Article

Part 1 - Looking Back and Looking Around: How Parents, Coaches and Athletes See Psychosocial Development in Adolescent Performance Sport

Sergio Lara-Bercial [1,2,*] **and Jim McKenna** [1]

[1] Research Centre for Sport Coaching, Carnegie School of Sport, Leeds Beckett University, LS6 3QT, UK; j.mckenna@leedsbeckett.ac.uk
[2] Global Coaching Office, International Council for Coaching Excellence, Leeds Beckett University, LS6 3QT, UK
* Correspondence: s.lara-bercial@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Abstract: Sport has the potential to support psychosocial development in young people. However, extant studies have tended to evaluate purpose-built interventions, leaving regular organised sport relatively overlooked. Moreover, previous work has tended to concentrated on a narrow range of outcomes. To address these gaps, we conducted a season-long ethnography of a youth performance sport club based on a novel Realist Evaluation approach [**1**]. We construed the club as a social intervention within a complex system of agents and structures. In this - Part 1 - account we detail the perceptions of former and current club parents, players and coaches, using them to build a set of programme theories. The resulting network of outcomes (i.e. self, emotional, social, moral and cognitive) and generative mechanisms (i.e., the attention factory, the greenhouse for growth, the personal boost, and the real-life simulator) spanning across multiple contextual layers provides a nuanced understanding of stakeholders' views and experiences. This textured perspective of the multifaceted process of development provides new insights for administrators, coaches and parents to maximise the developmental properties of youth sport, and signposts new avenues for research in this area.

Keywords: Positive youth development; youth sport; realist evaluation; life skills; personal development; psychosocial development

1. Introduction

Over the last forty years sport has become integral to the lives of many Children and Young People (CYP). Beyond the typical array of physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits ascribed to participation (i.e., enhanced cardiovascular and musculoskeletal function and lower risk of obesity, diabetes and depression; [2-4], sport is also regularly presented as a tool to foster psychosocial development [5,6]. Given these potential benefits, governments and communities across the world continue to invest large amounts of financial and human capital in the promotion and provision of sport [7,8]. Whilst the physical and mental wellbeing benefits of participation have been studied extensively, a number of authors have contested the assumption that sport participation inevitably and automatically translates into psychosocial development [9,10]. Concerns have been raised that the extant literature fails to clearly define and fully understand the nature and extent of this phenomenon [9,11,12].

The study of sport as a tool for psychosocial development has been approached from three related yet distinctive perspectives, namely Sport For Development (SFD), Life-Skills Development (LSD) and Positive Youth Development (PYD). SFD is broadly defined as encompassing programmes that use 'sport as a tool for development and peace'

aiming to maximise 'the potential of sport as a tool to reach personal, community, national and international development objectives' [13]. LSD typically focuses on the capacity for sport to teach youth essential skills needed to successfully negotiate the demands of everyday life [14,15]. Finally, PYD has emerged as a broader field than LSD, focusing on the contribution that sport can make to foster positive and developmental behaviours and attitudes in young people allowing them to thrive and transition successfully into young adulthood [16,17] . An in depth review of this broad and extensive literature is beyond the scope of this paper (see [18,19]). Nonetheless, a brief critique is presented below to set the context for the current paper.

Research emerging from these three perspectives has enhanced our understanding of the properties of sport as a development agent. However, a number of concerns have been raised. First, there is no consensus regarding what constitutes personal development through sport [9]. Second, there is a tendency to study discrete outcomes using experimental designs to the detriment of establishing an integrated view of the process in natural settings [20]. Therefore, some authors have called for more process-based research focused on understanding the underpinning conditions and mechanisms that lead to positive psychosocial outcomes. [14, 21]. Finally, the field has been criticised for generally placing the focus on evaluating purpose-built interventions, thus overlooking regular organised sport where most children take part [22]. As a result, some researchers suggest that many of the claims made for the psychosocial benefits of sport participation are only partially substantiated and lack ecological validity [9,23,24].

Youth sport researchers are thus being challenged to develop a deeper, systemic and integrated understanding of the factors and processes that lead to positive development [9,18,21,23]. To the best of our knowledge, a comprehensive exploration of sport-based psychosocial development meeting these criteria has not been conducted to date. The current study aims to address this gap in the literature through the ethnographic investigation of a youth performance sport club. In doing so, the new evidence-base it produces will enhance the capacity of sport psychologists, coaches, parents, clubs and schools' to foster positive growth. This evidence base will also be timely; it will contribute to providing essential political and financial support for youth sport to address the many harms accompanying the response to, and aftermath of, the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Materials and Methods

To address the gaps identified above, this study adopted a novel Realist Evaluation (RE) approach [1,25]. While RE typically aims to establish how well a given purpose-built social intervention achieves expected outcomes, its unique features have particular utility in the study of psychosocial development in organised youth sport if sport clubs are construed and positioned, even if only by researchers exploring them, as organic social interventions embedded within complex systems. In other words, environments where with or without the awareness, intention and volition of those within it, a series of mechanisms interact leading to explicit, implicit, desired and undesired outcomes.

At an ontological and epistemological level, RE spouses a realist ontology and epistemology which accepts the existence of the social and material reality we interact with, yet states that the claims we can make about knowledge are always partial and never final. From this perspective, the role of the researcher is to constantly improve the existing available knowledge [1]. RE emphasises the fundamental role of theory in driving social research, and the importance of looking beyond quantification and correlation to shed light on the generative mechanisms affecting choices, behaviours and, ultimately, the outcomes of a given intervention. RE is thus concerned with the notion and nature of causality, focusing on "what works for whom, under what circumstances and why" [25] (p.29). Despite this focus on explanation and causality, RE accepts that social programmes take place within fluid and changing systems, meaning they feature flux, self-transformation and repatterning. Explained as 'morphogenesis' [26], RE implies that social interventions are never implemented in the same way twice, nor under similar conditions. Central to

this variability is the intervention context. Given that social programmes are embedded into specific social systems, context is pivotal for how any programme works (or does not). From this perspective, programme outcomes emerge from a combination of agency and structure, the interface between the choices and capacities of contributing individuals, and the collective resources at their disposal [1]. The fluidity and dynamism of the social world makes it challenging for the social evaluator to speak in absolutes or to make generalisations. Instead, RE recognises that certain elements and processes are relatively stable and that these demi-regularities are the "subject matter of realist evaluation" [25] (p.6). RE therefore, subtly balances generalisability with specificity.

