

Student-athletes' perceptions of the sport school experience while participating in
Canadian hockey schools

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore student-athletes' perspectives of their lived experience while participating in a Canadian sport school. A sport school is an academic institution whose curriculum combines core academic courses with sport training or competition to allow high performance student-athletes to pursue academic and sporting success as part of the school day (Way, 2010). Participants consisted of nine high-performance student-athletes, ages 13-17, who participated in a Canadian hockey school to balance high academic achievement with sporting success. This interpretive, qualitative study used photo elicitation interviews to prompt discussion surrounding meaningful aspects of the student-athletes' environment. Photo elicitation interviews allow the "participants to take a more active role in both data collection and the interview process by informing the direction of the interview with participant-produced photography" (Sawyer, Ucci, Jones, Smith, Fisher, 2018, p. 50). Data was analyzed using previously established guidelines for thematic analysis (Ritchie and Spencer, 2002). Results suggest that student-athletes perceive the sport school environment to provide opportunities for inter- and intrapersonal development in the presence of a strong network of social support and student-athlete-centred program structures. It is expected that this study will add to current literature pertaining to talent development and dual career pathways and provide insight into the sport school experience to help guide policy and practice.

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To my son, Calder – to say you are everything to me seems somehow inadequate because you are so much more than that. I know now that the best thing I will ever be is your father. I hope I can make you proud of me.

Dedication

For my wife,

who I'm still just trying to impress

And for our son,

who brought us so much happiness

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Chapter One: Introduction

In the past two decades, Canadian schools have observed an amalgamation of community sport, school-based sport programs and curricula in the form of academies and sport schools (Balderson, 2015). One such school, the National Sport School in Calgary, established in 1994, produced 10% of the Canadian Olympic team competing at the 2006 winter games in Torino (Radtke & Coalter, 2007) and boasts an impressive roster of alumni, including Olympic gold medallists Jennifer Botterill, Kyle Shewfelt and Kaillie Humphries (Spencer, 2011). Despite the increasing prevalence of these entities across Canada, including over 600 programs in Quebec (Éducation et Enseignement supérieur Québec, 2019), and their success in developing elite talent, confusion remains over how these programs function within Canadian schools. Furthermore, as Way, Repp, and Brennan (2010) suggest, the sport school system across Canada is largely unregulated and diverse, which creates “a fragmented system that is not held to any standard of design, instruction, performance, or evaluation, with the exception of Quebec” (p. 21).

Sport schools are designed to alleviate time pressures felt by high-performance student-athletes who commit substantial time to training and competition by providing student-athletes with a flexible academic schedule to allow sport training to occur during school hours (Radtke & Coalter, 2007). However, as high-performance student-athletes tend to place greater emphasis on sporting success, many are unable, or unwilling, to devote enough time to achieve academically (Cosh & Tully, 2014). These schools are thus designed to enhance sport performance while providing student-athletes with academic and social supports to nurture holistic development (Borggreffe & Cachay, 2012). While sport schools have proved successful in developing elite talent in sport (Radtke & Coalter, 2007),

there remains limited research exploring the lived experience from the perspective of the student-athletes enrolled in these schools. As there is evidence to suggest high performance sport settings may be overly strict, regimented and competitive (Parker & Manley, 2017; Williams, 2009), it is imperative to explore the sport school context to ensure this environment is conducive to developing high performance in sport without diminishing the student-athletes' passion for sport, academic achievement or psychosocial wellbeing.

As Canadian sport federations continue to expand on the role academies and sport schools play in their athlete development strategies, such as Canada Soccer's EXCEL program (Ontario Soccer, 2018), it is necessary to further explore the sport school's ability to provide positive experiences in high-performance sport. Within current literature, however, there remains limited studies exploring sport schools from the student-athletes' perspective and even fewer studies exploring sport schools from a Canadian context. As such, the purpose of this study was to explore student-athletes' perceptions of their lived experience in a Canadian sport school. The primary focus of the study was to explore the factors perceived to nurture or hinder high-performance student-athletes' physical, psychological and social competencies and wellbeing. A secondary focus was to explore student-athletes' perceived ability to balance the demands of high-performance sport while attaining high academic achievement. By capturing the student-athletes' lived experience, this study aimed to provide a holistic view of the sport school experience to inform policy and practice, as well as contribute to the limited research exploring this trend.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

A lack of literature exploring sport schools in Canada has led to confusion over their functioning and impact on Canadian student-athletes. To that end, this literature review will first seek to provide clarity to the diversity within the sport school system in Canada and provide a sample of how some of Canada's more established programs balance high-performance sport and academics. As the aim of sport schools is to nurture sporting success while maintaining academic achievement (Radtke & Coalter, 2007), this review of literature will provide an overview of the process by which elite talent in sport is developed and the challenges student-athletes face when balancing high-performance sport with academic achievement.

Defining the Sport School

The term "academy" is used in several different contexts by both professional organizations and the general population, but in general refers to a program in which athletes receive sport-specific education and training. Academies typically, but not always, have a focus on high-performance sport and vary in terms of their connection to academic institutions (Way et al., 2010). To that end, it is necessary to provide some clarity between the three most commonly used terms in Canada: skills academy, sport academy, and sport school. As Way et al. (2010) provide one of the few Canadian documents to distinguish between these three entities, their definitions will largely provide the basis for clarification going forward.

A skills academy provides some form of curriculum-based sport program in association with a school (Way et al., 2010). The coursework, however, may vary significantly between programs. While some programs offer the sport training portion of

the academy as a core course, others offer sport-specific coursework in the form of sport nutrition, sport psychology, or sport medicine. For example, Shaftesbury High School in Winnipeg, Manitoba offers the Shaftesbury Hockey Academy as an elective course combining on-ice instruction with off-ice conditioning and sport education (Shaftesbury Hockey Academy, 2018). The academy is an official Hockey Canada Skills Academy (HCSA) and allows students to earn up to four credits through hockey-specific instruction. Hockey Canada Skills Academies are operated in association with Hockey Canada and, therefore, maintain some level of consistency nationwide. The program has set standards for coach certification and training and provides a curriculum framework including on- and off-ice instruction (HCSA, 2018). While schools may differ in terms of scheduling, these skills academies are low cost and available to students of any skill level. As of 2018, 145 schools across Canada offer an HCSA.

Confusion begins when trying to delineate between sport academies and sport schools, as academics, such as Balderson (2015), tend to use the terms interchangeably. For the purposes of this study, however, these two entities will be considered separate and distinct. As Way et al. (2010) suggest, a sport academy is “a high-performance training group in one or more sports” (p. 5). It is important to note that sport academies differ in terms of their affiliation with local (LSO), provincial (PSO), and national (NSO) sport organizations, as well as their connection to educational facilities (Way et al. 2010). For this study, the potential lack of affiliation with an educational facility will serve as the defining feature between sport academies and sport schools. As the literature (Balderson, 2015; Way et al., 2010) suggests, sport academies are largely unregulated and, therefore, may differ drastically in structure, function and cost across Canada.

Sport schools are also difficult to define as regulations vary across provinces and sport federations, meaning a program may not receive recognition as a sport school despite functioning as such. Regardless of this lack of regulation, these schools share certain identifying features. Radtke and Coalter (2007) define a sport school as an academic institution (public or private school) which functions to provide student-athletes the opportunity to participate in sport training during school hours without sacrificing academic success. Way et al. (2010) provide a slightly different variation in describing a sport school as a “school-based program where some form of sport training/competition is provided during the school day as part of the curriculum” (p. 5). It should be noted, however, that not every school that provides flexibility for an elite athlete or offers a skills academy is considered a sport school. Sport schools have an organized structure for accommodating several student-athletes who have typically been recognized as elite by a PSO or NSO. The individual student-athletes participate on provincial or national teams, or the school competes in a separate league, such as the Canadian Sport School Hockey League (CSSHL). Furthermore, sport schools have received recognition as such by an educational or sport governing body and coaches require certification from the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) or equivalent education and training.

In summation, for the purposes of this study a sport school will herein be defined as an academic institution whose curriculum combines core academic courses with sport training or competition to allow high performance student-athletes to pursue academic and sporting success as part of the school day.

Sport Schools in Canada

The influence of sport schools on the landscape of elite sport in Canada continues to rise as sport federations increasingly view these schools as a viable means of developing elite talent in sport. In 2009, Hockey Canada established the Canadian Sport School Hockey League (CSSHL, 2019), which as of 2019 includes 19 sport schools Canada-wide. In the 2019 Western Hockey League (WHL) Bantam Draft, 85 student-athletes were selected from the CSSHL alone, including 13 of the top 22 selections (CSSHL, 2019). League alumni include former first round National Hockey League draft selections Matt Dumba, Curtis Lazar and Jake Bean. The occurrence of sport schools does, however, vary across provinces, with Alberta and Quebec being the first to invest in the sport school model (Way et al., 210). In Quebec, the Sport-études (sport-studies) program currently recognizes over 600 institutions (Éducation et Enseignement supérieur Québec, 2019).

In 2010, CSC Pacific (Way et al.) called for a national sport school model within which sport schools would apply for designation as a sport school and be held to universal standards of practice. These sport schools would operate in partnerships between education systems, sport federations and the public. By setting consistent, nationwide standards for coaching, facilities and academics, every student-athlete participating in a Canadian sport school would receive the same level of attention and care. While, as of 2018, the system remains convoluted and inconsistent across provinces, many governing bodies, including school divisions and sport federations, have established standards of practice for programs they have recognized as sport schools. However, the way in which the individual schools function varies significantly. CSC Pacific outlines five distinct sport school options across Canada, which differ in terms of their relation to the general population and affiliation with

a provincial sport organization (PSO). The first (Type 1) are standalone public schools in which the entire student population consists of student-athletes and both the academic and athletic portions of education take place within the school. The second and third options are schools in which both the academic and athletic aspects take place within traditional public schools offering sport academies that are either linked (Type 2) or not linked to a PSO (Type 3). In Type 4 sport schools, athletic training occurs in a non-school location, but student-athletes complete their academic education in a traditional public school setting. The fifth option (Type 5) consists of student-athletes engaging in both the academic and athletic components within a private school setting. While individual programs are largely independent, sport schools affiliated with a PSO or NSO are able to provide a greater measure of consistency and held to higher standards of practice.

Hockey Canada is one of the more progressive governing bodies in Canada in terms of their commitment to development through sport schools. In addition to Hockey Canada Skills Academies, Hockey Canada established the Canadian Sport School Hockey League (CSSHL, 2019) to provide youth hockey prospects the opportunity to compete against elite competition while maintaining high academic standards. Schools participating in the CSSHL are certified as sport schools by their local PSO, as well as Hockey Canada and must adhere to regulations including coach certification, academic achievement, and the provision of support staff. While schedules vary between programs, schools must ensure they meet standards of academic, sport, and life skills.

In Alberta, the Edge School (a Type 5 sport school) is a registered CSSHL sport school that provides a combination of core curriculum and sport-specific courses, as well as skill academies across several sports. Students participate in both academic and athletic

endeavours within the same facility. The Edge School's philosophy is to "facilitate the holistic development of academics, athletics, and character in a way that does not sacrifice one for the other" (Edge School, 2019). Enrollment in the school, however, requires a significant financial commitment. As of 2018, tuition for a high school student is over \$18,000 per year plus additional sport-specific fees ranging from \$800 to \$16,500. Despite the potential to receive financial awards, four-year enrollment in the school for a hockey player can approach \$140,000.

The Canadian Sport School in British Columbia is operated in association with Canadian Sport Institute Pacific (CSI Pacific). Students spend half days at the school completing a combination of physical training, sport seminars and independent study blocks (CSC Victoria, 2018). The remaining academic portion takes place within public high schools, while sport-specific training occurs with their local sport federation. Consistent with other sport schools, students earn credit through courses offered by the Canadian Sport School.

Quebec's Sport-études (sport-studies) program is perhaps Canada's most regulated and well-established system of sport schools, recognizing over 600 programs (Éducation et Enseignement supérieur Québec, 2019). Individual schools apply for recognition from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and must abide by set regulations to receive continued recognition as a sport-études school. These regulations outline the roles and expectations of all stakeholders, including the governing body, the school and the student-athlete, and ensure each program is held to a high standard of practice. Student-athletes participating in the program have been identified as elite by their PSO or NSO and require flexible scheduling and individualized attention to achieve their athletic pursuits

without comprising educational success. Training and competition occur in partnership with local sport federations, while academics take place within public or private schools.

The above programs represent only a small sample of sport schools offered in Canada as new programs continue to form in partnership with local schools and sport federations, including the development of art schools for programs such as circus and ballet. While sport schools vary in terms of their facilities and daily operations, they share the common aim of promoting high academic achievement and citizenship while allowing high-performance youth student-athletes to nurture their abilities in sport (CSSHL, 2019; Edge School, 2019), which Gagné (2004) suggests occurs through an interrelationship between intrapersonal and environmental catalysts.

Developing Elite Talent in Sport

Gagné (2004) describes giftedness as inborn abilities and talent as competencies which have been developed through structured training. The process by which a gifted individual develops into an elite talent, however, can be fickle. Even in the presence of elite natural abilities, athletes identified as gifted may not live up to their potential if they display a lack of commitment to their craft, or an inability to cope with the pressure of a competitive environment (Reilly, Williams, & Richardson, 2003). This is reflected in Ellis, Riley, and Gordon's (2003) sport-specific model of giftedness, which identifies talented individuals as those who possess three essential traits: athletic ability, commitment to sport and creativity. The Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT; Gagné, 2004) provides a more complex view of development in stating that talent is developed in the presence of a series of intrapersonal and environmental catalysts. Intrapersonal catalysts consist of mental and physical traits coupled with the ability to self-manage, including the

individual's level of motivation and autonomy. Environmental catalysts consist of the individual's surroundings (demographics, socioeconomic status), the influence of significant others and the structures in place to promote the development of elite talent. As this model suggests, talent is determined by the interaction of physical, psychological, and social competencies, as well as the structures in place to support healthy development.

While differences exist between models, it is consistently shown that athletes transition between several developmental stages throughout their sporting careers (Alfermann & Stambulova, 2007). Bloom (1985) suggests talent development occurs across three development stages: the early years, the middle years and the later years. The early years represent the stage at which athletes are first introduced to sport and develop a connection to the activity as a source of enjoyment. In this stage, children are provided ample opportunity for unstructured play with emphases on engagement and developing a positive attitude toward sport. In the middle years, youth begin to view themselves as athletes competing in a sport and strive to develop their sport-specific competencies. In this stage, athletes make a commitment to more formalized training with a focus on skill development. Youth become more involved in their own athletic development and often sacrifice social relationships in favour of their sporting endeavours. The later years are characterized by an almost all-encompassing commitment to training and competition. Athletes work with elite coaches and compete against elite competition to hone sport-specific competencies and develop the confidence to achieve at the highest level.

Building off the work of Bloom (1985), the Developmental Model of Sport Participation (DMSP) suggests elite performance and psychological wellbeing are nurtured across three developmental stages (Côté, 1999; Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2016). Between

the ages of six to twelve, the sampling years, athletes are encouraged to participate in several sports and activities with a focus on deliberate play. Deliberate play activities provide opportunities to engage in physical activity in a largely unstructured environment in which the focus is enjoyment, creativity and freedom of movement (Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2007). These activities may loosely mirror the rules and skills used in sports, but the emphasis is placed on meaningful experiences over quality of movement. Conversely, deliberate practice consists of structured activities in which the primary objective is skill development (Côté et al., 2007). Early specialization in a single sport, with a focus on deliberate practice over play, may lead to negative outcomes, including increased risk of injury, decreased psychosocial wellbeing, or disengagement from the activity (Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2016; Wall & Côté, 2007). For athletes who engage in early specialization, prolonged engagement and enjoyment in their chosen sport may be determined by the program's developmental approach and the athlete's level of social support (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2008).

During the specialization years, age 13 to 15, athletes begin to shift toward greater amounts of deliberate practice in one or two sports in which they show potential, while maintaining participation in deliberate play (Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2016). The sport in which the athlete chooses to specialize may be influenced by their personal connection to the sport, level of achievement or social influences, such as coaches, parents, siblings, and peers (Côté, 1999). Parents play another important role in their child's development in this stage by committing to the significant financial and time demands required to participate in elite sport (Bloom, 1985; Côté, 1999). One such financial commitment is the

procurement of elite coaches who can positively influence development in sport without compromising their child's wellbeing (Witte, Kiewra, Kasson, & Perry, 2015).

In the investment years, age 16 to 18, athletes participate in significant amounts of deliberate practice in one sport-specific context with a focus on performance outcomes (Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2016). This increase in deliberate practice, however, leads to a significant reduction in opportunities for deliberate play (Côté et al., 2007). As Côté (1999) suggests, the focus on elite performance through demanding training and competition schedules places athletes under stress and increases the role of parents as mentors and social supports. In this stage, however, coaches may have a greater influence on athlete development and psychosocial wellbeing. As Côté and Gilbert (2009) state, effective coaching involves “the consistent application of integrated professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge to improve athletes' competence, confidence, connection, and character in specific coaching contexts” (p. 316). In the investment years, coaches must nurture elite performance through regimented, athlete-centred training and competition schedules while maintaining the athlete's passion for sport, providing social supports, and encouraging holistic development through non-sporting pursuits (Côté, Bruner, Erickson, Strachan, & Fraser-Thomas, 2010).

Throughout all stages of development, the goal of any youth sport program should be to increase sport performance and personal development while encouraging prolonged participation in sport (Côté, Strachan, & Fraser-Thomas, 2008). The Personal Assets Framework (PAF; Côté, Turnnidge, & Evans, 2014) provides a model by which the outcomes of participation, performance and personal development are achieved through the development of four personal assets: competence, confidence, connection, and

character (4Cs; Côté et al., 2010; Vierimaa, Erickson, Côté, & Gilbert, 2012). As the development of elite talent is determined by the interaction of physical, psychological, and social factors (Gagné, 2004), talent development in sport is reliant upon a program's ability to provide an appropriate training environment, opportunities for intra- and interpersonal skill development and positive social experiences (Strachan, Côté, & Deakin, 2011). Consistent with the findings of Strachan et al. (2011), the PAF (Côté et al., 2014) describes appropriate settings, quality relationships, and personal engagement in activities as the three variables which determine the short-term development of the 4Cs and their associated long-term outcomes.

Developing Elite Talent in Sport: The Sport School Perspective

As limited studies were found that expressly state a focus on talent development within a sport school structure, research exploring sport academies will provide the basis of this section. The omission of the academy's connection to an educational institution represents a common oversight in current literature. This makes it difficult to know when training occurs and what parameters are in place to accommodate the student-athletes' educational and social lives. Despite this limitation, research exploring participation in sport academies provides a useful insight into the sport school experience as the academy represents the sport-specific aspect of the sport school experience. Furthermore, these studies explore the intrapersonal and environmental factors deemed necessary for the development of high-performance student-athletes at an age in which they are trying to balance school and sport.

Mills, Butt, Maynard, and Harwood (2012), through interviews with elite youth academy coaches, provide a framework identifying the factors perceived to contribute to

successful development of elite talent within a sport academy setting. Consistent with Gagné (2004), Mills et al.'s (2012) model represents an interrelationship between intrapersonal and environmental factors. Within this model, success is reliant upon the student-athletes' ability to develop sport-specific attributes, sport and psychosocial intelligence, awareness of self and others, goal directed attributes, and resilience. Each of the intrapersonal competencies is influenced by environmental factors, including the role of significant others and having access to the facilities and equipment required to support training demands. The provisions required are sport-specific and bring attention to the necessity to provide an individualised approach to the development of elite talent (Feldhusen, 1996).

