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The Impact of Relationships on Youth Developmental Outcomes in a Sport-Based Setting

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The Impact of Relationships on Youth Developmental Outcomes in a Sport-Based Setting

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Introduction

Participation in sports and structured physical activity brings about numerous benefits to youth in terms of physical, social and academic development (Aspen Project Play, 2019). Specific examples of such beneficial developmental factors include improved cognitive skills, self-esteem and leadership ability, among many others (Aspen Project Play, 2019). Piche (2015) found that children in grades kindergarten through 4th who participated in structured physical activities saw increased classroom engagement and decreased physical aggression and impulsivity.

Despite the positive benefits that structured physical activity programs can bring, individuals from low income backgrounds are often times shut out from participation due to the associated costs. Participation rates for children from lower income brackets has been trending down in recent years. In 2017, only 34.1 percent of youth aged 6 to 12 from households with incomes $25,000 or less participated in sport; compared to a 64 percent participation rate for those whose household income was $75,000 to $99,000 and 69 percent whose household income was $100,000 or above (Aspen Project Play, 2019).

According to a Hartford demographic report (2014), 45 percent of Hartford households have an income of $25,000 or less. The US Census (2018) shows that 30.5 percent of Hartford residents live below the poverty line. That number is even higher among Hartford youth, with 36.9 percent of children living below the poverty line (City-Data, 2016). In communities where prosocial involvement is limited and there is a greater exposure to risk (Riley & Anderson, 2012), the presence of structured physical activity programs could greatly impact youth development.

The current study takes a deeper look into Sport Hartford, an in-school physical activity program that takes place in a low-income neighborhood in the city of Hartford. The program is of no cost for students to participate and provides the demographic of students mentioned above an opportunity to access the benefits that physical activity/sports programming offers.

In examining the benefits that structured physical activity programs provide, the specific factors that contribute to such positive development are often times overlooked. Generally, claims are made that participation in physical activity programs play a part in positive youth development, yet the specific factors that contribute to this development are very rarely mentioned. This may include how interactions with teammates and peers build the youths' interpersonal skills, or the influence a coach/adult figure may have on the behavior and/or outcome of the youth. For example, the general claim that youth develop stronger interpersonal skills by participating in physical activity programs could be further substantiated by the interactions and relationships these youth have with individuals within the program (with their peers, with adults, etc.). Lastly, many studies take aim at only the positive impacts that such programs have on youth without examining potential detrimental effects.

Assuming a 7-hour school day and 180 days of school, the average student will spend a little over 1,000 hours in school during the year (National Center On Education and The Economy, 2018). One could argue that [presumptively] next to immediate family, a student spends the most time with their teacher and classmates and therefore these people play a major role in the student's overall development. According to Eccles (1999), children dramatically develop their fundamental learning and self-awareness skills during middle childhood (ages 6 to 10). Eccles further states that two key forces to developing these skills are "a broadening of children's worlds to encompass peers, adults and activities outside the family" and "exposure to

social comparison and competition in school classrooms and peer groups". Through a youth's 1,000 hours spent in school each year, their development is heavily impacted by the interactions they have with said individuals (teachers, classmates and other adults) in said environment (school/classroom setting). Sport Hartford creates an environment where students are exposed to people and activities outside of their normal family setting, and where healthy competition and learning is embraced.

The purpose of this study is to examine different youth development factors through a structured in-school physical activity program (Sport Hartford) in a low-income neighborhood. The study will focus on the relationships and interactions that 3rd and 4th grade participants have with each other, with their teachers, and with the staff members involved with a specific physical activity program, Sport Hartford Grows. The study will further examine the impact that these three types of relationships and interactions have on youth development, both positive and negative. In other words, the study will look at how the three aforementioned groups (students, teachers, staff members) interact with one another to contribute to youth development through a structured physical activity program.

Theoretical Framework

Positive Youth Development

Vierimaa, Erickson, Cote and Gilbert (2012) describe positive youth development (PYD) as a perspective on youth that suggests all young people possess the potential for positive, successful, and healthy development. Furthermore, such development can occur through the acquisition of certain competencies, assets, values and life skills (Jones, Dunn & Holt, 2011).