At a practical level, social programming and evaluation must start by making explicit the theories informing programme development and implementation, also known as Programme Theories (PTs) [1]. Successful programmes have well-defined outcomes, target the right people in the right circumstances and context, and are delivered in a particular way [25]. Clearly identified PTs also provide the baseline for evaluation. As blueprints, PTs facilitate looking into the black box of programmes to establish not only if they work, but for whom, how and why. In RE, PTs comprise of context-mechanism-outcome (CMO) configurations which allow researchers to make explicit not only the objectives of a programme (i.e., the expected outcomes of the intervention) within a specific context(s), but also the underlying assumptions about how a programme works (i.e., the generative mechanisms). Having clearly articulated the PTs, researchers can explore how well these are realised in the "live" environment of the intervention; if they are not, or they are reached in unexpected ways, researchers can offer alternative explanations to create an "adaptive theory" [27], which is ever-evolving in light of new data [28].

Although RE has become a popular philosophical and methodological framework in social science in the last 30 years, this trend did not reach the sport literature until recently. RE-based approaches have started to proliferate in sport psychology [29], sport coaching [28,30], coach development [31] and sport policy [32]. RE not only allows but also requires researchers to integrate the wide number of 'everyday' factors that constitute ordinary sport club functioning into nuanced and fine-grained accounts of how psychosocial development may materialise. The resulting accounts will help sport psychologists, coaches and club administrators to become more effective, proactive and deliberate in their efforts to support it.

To achieve the above, we conducted a case study investigation of psychosocial development in a performance development basketball club in North West England. Case studies entail detailed examination of an individual unit, case or system allowing researchers to achieve greater levels of depth and understanding of their internal structure and operation [33]. By focusing on a single unit, case studies make it possible to address the complexity and individuality of social phenomena [34] in a live context [35]. Moreover, a case study approach allows researchers to address the need for reality, complexity and depth in the investigation of psychosocial development because the case being studied already exists – it is not manufactured for the purpose of the research [33]. In line with the principles of RE, the study embraced a realist ontology and epistemology.

Criterion-based sampling was used to select this setting [36]. Criteria included an environment featuring: i) high intensity and frequency of participant engagement combined with high future stakes (i.e., a professional career); ii) a hybrid club ethos combining community and performance-based values and provision, leading to a wide range of experiences and interactions; and iii) an explicit humanistic philosophy combined with prolonged high level of success at the national and international level. It is important to note the lead researcher's familiarity with the setting where he has coached for the last 20 years. The pros and cons of this element were carefully weighed regarding the balance of insider versus outsider positionality; the research team decided that the benefits outweighed the potential negative effects. Note also that none of the research subjects were or had ever been coaches coached by the lead author. On these bases, permission to progress with the

study was provided by the club Chairman. Approval was subsequently granted by the Ethics Committee of Leeds Beckett University.

Purposeful sampling led to the identification of participants from three distinct samples: i) former parents and players who had left the club at least 10 years ago; ii) current parents and players; and iii) current coaches. This aimed to generate two views of the same phenomenon. Former parents and players offered 'updated-yet-retrospective-views'. By contrast, current parents and players provided 'contemporary-prospective-views' of their perception of day-to-day development, as well as anticipation of future benefits. Coaches, having worked at the club for multiple seasons, straddled a full range of these viewpoints. From an RE perspective, the depth and width of the accounts generated by such a group allows for a close understanding of the structure and impact of the whole programme by drawing on personal insights reflecting different time frames of engagement and reflecting distinctive experience and expertise [1].

Five senior club coaches were selected (all male; Mage = 47; SD = 20.61). In addition, eight former parents (5 male and 3 female; Mage = 58.25; SD = 1.56), and six former players (all male; Mage = 30.83; SD = 1.77) were purposefully sampled based on their diverse trajectories after leaving the club (i.e., going to college, turning pro, playing recreationally, etc).   Finally, 10 current parents (5 male and 5 female; Mage = 46,5; SD = 2.24) and 10 current athletes (all male; Mage = 13.9; SD = 1.57) were purposefully selected   from the under 13 (U13) and under 16 (U16) teams (for full details of participants see appendix 1 in supplementary materials).

A variety of data collection methods were used to elicit the PTs from the three stakeholder groups. Coaches and former parents and players were asked to take part in in-depth semi-structured interviews lasting an average of 70 minutes (range of 35 to 121). All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim, producing over 350 pages of double-spaced text. Interviews commenced with a broad question: 'In your view, beyond gaining physical and basketball-related skills, what is the impact of participation in the club programme at a personal level for the players?' Interviewees were encouraged to elaborate on responses - with examples - to explore different areas. Given the RE approach, the researcher explicitly probed interviewees to go beyond the identification of developmental outcomes and to articulate the how and why of these processes asking questions like 'Would you be able to explain to me how this happened?' or 'What factors do you think are responsible for this?'. Interviewees were also explicitly asked to consider the same issues from a negative standpoint (i.e., 'From a personal development perspective, do you see any negative outcomes of being involved in the club?').