Psychosocial competencies. Through interviews with elite Canadian youth soccer players and English Premier League youth academy players and coaches, Holt and Dunn (2004) identified discipline, resilience, commitment, and social support as the four psychosocial competencies required for optimal talent development. In 2006, Holt and Mitchell refined Holt and Dunn's model to encompass the competencies of hope, resilience and social support. Hope combines the idea of setting a clear goal and having the mindset that you will not let anything prevent you from achieving that goal. Despite Holt and Mitchell's shift toward a comparison of athletes who made successful and unsuccessful transitions to senior level professional programs, their study focused solely on athletes during the investment years (Côté, 1999). Larsen, Alfermann, and Christensen (2012) explored academy athletes across three developmental stages and divided psychosocial skills into two broad categories: internal and interpersonal. Internal skills included the subcategories of self-awareness, goal setting, motivation, self-organization, and work ethic.

Interpersonal skills consisted of showing respect, utilizing team skills, appreciating social supports, and general social skills. In addition to social and emotional competencies, Mills et al. (2012) highlight the importance of sport intelligence.

As Mills et al. (2012) suggest, elite players exhibit a greater understanding of their sport and a heightened awareness of game situations. Elite athletes are able to process game situations, identify strategies and anticipate the play better than their non-elite counterparts (Reilly et al., 2003). While it is unclear if this is an inborn ability, research suggests a strong interrelationship between sport intelligence and coachability (Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffett, 2002). Athletes considered coachable are those who are able to quickly absorb and implement instruction to improve their performance. This trait is enhanced through an awareness of coach expectations and an ability to objectively critique one's own performance and identify areas in need of improvement (Larsen et al., 2012; Mills et al., 2012). Sport intelligence may also be developed through prolonged engagement in competition and an increased awareness of teammates' abilities and tendencies (Gershgoren, Filho, Tenenbaum, & Schinke, 2013).

Interactions with teammates, coaches, peers, and family play a significant role in development and overall wellbeing (Côté et al., 2014; Fraser-Thomas et al., 2008). While athletes cannot always control the level of social support they receive in their home or sporting environment (Gagne, 2004), athletic development may be improved with a higher degree of social competency (Mills et al., 2012). Athletes must be aware of the social climate and find a way to fit within the organization's social structure. This involves an ability to interact and make meaningful connections with their peers. Additionally, as athletes are often forced to sacrifice time with friends and family in favour of their

demanding training and competition schedules (Holt & Dunn, 2004), they must be willing to seek out social supports (Larsen et al., 2012). While social support is proven to be an effective coping strategy, younger athletes do not utilize social supports as effectively as older athletes (Reeves, Nichols, & McKenna, 2009).

An important factor in talent development is the individual's level of commitment to the sport (Ellis et al., 2003). Motivation plays a role in determining the athlete's level of commitment and may be intrinsic or extrinsic in nature (Holt & Mitchell, 2006). Larsen et al. (2012) identified intrinsic factors such as a desire to improve as predictors of sporting success. Additional factors in determining commitment include having a strong work ethic and the ability to create career goals (Mills et al., 2012). Goal setting helps the athlete focus on career aspirations and demonstrate resiliency in the face of adversity (Larsen et al., 2012).

The concept of resilience relates to the athlete's ability to overcome barriers and setbacks (Holt & Dunn, 2004), such as poor performance or injury, while maintaining a positive outlook and confidence in your ability to perform (Mills et al., 2012). Within a high-performance academy system, the expectation to perform at an elite level in a highly competitive environment can place youth athletes under immense pressure (Williams, 2009). Reeves et al. (2009) identified making errors, team performance and level of competition from the opposition as three of the stressors most commonly reported by academy athletes between the ages of 12 to 18. In addition to the aforementioned stressors, as athletes moved closer toward exiting the academy system for the professional ranks they more frequently identified coaches, individual performance, and selection in and out of competition as additional stressors. While academy athletes report numerous and varied

stressors (Reeves, 2009), fear of failure represents perhaps the most complex psychosocial barrier to success and wellbeing (Sagar, Lavallee, & Spray, 2007).

The focus on performance-related outcomes signifies a need for athletes to develop strategies to effectively cope with their competitive environment (Holt & Dunn, 2004). While academy athletes aged 12-14 years tend to utilize behavioural performance strategies and increased concentration, as athletes mature they develop additional problem-focused strategies, such as positive self-talk and reflection, and begin to develop emotion-focused coping strategies, including placing greater emphasis on seeking social support (Reeves et al., 2009). Conversely, several athletes use avoidance-focused coping strategies, such as mental disengagement and social withdrawal, in an attempt to repress the stressor (Sagar, Lavellee, & Spray, 2009). Avoidance-focused coping strategies are observed more prominently in younger athletes, which highlights the need for sport organizations to provide appropriate support mechanisms and psychological coaching throughout all stages of development (Richardson, Gilbourne, & Littlewood, 2004). However, as previous literature largely relies on participant recall, there remains a need to further explore perceived stressors and coping strategies as they occur.

Physical competencies. Although psychosocial factors play a role in developing sport-specific attributes, success is largely determined by physical stature and technical ability. When identifying talent in athletes, youth are often judged on anthropometric measures, such as height and weight, and fitness measures, such as speed and endurance (Reilly et al., 2003). As Reilly et al. suggest, youth who lack ideal measurable traits are often overlooked in favour of those who look more physically mature. Jones et al. (2018) determined that youth academy rugby players possessed a larger physical stature and

greater degree of physical fitness than their school-based counterparts. However, it is unclear if this is a by-product of training with elite coaches, or if these players were selected for the academy because of their physical qualities. While it is evident that physical traits are coveted in elite sport, ideal physical traits are dependent upon the individual activity in which the athlete is participating (Gagné, 2004).

Despite the significance of physical characteristics on talent development, success in their chosen sport will largely depend on the athlete's ability to perform sport-specific tasks (Mills et al, 2012). While the development of sport-related competence represents one of the crucial foci in youth sport (Côté et al., 2014), athletes who place too much emphasis on physical fitness (Wall & Côté, 2007) and peak performance (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2008) in the early stages of development are more likely to withdraw from the sport over time. This places pressure on sport organizations to cater to individual training needs to ensure healthy progression across all stages of development to promote physical and psychosocial competencies and reduce risk of negative outcomes.

The talent development environment. Elite sport requires the application of appropriate structures to promote progressive development of physical conditioning and sport-specific competencies (Strachan & Davies, 2015). Furthermore, as the psychosocial predictors of talent development consist of varied internal and interpersonal skills (Larsen et al., 2012), it is imperative the sport environment provide support mechanisms to nurture psychological wellbeing (Richardson et al., 2004). Although youth athletes are largely at the mercy of factors out of their own control, such as their family's ability to provide social and financial support (Gagné, 2004), the talent development environment plays a pivotal role in developing their physical and psychosocial competencies. Henriksen, Stambulova,

and Roessler (2010) present two models exploring talent development environments. The Athletic Talent Development Environment Model (ATDE) describes the interaction between environmental factors at the micro- and macro-level in both athletic and non-athletic domains. For example, school is presented as a non-athletic environment with which the athlete is in constant interaction. The Environment Success Factors Model (ESF) states that the effectiveness of the environment is determined through the development of three outcomes: individual competencies, team success and organizational culture. These outcomes are influenced by environmental preconditions, such as financial concerns, and the day-to-day interactions and experiences within the environment (the process). The ATDE provides an overview of the talent development environment, while the ESF aims to predict whether the environment will be successful in producing elite talent. A key component of Henriksen et al.'s models is the variation that exists within each environment.

Mills, Butt, Maynard, and Harwood (2014) explored an elite soccer academy context and identified an interrelationship between tangible, strategic, and procedural components of the talent development environment. Consistent with Henriksen et al. (2010), the process is identified as a key component of the environment. In Mills et al.'s model the process consists of the day-to-day operations and the protocols in place to promote overall wellbeing and engagement. Tangible supports refer to the physical environment, such as the facilities in which the athletes train and reside. In this context, living arrangements were provided by the sport organization, which is not the case for every academy or sport school. This aspect may still be relevant, however, when considering hotel accommodations when travelling for competition. The strategic

component refers to the general operating system, which outlines the program's fundamental approach to talent development.

A sport organization's operating system includes the mission and values which define the purpose and overall functioning of the program (Mills et al., 2014). As an example, the mission of the National Sport School in Calgary is to "provide a supportive learning environment to enable developing high-performance athletes to mature as self-directed, life-long learners while pursuing excellence in sport" (NSS, 2018). This mission will determine the school's overall approach to combining academic and sporting success. Sport organizations must establish a clear philosophy and set goals for all stages of development to ensure consistency in instruction and expectations (Martindale, Collins, & Abraham, 2007). In addition to establishing a vision, the organization must strategically develop a plan for implementation and ensure these principles are consistently enforced throughout all levels of the organization (Martindale, Collins, & Daubney, 2005). A well-conceived operating system provides consistency within the program and determines the successful functioning of day-to-day operations. Organizational functioning includes the program's ability to provide flexibility, maintain stability and communicate with athletes about expectations and individual progress (Mills et al., 2014).

Closely tied to organizational functioning are the structures in place to ensure the overall psychosocial wellbeing of the athletes. As Mills et al. (2014) suggest, the psychosocial architecture ensures the athlete is engaged in activities, feels valued, has positive interactions with staff, parents and peers, and feels a sense of accomplishment. A key component to psychosocial wellbeing is the influence of social supports. High performance sport requires a significant time commitment from the athletes, which limits

time spent with peers outside of the sport environment (Henriksen et al., 2010). As a result, athletes must develop relationships with peers and coaches within their sporting environment. One such method for developing more cohesive peer support is a systematic approach to role modeling, which may include pairing athletes by age group to place more experienced athletes in leadership roles (Martindale et al., 2007).

The coach plays a pivotal role in the healthy development of both physical and psychosocial competencies. Much of the development of elite talent depends on the coach's ability to provide short- and long-term training plans and make adjustments to meet individual needs (Strachan et al., 2011). This ensures every athlete receives an individualized approach to sport-specific training and conditioning. In addition to performance-related outcomes, Côté and Gilbert (2009) suggest coaches must create an environment in which psychosocial wellbeing is nurtured and holistic development through non-sporting endeavours is encouraged. This remains consistent with Côté et al.'s (2010) assertion that, despite a focus on elite performance, high-performance coaches must provide a positive, healthy approach to talent development by placing emphases on the 4Cs.

Literature exploring talent development within elite sport contexts compares favourably to models of positive youth development in many regards. In all cases, research demonstrates the significant role the talent development environment plays in nurturing physical, psychological and social competencies. Within the Personal Assets Framework (Côté et al., 2014) the development of these competencies is predicated on the sport program's ability to provide appropriate training and competitive settings, opportunities to develop meaningful relationships and a sense of personal engagement. Mills et al.'s (2014) framework for the talent development environment within a soccer academy setting

presents similar findings but places greater emphases on establishing and implementing a clear and consistent mission and values. However, Mills et al.'s framework is taken from the coaches' perspective and requires additional exploration from the perspective of the athletes participating in the academy. Furthermore, there remains a need to further explore best practice for balancing high-performance sport with academic commitments.

Balancing School and Sport

As with other high-performance athletes, the primary focus for many student-athletes participating in a sport school is achieving sporting success. However, "as sporting success...is not guaranteed, such schools must be judged on their ability to provide a good secondary education for the elite pupil athletes" (Radtke & Coalter, 2007, p. 3). Athletes who achieve early success tend to construct their social identity solely around their sporting achievements and struggle to cope when they are no longer achieving the same degree of success (Brown & Poltrac, 2009). For those athletes who maintain athletic success, adequate educational or vocational training may still prove invaluable as athletes who fail to explore diverse pursuits in their school years may struggle to adjust to their transition away from sport (Miller & Kerr, 2002). Furthermore, retired athletes tend to enter the workforce with limited work experience and acquire jobs equivalent to their level of education (Metsä-Tokila, 2002). Thus, literature exploring dual career pathways of student-athletes emphasizes the importance of pursuing holistic education despite perceived barriers to balancing both school and sport.

Benefits of a dual career approach. Aquilina (2013) presents one of the few studies to explore the reciprocal relationship between academic and athletic pursuits. Student-athletes who participated in the study described the balance as alleviating some of

the stress and monotony from pursuing a one-dimensional career. Pursuing academics simultaneously with sport allowed the student-athletes to shift their focus toward intellectual stimuli while providing a sense of relief in knowing they would acquire a degree on which to fall back if their athletic career were to end. Student-athletes also believed the skills developed through education, such as critical thinking and work ethic, applied directly to their sport and improved performance. These results are in line with Miller and Kerr (2002) who suggest that athletes who develop holistically throughout their academic years make a smoother transition to life after sport. In order to provide student-athletes with the best chance for success in balancing their dual careers, McKenna and Dunstan-Lewis (2004) emphasize the need to establish clear expectations and set goals for both academics and athletics, as well as create a more engaged and supportive relationship between the student-athlete, educators, support staff, and peers.

Factors influencing dual career success. For many athletes, the failure to develop as well-rounded individuals stems from their inability to combine academic and social ventures with their high-performance sport pursuits. While literature consistently demonstrates a focus on athletic success, differences exist regarding the student-athletes' level of commitment to academics. Ryba, Stambulova, Selänne, Aunola, and Nurmi (2017) found that while high-performance training and competition was their primary focus, many student-athletes committed the remainder of their time to academics. In these instances, social interactions were diminished in favour of sport and academics. Conversely, Cosh and Tully (2014) found that while student-athletes believed themselves to be capable of achieving academic success, their perceived inability to effectively manage time constraints resulted in a lackadaisical attitude toward academics. Cosh and Tully attributed

academic shortcomings to poor time management or lack of commitment to academics. While the student-athletes' level of commitment to academics may be disputed, student-athletes commonly report the physical and psychological toll high performance training can have on their ability to concentrate on schoolwork. Being able to improve concentration in school may depend on the student-athlete's ability to self-manage and use coping strategies to limit physical symptoms, such as fatigue and soreness (O'Neill, Allen, and Calder, 2013).

The fear of underperforming in a highly competitive environment may also have a negative effect on the student-athlete's ability to concentrate on schoolwork (Sagar et al., 2009). Psychosocial competencies contribute to career success and appear to differ between genders, as female student-athletes express a greater level of commitment to schoolwork and determination to achieve academic success (Tekavc, Wylleman, & Erpič, 2015). Conversely, female athletes report more social exclusion and bullying (O'Neill et al., 2013) and are more likely to have their athletic performance affected by issues with body image during adolescence. While social support from family and peers is viewed as significant by both genders, current literature into the influence of the coach on dual career success is inconsistent. Through interviews with hockey coaches, Ronkainen, Ryba, Littlewood, and Selänne (2018) determined that while coaches perceive themselves as taking steps to ensure student-athletes remain committed to holistic development, they are often unable to articulate instances in which they actively emphasize the importance of a dual career pathway to their student-athletes. Ryan (2015) identified the level of support from coaches and NSOs as being situation specific. By exploring dual career pathways from the student-athletes' perspectives, Ryan found that few student-athletes are

encouraged to pursue multiple ventures, while many are actively prevented from exploring areas outside the sport context.

Difficulty in managing school and sport may differ throughout development stages as each stage is characterized by variances in physical and psychological development, as well as the social structures and supports to aid in holistic development (Wylleman, Alfermann, and Lavallee, 2004). Tekavc et al. (2015) identify the transition from secondary school to university as the stage during which student-athletes experience the most difficulty balancing school and sport. Throughout each stage of development, however, success is influenced by physical, psychosocial and environmental factors.

Policies and procedures in sport schools. Sport schools were developed to “safeguard the ‘dual careers’ of school-aged athletes structurally by changing participation requirements and adapting them to the demands of elite sport” (Borggreffe and Cachay, 2012, p. 58). Despite this coupling of school and sport, questions remain regarding the ability and desire of student-athletes to simultaneously achieve sporting and academic success. Few studies have explored dual career pathways from the perspective of adolescent student-athletes and even fewer have focused specifically on student-athletes managing their dual career pathway within the context of a sport school. There are, however, examples of literature exploring the influence of policies and procedures within a sport school setting. According to Borggreffe and Cachay, policy changes in sport schools can be made in the temporal, social and factual dimensions. Within the temporal level, changes can be made to provide flexibility to academic schedules to accommodate training and competition demands. As student-athletes may miss class time for athletics, support in the social dimension provides additional social support in the form of one-on-one

instruction or tutoring. Adjustments to the factual dimension include modifications to the curriculum by reducing course content for the student-athlete or including sport-specific education or training as part of the curriculum.

De Bosscher, De Knop, and Vertonghen (2016) present an evaluative framework for determining the success of policies governing sport schools in Belgium. The framework outlines three levels of policy influencing the functioning and effectiveness of sport schools in developing both sport and academic success. The first level, input, describes a financial commitment from both the ministry of sport and ministry of education with the remaining fees covered by the individual student-athletes. The second level, throughput, describes the policies and provisions in place to support academic achievement and athletic success. Throughput encompasses the day-to-day operations and supports which aid in the student-athletes' development. Academically, students require flexible scheduling, individual support and tutoring, modified coursework, and opportunities to learn while away from the classroom. These modifications represent the temporal, social and factual dimensions as expressed by Borggreffe and Cachay (2012). Athletically, students require individualized sport training and education from coaches with specialized knowledge, opportunities to compete against elite opposition, and access to high performance facilities. The third level, output, describes the desired outcomes as determined by the sport school, which include improved sport performance and the opportunity to develop academically and athletically while reducing the likelihood of dropout from either realm. While De Bosscher et al. provide a multi-level overview of academic and athletic success within a sport school setting, their model places greater emphasis on developmental outcomes than psychosocial wellbeing. This likely stems from their reliance on quantitative measures, thus highlighting

a need for further qualitative study to provide a more holistic view of sport schools, encompassing academics, athletics, and the psychosocial factors influencing success in both realms.

Research Rationale and Purpose

Despite the increasing prominence of sport schools across Canada, there remains a scarcity of literature exploring this trend. Within current literature, few studies were found that explore talent development or dual career pathways within a sport school setting. Studies conducted within the context of an academy (Mills et al., 2012) typically do not state the academies' connection to an educational facility or how training is structured within a school day. Many of these studies have also been conducted within the context of soccer academies in the United Kingdom (Holt & Dunn, 2004; Mills et al., 2014), signifying a need for further exploration of sport schools from a Canadian perspective, as well as individual sports beyond soccer. Furthermore, there remains a need to explore the sport school environment from the perspective of youth student-athletes currently enrolled in the schools, as much of the literature has explored the coaches' perspective or been retrospective in nature.

In addressing these identified gaps, the purpose of the current study is to explore the lived experience of high-performance student-athletes participating in a Canadian hockey sport school. The primary focus of the study is to explore the factors perceived to nurture or hinder high-performance student-athletes' physical, psychological and social competencies and wellbeing. A secondary focus is to explore student-athletes' perceived ability to balance the demands of high-performance sport while working to attain high academic achievement. By affording student-athletes the opportunity to provide meaning

to their lived experience, it is expected that the study will contribute to the overall development and wellbeing of youth student-athletes by informing policy and practice. The study may also contribute to the body of qualitative literature regarding both talent development environments and dual career pathways while continuing to add support to photo elicitation as an effective means of exploring youth sport through the eyes of youth student-athletes.

