

Boise State University

ScholarWorks

Kinesiology Faculty Publications and
Presentations

Department of Kinesiology

2022

A Season Long Investigation of Social Emotional Learning Associated with High School Basketball Participation

Daniel Gould

Michigan State University

Eric M. Martin

Boise State University

Lauren F. Walker

Elon University

A Season Long Investigation of Social Emotional Learning Associated with High School Basketball Participation

Daniel Gould
Michigan State University

Eric M. Martin
Boise State University

Lauren F. Walker
Elon University

Abstract

This qualitative, longitudinal investigation had three purposes: (1) to investigate social emotional learning (SEL) outcomes athletes reported from participating in high school basketball; (2) to identify critical incidents that occurred over the course of a season that were associated with SEL outcomes; and, (3) to explore the processes identified as leading to the athletes' SEL outcomes. High school varsity basketball players (4 males, 5 females) were interviewed five times over the course of their season. Content analysis revealed that major categories of SEL outcomes identified included: psychological dispositions (e.g., accountability, discipline); psychological skills (e.g., emotional regulation, time management); and interpersonal competencies (e.g., communication, friendship). Student-athletes reported several critical incidences (competitive outcomes, shifting team responsibilities, team conflict, and emotional regulation events) and these were directly related to SEL outcomes. Student-athletes reported learning SEL outcomes from both the totality of their sport experience and from specific critical incidents such as winning and losing big games or handling team conflict. Results are discussed in light of the social emotional learning literature in education (Zins et al., 2007) and Larson and Brown's (2009) propositions regarding how youth learn via extracurricular activity participation.

Over the last two decades there have been renewed efforts to better understand the role that sport participation plays in the personal and social development of children and youth. Investigators have studied such topics as the development of personal and social responsibility in young people taking part in sport programs (e.g., Martínez et al., 2014), youth leadership development through the sport captaincy experience (e.g., Voelker et al., 2011), the development of life skills in young athletes (e.g., Camiré & Trudel, 2013) and the effectiveness of life skills development programs (e.g., Weiss et al., 2016). Summarizing these various areas of research, several comprehensive reviews of the literature (Anderson-Butcher, 2019; Eime et al., 2013; Gould et al., 2014) have identified a large number of psychological and social outcomes associated with youth sport participation. Eime and her associates (2013), for example, identified over 40 different social and psychological outcomes linked with youth sport participation. These ranged from specific assessments of assertiveness and teamwork to more global measures of behavioral well-being and general mental health. Most importantly, they concluded that there was:

.... substantive evidence of many different psychological and social health benefits of participation in sport by children and adolescents. Furthermore, there is a general consensus that participation in sport for children and adolescents is associated with improved psychological and social health, above and beyond other forms of leisure-time physical activity (p. 19).

Eime and her colleagues also concluded that social and psychological benefits of sport participation resulted from positive interactions with adults and peers involved in these programs and because of the social context provided by team sports; participation in those sports was more often associated with these psychological and social benefits compared to individual sports.

Camiré (2014) came to a similar conclusion as Eime and her colleagues after reviewing the literature specifically focusing on the developmental outcomes of high school sport participation. In this review, he found that high school sport participation was correlated with academic and psychological development while reducing several undesirable

behaviors such as emotional distress and mental health issues. He further concluded that participants reported learning a wide range of values and life skills such as accountability, perseverance, responsibility, time-management, goal setting, respect and honesty.

While sport psychology researchers have focused on identifying the psychosocial benefits of sport participation (e.g., Gould et al. 2014), Wright et al. (2020) indicated that it is ironic that few attempts have been made to integrate these findings with the vast literature on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) that has received considerable attention by educators (Starr, 2019) and by educational researchers (Zins et al., 2007). SEL is the process by which children and youth learn to recognize and manage emotions, develop positive relationships, behave ethically and responsibly care about others, make good decisions and avoid negative behaviors. It involves "... teaching children to be self-aware, socially cognizant, able to make responsible decisions, and competent in self-management and relationship skills" (Zins et al., 2007, p. 195). SEL general competencies include self-awareness (e.g., identifying and recognizing emotions), social awareness (e.g., respect for others), responsible decision making (e.g., problem identification and situation analysis), self-management (e.g., self-motivation and discipline) and relationship management (e.g., communication, social engagement). These competencies parallel much of the sport-based research on life skills and psychosocial development of children and youth, yet have largely remained isolated from the sport-based life skills development literature.

A key attribute to consider in the development of various psychosocial attributes, competences, and skills is how these skills are presented and learned in terms of intentionality. While many researchers (e.g., Gould & Westfall, 2014; Turgeon et al., 2019) have concluded that intentionally teaching or coaching psychosocial skills and attributes is important for optimizing youth development through sport, investigators have discovered that implicit learning of life skills also takes place (Chinkov & Holt, 2016; Holt et al., 2008). Summarizing and extending much of this literature, Bean et al. (2018) formulated an implicit/explicit continuum of life skill development and transfer. This continuum consists of six stages ranging from implicit aspects like recognizing the inherent demands of sport and the design of the program (Stage 1) and facilitating a positive climate (Stage 2) to more explicit stages that include discussing transfer opportunities (Stage 5) and providing opportunities for life skills application beyond sport (Stage 6). This framework illustrates that labelling environments as either implicit or explicit is too simplistic and instead, both elements might exist over the course of the season. In fact, researchers have identified specific strategies for promoting life skills and social development through sport (Anderson-Butcher, 2019; Kahn et al., 2019) that emphasize a mix of implicit and explicit strategies. In terms of explicit strategies, Anderson-Butcher's review (2019) indicated that programs made psychosocial and life skill development something that coaches promoted intentionally through assigning leadership positions, empowering youth, providing goal direction and support, and presenting opportunities for practice and reflection. In the more implicit strategies, she found programs/coaches generally fostered positive relationships with players and provided positive behavioral support through program structure but did not explicitly make these goals a priority. It is clear, then, that much has been learned about ways to intentionally foster social emotional and life skills via youth sport participation in both implicit and explicit manners from the perspective of a program leader or coach (Anderson-Butcher, 2019; Bean et al., 2018; Kahn et al., 2019).

While the link between life skills and other psychosocial benefits of sport participation research and SEL has seldom been made, some research has looked at SEL in sport and physical activity contexts. For example, in a sample of 160 college students engaged in intramural sports, Nesbitt (1998) found no differences in SEL between participants and non-participants. In contrast, Gano-Overway and colleagues (2009) found a significant link between participant perceptions of a caring climate and SEL outcomes in youth summer camp participants. In addition, several interventions or activity programs designed to intentionally teach SEL skills and competencies have been shown to be effective at positively impacting SEL (e.g., Gordon et al., 2016; Wright et al., 2020; Whitley et al., 2017). As a whole, these studies lend credence to the possibility of sport as a pathway to SEL, yet, this research was largely done in programs specifically designed to impact SEL or with less formal sport programs, leaving our understanding of how this process occurs in more organized and competitive programs largely unexplored.