Holistically put, PYD is the positive developmental effect on the youth as a result of the youth's environment and the collective factors within that environment. Such 'factors' can be examined through one of the main models that has been used to measure the various outcomes of PYD; the 5 C's (Lerner et al., 2005). The 5 C's encompasses the developmental characteristics of competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion. A sixth "C", contribution, was further developed as a result of studies applying the aforementioned 5 C's (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008).

Much of Lerner's work with regards to PYD is derived from his studies focused on out-of-school time (OST) activity. Lerner's work, to date, has been focused on individual development and how contextual factors (i.e. family assets, how OST is spent) contribute to that development (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008). Through Lerner's conducting of OST studies, it was discovered that increased involvement in OST activities promoted PYD. Furthermore, it was through these studies in which the 6th 'C' of contribution was derived.

Sport-Based Youth Development

The concept of sport-based youth development (SBYD) is grounded in PYD and looks at how the 5 C's model (and the 6th C) can be applied in a sports setting. SBYD uses Lerner et al.'s (2005) 5 C's model and applies that same model within the context of sport. Moreover, SBYD further investigates the impact that each "C" has on youth in a sport-based setting and on what life skills (team-building, communication, decision-making, problem-solving, etc.) can be developed through a specific sport or sports program(s). Competence refers to the positive views of an individual's action in areas that can range from social to cognitive development. Confidence refers to the individual's sense of positive self-worth and self-efficacy. Connection refers to bonds between the youth and their peers, family, school and community that affect the

relationship. Character refers to youths' possession of morals, integrity and societal norms. Caring/Compassion refers to the youths' showcase of sympathy and empathy towards others. Contribution refers to the youth's overall contribution to themselves, their families, their community and to society as a whole (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008).

Lerner's findings indicated that the more OST activities youth participate in, the higher they score on the PYD scale, the findings never specifically described what life skills were developed, the contributing factors to that development or which of the 5 C's were more present than the others. However, the findings did indicate and support an increased presence of the 6th 'C' (contribution) in youth that participated in more OST activities, in turn creating a trickle-down effect of development from the youth onto others that they interacted with (i.e. family, community members, peers). With sport and physical activity being a prominent OST activity, it is widely believed that the environment that sport provides for youth will lead to an unveiling of Lerner's 5 C's within a sport context, and in bring to light the presence positive youth development [factors] through sports programming and activities.

To date, little empirical research has been conducted using the 5 C's in a sport context (Vierimaa et al. 2012). Additionally, Jones et al. (2011) have stated that further research is needed to examine the empirical validity of PYD in sport contexts, and that no empirical evidence supporting the existence of the 5 C's in sport has been provided. Two years following this claim, Fuller, Percy, Bruening and Cotrufo (2013) conducted one of the few empirical studies on a smaller scale that examined the effect of PYD in a sport setting afterschool.

One of the main components of SBYD and PYD through sport is intentionality. Fraser-Thomas, Cote and Deakin (2007) state that such [SBYD] programs need to be explicitly designed to teach good habits and positive life skills. Additionally, during a 2006 summit, a

group of social entrepreneurs put forth a variety of identifying characteristics of SBYD (see

Table 1) (Perkins & Noam, 2007).

Table 1. SBYD Characteristics

Characteristic	Description
Physical/Psychological Safety	Providing a safe haven physically and emotionally, where the emotional climate of the session is predominantly positive with few negative behaviors.
Appropriate Structure	Programs has appropriate flow and pace of sessions with activities and expectations explained clearly by staff.
Supportive Relationships	An establishment of trusted connections; intentionality of building positive relationships.
Opportunities to Belong	Activities that foster friendships and promote a positive group experience. Relationships are inclusive with a lack of small cliques.

Positive Social Norms	A positive peer group culture that allows for the acquisition of social skills.
Support for Self-Efficacy and Mattering	Places an emphasis on individual self-improvement as opposed to peer group improvements.
Opportunities for skill-building	Skill development (leadership, decision-making, communication, etc.) through team-building experiences.
Integration of family, school, and community efforts	Constant communication and ties with families and schools to create similar cultures across the three and the community, sending youth a consistent message across lines.