Chapter Three: Methods

Approach to Research

The interpretive paradigm was utilized as the purpose of the study was to “understand the individuals’ behaviours, meanings and experiences within particular social settings” (Markula & Silk, 2011, p. 31). As such, this study assumed a relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology as it assumed reality is subjective to individuals’ experiences and co-created through interaction between the participants and the researcher (Markula & Silk, 2011). Furthermore, the study assumed a qualitative methodology with an inductive research design as it aimed to develop a new theory or model instead of relying on a priori assumptions or fitting research within an existing framework (Gratton & Jones, 2004).

Participants

This study aimed to recruit 10 participants, which was viewed as an acceptable sample size given the purpose of the study (Markula & Silk, 2011). Participants were selected through purposive criterion sampling (Markula & Silk, 2011) using the following criteria: 1) was participating in a Canadian sport school which accommodates academic and athletic pursuits at the time of the study, 2) the sport school had to be affiliated with a PSO, NSO or other governing body, and 3) was a student-athlete in the middle or senior years (grades 7-12). These criteria ensured that participants were elite-level student-athletes in the specialization or investment years (Côté, 1999) enrolled in a regulated sport school. Convenience sampling (Markula & Silk, 2011) was also used to a certain extent, as preference was given to student-athletes located within closer proximity to the lead researcher.

After receiving ethics approval from the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) at the University of Manitoba, participants were recruited through the administrators at the sport school in which they trained. As each of the programs which met the criteria for participation in the study were type 4 (private sport academy) or type 5 (private school) sport schools, programs were contacted directly rather than through school divisions. Administrators were contacted through email or telephone and provided with details of the study. In a few cases, the lead researcher also had an in-person meeting with administrators to further discuss the study. Administrators were provided with information about the study and a recruitment poster and asked to arrange a face-to-face meeting between the lead researcher and potential recruits in which the lead researcher would explain the study to recruits and their parents. Due to time constraints, programs declined a face-to-face meeting and participants were recruited by the administrators at each respective program. Administrators presented their teams with information about the study, as provided by the lead researcher, and student-athletes interested in the study agreed to participate voluntarily. The lead researcher then distributed assent forms for the participants and consent forms for capable legal guardians, as well as consent forms for administrators and coaches.

Recruitment yielded nine participants (four males and five females) between the ages of 13 and 17 years from two type 4 sport schools in central Canada (see Table 1, for participant profiles). All the participants were hockey players who had participated in their sport for 10+ years on average with most participants in their first season at their current sport school. The majority of participants were not attending a sport school located in their hometown and were living in dorm rooms or with billet families. While a few participants

were from a different province or country, most of the out of town participants were from cities within the same province as the sport school. Additionally, most of the participants were Caucasian with the exception of three student-athletes who identified as Indigenous, Metis or Filipino. While the study may have benefitted from greater diversity, the participants were representative of the demographics of their individual teams. Pseudonyms chosen by the participants have been used in place of real names. Sport schools have also been assigned pseudonyms as chosen by the lead researcher.

Table 1

Participant Profiles

Pseudonym	Sport School	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Years in Current Sport School	Living Situation
Bill	SS1	Male	13	Caucasian	1	Local with Family
Darnell	SS1	Male	14	Indigenous	1	Billet Family
Andy	SS1	Male	14	Caucasian	1	Billet Family
Frank	SS1	Male	15	Metis	1	Local with Family
Bailey	SS2	Female	15	Caucasian	1	In Dorm
Carrie	SS2	Female	15	Filipino	1	In Dorm
Giavanna	SS2	Female	16	Caucasian	1	In Dorm
Jill	SS2	Female	16	Caucasian	1	In Dorm
Jake	SS2	Female	17	Caucasian	2	Local with Family

Sport School Context

Sport School One (SS1) is a male bantam (under 15) team from a private hockey academy competing in the highest division of a sport school league that is recognized by an NSO. Student-athletes attend classes at a local high school in the morning and train at the hockey academy in the afternoon. Student-athletes begin classes at 7:30am and receive

a physical education credit for training with the academy. A typical day at the academy consists of physical training, on-ice training and one hour for study hall. A condensed academic schedule allows student-athletes to complete both academics and athletics during the day. Student-athletes are finished by 5:00pm each day. Student-athletes from out of town live with billet families during the season.

Sport School Two (SS2) is a female midget (under 18) hockey team competing in the developmental division of a sport school league that is recognized by an NSO. Student-athletes attend regular classes at a local public school and train with a private hockey academy in the afternoon. Student-athletes complete a full school day with the regular student population, apart from physical education for which they receive a credit for training with the academy. The academy provides physical training and on-ice skill development in the afternoon, as well as study hall in the evening. The majority of student-athletes in the program live in dorms during the season while only a few live locally. The program includes scheduled times for meals during the day and free time in the evenings.

Data Collection

Data collection took place between December-March during the 2018-2019 hockey season and consisted of photo elicitation interviews. Participants were asked to capture their lived experience using digital cameras provided by the lead researcher. Photographs taken by the participants and lead researcher then provided the basis for questioning in focus groups. Participants were briefed on proper conduct when taking photographs of individuals and their environment prior to receiving cameras (see Appendix G for protocol). In total, participants collected 153 photographs, of which 109 were used in focus groups. Focus groups took place between January and April 2019 and were audio recorded and

transcribed verbatim by the lead researcher. Copies of transcripts were provided to participants for review prior to data analysis.

Photo elicitation interviews. In photo elicitation, photographs taken by the participants form the foundation of discussions between the participants and the researcher through which subjective meanings are drawn (Croghan, Griffin, Hunter, & Phoenix, 2008). The use of photo elicitation interviews allows the “participants to take a more active role in both data collection and the interview process by informing the direction of the interview with participant-produced photography” (Sawyer, Ucci, Jones, Smith, Fisher, 2018, p. 50). Furthermore, the use of photographs may improve participants’ level of engagement, enjoyment and connection to the research by capturing images they themselves have deemed significant (Cook & Hess, 2007). To account for a potential lack of opportunity for participants to take photographs during specific portions of the day, such as on-ice training, the lead researcher took photographs during these sessions (Figure 1.1, in Appendix A). The lead researcher also pulled photographs from public social media accounts (Figure 1.2, in Appendix A) to represent locations the participants would not be visiting during the designated photo taking period or would otherwise not be able to capture themselves.

Data collection occurred in phases similar to those used by Strachan and Davies (2015) with the exception that phases one and two occurred in one session at the request of the programs due to time constraints. In phase one, participants were provided guidelines for appropriate use of cameras and asked to consider aspects of their environment they find meaningful. Guidelines were intended to reduce negative impacts photo-taking may have had on individuals or the programs. After discussing the guidelines for photo-taking, participants were asked to brainstorm meaningful aspects of their experience and ways they

might capture those experiences in photographs. As public schools did not allow photographs to be taken on school property, participants were asked to find creative ways to capture meaningful aspects of their experiences at school.

In phase two, the lead researcher reviewed the guidelines for photo-taking and provided participants with digital cameras. Participants were given 24 hours to photograph meaningful aspects of their environment. The 24-hour timeframe allowed participants to capture their experiences without causing prolonged disruptions to the program. Prior to taking photographs of non-participants, participants were required to receive verbal consent and explain that photographs would not be used in the study without their written consent. Non-participants were then provided with a photo release form, which was provided by the lead researcher.

In session three, the lead researcher provided copies of the photographs and participants were asked to choose approximately 10-15 photos that best represented the ideas they were trying to encapsulate. A second set of photographs was provided to the participants as a memento.

In session four, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted in groups of two or three participants to explore the meanings behind the photographs and their influence on the student-athletes' experiences. The bulk of the focus groups pertained to photographs selected by the participants and remained consistent with Strachan and Davies (2015) by following a main question with probing questions. As focus groups were guided by photographs, main questions were broad in nature. An example of a main includes "What were you trying to capture in this photograph?" Probing questions then aimed to elicit greater depth of information about the topic raised from the main

question. An example of a probing question includes “Can you tell me more about...?” Photographs taken by the lead researcher were included after participant photographs and were intended to capture areas of the program that participants were unable to capture themselves based on conversations between the student-athletes and the lead researcher. At the end of the interview, additional open-ended questions were asked to gauge student-athletes’ overall impressions of the sport school and to identify areas which may have been missed. An example includes, “How would you describe your overall experience participating in the sport school?”

Prior to focus groups, the lead researcher observed the sport school environment to gain insight into the school’s daily operations and the way in which participants interacted with the environment. The lead researcher captured observations through photographs and field notes. Field notes aided in the researcher’s understanding of the sport school environment and helped inform data analysis.

Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by the lead researcher and copies were provided to the participants to verify accuracy prior to analysis. Ritchie and Spencer’s (2002) framework for analyzing qualitative research was used to sort and provide meaning to the unstructured data using the analysis software NVivo 12. Ritchie and Spencer’s framework consists of five stages of data analysis. In the familiarization stage, the lead researcher read transcripts several times and noted similarities between interviews. A thematic framework consisting of recurrent concepts and themes was then identified to aid in sorting individual transcripts. In the indexing and charting stages, transcripts were coded line by line and sorted into the previously identified thematic framework before each

theme was further coded and divided into subthemes. In the final stage, mapping and interpretation, coded data was interpreted and applied to the broader focus of the research to present an overall picture of the sport school experience. Themes emerged through repetition in meaning units gleaned through participant quotations. Field notes helped inform meanings by providing additional context to dialogue obtained through interviews. Once the lead researcher observed repetition of themes without the creation of additional themes, it was assumed saturation had been reached. Data analysis was primarily conducted by the lead researcher; however, themes were reviewed with a secondary researcher throughout analysis and participants were provided the opportunity to review themes after analysis was completed.

Rigour

To establish rigour, the lead researcher utilized a relativist approach, which challenges the notion of evaluating qualitative research through rigid, universal criteria (Burke, 2016). The relativist approach evaluates qualitative research using lists that are “necessarily open-ended because the criteria used can change depending upon the starting points, context and purposes of the specific piece of research being judged” (Smith & McGannon, 2018, p. 116). In keeping with a relativist approach, such criteria as the worthiness of the topic, maintaining ethical practices, establishing and abiding by clearly articulated research methods, developing rigour through data collection and analysis, and establishing credibility through detailed descriptions and open dialogue with participants (Tracy, 2010) were used.

Chapter Four: Results

Data analysis yielded three main themes pertaining to student-athletes' perceptions of participation in sport schools: a) opportunities for personal growth, b) a network of social support, and c) program structures. Each theme presented a set of subthemes which are supported through verbatim quotations from participants. In general, few discernible differences could be found between male and female participants. There were, however, differences between student-athletes attending a local sport school and those who live with billet families or in dorms. While these differences merit discussion, they did not represent additional themes. Therefore, rather than presenting these participants separately, distinctions between local and out of town participants were made within each theme where applicable. Furthermore, education and athletics were not treated as separate themes for two reasons. First, the study was designed to explore sport schools as a whole, including the integration of school and sport into one program, so treating the two as separate entities seemed counterintuitive. Second, many of the themes, such as work ethic and social support, appear in discussions surrounding both school and sport, and would therefore be repetitive.

Opportunities for Personal Growth

The theme opportunities for personal growth described the development opportunities embedded within the sport school structure. Within this theme, three subthemes emerged: athletic development, career transition and psychosocial development (see Table 2).

Table 2

Results Outlining the Theme Opportunities for Personal Growth with Subthemes

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONAL GROWTH		
Athletic Development	Physical Capabilities	Improve physical capabilities - strength, speed, cardio, etc. Elite training - training like the best Being physically ready for competition
	Individualized Workouts	Workouts tailored to the individual athletes
	Variety	Use a variety of activities
	Recovery	Provide time to relax and recover Utilize yoga and stretching activities Treatment plans to recover from injury
	Sport Performance	Improved physical skills - stick skills, skating, etc. Improved mental skills - strategy, zone play, etc.
	Elite Competition	Playing against elite competition Being challenged, learning from mistakes
	Elite Coaches	Coaches are knowledgeable; know how to get to the next level Coaches have been there, done that
	Feedback	Receiving constructive criticism Learning from watching game film Learning from watching others (teammates, peers, NHL)
	Career Transition	Recognition
Career Preparation		Understand rules and expectations for university Getting good grades - acceptance to university, jobs
Independence		Know how to live on your own – easier transition later Learn maturity, responsibility
Psychosocial Skills	Passion	Passionate about the sport Desire to continue with sport into adulthood
	Work Ethic	"Here to work" attitude Have to work hard to accomplish goals Putting in extra work (weights, cardio, shooting pucks) at home
	Focus	Getting mentally prepared before competition Staying focused on hockey when travelling
	Coping	Sport to take your mind off school, social responsibilities Overcoming nerves before competition Being able to relax in idle time Being able to stay positive
	Team Mentality	Help each other improve Play for the front, not the back Communicate and work together
	Self-Motivated	Recognize own weakness and work to improve Setting goals for yourself
	Self-Confidence	Recognizing your own accomplishments

Athletic Development. The subtheme athletic development describes improvements to physical capabilities and sport-specific competencies. Within this subtheme, student-athletes identify the lower order themes physical capabilities, individualized workouts, variety, recovery, sport performance, elite competition, elite coaches, and feedback.

Improvements to physical capabilities as agility, strength and cardiovascular endurance through off-ice training emerged as a significant theme, particularly for male participants (Figure 2.01, in Appendix A).

Uh, that's [our weight room]. Our gym. It's very important to me. For all of us, actually. It's where it starts, like, that's where we get stronger and more powerful, which leads to on-ice, which will help us in skating or being just more physical and out-muscling other teams. So, being in the gym really helps. And the workouts are great. (Bill)

Student-athletes recognized the important role physical training played in improving their on-ice performance and ability to keep up with demanding competition schedules.

You have to be in shape. Uh, you have to be, like, at the peak of your game right before you get out there, wherever it is, because if you're not, you're gonna be bagged by the second game...like, by the third game. Sometimes you have to play two in a day and, uh, it could get tough if you're not in shape. So, I think they do a really good job at keeping us in shape for that and, uh, getting us prepared for that. (Frank)

Within the training environment, student-athletes expressed the importance of two significant variables. The first variable is that student-athletes receive individualized

workouts through training plans tailored to the individual athlete (Figure 2.02, in Appendix A).

That's my personal workout that I had on that day. Uh, as you can see it's... it's leg day, so it was a pretty tough workout, but, yeah, all these...all these workouts are very...very important to us 'cause that's what we need to get better on. Like, I need to get better on my stride, or my acceleration. So, they really put some good leg workouts in there to get my legs pumping like that. (Bill)

Student-athletes expressed a desire to demonstrate continued growth in areas perceived to be strengths, as well as to improve upon areas of weakness through training plans targeting individual weaknesses.

Um, they tailor a workout personally to your body type, to your weight and, uh, to your strengths and weaknesses. And they work on...they pick away on certain things that you might need work on. So, if you lack maybe arm strength, they'll give you extra arm workouts; core strength, they'll give you extra core. If, uh, maybe your, um, endurance needs some work, the treadmills and the Jacob's Ladder help. (Frank)

The second variable relates to incorporating variety into workouts by including activities which promote well-rounded athlete development and increased engagement. Programs were able to include variety through changes to activities, such as focusing on different muscle groups or skills, and utilizing different venues, such as outdoor space and gymnasiums (Figure 2.03, in Appendix A).

Um, that's the gym at [a local rink]. So...we...we're lucky to have...be able to rent out this gym as well. Not only here but [there], so if we're having our team practices

at [that rink], after we'll come in here and do a gym workout, like core or, uh, fast feet sometimes, or we also do yoga there, which is very, very good for our bodies and just relaxing, and it feels really good. (Bill)

While only a few student-athletes commented on variety as a means of improving personal enjoyment, the majority of student-athletes commented on variety as a means of providing more well-rounded physical development.

Um...these ones are more of a, obviously a group focus. And I think they're, they're important just because that's a...yoga's a good way to cool down. Stretching's a good way to cool down. And, um, whenever we have something else it...it, uh...those are important because those are strengths everyone needs. You need good foot speed. You need a strong core. Spin classes help with a bunch of stuff. (Frank)

While student-athletes relished the opportunity to receive elite-level training, they stressed the importance of recovery in maintaining and improving physical capabilities. While a few student-athletes commented on receiving treatments from chiropractors or massage therapists, others stressed the importance of relaxation and stress relief through group activities like yoga.

That's, um, a yoga session. Uh, and, those are very helpful to help relax your body. Maybe you have a big weekend coming up or, uh, you had a really tough week at, uh, working out that week. And, um, I think that that's important because, um, you don't notice it, but you really need that, that stretch or that relaxation. (Frank)

Related to the theme of recovery, student-athletes commented on sport schools providing adequate time to recover from injuries and prescribing fitness plans designed to promote healing.

I think they, like, give them, like, extra stuff to do. You know, like, make sure they're working and keeping it, like, loose and, like, if you get out of a cast or something they're giving you stuff to help make it stronger faster, so you can get back out there as fast as you can. (Jill)

In addition to developing physical capabilities, a significant aspect of the sport school experience was the opportunity to improve sport performance by improving sport-specific competencies. These competencies consisted of mental components, such as zone work and strategy, as well as physical components, such as skating and puck skills (Figure 2.04, in Appendix A).

This is representing, like, where we all get our skill development done and, it's not like the biggest...the big rink. It's, uh, half size, so we can work on our individual skills or, like, puck protection, stick handling. All in just a condensed area. (Bill)

Student-athletes commented on three important factors contributing to improvement of sport-specific competencies. First, student-athletes described the importance of competing against elite competition, which included qualifying to play in prestigious tournaments and competing in the highest division in league play.

Um, well I think trying to move our team up to the prep level would be a first step. I know they tried to do that this year, but I think taking more of a charge and pushing towards that would be important. Like, our league this year...we dominated it, which

I don't think should have happened. Like, it didn't give us competition. Like, we weren't learning from playing against teams in our league when we were winning games eight-nothing. (Jake)

Second, student-athletes benefitted from working with elite coaches who possess the knowledge and experience necessary to improve athletic performance. Student-athletes valued coaches who have played and/or coached at a high level, have the knowledge to improve athletic performance and know what it takes to make it at the next level.

All this staff has been, uh, training elite people for a very long time and they have also been elite. Like, they have made it to junior, or pro, or somewhere with whatever it is that they do. I think that they, uh, provide the best equipment and best knowledge for anyone that wants to achieve something in sports. (Frank)

Third, sport-specific competencies were developed through verbal and visual feedback. Coaches were able to identify areas for improvement and work with student-athletes to improve performance. This included conversations with individual athletes and addressing areas in need of improvement with the team during competition and practices.

Um...our coaches have our backs. They will help us if we're struggling. They'll take us aside and explain something to us, and, like...throughout the season, on the bench if they see something and they think that it needs to be worked on, like, as a team, then that week in practices, then that's what we'll be working on. Like, uh, at the beginning of the year our transitions weren't the best, so we worked on that and by the end of the year they were the best in the league. We were able to move the puck up faster than any other team. (Bailey)

Student-athletes received additional feedback through watching others within the sport school practice and through reviewing game film of past performances with teammates and coaches (Figure 2.05, in Appendix A).