By contrast, current parents and players' PTs were identified through a series of Focus Groups (FG). FG participants were selected working with the team coaches who were asked to identify a group of individuals with contrasting backgrounds and experiences (i.e., socioeconomic status, ethnicity, squad status, etc). All in all, four separate FGs took place; two with U13 (n=5) and U16 parents (n=5), and two with U13 (n=5) and U16 (n=5) players. These lasted an average of 52.25 minutes (range 40-72). The FG included similar questions to the in-depth interview, but in order to elicit as high a number of responses as possible, participants were asked to initially write each developmental outcome on a sticky note and to submit all their answers into an opaque container. Subsequently, the researcher took one item at a time out of the box and ask participants to come forward to explain what they meant, or if no one came forward ask the others if they had a similar experience. Throughout the FGs the researcher encouraged elaboration to explore the features of the context and mechanisms that brought about specific outcomes. FGs were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim producing over 60 pages of double-spaced text.

Interviews and FG were analysed using a deductive-inductive iterative process facilitated by NVIVO10 software [37]. A three-stage process was implemented. First, interview transcripts were read once to familiarise with the content. Second, a deductive phase ensued in which the transcripts were read a second time focusing on the identification of developmental outcomes. In line with RE tenets, this step was theory driven and guided

by a Psychosocial Outcomes Framework (POF) created by the researchers through a substantial literature review of developmental psychology literature (Figure 1; the full framework and review is available in appendix 2 in the supplementary materials). Outcomes that did not fit into any of the categories of the framework were grouped as 'Miscellaneous'. In the final, third stage, the analysis transitioned to an inductive approach focused on identifying generative mechanisms and their links to specific outcomes and to key contextual features. This process aimed to build a deep understanding of how coaches, parents and players construed the impact of participation in sport on psychosocial development.
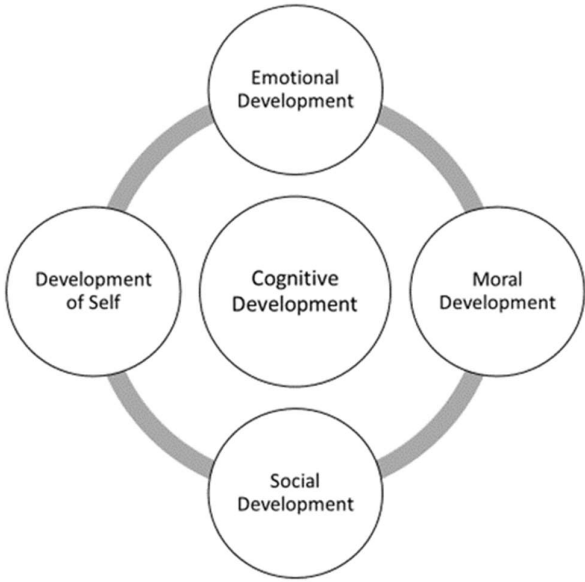
Figure 1. Psychosocial Outcomes Framework.

3. Results

Study results are presented in five sections. The first two sections introduce the outcomes and generative mechanisms identified by all stakeholders using the POF as an organising tool. In the third section, the proposed mechanisms are explored in detail and a new categorisation – based on four broad families - is proposed. Finally, section four details how the context modulated the impact of participation. For economy, given the broad range of findings, a combination of summative tables and text is used to introduce the findings and interview and FG quotes are used sparingly. Full quotes can be found in the supplementary materials.

3.1. Participation-Based Outcomes

The analysis of the interviews with coaches, parents and players elicited a wide array of both positive and negative outcomes (Table 1).

Table 1. Developmental outcomes of participation in youth performance sport.

Category	Positive Outcomes	Definition	Negative Outcomes	Definition
Development of the Self	Positive identity	A healthy view of oneself in the world	Quashed individuality	Submission to the group's needs above one's own
	Sense of hope and life purpose	A positive outlook of the future and that one's life has meaning	Low self-confidence	A reduce belief in one's capability to deal with day-to-day issues
	Self-confidence			

Social Development		A belief in one's capability to deal with day-to-day issues		
	Interpersonal skills	Competence to interact positively with others		
	Sense of belonging	A feeling of being part of something bigger than oneself		
	Social capital	A network of people around oneself which contributes to positive outcomes	Social isolation	A sense of being cut off from friends and relatives
	Cooperation skills	Ability to work with others for a common purpose	Selfishness	Putting one's personal needs and desires above those of the group
	Leadership attributes	Capacity to take initiative and to influence others.		
	A broader worldview	An understanding of different perspectives and experiences		
Emotional Development	Emotional wellbeing	Overall high mental health	Low emotional wellbeing	Reduce mental health
	Emotional literacy	Understanding of a range of emotions	General demotivation	Lack of motivation to do things beyond sport
	Emotional control	Being able to self-regulate emotionally		
Cognitive Development	Higher learning ability	Capacity to engage in learning opportunities		
	Enhanced decision-making	Ability and proactivity to make decisions	None recorded	
	Improved communication	Capacity to express oneself clearly and publicly		
Moral Development			Uncontrolled aggression	Bouts of aggression and hostility towards others
	Respect for others	Respecting others' rights and feelings	Disrespect for others	Lack of respect for others' rights and feelings
	Moral decision-making	Being able to tell right from wrong and decide accordingly	Bullying	Purposefully trying to hurt others physically or emotionally
			Occasional drinking	Episodes of drinking with teammates
Miscellaneous	Work ethic	Ability to work hard for long periods		
	Competitiveness	Desire to do well and succeed		
	Self-reliance	Capacity and proactivity to resolve problems independently		
	The springboard effect	Advantages later in life facilitated by their sport experiences		

A total of 21 positive and 11 negative outcomes were identified across the five development areas of the POF and a miscellaneous category. The social development category contained the highest number of positive outcomes (n=6), whilst moral development contained the most negative outcomes (n=4). With regards to single positive outcomes, a positive identity, a sense of hope and life purpose, a sense of belonging, a broader worldview, higher learning ability and work ethic were the most widely reported by interviewees. The below quotes illustrate these outcomes:

Positive Identity: "'I'm pretty popular in my school. I even get away sometimes with stuff others don't because I play in the basketball team'. (Kyle, current player)

Sense of hope and life purpose: "This is what he wants to do, and this is the best possible place for him to do it in. He is determined to do it and he really feels like this place helps him get closer to his dream" (Jerome, current parent).