The above investigations are important not only because they show that athletes learn social and emotional life skills via sport participation, but because they highlight the need to more thoroughly uncover the explanations for why psychosocial outcomes are learned through participation. Indeed, after reviewing the literature, Holt and Jones (2007) "... called for more investigations that go inside sport contexts to establish whether, what, and how youth learn (life skills)" (p. 283). More recently, Turgeon and colleagues (2019) voiced the same concern and emphasized the need to move from cross sectional to longitudinal designs. Further, as a majority of the previous SEL studies were coach/leader

centric with little attention paid to the implicit process of how student-athletes experience participation and what they take from it, research on how these skills and characteristics are specifically learned should be pursued. This is especially important in regards to the perspective of student-athletes in well organized, and non-SEL specific, programs.

The youth development field, at large, has examples of how studies might be conducted to uncover how and why psychosocial outcomes are developed via youth participation. Larson and Brown (2007) were interested in studying the effects of participation in a drama program on the emotional learning and development of adolescents aged 14-17 years. Ten youth (5 males and 5 females) were interviewed both in-person (at beginning, midpoint, and end of the program) as well as by phone (approximately every 2 weeks) across the three-month duration of the program. During the study, youth experienced a matrix of emotions that centered around “hot”, or emotionally upsetting, episodes that included disappointments (e.g., with the casting), elation and satisfaction (e.g., with doing well), stress and anger (e.g., when facing interpersonal obstacles), and anxiety (e.g., relative to stage fright). Youth learned about their emotions by drawing from the program culture and its adult leaders in terms of developing strategies to regulate their emotions and processing the important events during the production. The authors forwarded three propositions about adolescent emotional development: (1) adolescents are producers or agents of their emotional development; (2) repeated “hot” emotional episodes provide experiences that facilitate the active process of emotional learning; and, (3) adolescents understand and manage their emotions by drawing on the culture of the program setting. Larson and Brown suggested future studies examine these propositions with an explicit suggestion that future studies target youth sport.

Given the above, this investigation had three purposes: (1) examine the SEL outcomes athletes reported from participating in high school basketball in a longitudinal manner; (2) identify critical incidents (or major events) that occurred over the course of the season; and, (3) examine the process identified as leading to the athletes SEL outcomes. To accomplish these purposes, multiple in-depth interviews were conducted with male and female high school varsity basketball athletes across their 14-week season. Basketball was selected because of its broad popularity for both boys and girls and Eime and associates’ (2013) conclusion that the social context provided by team sports participation is more often associated with the psychological and social benefits of participation.

Method

Participants

The head coaches of the varsity boys’ and girls’ teams at the same high school identified six of their athletes who they thought would be interested in participating in the study and would be representative of their team. Of the 12 athletes approached, one athlete did not have interest in participating and two athletes withdrew during the course of the study (one athlete withdrew following the third interview while the other following the fourth interview). Therefore, the final sample contained nine athletes who were interviewed at all five time points. Athletes were participating in a high school varsity basketball program during the winter season (approximately October to March) and were drawn from both the boys’ team (n = 4) and girls’ team (n = 5). Athletes were from the same, predominately white, Midwestern suburban high school of approximately 950 students. Of the final sample, six were seniors, one was a junior, and two were sophomores. All nine athletes had some varsity experience in the past and expected to contribute heavily to the current season (e.g., 7 starters, 2 reserve contributors), had been involved in organized basketball since they were young, and had plans to continue their education in college (e.g., community college or four-year college). As the composition of the team was primarily white, only one athlete identified by coaches was non-white. However, the athlete indicated no interest in participating in the study, and therefore, all nine athletes in the final study were white. Both coaches identified as white, were highly experienced (10+ years of experience) and had been coaching the school’s Varsity team for a number of years. Further, both coaches interacted frequently and held similar beliefs concerning team rules, player expectations, and desired team culture.

Procedures

Following IRB approval of the investigation, staff contacts at the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) identified a well-run program where they thought the coaches would be open to allowing the researchers to conduct a season long investigation. They identified an accomplished local program with a history of success (vying for league titles and making the state championship tournament) and we contacted head coaches of both the boys’ and girls’ team to gauge interest in participating in this investigation. Athletes and their parents who agreed to participate received an explanation of the study and completed parental consent and athlete assent forms. We interviewed athletes

in the study five times over the course of the study; at the beginning of the season, approximately once per month over the course of the season, and at the end of the season. We conducted in-depth face-to-face semi-structured interviews at the beginning and end of the season (lasting 30 – 95 min) and shorter, monthly meetings either by phone or face to face depending on each athlete's schedule and availability (lasting 17 – 45 min). To establish rapport between the interviewer and each athlete, each participant was interviewed by the same researcher throughout the research project. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed.

Interview Guide¹

The interview guide was designed to provide athletes a forum to describe their experiences in the programs and how they were influenced by these experiences. The guide focused on a range of topics including athlete motivation, personal challenges, and emotional development. Athletes were encouraged to describe any significant events they experienced, with the interviewer asking follow-up questions to better understand how the athlete experienced the event and if the event had any lasting effect on the athlete. Consistent with the methods of discovery research (e.g., Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Larson & Angus, 2011), our aim was to allow athletes to identify the most salient experiences they took from their program involvement without imposing the interviewer's viewpoints and theoretical framework.

Paradigmatic and Methodological Perspective

In terms of the investigative team's paradigmatic beliefs and assumptions regarding the philosophy of science and qualitative research, we do not align fully with one paradigmatic view or perspective. The view we most closely align with is the post-positivistic paradigm (Creswell, 2013). Specifically, we believe in rigorous data collection and analysis procedures when conducting qualitative research and recognize that our interviewer's interactions with athletes may influence the athletes' perceptions of their SEL. Further, we value multiple measures and observations to get a more thorough understanding of a given context. Our aim for the study was to take a phenomenological approach to the research, in that we focused on analyzing and understanding how these young people perceived, experienced, and conceptualized their SEL and basketball experience (Marton, 1981). Our ultimate goal was to find the commonalities and unique aspects that may exist amongst individual experiences (Åkerlind, 2012; Barnard et al., 1999). Therefore, the phenomenological approach allowed for us as researchers to understand each participant's perception of their varsity basketball experience; particularly similarities and differences among the athletes' perceptions of SEL outcomes and critical incidents.

We used a six-step approach to help ensure the rigor of the data analysis process. These included:

- (1) ensuring all four members of the research team had prior training and experience in qualitative research and data analysis;
- (2) following researcher reflectivity guidelines (Creswell & Miller, 2000, Smith & McGannon, 2018), in that, we discussed our opinions and or assumptions held about SEL development via the previous scholastic sport research and/or based on our own experiences (e.g., that youth learn both implicitly and explicitly but explicit efforts are consistently more effective, sport is associated with more positive than negative SEL outcomes) while working to ensure these assumptions did not unduly influence the results (e.g., avoided leading questions during the interviews, looked for refuting evidence to our beliefs in the data analysis);
- (3) employing an audit trail to examine the research process and the trustworthiness of the results (Cresswell & Miller, 2000) and to help ensure that the research aims were reflected in the research methods used (Åkerlind, 2012). We took field notes during each interview and kept a research log of all activities and decisions for accounts of the thought process involved in the analysis;
- (4) using appropriate and well- established data collection and analysis procedures (e.g., semi-structured interviews modelled from Larson & Brown, 2007) that allowed for the provision of abundant rich data from multiple participants;

¹ All interview guides are available by contacting the corresponding author.