We watch video in here. So, any games we had before, uh, we came here. We put it up on the big screen and watch it and review and just, like, see what we have to work on. And then we'll develop those skills at the rink. (Bill)

They'll show us, uh, some video if that's what you maybe need to correct your errors and focus on the game. Uh, they'll show you video before, after, any time you need. And, uh, that...that actually helps a lot, just to see that if you're doing something wrong or to see if you're, uh, like, doing something better. So, I think that...that helps me a lot. (Frank)

Career Transitions. Student-athletes perceived participation in a sport school to be preparing them for the transition into their next phase of life. Within this subtheme, the lower order themes recognition, career preparation and independence emerged. A common theme amongst participants was a desire to play in elite developmental leagues, such as the Western Hockey League (WHL) or National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), or play professionally. Female participants more often mentioned playing in university or for their national team, due in part to the fact there are fewer leagues available to women as adults. As a result, student-athletes identified recognition from scouts as an important aspect of participation in a sport school. While most of the student-athletes felt they received enough exposure to scouts, the amount of exposure seemed to be relative to the division in which the teams participated, which coincides with the theme of playing against elite competition.

And I also found, like, we kinda got the crappy end of a stick this year playing here because all the girls from [our old team] from our age were able to go and play in, like, the top 68 tournament for [our province]. And 'cause we were playing here, we didn't get that opportunity and we don't really get noticed as much, even though there should be more exposure here. So, people don't really watch us because I guess it's hard to with the league we're in. Like, we're in varsity league and scouts are more into either the AAA or the prep. Like, it seems like we're at the bottom of that, so it's hard where we're supposed to be getting more exposure and we're paying for more exposure but there's not scouts at our games and there's not people watching. (Jake)

While most participants expressed an interest in playing the sport into adulthood, every participant expressed an interest in pursuing higher education or careers outside of their sport. As Giavanna expressed, "We have to work hard to keep our grades up, so...especially having careers" (Figure 2.06, in Appendix A). Participants did, however, vary in terms of whether a career outside of their sport was a goal or a fallback. Regardless, student-athletes felt that participation in a sport school prepared them for "other things in life" for a variety of reasons including academic achievement, career planning with advisors and adherence to rules of conduct.

I feel like this is gonna help me, like, when I'm playing in university. Like, to really help me, like, balance my time...like, balance my time between hockey and school and, like...yeah. And, like...and knowing that, like, I'll be busy then too, like, I'm preparing now to be ready for university. (Carrie)

And, uh, the schooling...they provide, um, information about what you need. What, uh, kinda classes you'll need to take to pursue your future career or anything like that and, uh, our advisors are really good. They help us out a lot. (Frank)

A theme which was universal amongst student-athletes who lived in dorms or with billet families was the idea that the experience fostered independence and prepared them for the adjustment of living away from home later in life. Every out of town participant believed that living away from home as youth would make for an easier transition to university or other leagues. Student-athletes cited maturity, independence and an ability to cope with homesickness as factors to ease the transition.

Um, my plan is to play, like, university hockey at, like, a high level, which would mean I'm not living at home, so being away from home at a younger age, like, is really helpful in knowing how...how to live and to be more independent and what I'm gonna have to do and how I have to prepare and change the way I get ready for stuff because it's on *my* time and it's not on my parents time or anything. (Bailey)

The concept of easing the transition to university was not limited to out of town participants. A few of the local participants also recognized the sport school as a means of fostering independence and maturity.

And even for us, not even coming from out of town, this place really matures us, and they all want us to be grown up, to be young men, and responsible. (Bill)

Psychosocial Skills. Student-athletes described the interconnected relationship between psychosocial skills and participation in a sport school. While it may be unclear if psychosocial skills were innate or developed through participation, sport schools

reinforced and provided opportunities to further nurture psychosocial skills. Student-athletes described several psychosocial skills including passion, work ethic, focus, coping, team mentality, self-motivation, and self-confidence. A theme which was apparent was the student-athletes' passion for the sport (Figure 2.07, in Appendix A).

Uh...this is in my living room. It's...it was obviously around Christmas time. Have the hockey game on. That's pretty important. Always...there's always hockey in our live... or, in our lives, so we...if we're not playing, we're either watching it or at home doing it. (Bill)

Student-athletes described participation in the sport as a career aspiration, source of enjoyment, opportunity to build relationships, and a distraction from stressors.

Um, I hope that in grade 12 I will be able to get, like, some sort of scholarship to help with my schooling. To be able to go to a good school and play hockey because hockey's, like, my passion. So, I don't think I could be able to do stuff without it. It's, like, my getaway from school, family, just struggles from life, I guess. (Jill)

The theme of work ethic was one of the most common amongst all the participants. Whether describing athletics or academics, student-athletes maintained the mindset that they were in the program to work hard. While all participants understood the value of education, some participants placed greater emphasis on school than others (Figure 2.08, in Appendix A).

Um, well, I'm *very* school focused. Like, more than hockey. So, I kinda put my school a lot before my hockey. I find it more important to me because hockey's kind of a backup if my grades don't work out. And so, I don't know, I just think it's

important and I study hard and all that kind of stuff. So, I put just a picture of a grade on there to show how hard I work for my grades. (Jake)

Participants worked hard to improve or maintain their grades for varying reasons, including achieving personal goals, receiving scholarship opportunities and being accepted into universities.

Yeah, so, uh, this is where we just kinda get to work on our schoolwork and kinda for...like I'm one of the kids that struggle in school, and I really try and, uh, get better every day I go to school, and I really work at it. (Andy)

Some people, like, don't actually do study hall but, like, I make sure that I do it 'cause, like, I want to keep my grades up, and I want to get into a good school when I'm older. So, in order to do that, you gotta, like, keep your good...keep good grades. (Jill)

Participants more often spoke of their work ethic in relation to their athletic pursuits. Student-athletes frequently described their willingness to push themselves on and off the ice to improve their physical capabilities. The manner in which student-athletes, particularly males, described their experience in the sport school often sounded akin to having a job. Participants frequently used phrases such as “get our work done”, “put in the work” or being “ready to work”. Evidence suggested that a strong work ethic had been preached to the student-athletes and that they subscribed to that principle (Figure 2.09, in Appendix A).

Uh, that's up here in [our gym]. It's Relentless Highway. That's kinda the motto for [our gym], is relentless. And that's kinda what most of the guys, like, try to live

up to, or yeah, when they're up here working, or even on the ice, just be relentless and train as hard as you can. Just put in 110% all the time. (Bill)

Related to having a strong work ethic, most student-athletes described putting in extra work at home in addition to the athletic training they received with the program. Some student-athletes used cardio and strength equipment to improve their fitness, while others focused on sport-specific skills by spending extra time on the ice or practicing stick skills in the basement. In all cases, student-athletes felt this extra work would be beneficial to their development.

Um, I think it's important to put in work at home because you're trying to play at such an elite level. You have to do everything you can to excel and be better than your opponents, and everything. So, I think that this, uh, program really instills values that you should be working hard to get to where you want to get. (Frank)

Student-athletes described the importance of staying focused and being mentally prepared, especially on game days (Figure 2.10, in Appendix A).

Well, that's just my spot...my stall. And, like, that's, like, where I go to, like, prepare for my games when we have home games. And, like, I think, like, it's a special place for me 'cause, like, I don't know...like, that's where I go to, like, to prepare for, like, big games and stuff. And, like, where I go to, like, get my head in the right place for games and stuff. (Carrie)

Student-athletes varied in terms of the techniques they used to focus before competition, which included visualization and routines, but consistently expressed the role mental preparation played on performance.

Before a game it's a little bit more important than practice 'cause, uh...like, before a game you need to be always mentally prepared, like, if you want have a good game. Obviously, you want to have good practice too but, like, I think it's more important to have a...good mental preparation before a game. And, like, that's just, like, kind of shutting your brain down and getting, like, ready for the game and not...thinking of nothing else. Kinda just about the game and what are you gonna do out there to kinda, like, have yourself a good game. (Andy)

Related to the theme of focus is the ability to cope with stressors. Student-athletes commented on overcoming nerves prior to competition, relaxing in their idle time and finding ways to stay positive when faced with challenges. One student-athlete described how visual reminders at home helped her stay positive (Figure 2.11, in Appendix A):

Um, that's a sign in my room, and I have it up. I just think it's good 'cause I know there's a lot of time, like, athletes being struggling, whether it's in school or sports or with relationships. And in sports programs like this and...I know it's hard for people being away from home too...and for me it's like having a whole twenty new people move into my town to interact with so I think it's important to always, like, stay positive about it and if you're down about things, like, always make the best out of situations. And I think it's just a good reminder to look at every day. And you have to find something positive in every situation that kinda makes your day a little better. (Jake)

A common theme amongst participants was having a team mentality. While male participants often commented on team bonding, female participants spoke more directly about having a team mentality.

Uh, the team is... always being together, you gotta find your teamwork. Otherwise the team doesn't work. If there's girls that have problems, the team is there to help them work it out. Or if they don't want the girls' help, they obviously have to go to the coaches or Carl or whoever to help, because if we're not a team, we can't play as a team. So, that kinda brings everybody down, brings the whole team part down. So, it just wouldn't work. (Jill)

Conversely, a few participants described the importance of being self-motivated. Student-athletes were able to recognize areas of weakness and work to accomplish personal goals.

I also think it's important because a lot of people say, like, "play for the front, not the back", but I think the back is important 'cause you're not always gonna have that team with you everywhere you go and you need to push yourself for individual goals as well. Like, team goals for short periods of time are good but I think it's important to realize that you're gonna have to push yourself and work yourself to get places and, I don't know, as an individual you need to get far 'cause you can't always have your whole team with you. (Jake)

An additional psychosocial skill discussed by only a few participants was self-confidence, which was mentioned as an outcome rather than a determinant of success. Participants mentioned receiving awards and their initial selection by the sport school as sources of self-confidence.

I'm honoured to be here. I've...I'm not gonna say I've worked hard to get here, but I've done something good to prove that I can be here. And play at this level hockey and attend this school. (Darnell)

Network of Social Support

Student-athletes recognized the influence significant others, including teammates, peers, coaches, and teachers, had on their development and psychosocial wellbeing while participating in a sport school. Student-athletes identified the significance of building personal relationships as well as the need for athletic, academic, emotional, and tangible support (see Table 3).

Personal Relationships. Student-athletes developed personal relationships with individuals associated with the program, including close relationships with teammates. When asked to describe why she took a photograph of one of her teammates (Figure 3.1, in Appendix A), Giavanna responded with the following:

Um, mainly because Lilly's one of my closest friends here. And I think friends, especially, like, for me being so far away it's, like, very, very important.

Student-athletes were able to build close relationships with teammates as a result of spending vast amounts of time socializing, travelling and competing together.

Probably some of our best friends are in this program, so I'd say that that's, like, the best thing you could ask for because you meet your new friends, you get to travel with them across Canada, and you get to spend as much time with them as you'd like, pretty much. (Frank)

Table 3

Results Outlining the Theme Network of Social Support with Subthemes

NETWORK OF SOCIAL SUPPORT		
Personal Relationships	Teammates	Forming friendships Fun and enjoyment Having a "sense of family"
	Billet Families	Feeling like part of the family
	Athletic Staff	Staff takes time to get to know the student-athletes
	Peers	Provide a break from the sport; not always "hockey talk" Potential for conflicts with old friends; not seeing old friends
Academic Support	Teachers	Teachers available for extra help outside of class time Maintain communication - active on email
	Tutors	Opportunity to work with tutors/knowledgeable adults Extra help for those who need it
	Work with Teammates	Teammates help each other with schoolwork Organize study groups
Athletic Support	Athletic Support	Having a cheering section at games Receive encouragement from family, community Inspired by family and teammates to push themselves Teachers, community, support staff take an interest in the sport
Emotional Support	Emotional Support	Provided support when student-athletes felt they did not meet expectations Support from individuals outside the program re: anxiety, depression, challenges Helped cope with feelings of homesickness
Tangible Support	Tangible Support	Organizing meals and accommodations Providing transportation Maintaining athletic facilities Financial support; paying for the program

Participants often described relationships with their teammates as a “sense of family”, particularly for those student-athletes who came from out of town.

At the end of the day it’s like they really don’t feel like they’re from out of town.

They feel...like it feels like they’re from here, ‘cause we’re all like one big family here. (Bill)

Having a sense of family was used by student-athletes who lived in dorms to describe their teammates, as well as by student-athletes who lived with billet families to describe the way in which billet families fill in for their families back home.

It's just different 'cause other people have parents here and mom and dads, and mine...mine are back home, but with my billet family it's just like another family to me, which means a lot to me. (Andy)

Within the sport school environment, student-athletes described the importance of having personal connections with staff that extended beyond athletics. Participants described how relationships with coaches were improved through coaches taking time to get to know the student-athletes and taking part in team building activities. One student-athlete described how the bus drivers made an effort to connect with the student-athletes (Figure 3.2, in Appendix A):

We also had...we had great bus drivers. I mean they were *talking* to the girls, like they weren't just kinda, like, by themselves. They interacted with us and they became like part of our family too, so that was really nice. (Jill)

Participation in a sport school yielded both positive and negative relationships with peers who were not participating in the sport school. Student-athletes had positive relationships with peers at school and enjoyed having a break from their sport.

Well, out of the academy, having, like, school and then friends at school, it's really good because you don't have to talk hockey and you don't have to talk about people in the academy... You can talk about anything you want without, uh, having to talk about hockey 'cause sometimes with all the hockey talk, it gets tiring. (Bailey)

Conversely, a few student-athletes commented on the challenge to maintain old friendships as a result of participating in a sport school.

Like, I mean there's girls that I've been say best friends with for three years and because you're in this program, like, you never see them; we're tied down every day. Like, although being on the ice every day is good and that's what we're paying for, it's hard when you don't see the people that you used to see every day and the people that you've grown up with and that kind of thing. (Jake)

Athletic Support. Having individuals who supported the student-athletes' athletic pursuits increased their connection to the program and aided in their development. Student-athletes appreciated having teachers and peers from their high school, members of the community and support staff take an interest in their athletic careers. Student-athletes particularly valued knowing that their teachers took an interest in them outside of the classroom.

I think it's really cool that they come out and support us. They watch our games and, uh, pay such close attention to our games and every...all that stuff. It's, uh, it's nice to know that your teachers are interested in you away from school as well. (Frank)

Related to having others taking an interest in their athletic careers, student-athletes valued having friends, family and community members cheer for them during competition. Having a cheering section, particularly at home games, was described mainly by female participants but was mentioned by every female participant (Figure 3.3, in Appendix A).

And, like, everyone here has our back. And if we play against, like, one of the teams from our league, we know no one's cheering for them; everyone's cheering for us. Because the community comes to support us and our school comes and, like, all our friends from school will come watch our game and cheer us on. (Bailey)

Student-athletes utilized social support from coaches, teammates and family members as a source of motivation, inspiration and encouragement. Student-athletes described how individuals within the sport school “push you to be...working your hardest” and how that support “keeps you motivated and keeps you going”. Having high expectations from athletic staff, including coaches and trainers, was viewed as a common motivating factor.

And our coaches always pushed us. Yeah. Even if we were, like, having a good game or, like, a pretty decent game, they always, like, expected more out of us. (Carrie)

Family members were viewed as a common source of inspiration as the student-athletes expressed a desire to make their families proud and represent their family name (Figure 3.4, in Appendix A).

Um, I chose this picture because when my family comes to watch me, like, this is usually the place they sit. And before I started playing here, my dad actually passed away and that was always *his* seat. So, I like it. It's kind of like, when I play [here] or when I practice, if I'm struggling or, like, having a bad game, I like to look there and it just kind of pushes me to go harder, try harder and do better. (Jake)

A few participants also described how training and competing with elite athletes was a source of inspiration for them.

Having, like, just a bunch of hockey players around you makes you want to do better and it's kind of, like, inspiring having, like, other people who are as successful or more successful than you be around you because you know it's gonna make you better. (Bailey)

Student-athletes described encouragement as both a factor in their pursuit of the sport and a way to overcome challenges. Some participants described how family members encouraged their early participation in the sport and influenced their decision to enroll in the sport school.

Um, well my dad was the one that pushed me to come here. I just wanted to stay in the city and then he said, "It will be good for you, 'cause you'll get to know what it's like living away from home and you'll be able to know what your future's gonna be like if you go". So, my dad was...played a really big role in me coming here. (Bailey)

Academic Support. Student-athletes who participate in sport schools require flexible academic schedules to accommodate for practice and training sessions during the day and travelling for competition on weekends. While having designated study times helped the student-athletes stay on top of schoolwork, many required additional support from teachers, tutors and peers to maintain their grades. Student-athletes often organized study groups with their teammates and helped each other through academic challenges, which was made easier by having a designated study time.

We always just, like, bounce ideas off each other and, like, we have a little whiteboard so if we're having problems with, like, math...*(laughter)*...then we'll put it up on the whiteboard and just, like, work it out. (Bailey)

Teachers played a fundamental role by meeting with the student-athletes outside of class time and maintaining communication through email.

Um, well this year I took three courses as an independent study 'cause it was easier with being away so much for hockey. And so, if I needed help with any of that, they were always good about helping me even though I wasn't taking them in the school. And just support like that. (Jake)

Each of the sport schools provided additional academic support from adults during study hall. SS1 provided a tutor who worked with the whole team a few times per month and individual student-athletes as needed. SS2 had a former teacher on their athletic staff who made himself available to work with the girls during study hall.

Carl helps whenever he's at the dorms doing, like, our study hall. 'Cause one of the adults is always there. Uh, he's really good at math so...He used to be a math teacher, so he'll help us if we're having problems. (Bailey)

Emotional Support. Student-athletes identified challenges from participation in a sport school, including balancing busy schedules, meeting high expectations for athletic and academic success, and being homesick. Student-athletes sought emotional support from individuals within the sport school, as well as from outsiders.

A common challenge for student-athletes involved coping with poor individual or team performance. Student-athletes counted on each other for emotional support when they felt they had not met expectations.

After maybe, like, a big loss, the whole team will be down, but we all have each other's backs and we have to...we make sure that we're all there for each other if any of us need more support. (Jill)

The most common challenge for student-athletes who came from out of town, was feeling homesick. Student-athletes relied heavily on support from teammates to cope with feelings of homesickness. When asked why having support from teammates while living in a dorm was significant, one participant responded as follows (Figure 3.5, in Appendix A):

Because you're *not* living at home. So, like, being upset is...or, like, missing home is, like, pretty common and happens a lot. So, having, like, your teammates' support kinda just helps you get over that and, like, not miss it as much and kinda take your mind off of it. (Bailey)

Student-athletes valued receiving emotional support to cope with these and other challenges. Most of the support student-athletes received came from teammates, peers, family, and coaches.

That's the, um, the office where Carl and the coaches sit. If you ever have troubles or you need to talk to them that's usually where you go. It's, like, the safe spot, the rink. (Jill)

Student-athletes did, however, value having individuals from outside of the sport school as an additional resource. While individual programs varied in terms of the resources they utilized, participants recognized the value in discussing their concerns with individuals who were not directly involved with the program.