This study will use SBYD and Lerner's 5 C's to:

- Determine the presence of the 5 C's in sports-based programming

- Investigate youth developmental outcomes through the Sport Hartford program, with implications for other SBYD programs

- Examine the contributing factors that relationships have on youth development through a sports-based program

Furthermore, while the purpose of the study is to examine how relationships within a sport-based program influence youth development, a specific focus will be placed on the 'C' of connection and how connection impacts not only youth development, but each of Lerner's 5 C's in a sport-based setting.

Literature Review

Positive Youth Development (PYD)

Ross et al. (1998) define positive youth development (PYD) as "the engagement in pro-social behaviors and avoidance of health compromising behaviors and future jeopardizing behaviors" (p. 426). More simply put, PYD is the acquisition of competence, assets, values, and life skills (Jones, Dunn & Holt, 2011). Throughout the evolution of PYD, a series of models have been developed to further shape the framework. Little (1993) put forth the 4 C's model which suggested competence, confidence, connection and character as the four main constructs of PYD. Through further research and examination, Lerner (2005) proposed a 5 C's model, adding "caring/compassion" as a fifth construct. Côté et al. (2010) combined both Little and Lerner's work to offer a collapsed 4 C's model to encompass the 5th 'C' of caring/compassion under "character". It is widely believed that the PYD framework is present in a variety of settings and contexts, including sport(s).

Sport-Based Youth Development (SBYD) Programs

Sport-based youth development (SBYD) programs use sport as a connector to teach an array of life skills to the youth that participate (Fuller et al. 2013). Furthermore, Perkins & Noam (2007) describe sport-based youth development programs as programs that occur outside of school using a particular sport to facilitate learning and life skill development in youth. However, the classification of such a program has expanded to also include programs that occur during the school day. Perkins & Noam (2007) list the following as three main components of the SBYD experience/program:

- Opportunities that nurture positive relationships among youth and adults and youth and their peers

- Program staff identify and target certain skills for youth to develop

- The experience/program is tailored towards the needs of the [youth] participants

In a broader sense, SBYD programs place a strong focus on the development of targeted life skills and healthy habits through a specific sport(s). To date, a number of programs have set out to use sport as a means to develop positive life skills and characteristics of youth. A majority of these programs occur during out-of-school time (afterschool, summer, etc.), with few taking place on a larger [global/national] scale. For the sake of this study, I will focus specifically on domestic (U.S.) SBYD programs.

Relationship Impact

Zarrett & Lerner (2008) describe "connection" as "positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in exchanges between the individual and his or her peers, family,

school, and community in which both parties contribute to the relationship" (p. 2). Adult

influence plays a large role in how youth interact with their peer groups and the adults in the

program, based on their management, intentionality and implementation of programming [goals].

SBYD programs have caring adults that establish trusted connections with youth affecting youth

development in various forms such as improved peer interactions, self-motivation and behavior

(Perkins & Noam, 2007). In the context of team sports, we may talk about the impact a coach has

on his/her player(s) and the interactions between the player and their teammates. However, in the

context of an SBYD program, there are multiple existing relationships and relationship factors

involved that impact that particular youths' development.

Within the context of team sports, Veirimaa et al. (2012) describe connection as "a

measure of the quality of relationships and degree of interaction with peers and coaches in the

immediate sport environment" (p. 607). Vierimaa et al.'s (2012) study sought out to investigate

the claim that team sports programs produce positive sport-related developmental outcomes

citing the coach as a factor that plays an influential role in positive developmental outcomes in

athletes.