(5) using triangulation and peer debriefing whereby investigators independently coded and discussed the meaning units, categories and themes, and then arrived at consensus. This triangulation and peer debriefing were used to confirm that the data representation was an accurate account of what the athletes had discussed in their interviews and helped find congruence among different sources of information (Creswell & Miller, 2000). It also allowed the investigative team to reflect on the data and their interpretations of it; and,

(6) transferability of the findings was strengthened by providing rich description via the use of direct quotation reporting from athletes (Ungar, 2003).

Data Analysis

Verbatim transcripts of digital recordings were the primary data used in the content analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1984). To identify meaning units and themes, the first and second authors independently conducted open coding for each interview transcription to identify meaning units that most adequately represented the athlete's experiences (Côté 1993; Dale, 1996). These meaning units were defined as a "segment of text that is comprehensible by itself, and contains one idea, episode or piece of information" (Tesch, 1990, p. 116). Following open coding, we utilized axial coding to interpret the data because it allows for identification of important themes emerging from athletes' responses (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Further, this process allowed the emergence of themes and subthemes not previously identified in the literature (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Next, we extracted the meaning units from their transcript, organized into clusters or categories based on similar themes, and gave labels to aid the analysis process by separating the relevant portions from their context, creating categories similar to each other but distinct from others (Côté, 1993).

We developed a written coding scheme and then performed a hierarchical content analysis. We organized all meaning units into specific lower order themes. These lower order themes were then organized into broader higher order themes identifying core categories and any relationships among categories were determined (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Once the initial coding was completed, a separate spreadsheet was organized from each transcript document to arrange meaning units into their subsequent categories. All units were then organized by subthemes and themes in an iterative process using a word processing program (Hahn, 2008). Subthemes and themes were discussed throughout the analysis and refinements were made after discussions between the research team.

Results

The athletes' responses regarding their SEL outcomes, the critical incidents reported over the course of the season, and the link between these SEL outcomes and the critical incidents are presented below. In each category of responses, we identify both subthemes and major themes and provide a brief overview of each construct in each section.

Social Emotional Learning Outcomes

Analysis of all the scholastic athletes' interviews conducted over the course of the season resulted in a number of SEL outcome meaning units that coalesced into three major themes (see Table 1). Specifically, the athletes described the development of various psychological characteristics that were more dispositional in nature as well as learning psychological and interpersonal skills/competencies from participation. Finally, as this study was designed to investigate outcomes as they developed over time, we indicate at what point of the season each outcome was mentioned by athletes with Time 2 representing one month into the season, Time 3 representing near the midpoint of the season, Time 4 representing just before the conference tournament, and Time 5 representing just after their final loss (see Table 2).

Psychological Dispositions/Characteristics

In the interviews, athletes mentioned a number of psychological characteristics they developed from their participation in sport that we grouped into seven major themes. Specifically, athletes reported that they learned (1) accountability, (2) confidence, (3) discipline, (4) gratitude, (5) optimism, (6) perspective taking, and (7) work ethic. Meaning units were placed in this major theme because the athletes focused on the dispositional characteristics they felt that they gained from participation in basketball. More specifically, athletes viewed these characteristics as not just specific skills they developed, but rather they viewed them as general changes to their own orientations or personal way they looked at themselves. For example, multiple athletes indicated that through their participation in basketball, they learned they needed to be accountable to their teammates, coaches, and themselves to fulfill their potential

(accountability subtheme), sacrifice some of their own personal benefits for the best outcome for the team (discipline subtheme), appreciate their own circumstances and opportunities (gratitude subtheme), and learned to push themselves further than they thought possible (work ethic subtheme). In terms of when these outcomes occurred in the season, confidence, discipline, the ability to look at others' perspectives, and work ethic all appeared consistently throughout the season while accountability, gratitude, and optimism were only mentioned at the end of the season.

Psychological Skills

Within the psychological skills category, six psychological skills were identified that the athletes perceived that they learned or further developed from their participation in basketball. While the previously discussed dispositions were more about changes to their own values, personality, and personality characteristics, the psychological skills major theme was focused on specific abilities the athletes reported that they had gained through their participation in sport. Specifically, athletes learned (1) to demonstrate resilience (deal with mistakes/overcome adversity), (2) how to regulate their emotions, (3) set goals, (4) how to make good decisions, (5) to employ mental skills (e.g., attentional focus), and (6) time management. Athletes spoke consistently about how they were forced to overcome small mistakes during games and overcome adverse situations (demonstrate resilience subtheme), how to control their emotions in not getting too excited, frustrated, or angry at any specific moment (how to regulate their emotions subtheme), how to set and achieve goals (goal setting subtheme) and how to balance school, sport, and, sometimes, work responsibilities (time management subtheme). In terms of timing of these outcomes, athletes indicated that some skills were utilized throughout the season (e.g., emotional regulation, demonstrating resilience) while others were more important at the beginning of the season (e.g., goal setting) or end of season (e.g., how to make good decisions).

Interpersonal Competencies

These scholastic athletes reported a number of meaning units that focused on interpersonal competencies. Meaning units in this category focused on interactions with others and skills and strategies that focused on how to more positively engage with those individuals. Further analysis resulted in these meaning units being coalesced into six major interpersonal competency subthemes. Specifically, athletes indicated they gained (1) communication skills, (2) friendship, (3) leadership skills, (4) social capital, (5) respect for others, and (6) working/being part of a team. Athletes spoke to how they learned to better communicate with peers, coaches, and those not affiliated with the team because of their participation on the team (communication subtheme), developed close bonds with teammates (friendship subtheme), developed a respect for others' backgrounds and experiences (respect for others subtheme) and learned how to work within a team to try to achieve a common goal (working/being part of a team subtheme). Several interpersonal competencies occurred throughout the season (e.g., leadership, working/being part of a team) while others were more prominent in the final portion of the season when athletes were reflecting on their personal journey (e.g., communication, friendship, social capital, respect for others).

Critical Incidents

In addition to the SEL outcomes identified and an analysis of how they unfolded across time, the athletes also identified a number of critical incidents (CI) or events they viewed as particularly meaningful that occurred during the season (see Table 3). For us to categorize an event as a CI, athletes needed to identify a single event as significant or notable to their experience explicitly (e.g., mention that the event shaped their experience or perspective in some way) or speak about the event for an extended time during interviews to indicate the importance of the incident indirectly. Investigators identified these CIs from interviewer notes and/or during data analysis when repeatedly reading individual athlete interviews. Throughout the season, athletes identified 62 CIs that we categorized into four major theme groupings. Each of these four major theme groupings (competitive outcomes, shifting team responsibilities, team conflict, and emotional regulation event) contained a number of subthemes outlined briefly below. These results are important, because to our knowledge, this study is one of the first to systematically identify critical incidents reported by athletes and conveys what events student-athletes perceive to be most impactful over the course of the season instead of making assumptions or utilizing the perspective of adult leaders.