I think that'd be helpful, especially for, well, people away from home, plus athletes, plus school, and trying to balance everything. I think it's definitely necessary and obviously there's girls that are struggling on the team and that kind of thing. So, I think it's important if there's someone for people to talk to as...whether it's at the start of the season they bring someone in and say, like, this is your support system, or whatever they need. Like, I know we have coaches, but that's not always the people you want to talk to. When it's someone you see every day, sometimes it's nice to have a stranger – someone you're not as close with – to share things with.
(Jake)

Tangible Support. Student-athletes received tangible support from their families, billet families, coaches, and volunteers from the community. Tangible support included planning meals, booking accommodations for out of town competitions, providing transportation, and maintaining facilities for game days. One participant described one of the important roles of his coach as follows (Figure 3.6, in Appendix A):

Yeah, so this is another one of our coaches, and if we didn't have him on our team it would be really, like, devastating 'cause...just 'cause, uh, he does so much for the team and he's a very important role in the team for planning meals and taking us for flights and the bus trips. Stuff like that. (Andy)

Each form of tangible support was mentioned by only a few participants, but most participants described at least one form of tangible support. Despite fees for each program being greater than \$20,000 per year, only a few participants mentioned financial support. When describing the role his family plays in his time with the program, Darnell stated that his parents “work a lot, obviously, to pay off all this; to be here”.

Program Structures

The themes opportunities for personal growth and network of social support were influenced by program structures, which include the program’s approach to development and the way in which it utilizes available resources. Within this theme, the lower order themes ethos, schedules, academic adjustments, and facilities emerged (see Table 4).

Ethos. The theme ethos describes the sport school’s policies and procedures as influenced by their overarching beliefs. Within the theme ethos, participants believed their sport school was able to provide balance between school, sport and psychosocial development.

Um, it’s...uh, you’ll be a better athlete, you’ll be a better student and, I think, you kind of come out of this a better person with all the good experiences you have and new friendships. (Frank)

There were, however, differing opinions on the degree to which sport schools emphasize academic achievement. While most student-athletes believed their sport school took a school-first approach, a few participants felt that more could be done to ensure school was made top priority.

Table 4

Results Outlining the Theme Program Structures with Subthemes

PROGRAM STRUCTURES		
Ethos	Provide Balance	Provide balance between school, sport and psychosocial development School should be made top priority
	Community Service	Commitment to community service; provide opportunities
	Expectations	Having well-established rules of conduct Having high standards of effort and achievement
Schedules	Everything done in a day	School and sport done during the day; free time in the evening
	Study Hall	Having a designated time to work on schoolwork
	Team-Building Activities	Making time for team-building events and activities; cohesion, break from sport Incorporating fun into practices; friendly competition
	Pursue Other Interests	Opportunity to pursue other interests; flexible scheduling to accommodate Encourage student-athletes to participate in other sports in the offseason
Academic Adjustments	Flexible Courses	Earn credit through alternative courses; PE credit for training, volunteer hours Separate classes for sport school students; 7:30am class for sport school
	Adjusting Coursework	School provides flexible timelines to complete schoolwork Athletic staff provides time away from sport to catch up on schoolwork Options to learn away from the classroom - Google Classroom
Facilities	Rink	Rink is necessary for skill development Valued having storage space to keep equipment between practices Familiarity with home-ice; having home-ice advantage Having personal space in the dressing room
	Weight Room	Having a variety of equipment Facility is kept clean Weight room only available to participants in the sport school
	Visual Motivators	Motivational words and quotes in the weight room Alumni wall - inspired to achieve the same success
	Additional Facilities	Having an appropriate workspace to complete schoolwork Physical therapy room to receive treatments to promote recovery (only SS1)
	Dorms	Bus has enough space to sleep comfortably when travelling Able to personalize their rooms; make it feel like home Having a social space for team bonding; relationship building Challenges sharing amenities; waiting for washing machine, long showers Finding time to be alone; Need for privacy

Like, it's kinda...it's more...they're like hockey comes first, which I think is something that could be looked at in the future, is making sure that there's either consequences for people who don't work as hard in school 'cause I think it's an important part of the program. (Jake)

Despite differing opinions on where each program placed greater emphasis, student-athletes recognized the importance of a well-rounded approach to development and agreed that academic success should take priority over sport.

And I feel like here, like, our program, like, balances school and hockey really well. So, like, we can focus on both and, like, be successful at both. And that's what I really like 'cause, like, school is gonna be important, like...like, hockey won't always, like, be, like, the first thing in your life 'cause eventually you'll have to, like...like, I don't know, like, retire from it and then you'll be working for the rest of your life. So, like, here it does, like, a really good job of, like, focusing on school and hockey. (Carrie)

Another aspect of the program ethos that participants felt was important was the program providing opportunities to participate in community service. The sport schools provided various opportunities to engage in community service including working with local children's groups, serving meals at homeless shelters, cleaning local facilities, and teaching hockey skills classes. The sport schools were able to encourage participation in community service through organizing team events and providing high school credit for completing volunteer hours. Every participant recognized the value in providing community service.

We just get to see the other side of hockey and, like, helping out the community, 'cause you see guys in the NHL always going to hospitals, or volunteering and helping out the community and it's cool that we're...we get to do that as well. (Bill)

For some student-athletes, providing community service was viewed as an opportunity to reciprocate the support they receive from people in the community.

Yeah, like, the community supports us so we do as much as we can to support the community and, uh...like, volunteer at the daycare or, like, help out with, like, little kids on the ice. And we just try to give back to the community as much as possible because they put so much in it for us. (Bailey)

Another important aspect of the program ethos was having well-established rules of conduct and high standards surrounding effort and achievement.

And the staff from the high school will be expecting things, especially because we're in a different program than every other high school student. So, they expect us to pay that much more attention. They...they have higher expectations for us, I think, because we're doing something that's much different than everyone else in the school. (Frank)

Some of the rules mentioned by the participants included maintaining a minimum grade point average and keeping the dressing room clean. A few participants from SS2 commented on paying small fines, which the student-athletes decide how to spend, for breaking rules in the dressing room.

I think it's a really good thing because it kinda teaches everyone that you can't just do whatever you want. There are certain rules that you have to follow because it's

just more respectful. We can't go in the dressing room with, like, shoes on, especially if someone just cleaned it. If you do, then it's, like, a dollar. And people learn to respect that one really quickly. (Bailey)

Schedules. Student-athletes valued structured schedules that also allowed room for some degree of flexibility. A common theme amongst participants was getting everything done in a day. Participants commented on being able to go to school and train every day with free time in the evening to socialize or work on homework.

I really enjoyed it. Like, um, being on the ice every day and, like, just *living* hockey was kinda what I wanted, um, to do, like, last year but, like, my school last year was really hard so I'd have to spend a lot more time doing school and I'd have to miss practices way more often and...but here it's, um...we have, like, designated time for school and designated time for practice, which is really helpful to get both done. (Bailey)

Another aspect of the daily schedule that participants valued was having an hour per day designated for homework.

Uh, well at the dorms, um, we have, like, a study hall. So, from seven to eight, everyone has to be doing homework, which is nice because otherwise I probably wouldn't, like, be super focused on it. Like, I'll do it before that and after that, but during that time I'm, like, "Ok, I gotta do homework. No more distractions." (Jill)

Despite busy schedules, each sport school participated in team building activities throughout the season, including friendly competition during practice and organized team

activities off the ice, which student-athletes perceived to improve group cohesion and provide a break from the sport.

Um, well every once or...once a month we have a...a guy come in from, uh, church and do, um, team bonding activities with us. And we...like, we do activities, like, where we have to support each other or figure out a problem with each other, and he just talks about team and teamwork and all that and it really helps. (Bill)

While team building activities were perceived as valuable, student-athletes felt they could occur more regularly but also understood the challenges in facilitating those events.

I think they do a good job when they *do* have the time to organize them, but obviously it doesn't happen a lot 'cause both teams are really busy and it's hard when people are trying to focus on other things when they're not playing hockey. (Jake)

Consistent with taking a break from the sport, student-athletes also valued having the flexibility to pursue other interests, including different sports (Figure 4.1, in Appendix A).

I think playing different sports is good because you're not just playing...you're not just doing the same thing with the same girls. Like, on the team you're with the same twenty girls for ten months going...playing other sports you're seeing or meeting new other girls that you may or may not have already played with, just getting to be with different girls and not always the same girls is nice too. (Jill)

While fewer opportunities existed during the season, in part to reduce risk of injury, sport schools encouraged the student-athletes to pursue other sports in the offseason.

Yeah, I play badminton and baseball, and I think since I live here and I've done that my whole life, if the program wouldn't let us, I'd probably be pretty upset with that because playing badminton in our school and baseball with our school are two of the things I've always done. So, if it shut down opportunities like that, I think that'd be a negative. But, they always seem to be pretty ok with us doing things like that.
(Jake)

Academic adjustments. Student-athletes commented on various ways in which athletic and academic staff adjusted schoolwork to accommodate training and competition. For example, student-athletes were able to earn credits for independent studies, participating in training sessions, or accumulating volunteer hours.

Volunteering's a really big thing for our school because if you get enough of the hours, you get the credit for that. And, uh, as a team this year we went to [a local homeless shelter] and served lunch to people that are less fortunate. (Frank)

The student-athletes at SS1 also benefitted from having a class at 7:30am, which Bill captured by photographing the early time at which he leaves for school (Figure 4.2, in Appendix A). This class was only available to student-athletes in the sport school to accommodate for training and practice in the afternoons. Student-athletes recognized these academic adjustments as being necessary for the program.

If we didn't have the first class in the morning, we'd...or, like, just this relationship with [our high school] we'd...we'd kinda be screwed 'cause then [SS1] wouldn't happen." (Andy)

Student-athletes believed academic and athletic staff worked in unison to adjust schedules to accommodate both school and sport. The high schools provided flexible timelines to complete coursework and athletic staff allowed student-athletes to miss training or practice to make up for lost time in the classroom.

The school and the hockey program, they talk a lot, so they know...so the teachers will tell the coaches how we're doing in school, or, like, if I could miss...or if someone could miss, like, workout or hockey to, like, take a test or go over something in class that they didn't understand, just to boost their grade was very helpful. (Giavanna)

Student-athletes were also provided with options to learn outside of the classroom through alternative options, such as Google Classroom.

Yeah, and they have, like, Google Classroom, which is, um, really good for us 'cause, like, all our work is on that and they can, uh, put, like, lessons that they did in the class that we were gone. Like, our math teacher, she'll put up videos of things we've worked on and you watch those and it...you're able to take notes from it. So, that helps, like, everyone in math because if you don't have the notes, then you get really confused. (Bailey)

Facilities. When discussing facilities, participants often placed greater emphasis on having access to a facility than on the quality of the facility itself. The rink was the most

commonly mentioned facility, which student-athletes valued for both tangible and psychosocial aspects of the space. Male and female participants viewed having access to the rink as necessary for skill development and valued having storage space in which to keep their equipment. However, female participants more frequently commented on their personal connection to the rink, including having home-ice advantage (Figure 4.3, in Appendix A).

Well, we know where all the bouncy spots on the boards are so whenever someone plays here, we know how to use them the best. And, like, we know how...like, if we chip it off the glass, we know, like, how it will bounce out. And, like, at every rink it's different so no...having, like, our own rink is just really good to have 'cause you can get to know it really well. (Bailey)

In relation to their connection to the facility, female participants also commented on the importance of having personal space in the dressing room (Figure 4.4, in Appendix A).

Uh, this is my stall. This is, like, my space, my time, or my spot to prep before hockey games. Maybe if I'm upset, maybe, like, cry after hockey games, or just, like, wind down. So, it's, like...it's mine; no one else can, like, take it. (Jill)

When discussing the weight room, participants valued having a clean facility with a variety of equipment.

Daily we use one of these pieces of equipment to make us stronger, in some way we need to become stronger. Um, so we got the benches there which we'll use for...sometimes arm workouts, sometimes legs. Uh...we got these too. For lifting,

um, split squats. The Jacob's Ladder's right behind there too. And we have set of bikes back there that we'll use for...that we'll use on days we get bagged sometimes. (Darnell)

Most participants valued having visual motivators in the weight room and around the rink. One male participant described how looking at motivational words or phrases in the weight room "definitely keeps you motivated and keeps you going." At their respective rinks, both programs had an alumni wall of local athletes who went on to compete at a high level. The alumni walls acted as a source of inspiration for student-athletes looking to achieve the same level of success.

I think it's, um, something that I look at and I think, "Ok, that's what I want to do", so I wanna push myself so I can get there. And it's just, like, a reminder to keep pushing myself. (Jill)

A few participants commented on additional facilities, including a physical therapy room to improve the rate of recovery, an appropriate workspace to complete schoolwork, and a bus with enough space to sleep comfortably.

The bus gives you a fair amount of space. It gives you two seats, which is nice. So, you can lay down; you can actually sleep. You don't have to, like, sit up all the time. (Jill)

Student-athletes who lived in dorm rooms offered a unique perspective on the sport school experience. Each of the participants who lived in dorms valued having their own personal space and being able to make that space their own. Adding personal touches to

their rooms allowed the student-athletes to express their personalities and surround themselves with reminders of home (Figure 4.5, in Appendix A).

So, that's my room and you kinda, like...it's, like, one of my favourite places because I got to design it and I got to do what *I* wanted with it. Like, I added a whole bunch of pictures. I added lights. And you get to make it your home and...like, when people come in it's like, "Welcome! This is my place". And then when you're there it's...it reminds you of home. It reminds you of, like, everyone from back where you used to live and it's just, like...it's really nice. (Bailey)

The most commonly mentioned feature of living with teammates was being able to build close relationships, which was aided by having a social space in the which the student-athletes could build connections (Figure 4.6, in Appendix A).

Well, like, in the first, like, couple weeks, um, just hanging out in there, you made a lot of friends. Like...like, not knowing anyone and then hanging out in there you talk to other people a lot and you make friends and then you find out that they're in your class the next day and it's like, "Whoa! That's cool!" (Bailey)

While student-athletes mostly enjoyed dorm life, living with teammates and sharing amenities posed some challenges. One participant noted how "it takes about a week and half to unpack when you come back [from trips] (*laughs*) 'cause you're just waiting for a washing machine to open up (*laughs*)", while another commented on "people taking hour-long showers". The most common challenge, however, involved "being around everybody all the time". Student-athletes required space to spend time alone or with a close friend.

One participant described having dinner at a nearby hotel to have a private conversation with a teammate:

Whenever you go, you usually go with, like, a friend or something and it's kinda more bonding time. Like, if you're going with one of your close friends, you'll just get to, like, talk about everything that you want to talk about without other people, like, uh, listening to your conversations. 'Cause, like, at the dorms, the walls aren't the thickest so you can kinda hear. (Bailey)

Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore student-athletes' perceptions of their lived experience while participating in a Canadian sport school. The primary focus of the study was to explore the factors perceived to nurture or hinder high-performance student-athletes' physical, psychological and social competencies and wellbeing. A secondary focus for this study was to explore student-athletes' perceived ability to balance the demands of high-performance sport while attaining high academic achievement. While this study identifies consistencies with current research on talent development and dual career pathways, it explores them from a new context and provides insights into a growing trend in Canadian sports in a few keys ways.

First, the findings from this study support current models of positive youth development in elite sport environments, which suggest that development occurs in the presence of multiple, interconnected factors. As this study suggests, these factors include opportunities for intra- and interpersonal development, the presence of a network of social support and having student-athlete-centred program structures. These findings are consistent with Strachan et al. (2011) who identified the training environment, opportunities for skill development and social interactions as the three factors which influence talent development. These findings also support Côté et al. (2014) who identify engagement in activities, quality relationships and appropriate settings as the three key factors in talent development environments.

Second, this study extends beyond talent development to provide an overview of the sport school model and each of its interconnected parts. The sport school environment is unique in that it combines athletic and academic settings, as well as a home environment

for those who live in dorms or with billet families. To this point, few studies have explored the sport school environment to capture the student-athletes' holistic, lived experience. This study suggests that within the athletic, academic and home settings, student-athletes benefit from opportunities for personal growth, having a strong network of social support and program structures focused on student-athletes' holistic development and wellbeing. To provide a greater depth of information, the talent development environment, balancing school and sport, and the experience of living away from home as youth and adolescence will be explored separately.

Sport Schools as a Talent Development Environment

Student-athletes in this study represent the specialization and investment years of the DMSP (Côté, 1999; Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2016), which are defined by increased amounts of deliberate practice with a focus on achievement in one sport. However, while the DMSP suggests elite athletes in the specialization years maintain a balance of deliberate practice and deliberate play, student-athletes in the specialization years in this study appear to have a similar training, practice and competition schedule as those in the investment years. Despite the increase in deliberate practice in the specialization years, student-athletes in this study value having daily on- and off-ice training sessions and often participate in additional workouts in their free time. As success in a chosen sport is influenced by physical traits (Reilly et al., 2003) and the ability to perform sport-specific competencies (Côté et al., 2014; Mills et al., 2012), student-athletes in this study value elite training to improve physical fitness, and daily practices to improve sport-specific abilities. Improvements to physical abilities are encouraged through training regimens tailored to the individual athlete, such as individualized workout plans and personalized, sport-

specific feedback. Consistent with Mills et al., student-athletes in hockey schools identify improvements to both the physical and mental aspects of the game as being significant to their development. Improvements to the mental component of the sport include sport-specific knowledge, such as strategy and zone play, and receiving feedback from elite coaches through constructive criticism and watching game film.

While student-athletes in both stages of the DMSP (Côté, 1999; Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2016) recognize the importance of large amounts of deliberate practice, they also value having opportunities to engage in deliberate play in and out of the sport context. Student-athletes in this study perceive opportunities to engage in friendly competition on the ice and team-building activities outside of the sport context as providing a necessary break from the sport while also helping to build group cohesion. As Fraser-Thomas et al. (2008) suggest, student-athletes should also have the flexibility and support to pursue other interests outside of the sport context. As was the case with this study, sport schools may need to limit participation in other sports during the season to reduce the risk of overtraining and injuries, but should encourage participation in other sports in the offseason and provide opportunities to socialize with peers and pursue other interests during the season. As Côté et al. (2010) suggest, elite performance is nurtured through regimented, athlete-centred training and competition schedules while also maintaining the athlete's passion for the sport, providing social supports, and encouraging holistic development through non-sporting pursuits.

In addition to the perception that participation in a sport school improves physical capabilities and sport performance, student-athletes in this study view this environment as being conducive to the advancement of several psychosocial attributes which aid in their

continued success in the sport. Mills et al. (2012) identify psychosocial attributes such as work ethic, passion for the sport, focus, and the ability to cope with stressors as being significant to talent development. While it is unclear in the current study if psychosocial competencies are inborn or developed through participation in the sport school, this study suggests that participation in a hockey school may provide student-athletes with opportunities to nurture psychosocial competencies. Consistent with Larsen et al. (2012), student-athletes in this study identify internal and interpersonal psychosocial competencies. In the current study, the most significant interpersonal psychosocial competencies identified by student-athletes were maintaining a team mentality and utilizing social supports. While student-athletes in this study identify several internal psychosocial competencies, including focus and self-motivation, their most discernible psychosocial competencies are their passion for their sport and high level of work ethic, which may help student-athletes work through busy training and competition schedules.

Consistent with Côté et al. (2014), student-athletes in this study identify social support from teammates, coaches, family, and peers as playing a significant role in their overall development and wellbeing. For the duration of the hockey season, student-athletes spend a significant amount of time with teammates and coaches in what can be a demanding schedule. Within the sport school structure, coaches may take on the additional roles of administrator, chaperone and guardian for those who live away from home. As a result, coaches should make a concerted effort to build relationships with their student-athletes, ensure they have a network of social support, and monitor their wellbeing (Mills et al., 2014). The most significant role of the coach may be to provide student-athletes with opportunities to build positive relationships with their teammates.