Sense of belonging: "Look, at the time, we lived in [name of town], it was a shithole, we couldn't even go play outside and everyone was into football or rugby. Driving into [name of bigger city] to come to the centre was massive for me, having friends outside [name of town] was a salvation for me" (Darren, former player).

A broader worldview: "It was just great to see Sid interacting with all these different people. Where we live and where he goes to school most people are white middle class and he built some great relationships with kids that he would have never met otherwise, and I think that has stood him in great stead going forward to uni and now work" (Mark, former parent).

Higher Learning Ability: "It improves their concentration span. For him, it has gone through the roof, he has to pay attention to what coach is saying, to what's going on around him, it really has helped him by being constantly exposed to information and coaching" (James, current parent).

Work Ethic: "[…] sheer hard work, the boys learn how much harder they can work than they thought before. Coaches expect players to be on time, to do what they have to do, and to respect them and all around them. It builds a great work ethic." (Coach George).

Conversely, low self-confidence, selfishness and uncontrolled aggression were the most discussed negative outcomes. The quotes below display examples of these components:

Low Self-Confidence: "When they lose an important game or when they don't play that much it's hard, they are proper down and lose confidence. All you can do is comfort them and wait for them to bounce back" (Sophie, current parent).

Selfishness: "You always get two or three in a team that think they are the bee's knees, and they become a problem." (Coach Carl).

Uncontrolled aggression: "I have said it before, they are a pack of alpha dogs trying to establish who the uber-alpha is going to be. They all come here having been the best in their local clubs, and now they have to work out who is top dog. And that can get hairy sometimes" (Chloe, current parent).

3.2. Generative Mechanisms

Guided by the RE orientation of the study, identifying the generative mechanisms proposed by stakeholders was prioritised. Interviews elicited 68 mechanisms involved in the generation of the 21 positive outcomes (Table 2). Some of these were found to be more salient due to their involvement in the creation of more than one outcome: love for the game (n=6), the inspirational coach (n=6), success/winning (n=5), playing other club roles (n=5) and diversity (n=4) were the most salient. Similarly, 16 mechanism leading to negative outcomes were reported (Table 3). Internal competition (n=5) and negative coaching behaviours (n=3) were the most prevalent in the generation of multiple outcomes. Please

note the addition of a miscellaneous category to account for outcomes that did not fit the POF.

Table 2. Generative mechanisms of positive outcome of participation.

Development of Self	Social	Emotional	Cognitive	Moral	Miscellaneous
Positive Identity Success/Winning Height as positive Being cool Love for the game **Sense of Hope and Life Purpose** Success/Winning Inspirational coach Perception of progress Love for the game **Self-Confidence** Success and failure Competence Being cool Belonging to wider family	**Interpersonal Skills** Constant interaction Banter Social diversity Including new players Co-education Playing up an age group Positive use of social media Playing other club roles Coach as facilitator Interface with adults **Sense of belonging** Community spirit Belonging to wider family Soft hierarchy Common goals Looking out for others Love for the game Second home Sense of hope and life purpose Success/Winning Inspirational coach All family involved High family time Family sacrifices Parent as volunteer One special friend **Social Capital**	**Emotional Well-being** Caring environment Structure and routine The social network All family involved Letting off steam Competence Love for the game **Emotional Literacy** High exposure to range of emotions Inspirational coach Diverse responses to events **Emotional control** Standards and expectations High pressure Coping with setbacks Putting team first Inspirational coach Parental support Parental presence Strong social network Steam release Being ready to learn and perform	**Higher learning ability** Constantly taught Coaching behaviours Constant feedback Setting personal goals **Enhanced decision-making capacity** High-pace decision-making demands Love for the game **Improved communication** Interface with adults Coach as role model Constant interaction	**Respect** Club values Putting team first Competition Being ready to learn and perform Playing other club roles Social diversity Skill diversity **Moral Decision Making** Club values Love for the game Competition Keeping busy	**Work ethic** Club values Inspirational coach Internal competition Success/Winning Family sacrifices Career Ambitions Playing other club roles **Competitiveness** Inspirational coach High pressure **Self-reliance** Standards and expectations Lack of parental support Career ambitions Playing other club roles **The springboard effect** Playing other club roles Strong social network Perceived added value of sport

Belonging to wider family
Diversity
Playing up an age group
Contact beyond basketball
Positive use of social media

Cooperation Skills
Common goals
Need to cooperate
Understanding role and hierarchy
From 'I' to 'Us'

Leadership Attributes
Being the captain
Helping young players
Do the right thing

A Broader Worldview
Social diversity
Travel opportunities

Table 3. Generative mechanisms of negative outcome of participation.

Self	Social	Emotional	Cognitive	Moral	Miscellaneous
Quashed Individuality Putting team first **Low Self-Confidence** Internal competition External competition Negative coach behaviours The parent-coach	**Social Isolation** Lack of social time Being different in school **Selfishness** Burning desire to win Internal competition Parental behaviours	**Lowered emotional wellbeing** Pressure Lack of social time Lack of study time Negative coach behaviours Intra-team bullying **General Demotivation** Love for the game	None recorded	Occasional drinking Steam release **Uncontrolled aggression** Internal competition External competition Parental behaviours Negative coach behaviours **Disrespect and bullying**	None recorded

	Daily internal competition
	Being different in school

3.3. Classifying the Generative Mechanisms

Further to identifying the generative mechanism and their associated outcomes, the mechanism were grouped into related families. This exercise aimed to simplify the emerging complex picture and to start building a useable framework for practitioners. Four major groups of mechanisms were identified: i) The Greenhouse for Growth; ii) The Personal Boost; iii) The Attention Factory; and iv) The Real Life Simulator.