Holt (2016) states that "youth development programs are only as effective as the adults

that deliver them" (p. 62). Holt (2016) also stated that few empirical studies exist that have

examined the qualities of effective mentors. Giving the emphasis placed on caring adult figures

in SBYD programs, some programs, such as Play It Smart, train their staff to develop trusting

relationships with students (Holt, 2016). However, it would seem that most program training is

not as much relationship focused, but more so academic focused. Play It Smart employees

receive extensive training om study skills, crisis management and life-work planning (Holt,

2016) which is more targeted toward ensuring the academic success of their student-athletes. The

First Tee (TFT) is an SBYD program that places a large emphasis on mentorships and relationships between [adult] coaches and youth participants. The program conducts deliberate training for coaches to ensure effective delivery of life lessons in a "youth-friendly manner" (Weiss et al., 2013). TFT focuses on the self-improvement of its participants as compared to social comparison, a concept further enforced by coaches' specific attention to the youth's goals and desires (Holt, 2016). TFT coaches spent an average of 4 years coaching in the program, assisting Rhodes, Grossman and Roffman's (2002) claim that "youth who were in relationships that lasted a year or longer reported improvements in academic, psychosocial and behavioral outcomes".

One of the main relationships that is often time overlooked in SBYD programs is that between the adults delivering the program and participant parents and/or guardians. Perkins & Noam (2007) speak to the importance of integrating family and community into SBYD program practices. It is crucial that the developmental factors of focus within a particular SBYD program are further enforced and examined outside the program itself. By establishing and building upon relationships with those that live with the youth participants, such developmental factors can be further enhanced in and out of the program.

Tenacity is an SBYD program out of Boston, MA that uses tennis athletic activities integrated with literacy, tutoring and mentoring to promote academic motivation and achievement (http://www.tenacity.org). Programs like Tenacity place a high value on the importance of parent involvement within their program(s). As a part of Tenacity, parents participate in multiple home visits during the year to ensure their child's participation in the program, are required to attend award ceremonies, and are encouraged to play with their kids

outside of program time (Berlin *et al.* 2007). Furthermore, the program facilitates regular, open communication with participant families (Berlin *et al.* 2007).

DREAM is a SBYD program based in East Harlem, NY that aims to use baseball and softball to provide inner-city youth with opportunities to play, learn and grow, and to develop the life skills to become competent, confident and caring adults (http://www.wearedream.org). DREAM has initiated a Family Action Council (FAC), Parenting Journey and family workshops to further involve families with their children outside of program, as well as to give them a voice in their programs. The FAC develops activities and projects for DREAM families as well as serving as the communication medium for families, administration and program staff (http://www.wearedream.org). Parenting Journey and family workshops offer parents with the opportunity to further connect themselves to the community, while also giving them the skills to build safer, stronger families (http://www.wearedream.org).

By getting parents involved with such programming, they are able to positively contribute to their child's development, specifically as it pertains to academic and language skills, and social competence (Hill & Taylor, 2004). This is crucial considering the importance that SBYD programs place on academic enrichment and development.

Academic Impact

Academic enrichment/development is a core component for many SBYD programs, whether directly or indirectly connected to the life skills component. With all SBYD programs having school-aged participants, academics become a major developmental focus for such programs, and furthermore a measurement tool for SBYD programs to measure their effectiveness.

Programs like DREAM and Tenacity serve youth that live in urban areas and come from lower-socioeconomic backgrounds, where youth are "less prepared to begin school, demonstrate deficits in school achievement and experience continued risk for academic failure" (Mahoney, Lord & Carryl, 2005). However, participation in physical activity and structured sports programming is linked to improvements in school attendance, grades, course rigor and educational aspirations (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005).

Programs like DREAM that aim to practice physical literacy, achieve academic success and embody social emotional competencies (http://www.wearedream.org) break up their academic focuses based on age group (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Dream Program Breakdown and Focuses*

Program (grades)	Focus
Real Kids (K-5)	Increasing reading levels and building social and emotional skills
Teambuilders (6-8)	Academic preparation for high school and building of healthy relationships
Dreamworks (9-12)	College and SAT prep; work opportunities
Legends (College+)	Ongoing support for a successful career

http://www.wearedream.org

From a long-term standpoint, programs such as DREAM use theses academic focuses and benchmarks to measure their effectiveness through graduation rates and college matriculation of program participants.

With Tenacity, a stronger focus is placed on the game of tennis and the development of life skills at the elementary and middle school levels. However, once matriculated to high school and college, a much greater emphasis is placed on academic enrichment. The College Prep program provides academic support to high school students and prepares students for college and other post-secondary opportunities, placing a strong emphasis on graduation. The program also offers post-secondary services to promote continued success of post-secondary students and assist them with any challenges they may face during college (http://www.tenacity.org).

