How is it different depending on the age of the children?
2. What do you feel were your strengths this summer?
   a. Weaknesses?
3. Do you remember what your goals were for the summer? (if no, then remind them what they said in the first interview)
   a. Do you feel you met your goals?
   b. If so, how did you meet them? If not, what are some of the reasons you did not meet them?
4. Question for coaches only: What was your focus in sport sessions?
   a. Why?
   b. Did this change from previous summers?
   c. How do you facilitate it?
   d. How did the children respond to this?

Question for counselors only: How did you prepare for recreation events?
   c. Did this change from previous summers?
   d. Did this change depending on what type of event it was?
   e. How did the children respond to this?

Characteristics of coaches/counselors

5. What are the characteristics you admire most in other coaches/counselors?
   a. Why?
b. Do you feel that you possess any of these characteristics?

6. What were the characteristics of coaches/counselors you worked best with?
   a. Why/how did these characteristics complement those you possess?
   b. What about the characteristics of coaches/counselors you did not work well with?

7. What do you think are the most desirable characteristics of coaches?
   a. Least desirable?
   b. Most desirable of counselors?
   c. Least desirable of counselors?

8. How do you think coaches and counselors this summer are different in terms of personality?
   a. What about in terms of leadership qualities?

9. How do you think coaches and counselors this summer were different from those in previous summers?
   a. How was camp different this summer as compared to previous summers?

Perceptions of campers’ growth/development

10. During the course of the summer did you see children develop in any way? If so, what kind of development?
    a. Social, physical, mental?
    b. Different types of development depending on age of children?
    c. Do you feel that length of time at camp plays a role? (can also rephrase: some people might think that a week isn’t enough time for kids to experience any development or growth while at camp – what do you think?)
    d. Can you provide examples of situations where you felt you witnessed the campers’ growth or development?

11. What did you learn about child development this summer?
    a. What do you think facilitates this development among campers? (e.g.; programming, environment, or leaders?)
    b. What do you think may hinder this development among campers?

12. Did you plan for positive developmental experiences for the campers during sessions?
    a. Why or why not?
    b. What type of experiences did you plan? (e.g.; any examples of activities that you felt contributed to campers’ development?)

13. What do you hope campers gained from being a part of your team/cabin?
    a. How did you facilitate this?
    b. What kinds of things do you think campers learned from coaches this summer?
    c. What do you think they learned from counselors?

Final Question:

14. What did you learn about yourself this summer?

Wrap-up: Is there anything else you would like to add?
Camp Directors Interview Guide

Pre-Interview Information: I am interested in learning about youth development experiences at summer camp and the leaders that facilitate this development for campers. I am interested in your opinions and thoughts, and there are no right or wrong answers to any questions I will ask. If you don’t know how to answer a question or you choose not to answer, that is ok. If you so choose, you are free to stop the interview at any time. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and nothing bad will happen if you withdraw. Upon analysis of data, a ‘fake name’ (pseudonym) will be used so that you cannot be identified in the future, and I will not share your answers with anyone associated with camp. Do you have any questions?

Staff member written consent form – staff members will be instructed to sign and read the consent form prior to beginning the interview.

Ice-breaker/Background

1. Tell me about your reasons for originally forming the camp.

Camp Characteristics

2. How has the camp evolved over the years?
   a. Programming?
   b. Goals?
3. How does the camp change from year to year?
   a. Physical environment?
   b. Staff members?
   c. Programming?
   d. Goals?
4. What is your current focus/mission/goal for the camp?
   a. What about for the campers?
   b. What about for staff members?
   c. How do you transmit this to staff?

Knowledge/Perceptions of Child and Youth Development

5. Tell me about your perceptions of child and youth development?
   a. How does this factor into your programming?
   b. The hiring of staff members?
6. How do you stay updated on the current knowledge regarding child and youth development?
   a. E.g., Do you attend conferences or workshops?
7. In your opinion, what role does camp play in children’s development?
a. What are some of the things/factors at camp that influence children’s
development while they are here?
b. Do you feel that length of time at camp plays a role? (can also rephrase: some
people might think that a week isn’t enough time for kids to experience any
development or growth while at camp – what do you think?)

8. What type of child development do you most commonly see while they attend camp?
a. Can you provide any examples of times you’ve witnessed kids’ development at
camp?
b. How do you think this type of development occurs?

Staff Characteristics

9. What type of characteristics do you look for in general staff members?
a. In counselors?
b. In coaches?
c. In Master Staff?
d. Returning staff members?

10. What do you think makes a good youth leader?
a. Compare counselors vs. coaches?

Staff Training

11. What do you think is most important to include in staff training?
a. For counselors?
b. For coaches?

Wrap-up: Is there anything else you would like to add?
Athletic Directors Interview Guide

Pre-Interview Information: I am interested in learning about youth development experiences at summer camp and the leaders that facilitate this development for campers. I am interested in your opinions and thoughts, and there are no right or wrong answers to any questions I will ask. If you don’t know how to answer a question or you choose not to answer, that is ok. If you so choose, you are free to stop the interview at any time. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and nothing bad will happen if you withdraw. Upon analysis of data, a ‘fake name’ (pseudonym) will be used so that you cannot be identified in the future, and I will not share your answers with anyone associated with camp. Do you have any questions?

Staff member written consent form – staff members will be instructed to sign and read the consent form prior to beginning the interview.

Ice-breaker/Background

1. Tell me about your experience with summer camp.
   a. How did you become involved (as a camper, employee)?
   b. Why did you become involved?
   c. How long have you been at this camp?
2. What previous experiences prepared you for work at a summer camp?
   a. Work with children?
   b. Work teaching sport?
   c. Preparation for work as an athletic director?