'The Greenhouse for Growth' relates to the built-in features of the setting that lay the foundation for the club to become a source of personal growth rather than just a sporting venue. Our 'greenhouse' allusion is intended to reflect generalised notions of environment and climate. Four sub-categories were identified (i.e., club ethos, coaches' behaviours, parental support/influence and social support influence) incorporating a further 17 mechanisms.

'The Personal Boost' focuses on the capacity of participation in performance sport to generate elevated states of mind (i.e., happiness, joy, satisfaction, elation, pride, etc.) leading to increased player wellbeing and a strengthened drive to stay involved in the sport and the club. Three main sub-categories were associated to this family (i.e., experience of success, athletic kudos, and steam release) containing six mechanisms.

'The Attention Factory' revolves around the notion of sport participation providing athletes with a clear focus in life that (i) leads to positive behaviours and outcomes and (ii) individuals use to confirm their personal agency. This attentional focus also acted as a protective shield and deterrent against negative sport-based attitudes and behaviours and insulated against engaging in rivalrous conducts seen - by most adults - as undesirable. Two sub-categories of mechanisms were created (i.e., love for the game and a purposeful life) encapsulating a further 7 mechanisms.

Finally, 'The Real Life Simulator' relates to the idea that participation in youth performance development sport micro-replicates elements of the 'adult world'. From this perspective, participation offers inexperienced young athletes multiple opportunities to practice facing and resolving challenges and situations that may recur in future lives at university and/or in work. This family contains five sub-categories (i.e., competition, the team, learning, diversity and mini-workplace) encompassing 19 single mechanisms.

Tables 4 and 5 summarise the mechanisms and sub-mechanisms in each major theme. This secondary analysis, aimed at increasing the practical application of these findings for coaches and club administrators, led to the further distillation of the mechanisms presented in tables 2 and 3 with some of them merging into a single theme for a new total of 49 mechanisms. A full depiction of the four families of mechanisms with sample quotes can be found in the supplementary materials.

Table 4. Summary of generative mechanisms leading to positive outcomes by family.

The Greenhouse for Growth	The Personal Boost	The Attention Factory	The Real Life Simulator
Club Ethos	**Experience of Success**	**Love for the Game**	**Competition**
Club humanistic philosophy and values	Exposure to success and failure	Personal infatuation with the game	High pressure
High standards and expectations	Perception of Progress and Competence	Collective infatuation with the game	Coping with setbacks
			Internal and external competition
			Playing up
Coaches' Behaviours		**A Purposeful Life**	

Coach as inspiration Coach as facilitator Coach as role model **Parental Support/Influence** All family involved Family sacrifices Parental presence (or lack of) & contribution Proactive parental management by the club **Social Support/ Influence** Soft hierarchy Community spirit and belonging Common goals Looking out for others One special friend The social network Second home Interface with adults	Sense of hope and purpose **Athletic Kudos** Being cool Height as positive **Steam release** Letting off steam	Career ambitions Structure and routine Sense of hope and purpose Short and mid-term personal goals Keeping busy	**The Team** Putting team first Understanding roles and hierarchy Constant interaction Healthy banter Including players Looking out for others Do the right thing Chance to be a captain **Learning** Being constantly taught Constant feedback Setting personal goals High-pace decision-making **Diversity** Social diversity Geographical diversity **Mini-Workplace** Playing other club roles

Table 5. Summary of generative mechanisms leading to negative outcomes by family.

The Greenhouse for Growth	The Personal Boost	The Attention Factory	The Real Life Simulator
Club Ethos Putting team first (quashed individuality) **Coaches' Behaviours** Negative teaching Negative emotions **Parental Support/Influence** Parental negative influence The overinvolved parent **Social Support/Influence** Being different Lack of social time	**Experience of Success** Exposure to success (feeling superior to others leading to disrespectful behaviours and a general sense of entitlement) **Steam Release** Letting off steam (leading to negative behaviours such as uncontrolled aggression or occasional drinking)	**Love for the Game** Personal infatuation with the game (leading to general demotivation to do anything other than sport)	**Competition** High pressure Pathological desire to win (leading to immoral decisions) Internal competition External competition

Bullying

3.4. The Importance of Context

In keeping with the RE approach, the study also reflected on the impact of the context in the range of outcomes and mechanisms discussed by contributors. Following thw work of Pawson [25] (p.37), we addressed four contextual layers: i) Individuals (i.e., the characteristics and capacities of the various stakeholders in the programme); ii) Interpersonal relationships (i.e., the stakeholder relationships that carry the programme); iii) Institutional settings (i.e., the rules, norms and customs local to the programme); and iv) Infrastructure (i.e., the wider social, economic and cultural setting of the programme). Individuals and their relationships will be treated jointly; interviewees reported them as inseparable.

3.4.1. Individuals and Interpersonal Relationships

Four main groups of stakeholders were identified; club officials, coaches, parents and players. Club officials and coaches were primarily ex-high school teachers or past club players with a stated 'genuine' disposition to care for others supplemented by years of successfully working with young people in school and sport settings. Their unity drove 'what the club was about': prioritising positive relationships and personal development over winning and external success. Parents typically felt this grouping of officials and coaches was key to the club operating as it did – providing smooth alignment that integrated everyone at the club while activating every player and every team to develop individually in positive ways.