Life Skills Impact

The targeting of specific life skills is another core component of an SBYD program. Perkins & Noam (2007) states that SBYD programs must develop skills and competencies through its activities and team-building experiences, allowing youth to build life skills through sport. Programs may hone in on a specific life skills or a variety of such, including but not limited to communication, teamwork, self-worth, emotional/behavioral management and nutrition/physical activity.

Girls on the Run (GOTR) is a running program that serves over 185,000 girls in 3rd through 8th grade, aiming to develop social, physical and psychological skills of its participants through its encouragement of lifelong health and fitness, and building confidence through accomplishment (www.girlsontherun.org). GOTR aims to develop "the whole girl"; through the themes of body, brain, heart, spirit and social connection. GOTR does this by integrating an

experience-based curriculum that focuses on life skills like team building, developing a support system, boundary setting, decision-making, and asking for and providing help. While the program touches upon all these specific life skills, the curriculum is centered around physical activity, relationship building and self-worth.

DREAM focuses on a balance between physical activity/healthy habits and social skills (Berlin *et al.* 2007). Through baseball and softball, the program's main life skill focuses for youth are to practice physical literacy, achieve academic success and embody social emotional competencies (http://www.wearedream.org). As touched upon previously, DREAM places a much stronger and primary emphasis and the academic enrichment (physical literacy) as its main developmental factor while also focusing on social competency.

Stakeholders and individuals alike heavily influence the implementation and effectiveness of an SBYD program, and the specific components encompassed within. The proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" is epitomized through the collective body of individuals involved in the facilitation of such programs.

Campus-Community Partnerships

Bringle & Hatcher (2002) describe a campus-community partnership as a series of interpersonal relationships between campus administrators, faculty, staff, and students, and community leaders, agency personnel, and members of communities. Sport Hartford, similarly, is a program that positively engages college students, faculty and staff with members of a nearby urban community (Bruening et al., 2015). The program utilizes intentional sport programming to facilitate positive relationships between members of the campus, and members of the community (Bruening et al., 2015). Sport Hartford operates in-school, afterschool and weekend program for

students in grades K-12, creating partnerships and operating out of 4 community organizations, 2

high schools, and 3 elementary/middle schools (Bruening et al. 2015). The program places strong

focuses on literacy, physical activity, nutrition and college prep for its students (Bruening et al.,

2015).

In the Sport Hartford program, campus members interact with the community every day

of the week, tallying in total nearly 20,000 hours of service a year (Bruening et al., 2015).

Campus students have the option of taking a one credit course which requires 12 hours of

campus-community service/engagement, or a three credit course which requires 40 hours of

campus-community service/engagement (Bruening et al., 2015).

The partnership between a college/university and community entity further enforces the

components of SBYD. The presence of academics is exemplified in that all participants in the

campus-community partnership are involved with [higher] academia, ranging from faculty and

staff to the college students themselves. The college students themselves are still in a phase of

developing certain life skills which is further exemplified and personified in their actions and

interactions [with their peers and youth]. Campus-community partnerships are heavily impactful

on youth development in the context of such programs.

Methods

Setting

Founded in 2003, Sport Hartford is a non-profit, sport-based youth development

organization that operates under East Coast University. The organization focuses on four main

areas of youth development: physical activity, nutritional education, transferrable life skills and

academic enrichment. A majority of Sport Hartford programming occurs at an urban, K-8 school with other programs taking place at local community centers after school and on the weekends. In total, Sport Hartford services over 250 students through 6 in-school programs throughout the academic year. Each in-school program is divided by the students' grade level: Sport Hartford Reads (K-2), Sport Hartford Grows (3-4), Fun Friday (K-4), Sport Hartford Moves (5-6), Sport Hartford Boys Program (7-8) and Sport Hartford Girls Program (7-8). These groups meet separately throughout the week at different frequencies and time periods (see Table 3). Each program is led by a set of program leaders who develop and implement program lesson plans for their respective programs. In addition to these program leaders, student volunteers that are a part of a service-learning course at the East Coast University come in at various points throughout the week to assist in the implementation of these programs.