Competitive Outcomes

Competitive outcomes were the most frequently cited CI major theme. The student-athletes identified both winning and losing as something significant during the season, with added emphasis that the final loss of the season was particularly eventful as, in essence, it ended the basketball season or for senior athletes their high school basketball

career. For our sample, athletes more frequently cited losses as significant events, but athletes brought up both wins and losses frequently. In addition to winning and losing, athletes also cited being named the team of the week by a local television station (boys' team), a consequence of their previous wins, as significant during their season. Unsurprisingly, the competitive outcomes were present at every data collection time point throughout the season and are most likely highly salient to these student-athletes because both the boys' and girls' program at this high school had traditions of basketball success, vying for league titles and successful showings in the regional and state tournaments. In essence, wins and losses provided hot emotional issues for these young people and consistent opportunities for SEL growth.

Shifting Team Responsibilities

Athletes also cited their change in team responsibilities as being a significant aspect to their season. This change in team responsibilities occurred surrounding either an increase in the level of leadership that was expected of them or the unexpected change of specific team roles. For the leadership subtheme, this included athletes being named captain at the beginning of the year, an implicit indication they were a leader (coach-initiated meeting with a small leadership group), or being a representative expected to convey important traditions to the rest of the team. For the change of team roles subtheme, this was experienced primarily through the change of playing time on the team. Increased playing time appeared to be given due to positive performance in practices and games or due to an injury by another teammate; however, decreased playing time often appeared as a result of role changes within the team. The shifting team responsibilities subtheme was reported throughout the season except for the final interview. It is likely that at this point of the season, roles were firmly established and unchanging.

Team Conflict

The third critical incidents major theme that was identified from athletes' responses centered on team conflict. Multiple members of the female team identified a major team rule violation, and the subsequent lack of reporting this incident to the coach, as a source of conflict. This event influenced how the student-athletes processed the rest of the season, as athletes who did not report teammates felt conflicted about the integrity of their actions. A second major conflict reported was the clash of two segments on the boys' team between upper and underclassmen on the team. Specifically, the underclassmen on the team felt like there were specific instances where they were treated poorly/unfairly solely because they were not one of the seniors on the team. Another conflict occurred following a loss to a rivalry team. Athletes indicated that a significant conflict arose between several key athletes on the team regarding who was to blame for the loss. Additionally, one athlete indicated that there was conflict between parents of athletes on the team and experiencing this conflict was a significant event that impacted one athlete in particular. In terms of when the team conflict occurred, team dynamic concerns occurred throughout the season.

Idiosyncratic Emotional Regulation Events

The final critical incidents major theme identified from the student-athlete responses was related to specific emotional events that were not linked to one of the previous three subthemes, but instead specifically linked to a high-emotional moment that happened in the sport context. For example, one athlete mentioned that managing the stress from the first tournament game was a significant event as the team was preparing for what could have been the end of the seniors' athletic careers, and therefore, was especially salient to the individual. Two athletes indicated that they were significantly impacted by emotional outbursts, one in practice and one during competition. Specifically, one athlete mentioned that she was overwhelmed with several life and basketball stressors and had a "mini-panic attack" where she ran out of the gym and then recollected herself on her own. Similarly, one player indicated that during a competition he lost his temper and lashed out at an opponent which negatively impacted his team. Finally, one athlete indicated that a CI for her was when her coach modelled emotional control when she knew he was highly stressed and frustrated. In this instance, the coach was obviously frustrated by how the team was playing, but when discussing the situation with the team was able to cope with the high levels of emotion, calmly discuss the matter and devise a game plan that helped the team move forward and play better during the second half of the competition. Emotional regulation events were most varied across the course of the season and were largely dependent on unpredictable and unexpected events. Unlike the other CIs athletes reported, these were most difficult to predict and were more random in their occurrence.

Some of these CIs reported by the student-athletes in this study seemed to be predictable and somewhat generalizable (e.g., wins and losses) while others were much more idiosyncratic and unforeseen (e.g., athlete loses emotional control). It seems that sports give opportunities for youth to learn several positive SEL outcomes, some in predictable ways regardless of the season (e.g., how to manage emotions and deal with wins and losses) and others that are largely dependent on the specific leadership and circumstances of that specific season (e.g., a coach maintaining composure during a tough event). CIs identified in this study also parallel many of those identified by Larson and Brown (2009) in their study of students taking part in a drama program (e.g., disappointments with the casting, elation and satisfaction with doing well, stress and anger when facing interpersonal obstacles, and anxiety relative to stage fright). However, one difference from the Larson and Brown study relative to our study investigating sport, that would encourage future study in the sport domain, is the frequency of CIs. For example, the theater program that Larson and Brown studied had only one major public event (e.g., performing the play at the end of the season) where in the current study student-athletes were consistently performing throughout their season in high-pressure situations where peers and family could evaluate their performance. This repeated exposure to evaluative situations and focus on achievement striving makes youth sport participation an especially desirable arena for SEL and life skills development, especially in the area of emotional control.

Social Emotional Learning Outcome-Critical Incidence Link

A number of CIs deemed as emotionally or motivationally salient to these young athletes were identified. These events solidified lessons learned that were consistently stressed (e.g., the importance of hard work) or provided “ah ha” moments (e.g., viewing one’s coach controlling his emotions during a critical game where he was obviously frustrated by an official’s call) that identified the importance of an SEL competency (e.g., learning emotional control). From the data analysis, it was apparent that the student-athletes learned many SEL outcomes not from any one CI but from the totality of engaging in the basketball season and multiple repetitive incidents. At other times, athletes indicated they learned some outcome or outcomes directly from their experience with a single CI. In this section, we begin by identifying the SEL outcomes that athletes attributed to the whole of their experience as well as those SEL outcomes they linked to a specific CI. It is worth noting that we took a conservative approach in our coding of the direct SEL outcome-CI link. Specifically, there were multiple instances where interviewers/coders identified that student-athletes most likely learned an SEL outcome from a specific critical incident, but unless the athlete explicitly identified the SEL outcome-CI link it was not coded as such.

Totality of the Experience

In several instances, athletes indicated they could not identify a single event that led to their development of the psychosocial outcomes. Instead, athletes indicated they learned these things from the whole of the basketball experience. For example, athletes reported learning the importance of hard work from their work in practices and weight-lifting sessions. To illustrate this concept, Athlete 1, when asked about the season as a whole, said, “It takes time to get what you need, or what you strive for, and you have to put in work for it.” Additionally, athletes believed they learned several SEL skills including increased confidence from being a part of a team over the course of the season. Athlete 2 said, “Being part of basketball has really changed my confidence. It’s made me really confident in myself, so it just motivates me and gives me confidence to do more than what I’m capable of and that transfers into my school and I have more confidence in my work.” Similarly, athletes gained friendship or affiliation and an understanding of how to work as a team from consistent interactions with their teammates and a number of smaller incidents that occurred throughout the season. Athlete 4 indicated that, “It (basketball) taught me to work together as a team and as a group, with all sorts of different people, and just helped me learn how to adjust to that.”