While literature often places greater significance on the role of family and coaches within high-performance sport contexts (Holt & Mitchell, 2006), this study suggests the relationship between hockey teammates in a sport school setting may have the greatest influence on psychosocial wellbeing. In this study, relationships with teammates were valued as a source of camaraderie, inspiration and emotional support. As Strachan and Davies (2015) suggest, positive peer relationships increase enjoyment and other psychosocial competencies, which may create an environment more conducive to talent development and prolonged engagement in the sport. In this study, the increased reliance on teammates as a source of social support may be due to the experience of living away from home at a young age, as student-athletes who lived in dorms more frequently described teammates as a source of emotional support. One could posit that in the absence of family, student-athletes in hockey schools may form closer bonds to persons with whom they spend the greatest amount of time. Further studies are required to explore these relationships within a sport school context.

As these results suggest, within a Canadian sport school context hockey players have opportunities for intra- and interpersonal development through daily participation in on- and off-ice training during the weekend plus competition on the weekends. Sport schools can support holistic development by providing elite-level training opportunities, program structures that provide flexibility and encourage student-athletes to pursue other interests, and by placing emphasis on establishing a strong network of social support.

Balancing School and Sport

A secondary focus for this study was to explore student-athletes' perceived ability to balance the demands of high-performance sport while attaining high academic

achievement. Consistent with athletic development, the three factors of opportunities for intra- and interpersonal development, the presence of a network of social support and having student-athlete-centred program structures are identified within an academic context. This study highlights the significance of student-athlete-centred program structures in helping student-athletes achieve academic success while committing large amounts of time to athletics. As McKenna and Dunstan-Lewis (2004) suggest, there is a need for sport schools to establish clear expectations and set goals for both academics and athletics while maintaining supportive relationships between the student-athlete, educators, support staff, and peers. Each of the participants in this study believe academics should be made top priority and acknowledge the need for clear and consistent messaging surrounding expectations for academic achievement.

Consistent with Borggreffe and Cachay (2012), student-athletes in this study identify the sport school's ability to promote academic success through flexible academic schedules, adjustments to the curriculum and additional social supports. Student-athletes in this study identify flexibility with schedules in the form of early morning classes and teachers extending deadlines to accommodate training and competition schedules. The inclusion of a designated time for study hall also allows student-athletes to make up for lost time in the classroom. Changes to the curriculum were identified in the form of alternative courses including credit for completing volunteer hours and receiving a physical education credit for participation in training sessions.

Social support from teachers, teammates and coaches plays a key role in academic achievement. The roles of teammates and coaches in providing academic support are consistent with their roles within the athletic settings. Coaches provide tangible support,

opportunities for student-athletes to work together and additional resources, such as tutors. Coaches also play a significant role by encouraging and promoting success in academics (Tekavc et al., 2015). Participants in this study indicated that teammates are significant to academic success by working through academic challenges together and providing a break from the stress of academics and athletics. Teachers are unique to the academic setting and play a significant role by providing flexible deadlines and making themselves available outside of class time. Within a sport school context, this may include meeting with student-athletes before or after class, maintaining communication through email or making course content available online. The teacher-student relationship is further encouraged through genuine interest in the student-athlete's athletic pursuits, which may include attendance at local competitions. These findings are consistent with Tekavc et al., who suggest that teachers promote dual-career success by demonstrating support for the student-athletes' athletic pursuits and providing flexibility in the classroom.

As Miller and Kerr (2002) suggest, athletes who develop holistically throughout their academic years make a smoother transition to life after sport. Consistent with Aquilina (2013), student-athletes in this study recognize the reality of life after sport and value opportunities to prepare for careers outside of their sport. This includes support systems that promote learning, such as working with tutors, and help student-athletes prepare for university. Additionally, a dual-career approach relieves some of the monotony of a singular focus on academics or athletics (Aquilina, 2013). Within the specific setting explored, student-athletes are provided with a break from the sport and value interactions with peers that are "not always hockey talk". Concurrently, sport provides an outlet through which student-athletes can take their minds off schoolwork.

An area in need of further exploration is the interconnected relationship between athletics and academics. As Aquilina (2013) suggests, student-athletes who pursue a dual career approach may see positive outcomes in both academics and athletics due to the reciprocal nature of the two ventures. Within the current study, there is evidence to suggest that receiving academic support from teammates, coaches and teachers promoted both academic and athletic success. For example, teachers meeting with student-athletes outside of class time promoted academic success through one-on-one instruction while supporting athletic success by providing opportunities to participate in sport through flexible scheduling. It is unclear, however, if academic achievement is improved through participation in a sport school or simply not disrupted. Thus, it may be beneficial to further explore the relationship between academic achievement and participation in a sport school.

As these results suggest, the perceived benefits of pursuing a dual-career approach through participation in a sport school are influenced by program structures that provide the flexibility to participate in high-performance sport while prioritizing academic success. Student-athletes in hockey schools require academic adjustments and social support from teachers, coaches and peers in order to meet the demands of school and sport. The ability to achieve balance between school and sports, however, may depend on effective communication between academic and athletic staff.

Living Away from Home

Student-athletes who live away from home as youth or adolescents to pursue high-performance sport offer unique perspectives into the sport school experience and represent a population in need of further study as limited research could be found that directly explores this topic. This study, however, provides insights into this subject in a few ways.

First, student-athletes in this study who lived away from home, the youngest being 14 years old, highlight the significant role social support plays in the wellbeing of individuals who attend sport schools. As Côté (1999) suggests, during the specialization and investments years, high-performance athletes utilize tangible and emotional support from parents. However, as Bruner, Munroe-Chandler, and Spink (2008) suggest, the transition to living away from home may force student-athletes to rely more heavily on social support from sources other than family. While living away from home, student-athletes may form close bonds, or “a sense of family”, with teammates and billet families. Billet families take on parental obligations by providing tangible support, such as accommodations and transportation, and providing a family atmosphere.

Student-athletes who live in dorms, however, may rely more heavily on sport school staff for tangible support and teammates for social support. In a study of Indigenous athletes living away from home to pursue sport opportunities, Blodgett et al. (2014) found that Indigenous athletes experienced homesickness and loss of cultural identity through separation from family back home and challenges fitting in with non-Indigenous billet families. While participants in this study described positive experiences with billet families, student-athletes who live away from home are faced with challenges that may affect their psychosocial wellbeing and may rely on sources other than family to overcome these challenges.

This study highlights the need for sport schools to promote relationship building by providing social spaces and organizing team-building activities, and to make psychosocial supports available to those who need them. However, there remains a need for further

studies to explore the psychosocial wellbeing of student-athletes who live away from home to pursue high-performance sport opportunities.

Second, consistent with Bruner et al. (2008), student-athletes in the current study who live away from home perceive the experience as an opportunity to develop maturity and independence. An additional finding from this study, however, is the student-athletes' perception that living away from home as youth or adolescents will ease their transition into university or the professional level. Student-athletes in the current study perceive that by living away from home, they learn to take care of themselves and understand the challenges associated with feelings of homesickness. Additional challenges identified by student-athletes living in dorms include sharing amenities and having a need for personal space. By overcoming these challenges at a younger age, the student-athletes in this study consistently state that they believe they will be more prepared to face these similar challenges later in life. As previously stated, the transition to living away from home is made easier in the presence of social support, which highlights the importance of program structures designed to provide opportunities to build relationships in and out of the sport context. Additionally, programs can provide social space to promote relationship building while maintaining the student-athletes' need for personal space.

Limitations

While picture-taking had perceived benefits, including increasing participants' engagement with the study, the use of cameras posed some challenges. As previously stated, public schools did not grant permission to take photographs in the schools as administration was concerned about proper conduct with the cameras and how the study might affect non-participants. To overcome this setback, student-athletes were encouraged to think about

meaningful aspects of their school day and find alternate ways to represent those experiences. Additionally, the lead researcher used photographs that were public domain, including photographs posted to the schools' social media accounts, and used probing questions in interviews to elicit a greater depth of information. Despite efforts to overcome this challenge, there may have been aspects of the student-athletes' academic experience that were not captured through alternative means. Additionally, the use of cameras requires strict ethical guidelines when taking photographs of non-participants. Photographs of non-participants could not be used in interviews without signed consent, which placed the onus on participants to collect photo release forms. As such, participants may have been less inclined to take photographs of non-participants due to the additional hassle.

This study aimed to extend the literature surrounding sport schools beyond the oft studied soccer academies across Europe by exploring sport schools within a Canadian context. While this study provides some insight into Canadian sport schools, all of the student-athletes in this study were hockey players who were recruited from two central Canadian sport schools located within 200 km of each other. Each of the programs involved in this study were Type 4 sport schools (Way et al., 2010) in which training occurred in a private sport academy and academics occurred in a public school setting.

Furthermore, while the demographics of the participants were representative of the individual teams on which they competed, the majority of participants were Caucasian and were born in the same province. The majority of the participants were also in their first year at the sport school. Future studies may benefit from further exploring the perspectives of student-athletes from more diverse cultural backgrounds from sport schools across Canada and who represent a greater variety of sports. Continued exploration of sport

schools across Canada may contribute to a sport school model which promotes a greater degree of consistency nationwide.

Future Directions and Recommendations

While this study provides a preliminary look at sport schools in Canada by exploring two Canadian hockey schools, there remains a need for further qualitative exploration of these programs. This study aimed to provide an overview of student-athletes' overall experiences within a sport school structure rather than exploring the different components individually. As such, further studies may be necessary to take a more focused look at the athletic, academic and psychosocial development within different sport school contexts. Additionally, further studies are necessary to explore the perspectives of student-athletes from sport schools across Canada who represent additional sociocultural backgrounds and who compete in a greater variety of sports.

A unique aspect of this study was the perspective from student-athletes who lived away from home while participating in a sport school. Few studies could be found that explore the psychosocial impact of living away from home as a youth or adolescent student-athlete. Further studies are required to explore student-athletes' experiences while living with billet families or with teammates in dorms, as this may have practical implications for student-athletes' as they transition between different stages of their careers.

By exploring sport schools from the perspective of the student-athletes, this study has several implications for coaches and administrators who operate sport schools. Based off information provided by student-athletes participating in hockey schools, six recommendations are proposed which may promote positive experiences for student-

athletes who attend sport schools. These recommendations were developed primarily through data collected in interviews with the student-athletes in this study.

Recommendation One: Student-Athlete-Centred Program Structures Focused on Holistic Development. Sport schools should provide a balance between athletic, academic and psychosocial development. Within the sport context, sport schools should adopt talent development models that focus on positive youth development in high-performance sport contexts. Models such as the Personal Assets Framework (Côté et al., 2014) acknowledge the influence of psychosocial wellbeing on talent development. Sport schools should also promote engagement in academic pursuits and provide resources to support student-athletes' academic achievement.

Additionally, sport schools can support psychosocial wellbeing by encouraging student-athletes to pursue other interests, providing opportunities for positive interactions with peers, and providing opportunities for student-athletes to engage in community service.

Recommendation Two: Clear and Consistent Messaging About Expectations for Academic Achievement. The pursuit of athletic success should not encumber the student-athletes' academic achievement. As student-athletes in this study suggest, sport schools should make academic achievement top priority and ensure they have clear and consistent messaging regarding their expectations for academic achievement. This may include withholding participation in sport if a student-athlete has not demonstrated a commitment to academics.

Recommendation Three: Effective Communication Between Academic and Athletic Staff. Academic and athletic staff should maintain constant communication to

ensure student-athletes are achieving in both school and sport. Staff should be aware of any challenges being faced by the student-athletes to ensure they receive the support they need.

Recommendation Four: Preparation for Career Transitions. Sport schools should prepare student-athletes for the transition into the next phase of their sporting careers while also preparing them for life after sport. This may include conversations with coaches about other leagues, or meeting with advisors to discuss options for university. Sport schools can also make a concerted effort to attract recruiters to the program and help student-athletes research scholarship opportunities.

Recommendation Five: Strong Emphasis on Relationship Building. As part of their development model, sport schools should recognize the significant contribution social support has on student-athletes' academic achievement, sporting success and overall wellbeing by placing strong emphasis on relationship building. This can include participation in team-building activities, providing social spaces, staff taking an interest in the student-athletes, and providing opportunities to socialize with teammates and non-sporting peers.

Recommendation Six: Availability of Psychosocial Support Systems. Sport schools should be mindful of the challenges faced by student-athletes, particularly those who live away from home, and provide them with appropriate resources to promote psychosocial wellbeing. Resources may include opportunities to speak with peers, coaches and academic staff, or receive support from sources outside of the program, such as sport psychologists. Student-athletes should be aware of available resources and how to access them.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore student-athletes' perception of their lived experience while participating in a Canadian sport school. As the results suggest, student-athletes perceive the sport school environment to provide opportunities for inter- and intrapersonal development in the presence of a strong network of social support and student-athlete-centred program structures. As sport schools continue to make an increasing imprint on the landscape of sport in Canada, it is imperative to further explore these environments to ensure the promotion of holistic development and psychosocial wellbeing.

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Appendix A – Sample of Photographs Used in Interviews

Figure 1. Sample of Photographs Used by the Lead Researcher in Interviews



Figure 1. Photograph of a team practice taken by the lead in person (a) and a photograph of competition taken from social media (b) for use in interviews. Photographs chosen by the lead researcher were used in interviews and intended to account for photographs of meaningful aspects of the program which would not otherwise have been captured by participants due to lack of opportunity. Names, words and other identifying features have been blacked out by the lead researcher to protect the identities of individuals and programs.

Figure 2. Photographs Depicting Opportunities for Personal Growth

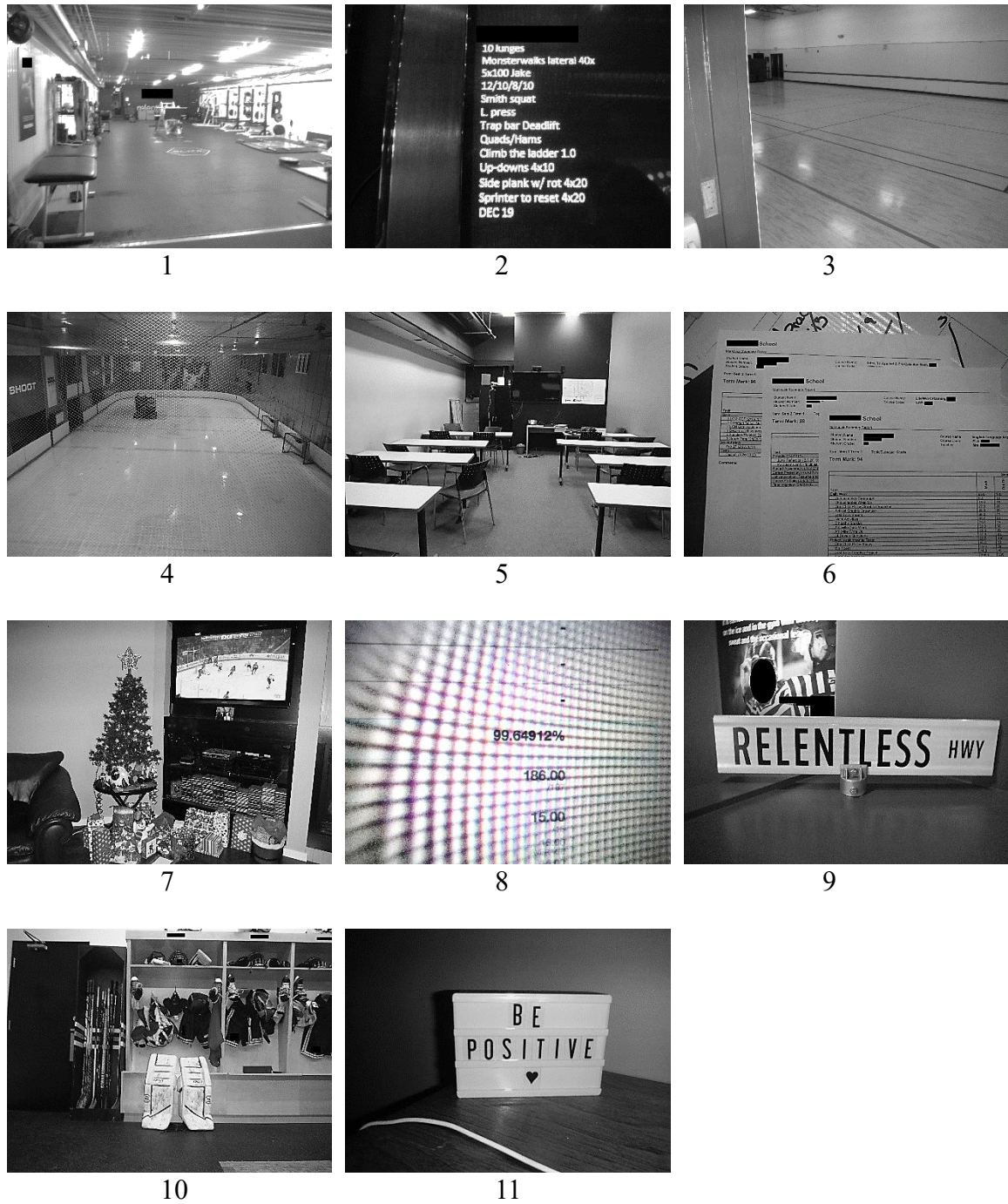


Figure 2. Sample of photographs used in interviews depicting the theme Opportunities for Personal Growth. All photographs were taken by participants. Names, words and other identifying features have been blacked out by the lead researcher to protect the identities of individuals and programs.

Figure 3. Photographs Depicting Network of Social Support



Figure 3. Sample of photographs used in interviews depicting the theme Network of Social Support. All photographs were taken by participants. Names, words and other identifying features have been blacked out by the lead researcher to protect the identities of individuals and programs.

Figure 4. Photographs Depicting Program Structures

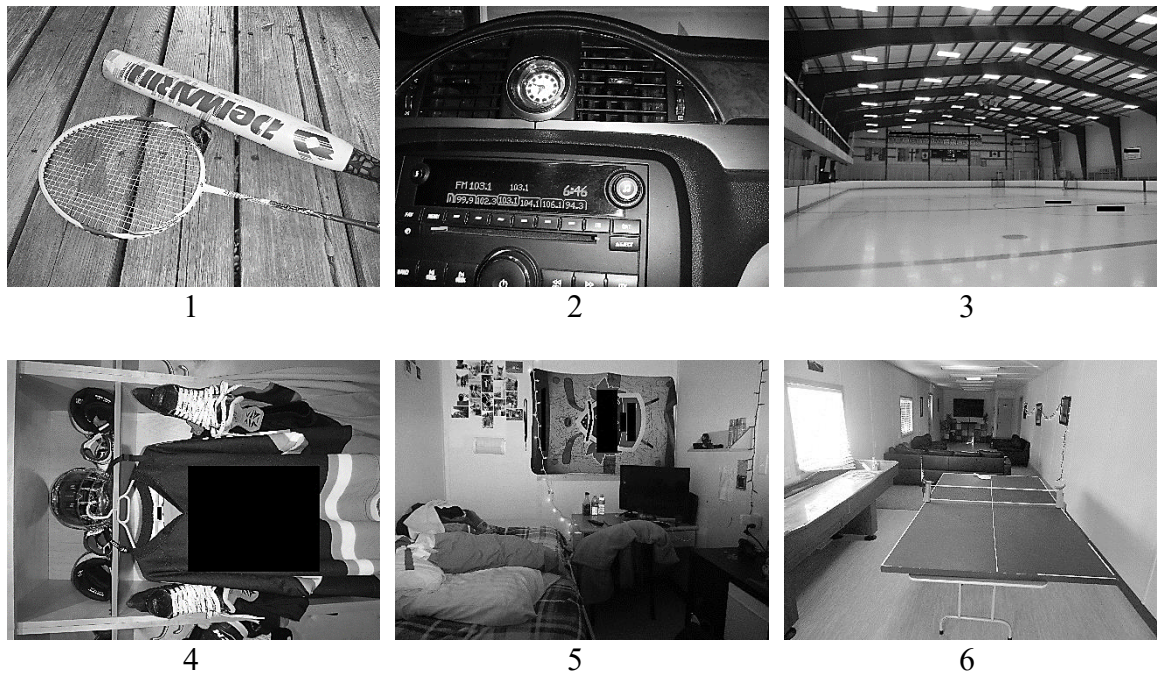


Figure 4. Sample of photographs used in interviews depicting the theme Program Structures. All photographs were taken by participants. Names, words and other identifying features have been blacked out by the lead researcher to protect the identities of individuals and programs.