Knowledge/Perceptions of Child and Youth Development

3. What do you know about child and youth development in general?
   b. What about physical development? Psychosocial development?
   c. Have you taken any classes or courses about development?
4. In your opinion, what role does camp play in children’s development?
   a. What are some of the things/factors at camp that influence children’s development while they are here?
      i. Environment?
      ii. Programming?
      iii. Leaders?
   b. Do you feel that length of time at camp plays a role? (can also rephrase: some people might think that a week isn’t enough time for kids to experience any development or growth while at camp – what do you think?)
5. What type of child development do you most commonly see while they attend camp?
   a. Physical, social, emotional, etc.?
b. Can you provide any examples of times you’ve witnessed kids’ development at camp?
6. How do you think this type of development occurs?

Staff Characteristics

7. What characteristics do you look for in an employee when you are hiring them?
   a. Characteristics of counselors?
   b. Characteristics of coaches?
8. What type of experiences do you feel are necessary for a future employee to have?
   a. Working with kids?
   b. Education regarding youth development?
9. What were the characteristics of the most successful coaches this summer?
   a. What type of personalities?
   b. Type of leadership skills?
10. What were the characteristics of the least successful coaches this summer?
    a. What type of personalities?
    b. Type of leadership skills?
11. In order for an employee to be offered a position to return, what type of qualities do you look for in them?
    a. For coaches?
    b. For counselors?
    c. For multiple year returners?

Wrap-up: Is there anything else you would like to add?
Resident Life Directors Interview Guide

Pre-Interview Information: I am interested in learning about youth development experiences at summer camp and the leaders that facilitate this development for campers. I am interested in your opinions and thoughts, and there are no right or wrong answers to any questions I will ask. If you don’t know how to answer a question or you choose not to answer, that is ok. If you so choose, you are free to stop the interview at any time. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and nothing bad will happen if you withdraw. Upon analysis of data, a ‘fake name’ (pseudonym) will be used so that you cannot be identified in the future, and I will not share your answers with anyone associated with camp. Do you have any questions?

Staff member written consent form – staff members will be instructed to sign and read the consent form prior to beginning the interview.

Ice-breaker/Background

1. Tell me about your experience with summer camp.
   a. How did you become involved (as a camper, employee)?
   b. Why did you become involved?
   c. How long have you been at this camp?
2. What previous experiences prepared you for work at a summer camp?
   a. Work with children?
   b. Work teaching sport?
   c. Preparation for work as a resident life director?

Knowledge/Perceptions of Child and Youth Development

3. What do you know about child and youth development in general?
   d. What about physical development? Psychosocial development?
   e. Have you taken any classes or courses about development?
4. In your opinion, what role does camp play in children’s development?
   a. Physical, social, emotional, etc.?
   b. What are some of the things/factors at camp that influence children’s development while they are here?
      i. Environment?
      ii. Programming?
      iii. Leaders?
5. Do you feel that length of time at camp plays a role? (can also rephrase: some people might think that a week isn’t enough time for kids to experience any development or growth while at camp – what do you think?)
6. What type of child development do you most commonly see while they attend camp?
   a. Can you provide any examples of times you’ve witnessed kids’ development at camp?
b. How do you think this type of development occurs?

Staff Characteristics

7. What characteristics do you look for in an employee when you are hiring them?
   a. Characteristics of counselors?
   b. Characteristics of coaches?

8. What type of experiences do you feel are necessary for a future employee to have?
   a. Working with kids?
   b. Education regarding youth development?

9. What were the characteristics of the most successful counselors this summer?
   a. What type of personalities?
   b. Type of leadership skills?

10. What were the characteristics of the least successful counselors this summer?
    a. What type of personalities?
    b. Type of leadership skills?

11. In order for an employee to be offered a position to return, what type of qualities do you look for in them?
    a. For counselors?
    b. For coaches?
    c. For multiple year returners?

Wrap-up: Is there anything else you would like to add?
Appendix B - Leaders and the Facilitation of the Process Within the 8 Settings Features

1) Physical and psychological safety

2) Appropriate structure
   How
   Inclusion of campers with special needs
   Age appropriate activities
   Following scheduling and programming at camp
   Appropriate social interactions with campers
   Why
   Prevent behavioural issues
   Promote developmental outcomes
   Promote a sense of fun and enjoyment

3) Supportive relationships
   Facilitating campers’ relationships with each other
   Making connections with individual campers
   Friendship versus respect and authority
   Stronger counselor-campers relationships than coach-camper relationships
   Supporting campers outside their comfort zone

4) Opportunities to belong

5) Positive social norms
   Teaching and reinforcing good behaviours
   Staff as role models

6) Support for efficacy and mattering
   Providing campers with special roles
   Informal and formal recognition of appropriate behaviours

7) Opportunities for skill building
   Life lessons
   Sportsmanship and teamwork
   Physical or sport skills
   Self-improvement or identity discovery

8) Integration of family, school, and community efforts
Appendix C - Camp Context and Management Facilitation of the 8 Settings Features

1) Physical and psychological safety
   Campers’ physical and emotional safety
   Prevention of social cruelty and mental abuse
   Safe for staff growth

2) Appropriate structure
   Programming and session structure
   Camper developmental stages
   Camper-to-staff progression and training

3) Supportive relationships
   Leader-camper relationships
   Camper-peer relationships

4) Opportunities to belong
   Accepting camp atmosphere
   Leaders’ responsibility

5) Positive social norms
   Staff as role models
   Campers as role models
   Sportsmanship and teamwork

6) Support for efficacy and mattering
   Inclusive atmosphere
   Providing children with support
   Providing staff with support

7) Opportunities for skill building
   Sport skills
   Life skills
   Outside comfort zone
   For leaders

8) Integration of family, school, and community efforts
   Transfer of skills
   Staff as one team or community
   Partnering with parents