Critical Incidents That Drove Social Emotional Learning

In addition to the SEL outcomes the athletes reported learning across the course of the season, there were a number of instances where evidence was provided in the interviews where specific outcomes could be linked to a specific CI. It is important to note that just as athletes did not link all SEL outcomes to CIs, not all CIs led to an SEL outcome. When investigating the link between CIs and SEL outcomes, all four major CI themes were represented, six specific CIs were represented, and nine SEL outcomes were mentioned.

Athletes linked the most SEL outcomes to winning and losing. Specifically, athletes found that through winning and losing they learned how to deal with mistakes and adversity and demonstrate resilience in their efforts. For example, Athlete 7 spoke to the importance of dealing with mistakes during a game when he said, “We have to keep playing as

a team and even in the middle of the game, try to fix it (mistakes) if we aren't playing as a team." Additionally, athletes felt they learned how to regulate their own emotions (e.g., work to overcome nerves in big games when close contest) and developed their own leadership skills (e.g., pushing the team following wins and losses) both during and after competitive events. In terms of developing leadership skills, Athlete 6 specified that after a loss, he needed to "bring everybody back together after a loss," indicating the important role he played in helping the team stay together regardless of outcome.

In addition to the SEL outcomes athletes reported learning from winning and losing, they also cited learning several SEL outcomes from the other CI themes. Athletes indicated that through various leadership events throughout the season, they learned how to deal with mistakes and overcome adversity, utilize goal setting, and develop a strong work ethic. Athlete 2 indicated, "It (being named captain) allowed me to take advantage of those opportunities of being a leader, something that I've never had before." In terms of shifting roles on the team, athletes gained a newfound confidence from additional opportunities, learned the importance of discipline when accepting a role they did not desire, and through both increased and decreased role opportunities the importance of working and being part of a team. Athlete 1 voiced this recognition of how important every role on the team is when she indicated, "I knew I had a role, but I didn't really think it was different from anyone else's. Like, I knew we all share some of the similar roles but everyone has their little thing but I think I'm just like, realizing I actually matter."

When athletes discussed various conflict events that happened during the season, they noted that they learned leadership skills, how to be part of a team, and respect for others. Athlete 7 indicated that through conflict, he learned that everyone has their own perspective and he must work toward addressing that disconnect between different individuals to move the team forward when he said, "You're never going to completely change someone's perspective on things. I think you can influence it, but it's, their own version and as a leader, I think you cannot just go at an issue and just try to attack and attack. I think it is more a molding thing." Finally, one athlete linked dealing with stress prior to a cross-town competition as one way he learned how to regulate his own emotions to perform to the best of his abilities.

At times, even though athletes indicated a certain event was significant during the course of the season, it did not mean that they automatically voiced learning anything from the incident. Conversely, athletes often could not cite a single specific CI for learning a SEL competency and instead learned concepts from the whole of the experience, or an accumulated effect from many different smaller experiences. Typically, when athletes experienced a CI during the season they primarily processed the event on their own. Yet, there were several times when a CI led to an important interaction that helped the athlete learn from the situation. For example, a member on the boys' team received a technical in the middle of an important game for taunting and the coach spoke to him about the situation afterward. In remembering the situation, the player indicated that coach said, "You've got to be bigger than that. You're a sophomore, you're a leader. You're a role model to kids in the stands." The athlete reflected on the situation and indicated he needed to remain more level-headed and control his emotions for the benefit of his performance, his team, and those watching in the stands. In this case, the coach's perspective helped the athlete process the event and maximize SEL outcome learned from the experience. Part of effectively facilitating SEL outcomes in young people may also involve recognizing when the best course of action is to let a student-athlete work through some issue or adversity on his or her own and when it would be most useful to intervene. This is no easy task as when discussing the paradox of adult leaders mentoring young people, Larson (2006) suggests that all adult mentors must wrestle with a series of day-to-day questions in providing the right balance in working with young people. These include:

When to set firm boundaries and when to be flexible? When to support a child's goals and when to challenge them? How to grant youth choice and autonomy without putting them at risk? When to listen and be empathic and when to give one's point of view? When to let youth learn from mistakes? (Larson, 2006, p. 683).

Factors such as a coach's level of emotional intelligence (Neale et al., 2011) may be worth examining in this regard as one would logically assume that a more emotionally intelligent coach would be more perceptive relative to identifying CIs athletes might be experiencing and knowing when to intervene or allow the athlete to work through the issue him or herself.

Discussion

This investigation was designed to: (1) to discover the SEL outcomes athletes reported from participating in high school basketball; (2) identify CIs that occurred over the course of a season that were associated with the SEL outcomes; and, (3) to longitudinally explore the how the CIs identified were linked to the athletes' SEL outcomes. While previous sport-based SEL and life skill studies have focused on programs where SEL competencies are specifically taught, the focus of most high school programs is broader and focused on achieving multiple outcomes including winning, fitness and health, and SEL. The majority of high school coaches do not specifically target SEL outcomes and, therefore, do not use explicit strategies for developing them. Rather, they rely on the structure of the program and general conditions created by the sport environment to implicitly develop them. Given the extent and importance of these traditional competitive high school sports in the U.S. culture, it is imperative that we document what, if any, SEL learning is taking place and how it is occurring in non-SEL specific contexts with the perspective of student-athletes as the primary lens. Further, instead of relying on retrospective reports by athletes on what they learned during their participation, we believed it was important to look at how SEL outcomes emerged longitudinally across a season. Ultimately, our goal was to better understand how the SEL outcome process unfolds across time, what critical incidents may arise which drive SEL, and how coaches teach SEL in both explicit and implicit manners. Therefore, results are discussed relative to these three purposes and in light of existing literature.

Social Emotional Learning Outcomes

The fact that the athletes identified both dispositions/characteristics (e.g., optimism) and skills (e.g., how to set goals) is why we labeled these outcomes as SEL outcomes versus life skills. Taken literally, the term life skills implies that the identified outcome focuses on a specific skill like goal setting versus more general disposition and/or orientation such as empathy. SEL outcomes, however, are more inclusive and include both skills and dispositions/characteristics. Additionally, as Gould and Carson (2008) have argued, for a psychosocial outcome of sport participation to be a life skill it must not only be developed or fostered through sport but must also be applied to other non-sport contexts. In the current study, athletes identified that several, but not all, of the SEL outcomes transferred to other domains. With the more restrictive definition of life skills, it would be inappropriate to include these as life skills without specific elaboration of transfer to another domain. Therefore, due to the broader application of the term, we suggest that SEL competencies might be a better fit for future researchers. We argue that future studies only utilize the term life skill if participants demonstrate transfer to other domains, as if there is no demonstrated transfer, using the term life skill is somewhat misleading.