Appendix B

Informed Consent

Research Project Title: Using photo elicitation to explore the lived experience from the perspective of student-athletes participating in a Canadian sport school

Principal Investigator and contact information: Matthew Decker, MA Candidate, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba

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Research Supervisor and contact information: Dr. Leisha Strachan, Associate Professor, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba

██████████@umanitoba.ca
(204) ██████████

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experience of student-athletes participating in a Canadian sport school. It is expected that this study will help guide policy and practice to ensure student-athletes' holistic needs are being met.

All participants in this study will take part in four sessions. The first session will introduce participants to the study, orientate them on proper use of cameras and begin to brainstorm aspects of their experiences that they may find meaningful (approximately 30 minutes). For the next session, participants will be provided with digital cameras and asked to photograph aspects of their day, positive or negative, that they believe are meaningful to their experience participating in a sport school. One example may include taking a photo of their alarm clock to express fatigue when waking up for early morning practices. Participants will have 24 hours to take photographs. After 24 hours, cameras will be returned and the lead researcher will make copies of the photographs; one for the researcher and one the participants can keep. In the next session, participants will be asked to look through their photographs and choose approximately 10-15 that they feel best represent meaningful aspects of their experiences (approximately 20 minutes). In the

final session, interviews will be conducted in small focus groups (two or three participants) in which the lead researcher will ask participants about the photos they took. Participants will have a chance to explain their photographs and why they are meaningful to their sport school experience (approximately one hour). The total anticipated time commitment from participants includes the 24-hour period in which you will be taking photographs, plus approximately two hours for the remaining three phases.

Participants will capture their lived experience using digital cameras, which will be provided by the lead researcher. Participants will be briefed on proper conduct when taking photographs of their environment prior to receiving cameras. Participants will receive copies of all photographs they take. Additionally, focus groups will be audio recorded. Recordings will be transcribed verbatim by the lead researcher and copies will be provided for participants to review. Photographs and audio recordings will be stored on a password protected memory stick and locked in a filing cabinet at the University of Manitoba. Only the lead researcher and his academic advisor, Dr. Leisha Strachan, will have access to the files. Results, including photographs and interview transcripts, may be published in an academic journal or presented at academic conferences. Identities of participants will remain anonymous and all data will be deleted after results have been published and/or shared with the academic community. The lead researcher will use pseudonyms for people (participants and non-participants), sport organizations, schools, and teams in all written documents. Participants' faces will not be shown in published photographs unless consent has been given by the participant and their legal guardian. Furthermore, faces and any other identifying features (tattoos, logos, buildings) of non-participants will not be shown unless photo release forms have been signed and returned.

There are no expected risks to physical, psychological or social wellbeing, and the study will not require any financial commitment from the participants. As the participants will photograph aspects of their daily lives, it is not anticipated the study will pose any risk greater than participants would experience in a typical day. Participants have the right to refuse to answer any questions asked during focus groups. It should be noted, however, that the researchers are obligated to report inappropriate or criminal behaviour, such as abuse, to the authorities (Child and Family Services, police) if disclosed at any time during the study. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Participants will, however, be provided a deadline for withdrawal (approximately one month) after data has been collected and transcribed as it will be difficult to remove participant responses once data analysis has begun. If a participant wishes to withdraw from the study, they should contact the lead researcher (Matthew Decker). If a participant withdraws from the study, the lead researcher will delete his copies of the participant's photographs. The participant may keep their own copy of photographs. Participant's responses will also be removed from interview transcripts.

As a token of appreciation for participation in the study, all participants will receive a \$15.00 gift card during the first session of the study. This will not have to be returned if a participant withdraws from the study at any point.

Participants will be debriefed after completion of interviews as to next steps. In this meeting, the lead researcher will provide an estimated timeline of when participants will receive copies of interview transcripts for review and a summary of results. It is estimated participants will receive a copy of interview transcripts for review by approximately late December 2018 and a summary of results by approximately March 2019. While transcripts will only be sent to participants, parents/guardians are welcome to a copy of results. Please indicate below whether you would like to receive a copy of results and provide an email address in the space provided.

No, do not send a copy of results

Yes, send results to (email address): _____

Any confidential materials collected throughout the study will be deleted/destroyed within one year of results being published. Information saved to a memory stick will be deleted and hard copies will be shredded.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's name (under 18): _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Relationship to Participant: _____

Child's signature: _____ Date: _____

Lead Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____



Appendix C

Child Assent (Participants aged 14-17 years)

Research Project Title: Using photo elicitation to explore the lived experience from the perspective of student-athletes participating in a Canadian sport school

Principal Investigator and contact information: Matthew Decker, MA Candidate, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba

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Research Supervisor and contact information: Dr. Leisha Strachan, Associate Professor, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba

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This letter is meant to help you understand what this study is about and how your participation will help. **Please read the following pages carefully and feel free to ask questions at any time.**

This study is designed to understand student-athletes' (your) experiences in a sport school and explore meaningful aspects of their (your) experiences. This study will help researchers understand what is important to student-athletes who participate in sport schools. Studies like these will help ensure student-athletes' holistic needs are being met.

All participants will be asked to participate in four sessions:

- 1) You will meet with the researchers to discuss appropriate use of cameras and brainstorm some possible ideas for photographs (**approximately 30 minutes**).
- 2) You will be provided with a digital camera and asked to take photographs of your day. These photographs should capture aspects of your experiences in a sport school that you find meaningful. You will have 24 hours to take photos.
- 3) You will be provided with copies of the photos you took and asked to select 10-15 that you think best represent your experiences (**approximately 20 minutes**). This may be positive or negative

experiences. You will be provided copies of your photographs that you may keep.

- 4) In groups of two or three, you will meet with the lead researcher to discuss your photographs and why they are meaningful to you (**approximately 60 minutes**).

It is estimated that this study will require approximately a **two-hour time commitment plus the 24-hour time frame to take photographs**.

Everything you say in interviews will remain private. The one exception involves instances when the researchers become aware of serious issues, such as abuse. If this happens, the researchers will contact legal guardians (unless they are the abuser) and alert the authorities (Child and Family Services, police) to protect your safety. Only the researchers will have access to your information and will not share information with your coaches, parents or peers. You will be emailed a copy of the interviews to review by approximately late December 2018. You will also receive a copy of the results of the study by approximately March 2019. Parents/guardians and administrators may receive a copy of results when the study is completed. However, only participants will receive a copy of transcripts. To receive transcripts and results, please provide an email address in the space provided below.

Email address: _____

A parent/guardian has agreed to allow you to participate in this study. It is, however, still your choice if you would like to participate. I encourage you to ask any questions you might have before you agree to participate. **You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you are free to leave the study at any time.** If at any point you decide to leave the study, you simply have to let me know. You will not get in any trouble if you decide to leave the study. There will be a **deadline to withdraw** approximately one month after the study has ended. This is because it becomes difficult to remove your information once analysis has begun. You will be reminded of this deadline before it arrives.

As a token of appreciation for participating in the study, you will receive a \$15 gift card. You will receive the gift card during the first phase of the study. The gift card will not have to be returned if you withdraw from the study.

Signing below indicates that you have agreed to participate in the study. Before you sign this letter, please make sure you:

- 1) Understand what the study is about
- 2) Understand what is expected of you
- 3) Ask any questions you might have
- 4) Understand that you are allowed to leave the study any time before the deadline

If you would like to participate in the study, please print and sign on the line below.

Participant's printed name and signature: _____

Date: _____

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.



Appendix D

Administrator Consent

Research Project Title: Using photo elicitation to explore the lived experience from the perspective of student-athletes participating in a Canadian sport school

Principal Investigator and contact information: Matthew Decker, MA Candidate, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba

██████████@myumanitoba.ca
(204) ██████████

Research Supervisor and contact information: Dr. Leisha Strachan, Associate Professor, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba

██████████@umanitoba.ca
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This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experience of student-athletes participating in a Canadian sport school. It is expected that this study will help guide policy and practice to ensure student-athletes' holistic needs are being met.

All participants in this study will take part in four sessions. The first session will introduce participants to the study, orientate them on proper use of cameras and begin to brainstorm aspects of their experiences that they may find meaningful (approximately 30 minutes). For the next session, participants will be provided with digital cameras and asked to photograph aspects of their day, positive or negative, that they believe are meaningful to their experience participating in a sport school. One example may include taking a photo of their alarm clock to express fatigue when waking up for early morning practices. Participants will have 24 hours to take photographs. After 24 hours, cameras will be returned and the lead researcher will make copies of the photographs; one for the researcher and one the participants can keep. In the next session, participants will be asked to look through their photographs and choose approximately 10-15 that they feel best represent meaningful aspects of their experiences (approximately 20 minutes). In the

final session, interviews will be conducted in small focus groups (two or three participants) in which the lead researcher will ask participants about the photos they took. Participants will have a chance to explain their photographs and why they are meaningful to their sport school experience (approximately one hour). The total anticipated time commitment from participants includes the 24-hour period in which they will be taking photographs, plus approximately two hours for the remaining three phases.

Participants will capture their lived experience using digital cameras, which will be provided by the lead researcher. Participants will be briefed on proper conduct when taking photographs of their environment prior to receiving cameras. Participants will receive copies of all photographs they take. Additionally, focus groups will be audio recorded. Recordings will be transcribed verbatim by the lead researcher and copies will be provided for participants to review. Photographs and audio recordings will be stored on a password protected memory stick and locked in a filing cabinet at the University of Manitoba. Only the lead researcher and his academic advisor, Dr. Leisha Strachan, will have access to the files. Results, including photographs and interview transcripts, may be published in an academic journal or presented at academic conferences. Identities of participants will remain anonymous and all data will be deleted after results have been published and/or shared with the academic community. The lead researcher will use pseudonyms for people (participants and non-participants), sport organizations, schools, and teams in all written documents. Participants' faces will not be shown in published photographs unless consent has been given by the participant and their legal guardian. Furthermore, faces and any other identifying features (tattoos, logos, buildings) of non-participants will not be shown unless photo release forms have been signed and returned.

There are no expected risks to physical, psychological or social wellbeing, and the study will not require any financial commitment from the participants. As the participants will photograph aspects of their daily lives, it is not anticipated the study will pose any risk greater than participants would experience in a typical day. Participants have the right to refuse to answer any questions asked during focus groups. It should be noted, however, that the researchers are obligated to report inappropriate or criminal behaviour, such as abuse, to the authorities (Child and Family Services, police) if disclosed at any time during the study. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Participants will, however, be provided a deadline for withdrawal (approximately one month) after data has been collected and transcribed as it will be difficult to remove participant responses once data analysis has begun. If a participant wishes to withdraw from the study, they should contact the lead researcher (Matthew Decker). If a participant withdraws from the study, the lead researcher will delete his copies of the participant's photographs. The participant may keep their own copy of photographs. Participant's responses will also be removed from interview transcripts.

Participants will be debriefed after completion of interviews as to next steps. In this meeting, the lead researcher will provide an estimated timeline of when participants will receive copies of interview transcripts for review and a summary of results. Administrators will not be provided access to interview transcripts but may choose to receive a copy of results. It is estimated results will be made available through email by

approximately March 2019. Please indicate below whether you would like to receive a copy of results and provide an email address in the space provided.

- No, do not send a copy of results
- Yes, send results to (email address): _____

Any confidential materials collected throughout the study will be deleted/destroyed within one year of results being published. Information saved to a memory stick will be deleted and hard copies will be shredded.

Please note, as an administrator you will not be asked to take photographs or take part in interviews. Information provided by participants will remain confidential with the exception of a summary of results being provided to administrators at the end of the study. By signing this form, you are agreeing to allow the lead researcher, his academic advisor and the participants of the study to photograph their academic and sporting environments, as well as participate in interviews discussing their participation in the sport school.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Administrator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Lead Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____



Appendix E

Superintendent Consent

Research Project Title: Using photo elicitation to explore the lived experience from the perspective of student-athletes participating in a Canadian sport school

Principal Investigator and contact information: Matthew Decker, MA Candidate, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba

██████████@myumanitoba.ca
(204) ██████████

Research Supervisor and contact information: Dr. Leisha Strachan, Associate Professor, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba

██████████@umanitoba.ca
(204) ██████████

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experience of student-athletes participating in a Canadian sport school. It is expected that this study will help guide policy and practice to ensure student-athletes' holistic needs are being met.

All participants in this study will take part in four sessions. The first session will introduce participants to the study, orientate them on proper use of cameras and begin to brainstorm aspects of their experiences that they may find meaningful (approximately 30 minutes). For the next session, participants will be provided with digital cameras and asked to photograph aspects of their day, positive or negative, that they believe are meaningful to their experience participating in a sport school. One example may include taking a photo of their alarm clock to express fatigue when waking up for early morning practices. Participants will have 24 hours to take photographs. After 24 hours, cameras will be returned and the lead researcher will make copies of the photographs; one for the researcher and one the participants can keep. In the next session, participants will be asked to look through their photographs and choose approximately 10-15 that they feel best represent meaningful aspects of their experiences (approximately 20 minutes). In the

final session, interviews will be conducted in small focus groups (two or three participants) in which the lead researcher will ask participants about the photos they took. Participants will have a chance to explain their photographs and why they are meaningful to their sport school experience (approximately one hour). The total anticipated time commitment from participants includes the 24-hour period in which they will be taking photographs, plus approximately two hours for the remaining three phases.

Participants will capture their lived experience using digital cameras, which will be provided by the lead researcher. Participants will be briefed on proper conduct when taking photographs of their environment prior to receiving cameras. Participants will receive copies of all photographs they take. Additionally, focus groups will be audio recorded. Recordings will be transcribed verbatim by the lead researcher and copies will be provided for participants to review. Photographs and audio recordings will be stored on a password protected memory stick and locked in a filing cabinet at the University of Manitoba. Only the lead researcher and his academic advisor, Dr. Leisha Strachan, will have access to the files. Results, including photographs and interview transcripts, may be published in an academic journal or presented at academic conferences. Identities of participants will remain anonymous and all data will be deleted after results have been published and/or shared with the academic community. The lead researcher will use pseudonyms for people (participants and non-participants), sport organizations, schools, and teams in all written documents. Participants' faces will not be shown in published photographs unless consent has been given by the participant and their legal guardian. Furthermore, faces and any other identifying features (tattoos, logos, buildings) of non-participants will not be shown unless photo release forms have been signed and returned.

There are no expected risks to physical, psychological or social wellbeing, and the study will not require any financial commitment from the participants. As the participants will photograph aspects of their daily lives, it is not anticipated the study will pose any risk greater than participants would experience in a typical day. Participants have the right to refuse to answer any questions asked during focus groups. It should be noted, however, that the researchers are obligated to report inappropriate or criminal behaviour, such as abuse, to the authorities (Child and Family Services, police) if disclosed at any time during the study. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Participants will, however, be provided a deadline for withdrawal (approximately one month) after data has been collected and transcribed as it will be difficult to remove participant responses once data analysis has begun. If a participant wishes to withdraw from the study, they should contact the lead researcher (Matthew Decker). If a participant withdraws from the study, the lead researcher will delete his copies of the participant's photographs. The participant may keep their own copy of photographs. Participant's responses will also be removed from interview transcripts.

Participants will be debriefed after completion of interviews as to next steps. In this meeting, the lead researcher will provide an estimated timeline of when participants will receive copies of interview transcripts for review and a summary of results. The superintendent will not be provided access to interview transcripts but may choose to receive a copy of results. It is estimated results will be made available through email by

approximately March 2019. Please indicate below whether you would like to receive a copy of results and provide an email address in the space provided.

- No, do not send a copy of results
- Yes, send results to (email address): _____

Any confidential materials collected throughout the study will be deleted/destroyed within one year of results being published. Information saved to a memory stick will be deleted and hard copies will be shredded.

Please note, as superintendent you will not be asked to take photographs or take part in interviews. Information provided by participants will remain confidential with the exception of a summary of results being provided to you at the end of the study. By signing this form, you are agreeing to allow the lead researcher, his academic advisor and the participants of the study to photograph their academic and sporting environments, as well as participate in interviews discussing their participation in the sport school.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Superintendent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Lead Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F

Recruitment

1) Recruitment: Email or phone

This script will be recited when communicating with administrators and superintendents from sport schools and educational facilities. It may be sent through email or recited through telephone conversations. Recruitment will be sent directly to the sport school if it is a private organization, and school divisions when the sport school is part of a public school.

My name is Matthew Decker and I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba. As part of the requirements for my master's thesis, I will be conducting a study on sport schools in Canada under the guidance of Dr. Leisha Strachan. I am looking for a minimum of approximately ten participants to discuss aspects of the sport school that they perceive to be meaningful to their experience. The study will involve the use of digital cameras (provided by the researchers) to photograph meaningful aspects of their daily life as a participant in a sport school. These photos will form the basis for interviews with the researchers.

The study will take place over four sessions. Participants will be required to take part in all four sessions. The first session will last approximately 30 minutes and involves a discussion of the study, guidelines for appropriate use of cameras and a brainstorming session to generate ideas for photographs. In the second session, participants will be provided digital cameras for 24 hours to photograph what they perceive to be meaningful aspects of their experiences. This portion is meant to capture a day in the life of a sport school student-athlete. The third session will last approximately 20 minutes and will involve the participants looking through their photos and selecting 10-15 that best represent the ideas they wish to convey. The fourth session will last approximately one hour and involves the participants discussing their selected photographs with the lead researcher. The purpose of this study is to better understand the sport school experience from the perspective of the student-athletes who participate in these programs. It is hoped this study will help guide policy and practice to ensure sport schools nurture positive, healthy development of the student-athletes who participate in these schools.

I have included a recruitment poster for you to distribute to potential participants. I would appreciate the opportunity to spend 5-10 minutes speaking with the interested athletes, coaches and parents before, during or after one of your training sessions. During this meeting I would outline the required expectations and time commitment and provide consent forms for review. I appreciate your consideration and will be available to answer questions at any time.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at [REDACTED]@myumanitoba.ca or [REDACTED].

I appreciate your time and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Matthew Decker

2) Recruitment: Recruitment poster

This poster will be distributed to potential participants by the administrator at the school.



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PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR A STUDY ON STUDENT-ATHLETES ENROLLED IN CANADIAN SPORT SCHOOLS

We are looking for student-athletes to participate in a study about the student-athlete's perspective on participation in a Canadian sport school.

Participants in the study will be asked to photograph meaningful aspects of their sport school experience and discuss these photographs in a one-day focus group.