Parents also played a significant part in the workings of the club. As a diverse cohort with a broad range of backgrounds (i.e., ethnic, educational and socio-economic), parental involvement was typically and mainly seen as positive. Three profiles were described by parents and coaches during the interviews and focus groups: i) 'peripheral parents' tended to stay outside of activities and maintained a predominantly transactional relationship with people and events associated with the club; ii) 'rarely-seen parents' were typically working shifts, having to look after younger siblings or simply living too far away and having no transport; and iii) 'core parents' who became club volunteers, playing roles such as team manager, mini-bus driver, table official, fund raiser, match steward, etc.

Parental dispositions reflected levels and styles of engagement. Playing-based and player-based outcome expectations moderated this experience. Most parents recognised the slim chance of their son making a living out of basketball; they instead emphasised the 'added value' of participation as their main concern. For fewer parents, winning national titles, playing for Great Britain and getting a college scholarship were the main drivers for involvement. The 'added value' group deployed more adaptive and supportive attitudes; they focused more on the positive developmental outcomes of participation and less on their son's playing time or performance. They were relatively content to 'belong' and to feel 'included' in the club environment. This attachment style may be moderated by the characteristics of the players as described below.

Players, like their families, were also highly heterogenous. Two main elements differentiated player experience and outcomes: i) level of parental support; and ii) pecking order within the club in terms of their expected progress. High parental support was linked to greater confidence, emotional wellbeing and emotional control. However, it was also connected to a sense of entitlement or - in the case of overinvolved parents - to lowered confidence and outbursts of bad temper. 'Low' parental support often created space for players to develop their resilience and self-responsibility, leading them to take charge of their own management and progress.

In relation to the playing pecking order, having high prospects and extended playing time was related to positive identity, a strong sense of hope and life purpose and higher

confidence. Yet, a high ranking was also linked to taking a different inter-personal stance; selfishness and disrespect for lower ranked players were noted. By contrast, players with lower personal evaluations risked developing low self-esteem, decreased emotional well-being and be prone to selfish acts to compensate. Despite this risk, powerful integrative, and developmental daily routines (i.e., training plans) coupled with a strong sense of identity meant that few lower ranked players were reported to exhibit these problematic responses.

3.4.2. Institutional Settings

The institutional settings incorporate the rules, norms and customs local to the programme. Four main features were reported: i) the explicit humanistic ethos of the club – rooted in the personal beliefs of the club founders; ii) inclusivity – the club hosted both a national league programme and community leagues and operated a low-cost policy to facilitate access; iii) member expectations – all club members contribute to its smooth running by embodying its positive principles and carrying out required chores; and iv) the role of the basketball centre – the facility itself created a socially-rich environment which contributed to the development of a strong sense of belonging and enhanced wellbeing. As a result, the perception amongst all interviewees was that club members tended to spend much more time at the centre than required by their training schedule. In effect, the basketball club seemed to operate as a de facto community centre where players and parents gathered to share in their love of the sport and each other's company.

3.4.3. Infrastructure

With regards to the wider social, economic and cultural setting in which the programme is embedded, a number of elements warrant special attention: i) set in an inner-city neighbourhood of a large city in the north of England, the centre attracts a broad range of families from multiple ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds. Inner-city young people from working-class families shared the space with middle-class youths living in suburbs as far as 40 miles away. This diversity was seen by interviewees as a catalyst for positive development mirroring the real world, providing children with a wider perspective and broader horizons; ii) the northern location strongly translated into a sense of 'northern identity' characterised by grit, toughness and a need to prove oneself to 'The South'; and iii) the minority-sport nature of basketball in the UK underpinned the development of a marked 'cult-like identity'. Belonging to a very unique 'baller' community, with a distinct life-style, leisure profile, and sense of fashion created a common identity. The low profile of the sport with few professional opportunities also meant that players and their families typically aspired to gain a scholarship to a USA College on completion of their secondary education. This facilitated a greater focus by the club on the long term development of the player and on the prioritisation of academic achievement by players and their families.

In sum, the above description of the multiple layers of the context and their impact on the generative mechanisms and developmental outcomes serves the purpose of re-emphasising the integrated, multi-dimensional, and highly individualised nature of the sport experience for young players. Table 6 provides a summary of the most salient contextual features.

Table 6. Most salient contextual features.

Most Salient Contextual Features
Individual and Interpersonal Level
Personal values and beliefs
Socioeconomic status
Coaches professional background
Parental involvement and attitudes

Pecking order
Institutional Level
Club ethos
Club status
Club owned facility
High contact time
Infrastructure
Minority sport
Lack of professional pathways

4. Discussion

This study used a RE approach to study psychosocial development in youth sport in a novel way. This – Part 1 – account has detailed the perceptions of former and current club parents, players and coaches, using them to build a set of programme theories – configurations of outcomes, context and mechanisms. The resulting network of outcomes and generative mechanisms spanning across multiple contextual layers provided a nuanced understanding of stakeholders' views and experiences. To respond to the many and dynamic needs of young people and the people who support them, the club appears to respond with a similarly complex offer, embodied by expectations and accountabilities built into the give-and-take of its routines, practices and rituals. No silver bullets for positive development were reported in this club [9,10]; instead high expectations placed on club members, and a group of stakeholders who were energised and committed to sacrificing and to hard work, done well and persistently, appeared to drive the outcomes [11,18,38]. This textured perspective of the multi-faceted process of development moves the study of psychosocial development in sport beyond the limitations of existing research and identifies the depth and integration of what goes into creating developmental experiences in sport [18,21].

The results highlight the complex and systemic nature of the development process wherein a variety of factors and elements combine, interact and catalyse in multiple, non-linear ways to produce highly individualised outcomes. Within this context, and in line with previous research, the figure of the coach was revealed as a key modulator and catalyst [21,28,39]. Finally, in line with previous literature, the study found that, despite a broad range of possible outcomes resulting from sport participation, the player's internal and external assets and the personal narrative they attached to the experience played a powerful role in determining the scale of their development [21,40].