To further link the outcomes identified by the athletes in the current study to SEL outcomes, we compared our findings with those recognized by Zins and colleagues (Zins et al., 2007) in the education context and noted that several of the SEL outcomes we identified parallel the framework of person-centered SEL competencies identified by Zins and colleagues. Specifically, in our study, the interpersonal competencies (e.g., communication, friendship) aligned with the SEL relationship management dimension (e.g., communication, working effectively), confidence, identified as a disposition in the current study, parallels the SEL self-awareness dimension, and several of those aspects identified as dispositions/characteristics (e.g., empathy, perspective) align with the social awareness dimension. In addition, athletes identified "how to make good decisions" which parallels "responsible decision making" dimension in the Zins and colleagues framework. Finally, a mixture of psychological skills (e.g., demonstrate resilience, goal setting) and dispositions/characteristics (e.g., optimism, discipline) fit in the self-management category (e.g., impulse control, self-motivation). These parallels to the Zins and colleagues (2007) framework indicate that researchers publishing in the education literature and those in the sport literature might be investigating similar constructs with different terminology being used. Ideally, efforts to work collaboratively between the two related subfields should be made to move forward our current understanding and help us develop a more consistent vocabulary to allow for easier comparison of findings between domains of study.

Social Emotional Learning Processes

Our results indicated that, on these teams, the SEL process occurred largely implicitly over the course of the year. Relative to the Bean et al. (2018) implicit/explicit continuum of life skill development, student-athlete reports indicate the coaches and context of development for these two programs is highly consistent with Stage 1 (e.g., structuring the sport context) and Stage 2 (e.g., facilitating a positive environment) of the continuum while also sporadically incorporating some elements of Stage 3 (e.g., discussing life skills). For example, these coaches set rules and designed highly structured programs (Stage 1 strategies) and were clearly positive role models and supported efficacy and

matter (Stage 2 strategies). For example, on the boys' team, the coach denoted captains but largely left these athletes on their own to process how to deal with challenges in team functioning. Even though one athlete indicated that he "took more responsibility in every aspect of the team" including "bringing everybody back together after a tough loss", a more directive and explicit approach on how to lead and how to transfer these leadership skills to other domains might have been more influential in bringing out lasting change in these athletes. Over the course of the season, athletes indicated that coaches talked about the importance of some life skills like time management so athletes could excel in both sport and school. Hence, some Stage 3 strategies were discussed (e.g., defining life skills, talk about life skills and their importance) but this was not done on a consistent basis. Other Stage 3 strategies, such as enabling reflection on life skills development, were rarely if ever mentioned by athletes. To our knowledge, the actions discussed in Stages 4 to 6 of the model did not occur. Thus, the SEL that took place in this investigation was implicitly driven and the overall impact of the high school sport experience might have not been fully realized with these athletes.

Additionally, student-athletes learned SEL competencies from both the totality of their basketball experience as well as from specific CIs that occurred during the season. For example, competencies such as work ethic and time management seemed to be more associated with the day-to-day striving needed to achieve basketball success while other competencies, while certainly influenced by day-to-day strivings, were really brought to the player's awareness and/or attention or reinforced through a CI. For example, one female player learned the importance of emotional control when she observed that her coach was very frustrated and mad but when he talked to the team did so in an emotionally controlled and calm manner. This example supports previous research that shows the young people learn social emotional skills by drawing lessons from and modeling the adult leaders involved (Larson & Brown, 2007). Our results, while not directly designed to test Larson and Brown's (2009) propositions regarding how youth learn via extracurricular activities, are consistent with them. Specifically, (1) adolescents are producers or agents of their emotional development; (2) repeated "hot" emotional episodes provide experiences that facilitate the active process of emotional learning; and, (3) adolescents understand and manage their emotions by drawing on the culture of the program setting.

Finally, several of the SEL outcomes occurred throughout the season while others were more likely to take place at a specific time in the year, largely influenced by some CI. For example, student-athletes recognized several SEL outcomes (e.g., working/being part of a team, regulating one's emotions,) occurring throughout the season and in response to the typical and consistent challenges associated with high school sport. Additionally, some SEL outcomes were recognized at specific times of the year (e.g., goal setting at the beginning of the year) also parallel what we would expect in terms of normal season (e.g., team goal setting happening at the beginning of a season). However, there were some SEL outcomes that occurred more sporadically, and often, in response to a specific CI. For example, on the boys' team, there was a shouting match between two athletes over feelings that certain athletes were being excluded during games to the detriment of the team. One captain on the team indicated that he learned that he would "never completely change someone's perspective on things, but I can influence it" for the betterment of the team. Ultimately, there are some things a coach can plan on in competitive sport that are consistent learning opportunities during the year (e.g., wins, losses). Other instances might be more unpredictable, yet these events can serve as teachable moments if a coach creates the scaffolding needed for athletes to properly process the event. As coaches, planning for these 'typical' events and how to leverage them for development should be done prior to the season, and the more unusual events should be addressed as they occur to best serve the athletes and their development.

Study Strengths, Limitations and Future Research Directions

The biggest strength of this study was its longitudinal nature as the majority of previous studies have been comprised of surveys or interviews administered on a single occasion (Camiré, 2014). This design allowed the investigators to assess the influence of the entire season on the young athletes' SEL outcomes. It also allowed us to explore what CIs were experienced by the athletes and how these were linked to SEL development. Further, even though interviews were structured along some major concepts (e.g., motivation, emotions, challenges), the majority of the conversations were directed by the student-athletes to understand the events that were most impactful to their own experience. This interview manner allowed for a richer understanding of the high school sport experience for these athletes and allowed for a greater understanding of their participation in sport.

The study was not without limitations. One primary limitation was that asking athletes to reflect on the SEL process might have forced them to be more reflective on the process than they would otherwise have done. It is entirely possible that the athletes in our study would not have reflected in the same manner they did when interviewed multiple times throughout the season and, therefore, our results should be interpreted cautiously. We believe that this limitation

is no different than having athletes reflect retrospectively about benefits of the youth sport environment, but fully realize the influence of our study on their own reflection process. Other limitations of the current study included the failure to go beyond the interviews and observe the athletes in all practices and games. While interviewing the athletes throughout the season provided important program context information, it would have been beneficial to have a consistent dialogue with coaches about the events athletes mentioned to better situate the events in a larger context. However, this was not feasible, as doing so while protecting participant confidentiality would be a challenge. Additionally, interviewing athletes' parents relative to their observations of SEL outcome and life skills transfer would be useful to see if care givers noticed similar outcomes or if they perceived more/different/less changes in their student-athlete. Additionally, because we asked coaches to identify athletes who they thought would be interested in participating in the study, instead of trying to recruit the entire team, the athletes we interviewed might have been those with the closest relationship with the coach instead of those best suited for participation. Finally, it would have also been helpful if our sample was more diverse in terms of SES and ethnicity as well as looking at programs that were less successful and/or had coaches who were less skilled as sport coaches in general.