The estimated time of completion consists of a 24-hour photo taking period, plus between 2-4 hours of additional meetings with the lead researcher.

For further information, you and your parents/guardians are encouraged to attend a brief information session with the lead researcher at (*Location*) on (*Date*).

To volunteer for this study, or to request additional information, please contact:

Matthew Decker
Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management
University of Manitoba
at
[REDACTED]@myumanitoba.ca

**This study has received ethical approval from the Education/Nursing
Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba.**

3) Recruitment: In person with potential participants

This script will be recited after a sport school has agreed to let researchers speak in person to potential participants before or after a practice or training session.

My name is Matthew Decker and I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba. As part of the requirements for my master's thesis, I will be conducting a study on sport schools in Canada under the guidance of Dr. Leisha Strachan. I am looking for approximately ten participants to discuss aspects of your sport school that you perceive to be meaningful to your overall experience.

For the study, you will be provided with a digital camera and asked to photograph meaningful aspects of your daily life as a student-athlete in a sport school. These photos will then be used to guide questions in interviews with the researchers.

The study will take place over four sessions. Participants will be required to take part in all four sessions. The first session will last approximately 30 minutes and involves a discussion of the study, guidelines for appropriate use of cameras and a brainstorming session to generate ideas for photographs. In the second session, you will be provided digital cameras for 24 hours to photograph meaningful aspects of your experiences in a sport school. This will help us understand the day-to-day life of a student-athlete in a sport school. The third session will last approximately 20 minutes. You will look through your photos and select 10-15 that best represent your experiences. The fourth session will last approximately one hour. In this session, we will discuss the photographs you selected and why they are meaningful to your experience in the sport school.

The purpose of this study is to better understand the sport school experience from the perspective of the student-athletes who participate in these programs. It is hoped this study will help guide policy and practice to ensure sport schools nurture positive, healthy development of the student-athletes who participate in these schools.

I have provided you with consent forms for you and your parents. These forms will provide you with more information about the study. Please read them carefully with your parents before agreeing to participate.

At this time, I will answer any questions you may have about the study.

I appreciate your time today and will be available to answer questions at any time. My contact information is on the form if you have any questions.

If you would like to participate, you can contact me through email or telephone.

I appreciate your time and look forward to hearing from you.

Appendix G

Scripts for Sport Schools Study

Session One: Orientation

Welcome everyone and thank you for your participation in this study. Before we begin, I would appreciate it if we can take a few minutes to introduce ourselves. My name is Matthew Decker and I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba. I am in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management with a focus on sport psychology. Can you tell me your names and how long you have been involved with the sport school?

As you should be aware, this study involves using cameras to photograph aspects of the sport school experience that you perceive to be meaningful. In a few minutes we will discuss some ideas for photographs that you might take. First, I would like to demonstrate how to operate the cameras and go over guidelines for the use of cameras.

- I. *Demonstrate how to operate the cameras* (I have not yet seen the cameras and can't speak to their operation). This will include zooming in/out, using the flash, taking a photo, reviewing photos, and deleting photos.
- II. Next, we will discuss guidelines for using cameras.
 - a. You may take photos of any aspects of your daily life that you believe is impacted, positively or negatively, by your participation in a sport school. These photos are meant to represent whatever meaning you have assigned to them. This may include objects or people.
 - b. When taking photographs of people, you must ask permission first. Please explain that the photo will be used in interviews for a study and that their names and faces will not be shown in published documents unless they sign a photo release form. The person and their parent/guardian (under 18 years old) will be able to decide for what purposes the photographs will be used. Photographs will not be published without their permission. If the person agrees to let you take a photograph, you must provide them with a photo release form, which I will provide you when I give you a camera. There are separate forms for adults and children (under 18). If an individual does not wish to have their photograph taken, you may ask if they would be comfortable if you took an alternate photo in which their face would not be shown. If they say no, do not take the picture. In this case, you can find another way to represent the relationship you wish to convey without including the person in the photo.
 - c. If you would like a photo of yourself, you may ask someone to take the photo for you but please refrain from giving cameras to strangers. I will also try to attend practices and/or training sessions and will be available to take photos for you if you wish.
 - d. Please ensure all photographs are appropriate. We want you to capture your full experience but places like washrooms and locker rooms may not be appropriate settings for photographs.

- e. Please do not let picture taking cause disruptions in sport or academic settings. If at any time you are asked to put the camera away by a teacher or coach, you must comply.
- III. I would now like you to take a moment and think about your experiences in this sport school and what aspects you find meaningful and how you might capture that idea in a photograph. Some things you might consider include:
- a. The people you encounter – coaches, peers, teachers, etc.
 - b. Where you train or the equipment you use
 - c. What you like and don't like about the sport school
 - d. How you balance school and sport
 - e. How this sport school has impacted other areas of your life
 - f. The rules or structure you have to follow
- They will have one minute to brainstorm before we share as a group.

Those are all great ideas and I'm excited to see what everyone comes up with over the next few days. The next time we meet I will give you your camera and you will have 24 hours to take photos.

Session Two: Photo Taking

In a moment I will hand you your cameras. I just want to give you a quick reminder of some of the expectations with these cameras.

- a. You may take photos of any aspects of your daily life that you believe is impacted, positively or negatively, by your participation in a sport school. These photos are meant to represent whatever meaning you have assigned to them. This may include objects or people.
- b. When taking photographs of people, you must ask permission first. Please explain that the photo will be used in interviews for a study and that their names and faces will not be shown in published documents unless they sign a photo release form. The person and their parent/guardian (under 18 years old) will be able to decide for what purposes the photographs will be used. Photographs will not be published without their permission. If the person agrees to let you take a photograph, you must provide them with a photo release form, which I will provide you when I give you a camera. There are separate forms for adults and children (under 18). If an individual does not wish to have their photograph taken, you may ask if they would be comfortable if you took an alternate photo in which their face would not be shown. If they say no, do not take the picture. In this case, you can find another way to represent the relationship you wish to convey without including the person in the photo.
- c. If you would like a photo of yourself, you may ask someone to take the photo for you but please refrain from giving cameras to strangers. I will also try to attend practices and/or training sessions and will be available to take photos for you if you wish.
- d. Please ensure all photographs are appropriate. We want you to capture your full experience but places like washrooms and locker rooms may not be appropriate settings for photographs.

- e. Please do not let picture taking cause disruptions in sport or academic settings. If at any time you are asked to put the camera away by a teacher or coach, you must comply.

I will collect the cameras from you (enter time, date and location) at which point I will get the photos developed. You will have a chance to review your photos on (enter date) and we will begin interviews on (enter date). I will be around if you would like to speak with me or would like me to take a photo for you. I hope everyone enjoys their time taking photos.

Session Three: Photo Selection

Your photographs have been developed. Today you will receive two sets of your printed photographs. One set is for you to keep. I would like you to look through the other set and select around 10-15 photographs that you believe best represent your experiences. If you feel like you need more than 15 photos, that is fine. Let me know when you have made your selections, so I can get them ready to bring with me when we meet for interviews. The interview schedule can be found here (provide a schedule).

Thank you everyone. I will see you all soon for your interviews.

Session Four: Interview Guide

These sessions will consist of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. The lead researcher will use photographs from session four to guide questioning. Initial questions are designed to establish rapport and gain insight into the participants' athletic backgrounds. Main questions will be broad in nature and aimed at understanding the participants' perspective of each photograph. Probing questions will be based on responses to main questions and seek to elicit a greater depth of information from the participants. Sample questions are included below. Additional questions will be then asked to cover any important areas which may have been missed. These questions may include further probing questions.

Opening Remarks:

"Before we begin, I would like to remind you that you have the right to refuse to answer any questions you wish, and you may leave the focus group at any time without penalty. Information provided during focus groups is not to be shared with anyone once you leave. This is to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants in this study. Please note that we cannot guarantee participants will not share information and it is your decision whether to participate in the focus group. Does anyone have any questions before we begin?"

Initial Questions:

"When did you start playing this sport?"

"Why did you decide to join this sport school?"

Main Questions:

"What were you trying to capture in this photograph?"

“What is the meaning behind this photograph?”
“Tell me what you see in this photograph.”

Probing questions:

“Can you tell me more about...?”
“Why is this important to you?”
“What impact does this have on...?”
“What can be done to improve this?”

Additional Questions:

“How would you describe your overall experience participating in the sport school?”
“What do you consider to be the greatest strengths of this program?”
“What do you consider to be the areas in need of improvement?”
“What are your plans for after graduation and in what way has this sport school prepared you for that?”
“Is there anything you feel we haven’t discussed that you would like to mention now?”

Appendix H

Guidelines for Use of Cameras

These guidelines will be reviewed with participants prior to them receiving access to cameras.

- a) You may take photos of any aspects of your daily life that you believe is impacted, positively or negatively, by your participation in a sport school. These photos are meant to represent whatever meaning you have assigned to them. This may include objects or people.
- b) When taking photographs of people, you must ask permission first. Please explain that the photo will be used in interviews for a study and that their names and faces will not be shown in published documents unless they sign a photo release form. The person and their parent/guardian (under 18 years old) will be able to decide for what purposes the photographs will be used. Photographs will not be published without their permission. If the person agrees to let you take a photograph, you must provide them with a photo release form, which I will provide you when I give you a camera. There are separate forms for adults and children (under 18). If an individual does not wish to have their photograph taken, you may ask if they would be comfortable if you took an alternate photo in which their face would not be shown. If they say no, do not take the picture. In this case, you can find another way to represent the relationship you wish to convey without including the person in the photo.
- c) If you would like a photo of yourself, you may ask someone to take the photo for you but please refrain from giving cameras to strangers. The lead researcher will try to attend practices and/or training sessions and will be available to take photos for you if you wish.
- d) Please ensure all photographs are appropriate. We want you to capture your full experience but places like washrooms and locker rooms may not be appropriate settings for photographs.
- e) Please do not let picture taking cause disruptions in sport or academic settings. If at any time you are asked to put the camera away by a teacher or coach, you must comply.



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Appendix I

Oath of Confidentiality: Lead Researcher

I, **Matthew Decker**, recognize that as lead researcher for a study being conducted under the guidance of Dr. Leisha Strachan in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management at the University of Manitoba, I will become aware of information shared by participants in the study which is to remain confidential.

I agree to respect the participants' right to privacy by not sharing, through any method of communication, information collected in the study with anyone other than my advisor, Dr. Leisha Strachan.

I will reveal to all members of the research team if I have any relationship to a participant in the study which may be considered a conflict of interest.

I agree to contact legal guardians and/or alert the authorities if made aware of inappropriate or criminal activity which may jeopardize the safety or wellbeing of a participant in the study.

Lead Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness Name: _____ Signature: _____



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Appendix J

Oath of Confidentiality: Advisor/Co-Investigator

I, **Dr. Leisha Strachan**, recognize that as the advisor for Matthew Decker, who is conducting a study with the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management at the University of Manitoba, I will become aware of information shared by participants in the study which is to remain confidential.

I agree to respect the participants' right to privacy by not sharing, through any method of communication, information collected in the study with anyone other than the lead researcher, Matthew Decker.

I will reveal to all members of the research team if I have any relationship to a participant in the study which may be considered a conflict of interest.

I agree to contact legal guardians and/or alert the authorities if made aware of inappropriate or criminal activity which may jeopardize the safety or wellbeing of a participant in the study.

Advisor/Co-Investigator Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness Name: _____ Signature: _____



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Appendix K

Oath of Confidentiality: Research Team Members

I, _____, recognize that in my position as
_____ for a study being conducted with lead researcher Matthew
Decker and under the guidance of Dr. Leisha Strachan in the Faculty of Kinesiology and
Recreation Management at the University of Manitoba, I may become aware of
information shared by participants in the study which is to remain confidential.

I agree to respect the participants' right to privacy by not sharing, through any
method of communication, information collected in the study with anyone other
than other members of the research team.

I will reveal to all members of the research team if I have any relationship to a
participant in the study which may be considered a conflict of interest.

I agree to contact legal guardians and/or alert the authorities if made aware of
inappropriate or criminal activity which may jeopardize the safety or wellbeing of a
participant in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness Name: _____ Signature: _____



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Appendix L

Oath of Confidentiality: Participants

I, _____, recognize that as a participant in a study being conducted with lead researcher Matthew Decker and under the guidance of Dr. Leisha Strachan in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management at the University of Manitoba, I may become aware of information shared by other participants in the study which is to remain confidential.

I agree to respect all participants' right to privacy by not sharing, through any method of communication, information shared throughout the study including responses provided during focus groups.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness Name: _____ Signature: _____



Appendix M

Photo Release Form – Participant

Research Project Title: Using photo elicitation to explore the lived experience from the perspective of student-athletes participating in a Canadian sport school

Principal Investigator and contact information: Matthew Decker, MA Candidate, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba

██████████@myumanitoba.ca
(204) ██████████

Research Supervisor and contact information: Dr. Leisha Strachan, Associate Professor, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba

██████████@umanitoba.ca
(204) ██████████

Purpose of the Study: This study is designed to explore meaningful aspects of student-athletes' experiences participating in a sport school. Studies like these help researchers understand what is important to student-athletes who participate in sport schools to ensure their holistic needs are being met.

This photo release form consists of two parts:

Part I allows photographs to be used for the purpose of discussion and analysis between the study participants and the research team and must be signed by the child appearing in photographs.

Part II dictates the extent to which photographs taken of the child can be used for the purposes of dissemination, including being published in a master's thesis and academic journals, or displayed in presentations and conferences. Part II must be signed by a capable parent/guardian.

If you have any questions, you may contact the principal investigator at the email address or phone number listed above.

Part I) Child Assent Form (Under 18)

As a participant in this study, you may be visible in photographs taken by yourself or another participant. As a participant in the study, you have a right to decide if you want to allow the photograph(s) to be used in the study and to what extent.

By signing this form, I, _____, acknowledge the following:

- 1) I agreed to be included in photographs prior to the photograph(s) being taken
- 2) I understand the purpose of the study in which the photograph(s) will be used
- 3) I understand that my photograph(s) will only be used for the purpose of discussion and analysis in focus groups unless I receive consent from a capable legal guardian.

Signing below indicates that you have agreed to have your photograph(s) used in the study.

I agree to the release of my photo(s) for use in focus group sessions between study participants and the research team.

I agree to the release of my photo(s) for use in dissemination (written documents, presentations, etc.). **This must be accompanied by a parent/guardian consent form.**

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Lead Researcher: _____ Signature: _____

Part II) Parent/Guardian Consent Form

I, _____, understand that my child has agreed to have his/her photograph taken for the purpose of discussion and analysis in focus groups for a study being conducted by Matthew Decker from the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management at the University of Manitoba.

As the parent/guardian, I agree to the release of photographs taken of my child to be used in this study for the following purposes (check all that apply):

- Publication in a master's thesis at the University of Manitoba

- Presentations and/or additional publications within the University of Manitoba.

- Presentations and/or publications outside the University of Manitoba, including but not limited to academic journals and conferences.

- All the above, but only if my child's face and other identifying features (tattoos, logos, etc.) are blurred.

- None of the above. Photographs may only be used in discussion and analysis between participants and the research team during focus groups.

Child's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

Principal Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____



Appendix N

Photo Release Form – Non-Participant (Under 18)

Research Project Title: Using photo elicitation to explore the lived experience from the perspective of student-athletes participating in a Canadian sport school

Principal Investigator and contact information: Matthew Decker, MA Candidate, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba

██████████@myumanitoba.ca
(204) ██████████

Research Supervisor and contact information: Dr. Leisha Strachan, Associate Professor, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba

██████████@umanitoba.ca
(204) ██████████

Purpose of the Study: This study is designed to explore meaningful aspects of student-athletes' experiences participating in a sport school. Studies like these help researchers understand what is important to student-athletes who participate in sport schools to ensure their holistic needs are being met.

This photo release form consists of two parts:

Part I allows photographs to be used for the purpose of discussion and analysis between the study participants and the research team and must be signed by the child appearing in photographs.

Part II dictates the extent to which photographs taken of the child can be used for the purposes of dissemination, including being published in a master's thesis and academic journals, or displayed in presentations and conferences. Part II must be signed by a capable parent/guardian.

If you have any questions, you may contact the principal investigator at the email address or phone number listed above.

Part I) Child Assent Form (Under 18)

A participant involved in this study has taken a photograph of you that they wish to use in the study described above. As a non-participant in the study, you have a right to decide if you want to allow the photograph(s) to be used in the study and to what extent.

By signing this form, I, _____, acknowledge the following:

- 1) A participant in the study asked permission before taking photographs of me
- 2) I understand the purpose of the study in which the photograph(s) will be used
- 3) I understand that my photograph(s) will only be used for the purpose of discussion and analysis in focus groups unless I receive consent from a capable legal guardian.

Signing below indicates that you have agreed to have your photograph(s) used in the study.

I agree to the release of my photo(s) for use in focus group sessions between study participants and the research team.

I agree to the release of my photo(s) for use in dissemination (written documents, presentations, etc.). **This must be accompanied by a parent/guardian consent form.**

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Lead Researcher: _____ Signature: _____

Part II) Parent/Guardian Consent Form

I, _____, understand that my child has agreed to have his/her photograph taken for the purpose of discussion and analysis in focus groups for a study being conducted by Matthew Decker from the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management at the University of Manitoba.

As the parent/guardian, I agree to the release of photographs taken of my child to be used in this study for the following purposes (check all that apply):

- Publication in a master's thesis at the University of Manitoba

- Presentations and/or additional publications within the University of Manitoba.

- Presentations and/or publications outside the University of Manitoba, including but not limited to academic journals and conferences.

- All the above, but only if my child's face and other identifying features (tattoos, logos, etc.) are blurred.

- None of the above. Photographs may only be used in discussion and analysis between participants and the research team during focus groups.

Child's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

Principal Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____



Appendix O

Photo Release Form – Non-Participant (Over 18)

Research Project Title: Using photo elicitation to explore the lived experience from the perspective of student-athletes participating in a Canadian sport school

Principal Investigator and contact information: Matthew Decker, MA Candidate, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba

██████████@myumanitoba.ca
(204) ██████████

Research Supervisor and contact information: Dr. Leisha Strachan, Associate Professor, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba

██████████@umanitoba.ca
(204) ██████████

Purpose of the Study: This study is designed to explore meaningful aspects of student-athletes' experiences participating in a sport school. Studies like these help researchers understand what is important to student-athletes who participate in sport schools to ensure their holistic needs are being met.

A participant involved in this study has taken a photograph of you that they wish to use in the study described above. As a non-participant in the study, you have a right to decide if you want to allow the photograph(s) to be used in the study and to what extent.

If you have any questions, you may contact the principal investigator at the email address or phone number listed above.

By signing this form, I, _____, acknowledge the following:

- 1) A participant in the study asked permission before taking photographs of me
- 2) I understand the purpose of the study in which the photograph(s) will be used
- 3) I understand that my photograph(s) will only be used for the purposes to which I have provided consent.

As a non-participant in the study, I agree to the release of photographs taken of me to be used in this study for the following purposes (check all that apply):

Discussion and analysis between participants and the research team during focus groups only.

Publication in a master's thesis at the University of Manitoba

Presentations and/or additional publications within the University of Manitoba.

Presentations and/or publications outside the University of Manitoba, including but not limited to academic journals and conferences.

All the above, but only if my face and other identifying features (tattoos, logos, etc.) are blurred.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Principal Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____