The use of a RE methodology addresses calls for a more systemic and process-based approach [14,20,21]. Identifying an emerging network of outcomes and generative mechanisms, filtered by individual, relational, institutional, and infrastructure contextual features as hinted at by Kochanek and Erickson [41], this study moves beyond the typically reductionist approach taken in existing work. This adds depth and utility to current theoretical conceptualisations [14,21,42,43]. Likewise, this investigation answers the need to conduct ecologically-valid research [22,44] by studying psychosocial development into an organised youth sport context - where the majority of participants and practitioners operate. Moreover, this paper problematised development in youth sport by highlighting the potential for both positive and negative outcomes [9,10,23].

Most importantly, however, the study highlights the complexity of youth sport as a developmental system. This intricacy is linked to the complexity of human development [45] and the myriad actors and potential generative mechanisms that combine - in multiple ways - to interact with the young person's existing assets and personal narratives [38]. Unsurprisingly, this leads to highly individualised outcomes. Despite this inherent complexity, using the RE framework has helped to make these intricate processes more accessible to practitioners [25]. By identifying and then classifying a clear set of developmental outcomes and mechanisms, sport psychologists, coaches and programme leaders are

provided with a concrete menu of options to facilitate programme design and implementation. Similarly, the study highlights the return on investment from deploying a tailored, deliberate and integrative approach to personal development in organised sport [6,11]. This calls all stakeholders to reconsider how their existing programmes address this wide range of features in their day to day processes.

Notwithstanding these findings, this study represents only one half of the RE process. Once the stakeholder's PTs are established, it is necessary to test how these elements and processes feature in the 'live' environment. This 'coalface' analysis may reveal previously unseen components and relationships to challenge existing participants' views; it may also unearth important new areas of inquiry and implementation. This is what Layder calls "adaptive theory" [27], the never-ending cycle of refinement of existing theory based on new emerging data to arrive at new insights. To address this, part 2 of the study will detail the full-season ethnographic immersion of the lead author into the club's environment. Through this multi-stage process, part 2 will also present an evidence-based, theory-driven and practitioner-oriented model of psychosocial development in youth sport together with recommendations for future research.

References

1. Pawson, Ray, and Nick Tilley. 1997. *Realistic Evaluation*. London: SAGE Publications Inc.
2. Alberga, A. S., R. J. Sigal, G. Goldfield, D. Prud Homme, and G. P. Kenny. 2012. "Overweight and Obese Teenagers: Why Is Adolescence a Critical Period?" *Pediatric Obesity* 7 (4): 261–73. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2047-6310.2011.00046.x.
3. Biddle, Stuart J.H., and Mavis Asare. 2011. "Physical Activity and Mental Health in Children and Adolescents: A Review of Reviews." *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 45 (11): 886–95. https://doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2011-090185.
4. Smith, Jordan J., Narelle Eather, Philip J. Morgan, Ronald C. Plotnikoff, Avery D. Faigenbaum, and David R. Lubans. 2014. "The Health Benefits of Muscular Fitness for Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis." *Sports Medicine* 44 (9): 1209–23. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-014-0196-4.
5. Holt, Nicholas L., Martin Camiré, Katherine A. Tamminen, Kurtis Pankow, Shannon R. Pynn, Leisha Strachan, Dany J. MacDonald, and Jessica Fraser-Thomas. 2018. "PYDSportNET: A Knowledge Translation Project Bridging Gaps between Research and Practice in Youth Sport." *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action* 9 (2): 132–46. https://doi.org/10.1080/21520704.2017.1388893.
6. Pierce, Scott, Kelsey Kendellen, Martin Camiré, and Daniel Gould. 2018. "Strategies for Coaching for Life Skills Transfer." *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action* 9 (1): 11–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/21520704.2016.1263982.
7. Commission, European. 2020. "Expert Group on Skills and Human Resources Development in Sport Guidelines Regarding the Minimum Requirements in Skills and Competences for Coaches." https://doi.org/10.2766/69405.

8.   Sport England. 2021. "Uniting the Movement."London: Sport England

9.   Coakley, Jay. 2011. "Youth Sports: What Counts as 'Positive Development?'" *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 35 (3): 306–24. https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723511417311.

10. Coalter, Fred. 2013. *Sport for Development: What Game Are We Playing?* Abingdon: Routledge.

11. Bean, Corliss, Sara Kramers, Tanya Forneris, and Martin Camiré. 2018. "The Implicit/Explicit Continuum of Life Skills Development and Transfer." *Quest* 70 (4): 456–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2018.1451348.

12. Turnnidge, Jennifer, Jean Côté, and David J. Hancock. 2014. "Positive Youth Development From Sport to Life: Explicit or Implicit Transfer?" *Quest* 66 (2): 203–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2013.867275.

13. Sport and Development. 2017. "Sport and Development." 2017. https://www.sportanddev.org/en/learn-more/what-sport-and-development .

14. Gould, Daniel, and Sarah Carson. 2008. "Life Skills Development through Sport: Current Status and Future Directions." *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology* 1 (1): 58–78. https://doi.org/10.1080/17509840701834573.

15. Hodge, Ken, and Steven Danish. 1999. "Promoting Life Skills for Adolescent Males through Sport." In *Handbook of Counseling Boys and Adolescent Males: A Practitioner's Guide*, edited by A. M. Horne and M. S. Kiselica, 55–71. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc.

16. Benson, Peter L., Nancy Leffert, Peter C. Scales, and Dale A. Blyth. 2012. "Beyond the 'Village' Rhetoric: Creating Healthy Communities for Children and Adolescents." *Applied Developmental Science* 16 (1): 3–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2012.642771.