Moving forward it would be important to further explore the role CIs play in SEL outcomes. It would be especially useful to investigate if athletes process CIs more intentionally if they participate in a program where coaches deliberately foster SEL outcomes and how that focus can impact athletes both during the season as well as in the future. Further, it would be interesting to explore if some athletes are better equipped to develop SEL outcomes and learn from the scholastic sport experience than others because of individual characteristics, self-awareness, reflective ability or maturity. For example, Pierce et al. (2016) have found preliminary evidence supporting the notion that young athletes who developed psychosocial skills and dispositions to a greater degree were more open to learning these skills and were more reflective individuals. Asking the question, then, of what youth (e.g., those who are more self-aware and reflective) are most susceptible to SEL outcome and life skills development is important.

Practical Implications

This investigation has several important practical implications. First, it provides additional evidence for the value of scholastic sport participation for promoting positive youth development in the form of SEL outcomes. This is important because while both coaches in this study provided what many would identify as quality adult leadership (e.g., provided a positive and safe environment, were good role models, implemented a structured program with clear and consistent rules and guidelines), they did not specifically target or intentionally teach SEL or life skill development in their coaching. This supports previous research by Holt and his colleagues (Holt et al., 2008; Holt et al., 2009) and emphasizes how athletes draw from their sport experiences on their own. If coaches can be taught to be more explicit in their own behaviors and interactions with athletes in terms of SEL, athletes would be better prepared to process important moments in the season and, hopefully, transfer these lessons to domains outside of sport. Further, this concept mirrors previous work with award winning high school coaches (Gould et al., 2007) that indicated that highly effective coaches did not view coaching life skills and general coaching strategies as competing aspects.

Our results also highlight the importance of "hot emotional issues" as a source of SEL. Like Larson and Brown (2007) found in a scholastic drama program, we found that often emotionally trying experiences can be a source of psychological and social growth for young athletes, helping youth learn from these especially challenging situations. This may be especially important today given recent findings revealing that coaches perceived junior athletes as more susceptible to stress and less equipped to handle it (Gould et al., 2020). It would be beneficial for coaches to understand these challenging situations and know how to intentionally provide support and guidance to athletes so athletes can process the event, learn from the experience, and conceptualize how the lessons learned in sport can transfer positively to other domains.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, [author initials], upon reasonable request.

References

- Åkerlind, G. S. (2012). Variation and commonality in phenomenographic research methods. *Higher Education Research and Development, 31*(1), 115-127.
- Anderson-Butcher, D. (2019). Youth sport as a vehicle for social development. *Kinesiology, Review, 8*(3), 180-187.
- Arikan, N. (2020). Effect of sport education model-based social-emotional learning program on emotional intelligence. *International Education Studies, 13*(4), 41-53.
- Auerbach, C. F., & Silverstein, L. B. (2003). *Qualitative studies in psychology*. New York University Press.
- Barnard, A., McCosker, H., & Gerber, R. (1999). Phenomenography: A qualitative research approach for exploring understanding in health care. *Qualitative Health Research, 9*(2), 212-226.
- Bean, C., Kramers, S., Forneris, T., & Camiré, M. (2018). The implicit/explicit continuum of life skills development and transfer. *Quest, 70*(4), 456-470.
- Camiré, M. (2014). Youth development in North American high school sport: Review and recommendations. *Quest, 66*(4), 495-511.
- Chinkov, A. E., & Holt, N. L. (2016). Implicit transfer of life skills through participation in Brazilian jiu-jitsu. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 28*(2), 139-153.
- Côté, J., Salmela, J. H., & Baria, A. (1993). Organizing and interpreting unstructured qualitative data. *The Sport Psychologist, 7*, 127-137.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design*. Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory Into Practice, 39*(3), 124-130.
- Dale, G. A. (1996). Existential phenomenology: Emphasizing the experience of the athlete in sport psychology research. *The sport psychologist, 10*(4), 307-321.
- Eime, R. M., Young, J. A., Harvey, J. T., Charity, M. J., & Payne, W. R. (2013). A systematic review of the psychological and social benefits of participation in sport for adults: Informing development of a conceptual model of health through sport. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity, 10*(1), 135.
- Gano-Overway, L. A., Newton, M., Magyar, T. M., Fry, M. D., Kim, M. S., & Guivernau, M. R. (2009). Influence of caring youth sport contexts on efficacy-related beliefs and social behaviors. *Developmental Psychology, 45*(2), 329.
- Gordon, B., Jacobs, J. M., & Wright, P. M. (2016). Social and emotional learning through a Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility based after-school program for disengaged middle-school boys. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 34*(4), 358-369.
- Gould, D., & Carson, S. (2008). Life skills development through sport: Current status and future directions. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 1*(1), 58-78.
- Gould, D., Collins, K., Lauer, L., & Chung, Y. (2007). Coaching life skills through football: A study of award winning high school coaches. *Journal of applied sport psychology, 19*(1), 16-37.
- Gould, D., Cowburn, I., & Shields, A. (2014). "Sports for all" - summary of the evidence of psychological and social outcomes of participation. *Elevate Health Series 15* (3), Presidents Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition Science Board, Rockville, MD.
- Gould, D., Nalepa, J., & Mignano, M. (2020). Coaching generation Z athletes. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 32*(1), 104-120.
- Gould, D., & Westfall, S. (2014). Promoting life skills in children and youth: Applications to sport contexts. In A. Rui Gomes, R. Resende, & A. Albuquerque (Eds.), *Positive human functioning from a multidimensional perspective. Vol. 2: Promoting healthy lifestyles* (pp. 53-77). Nova.
- Hahn, C. (2008). *Doing qualitative research using your computer: A practical guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Holt, N. L., & Jones, M. I. (2007). Future directions for positive youth development and sport. In N. L. Holt (Ed.), *Positive youth development through sport* (pp. 122-132). Routledge.
- Holt, N. L., Tink, L. N., Mandigo, J. L., & Fox, K. R. (2008). Do youth learn life skills through their involvement in high school sport? *Canadian Journal of Education, 31*, 281-304.
- Holt, N. L., Tamminen, K. A., Tink, L. N., & Black, D. E. (2009). An interpretive analysis of life skills associated with sport participation. *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise, 1*(2), 160-175.
- Larson, R. W., & Brown, J. R. (2007). Emotional development in adolescence: What can be learned from a high school theater program? *Child Development, 78*(4), 1083-1099.
- Larson, R. W. & Angus, R. M. (2011). Adolescents' development of skills for agency in youth programs: Learning to think strategically. *Child Development, 82*(1), 277-294.

- Kahn, J., Bailey, R., & Jones, S. (2019). Coaching social and emotional skills in youth sports. *Aspen Institute*.
- Martínez, B. J. S. A., Gómez-Mármol, A., Valenzuela, A. V., De la Cruz Sánchez, E., & Suárez, A. D. (2014). The development of a sport-based personal and social responsibility intervention on daily violence in schools. *American Journal of Sports Science and Medicine*, 2(6A), 13-17.
- Marton, F. (1981). Phenomenography—describing conceptions of the world around us. *Instructional Science*, 10(2), 177-200.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). Drawing valid meaning from qualitative data: Toward a shared craft. *Educational researcher*, 13(5), 20-30.
- Neale, S., Spencer-Arnell, L., & Wilson, L. (2011). *Emotional intelligence coaching: Improving performance for leaders, coaches and the individual*. Kogan Page Publishers.
- Nesbitt, G. M. (1998). Social-emotional development and extracurricular involvement of sport club participants. *Recreational Sports Journal*, 22(2), 6-9.
- Pierce, S., Gould, D., Cowburn, I., & Driska, A. (2016). Understanding the process of psychological development in young athletes attending an intensive wrestling camp. *Qualitative Research in Sport & Exercise*, 8(4), 332-351.
- Ryan, G. W., & Bernard, H. R. (2000). *Techniques to identify themes in qualitative data. Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Starr, J. P. (2019). On leadership: Can we keep SEL on course? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 100(8), 70-71.
- Smith, B., & McGannon, K.R. (2018). Developing rigor in qualitative research: Problems and opportunities within sport and exercise psychology. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 11(1), 101-121.
- Taylor, R. D., Oberle, E., Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2017). Promoting positive youth development through school-based social and emotional learning interventions: A meta-analysis of follow-up effects. *Child development*, 88(4), 1156-1171.
- Tesch, R. (1990). *Qualitative research: Analysis types and software tools*. Bristol, PA: Falmer
- Turgeon, S., Kendellen, K., Kramers, S., Rathwell, S. & Camiré, M. (2019). Making high school sport impactful. *Kinesiology Review*, 8(3), 188-194.
- Ungar, M. (2003). Qualitative contributions to resilience research. *Qualitative Social Work*, 2(1), 85-102
- Voelker, D. K., Gould, D., & Crawford, M. J. (2011). Understanding the experience of high school sport captains. *The Sport Psychologist*, 25, 47-66.
- Weiss, M. R., Bolter, N. D., & Kipp, L. E. (2016). Evaluation of The First Tee in promoting positive youth development: Group comparisons and longitudinal trends. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 87(3), 271-283. *Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 87(3), 271-283.
- Whitley, M. A., Massey, W. V., & Farrell, K. (2017). A programme evaluation of “Exploring Our Strengths and Our Future”: Making sport relevant to the educational, social, and emotional needs of you. *Journal of Sport for Development*, 5(9), 21-35.
- Wright, P. M., Howell, S., Jacobs, J., & McLoughlin, G. (2020). Implementation and perceived benefits of an after-school soccer program designed to promote social and emotional learning. *Journal of Amateur Sport*, 6(1), 125-145.
- Zins, J. E., Bloodworth, M. R., Weissberg, R. P., & Walberg, H. J. (2007). The scientific base linking social and emotional learning to school success. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 17(2-3), 191-210.

Table 1. *Social Emotional Learning Outcomes Major Themes, Subthemes, and Sample Quotes*

Major Theme	Subtheme	Sample Quote
Disposition	Accountability	"He needs to do his job, I have to do mine, that's what you have to do."
	Confidence	"Confidence...everyone was like "oh you were on the girls' basketball team?" because we did so well, so it's kind of like the confidence of "yeah, I'm on that team." And being a part of such a good program...being involved, it gives you confidence (that translates to other areas)"
	Discipline	"With every sport it's a commitment. Like, when doing something on the weekends, I can't go out and do everything because I'll have a lift on Sunday or a practice"
	Gratitude	"Just to be a part of something, so good, and having the community backup like everything that you do and just being blessed to like have such amazing opportunities."
	Optimism	"Like if I saw something that way I wouldn't react negatively to it I'd try to find the positive out of it."
	Perspective taking	"It taught me how to handle my stress better but it's like I can move on and think about other things, like it's not really going to matter in 10 years about what happened but it's still a good memory to hold on to obviously. But I think it just helps me realize that life moves on and that you can move past things"
	Work Ethic	"I learned I can push myself a lot harder than I thought"
Psychological Skills	Demonstrate Resilience	"(I learned) you can't keep your head down. You got to, like, face reality, you know that it's like over with."
	Emotional Regulation	"When I go in, and like I change my attitude right away and I'm not going to pout on the court. Like, I'm going to play, use the most of what time we have"
	Set Goals	"What I learned about achieving goals is that it takes a lot of commitment and dedication and motivation and you have to realize that sometimes you won't be always able to achieve those goals, but you can get close."
	How to make good decisions	"I think, as the season goes on, the girls like, become more mature as they're making smarter decisions in a game, and I think that reflects in your daily life."
	Employ Mental Skills	"And we just gotta be mentally focused."
	Time Management	"Being able to manage my time well...going from practice to team dinner to do homework and stuff."

Interpersonal Competencies	Communication	"I kind of put what was on my mind to the side and just listened to them and just be the person they needed to talk to. I wouldn't really add any feedback because I didn't want to talk about the person if they were complaining about someone and I just wanted to let them know that - yeah I'll listen to what you have to say but I wouldn't really like negatively talk back or anything."
	Friendship	"I would be a completely different person (if I didn't play). I probably wouldn't have the friends that are my closest now...and the connections, there are just a lot."
	Leadership	"Being a leader, a mature leader. Before I wasn't as vocal, but it really showed me how to be a vocal leader which going on in the next part of my life is really going to be important."
	Social Capital	"Like I said, the coaches - I can always go to them whenever I need them."
	Respect for others	"Respect. You need to be very respectful to your elders and your teachers and your people you're talking to in public because that's what's going to get you in life. I mean, you see somebody at a store and it's an old lady and you walk in there and she needs the door opened, you open the door for her. And maybe later down the road if she sees you in trouble she'll help you out."
	Working/Being Part of Team	"I think we're learning to work together more, which is beneficial to everyone, so... I think we're all improving."

Table 2. *Social Emotional Learning Outcomes by Time of Season.*

	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4	Time 5
Psychological Dispositions/Characteristics				
Accountability				X
Confidence		X	X	X
Discipline		X	X	X
Gratitude				X
Optimism				X
Perspective Taking		X	X	X
Work Ethic	X		X	X
Psychological Skills				
Demonstrate Resilience	X	X		X
Emotional Regulation	X	X	X	X
How to make good decisions			X	X
Mental Skills	X	X		X
Set Goals	X			
Time Management		X		X
Interpersonal Competencies				
Communication			X	X
Friendship				X
Leadership	X	X	X	X
Social Capital				X
Respect for others	X			X
Working/Being Part of Team	X	X	X	X

Note: Interviews at Time 2, 3, and 4 were conducted at 1 month intervals following the start of the season while the Time 5 interview was conducted following completion of the season.

Table 3. *Critical Incidents, Themes and Corresponding Social Emotional Learning Outcomes*

CI Major Theme	Social Emotional Learning Outcome
Competitive Outcomes (Athletes reported this theme at Interviews 2, 3, 4, and 5)	Demonstrate Resilience Emotional Regulation Leadership Working/Being part of a team
Shifting Team responsibilities (Athletes reported this theme at Interviews 2, 3, and 4)	Confidence Demonstrate Resilience Discipline Goal Setting Leadership Working/Being part of team Work ethic
Team Conflict (Athletes reported this theme at Interviews 2, 3, 4, and 5)	Leadership Respect for others Working/Being part of team
Emotional Regulation Event (Athletes reported this theme at Interviews 2, 3, and 4)	Emotional Regulation