17. Lerner, Richard M., Jason B. Almerigi, Christina Theokas, and Jacqueline V. Lerner. 2005. "Positive Youth Development: A View of the Issues." *Journal of Early Adolescence* 25 (1): 10–16. https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431604273211.

18. Holt, Nicholas L., Kacey C. Neely, Linda G. Slater, Martin Camiré, Jean Côté, Jessica Fraser-Thomas, Dany Macdonald, Leisha Strachan, and Katherine A. Tamminen. 2017. "A Grounded Theory of Positive Youth Development through Sport Based on Results from a Qualitative Meta-Study." *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology* 10 (1): 1–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2016.1180704.

19. Whitley, Meredith A., William V. Massey, Martin Camire, Lindsey C. Blom, Megan Chawansky, Shawn Forde, Mish Boutet, Amanda Borbee, and Simon C. Darnell. 2019. "A Systematic Review of Sport for Development Interventions across Six Global Cities." *Sport Management Review* 22 (2): 181–93. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2018.06.013.

20. Holt, N.L, and K.C Neely. 2011. "POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SPORT : A REVIEW Nicholas L . Holt & Kacey C . Neely The Concept of Positive Youth." *Revista De Iberoamericana De Psicología Del Ejercicio Y El Deporte* 6 (2): 299–316.

21. Pierce, Scott, Daniel Gould, and Martin Camiré. 2017. "Definition and Model of Life Skills Transfer." *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology* 10 (1): 186–211. https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2016.1199727.

22. Holt, Nicholas L., and Gareth W Jones. 2008. "Future Directions for Positive Youth Development and Sport Research." In *Positive Youth Development Through Sport*, edited by Nicholas L. Holt, 122–31. Abingdon: Routledge.

23. Hartmann, Douglas, and Christina Kwauk. 2011. "Sport and Development: An Overview, Critique, and Reconstruction." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 35 (3): 284–305. https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723511416986.

24. Kay, Tess. 2009. "Developing through Sport: Evidencing Sport Impacts on Young People." *Sport in Society* 12 (9): 1177–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/17430430903137837.

25. Pawson, Ray. 2013. *The Science of Evaluation: A Realist Manifesto*. London: SAGE Publications Inc.

26. Archer, Margaret. 1995. *Realist Social Theory*. Cmabridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511557675.

27. Layder, Derek. 1998. *Sociological Practice: Linking Theory and Social Research*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc. https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781849209946.

28. North, Julian. 2017. *Sport Coaching Research and Practice: Ontology, Interdisciplinarity and Critical Realism*. Abingdon: Routledge.

29. Lara-Bercial, Sergio, and Jim Mckenna. 2018. "PsyTool Supplement Suppl 3." *Journal of Sport Psychology* 27: 53–58.

30. North, Julian. 2013. "A Critical Realist Approach to Theorising Coaching Practice." In *Routledge Handbook of Sports Coaching*, 133–44. London: Routledge.

31. Dohme, Lea-Cathrin, Alexandra J. Rankin-Wright, and Sergio Lara-Bercial. 2019. "Beyond Knowledge Transfer: The Role of Coach Developers as Motivators for Lifelong Learning." *International Sport Coaching Journal* 6 (3): 317–28. https://doi.org/10.1123/iscj.2019-0034.

32. Lusted, Jim. 2018. "A Critical Realist Morphogenetic Approach to Researching Sport Policy: Reflections on a Large-Scale Study of Policy Implementation in Grassroots English Football." *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 10 (4): 705–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2018.1522658.

33. Creswell, John W. 2013. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc.

34. Schwandt, Thomas. 2015. *Qualitative Enquiry: A Dictionary of Terms*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc.

35. Simons, Helen. 2009. *Case Study Research in Practice*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

36. Sparkes, Andrew, and Brett Smith. 2013. *Qualitative Research Methods in Port, Exercise and Health: From Process to Product*. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203852187.

37. QRS International. 2015. "N-VIVO Qualitative Analysis Software." Burlington: QRS International.

38. Benson, Peter. 2006. *All Kids Are Our Kids: What Communities Must Do to Raise Caring and Responsible Children and Adolescents*. 2nd Editio. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

39. Newland, Aubrey, Maria Newton, E. Whitney G. Moore, and W. Eric Legg. 2019. "Transformational Leadership and Positive Youth Development in Basketball." *International Sport Coaching Journal* 6 (1): 30–41. https://doi.org/10.1123/iscj.2018-0002.

40. Pierce, Scott, Karl Erickson, and Radu Dinu. 2019. "Teacher-Coaches' Perceptions of Life Skills Transfer from High School Sport to the Classroom." *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* 31 (4): 451–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2018.1500402.

41. Kochanek, Jill, and Karl Erickson. 2020. "Interrogating Positive Youth Development Through Sport Using Critical Race Theory." *Quest* 72 (2): 224–40. https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2019.1641728.

42. Martinek, Thomas. 2017. "Enhancing Youth Development Programs Through Logic Model Assessment." *Revista Internacional de Ciencias Del Deporte* 49 (13): 302–16. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5232/ricyde2017.04908.

43. Bronfenbrenner, Uri. 2005. *Making Human Beings Human: Bioecological Perspectives on Human Development*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc.

44. Wells, MS, and SG Arthur-Banning. 2008. "The Logic of Youth Development: Constructing a Logic Model of Youth Development through Sport." *Journal of Park and Recreation …* 26 (2): 189–202. http://js.sagamorepub.com/jpra/article/view/1330.

45. Petitpas, Albert J., Allen E. Cornelius, Judy L. Van Raalte, and Tiffany Jones. 2005. "A Framework for Planning Youth Sport Programs That Foster Psychosocial Development." *Sport Psychologist* 19 (1): 63–80. https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.19.1.63.

-
-
-
-