In addition to conducting these programs, Sport Hartford also operates a school store in partnership with the school's initiative around Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The purpose of PBIS is to reduce disruptive behavior problems through the application of behavioral, social learning, and organizational behavior principles (Bradshaw et al. 2008). The school that Sport Hartford operated out of listed different behavior principles/rules that focused on respect, responsibility, preparedness, personal space and following directions. When these principles are followed, "positive passes" are distributed to students who exemplify them. While classroom teachers use the positive passes for different reasons (ex. classroom incentives, recess, etc.), they were used schoolwide for incentives such as "movie day" and primarily the school store, operated by Sport Hartford. With these tickets, students are able to purchase different items out of the school store including clothing, toys and nutritional snacks. Additionally, classes

were able to combine tickets to partake in a Sport Hartford hosted "recess" or tasting in which

Sport Hartford staff and the respective class prepared and ate a nutritional snack.

Sport Hartford places a large focus on the various forms of relationships that exist within

the organization (e.g. campus-community, student-teacher, adult-student, etc.) and uses such

relationships to further identify the needs of the [school] community, and to assess and

implement its programs. By using sport as a common denominator to assist in the development

and sustainability of such relationships, Sport Hartford has developed the following program

outcomes (Catalano et al. 2004):

- Increased self-esteem/self-worth as participants gain interest, knowledge and improve their physical abilities

- Increased accountability/responsibility for self as part of a small program with considerable individual attention

- Increased connections to community/sense of belonging through working closely with mentors, mentees, and peers

- Increased knowledge/acquisition of nutrition/physical activity/life skills/academic skills from the curriculum

- Application of those skills both within program, school, home, and community activities

- Active participation/recognizing one's own influence on self/others through power-sharing

In conjunction with the four main areas of youth development, program leaders consider the

aforementioned outcomes in the development and implementation of their respective programs.

Table 3. Program Overview

Program Name	Grades Served	Sessions per Week	Time per Session	# of Program Leaders	# of Classes Seen
Sport Hartford Reads	K-2	1	40 minutes	6	7
Fun Friday	K-4	1	30 minutes	7	12
Sport Hartford Grows	3-4	1	40 minutes	4	5
Sport Hartford Moves	5-6	3	30 minutes	6	4
Sport Hartford Boys Program	7-8 (Boys only)	1	90 minutes	4	4
Sport Hartford Girls Program	7-8 (Girls only)	1	90 minutes	3	4

Sport Hartford Grows

A typical Sport Hartford Grows sessions lasts approximately 40 minutes. To open the session, each class is welcomed into the classroom and introduced to the concepts for the week. Centered around the Sport Hartford pillars of nutrition, physical activity and life skills, program leaders will introduce what the sport/physical activity of focus will be for the session, along with the nutrition element of focus and life skills topic. Followed by the introduction and review, students participate in about 25 minutes of physical activity. The physical activity usually incorporates the sport/physical activity focus, the life skills focus and an educational component to teach students about the nutritional element for the section. The life skill typically has to do with one of the school's aforementioned Hi-Five PBIS rules.

Take for example a session where the physical activity of focus is plyometrics, the life skill is following directions, and the nutritional element is dairy. Plyometrics are simply defined as quick, explosive movements (ex. jump squats, lunge jumps, 1-legged hops). The program leader may name a food that is or is not a dairy (nutrition element). If the food is a dairy, they perform one plyometric exercise and if it is not, they perform a different instructed exercise (physical activity and life skill).

On occasion, Sport Hartford Grows sessions feature a monthly tasting, which allows the students to prepare and taste a food offering highlighted by the nutritional element of the session. Tastings in the past have included yogurt parfait (dairy), fruit pizza (fruit) and cucumber dill salad (vegetables) among many others.

At the end of the session, students are brought back together to review the concepts and focuses of the session. Throughout the session, students are awarded positive passes in

conjunction with the school's PBIS system. At the end of the session, the accumulated tickets are entered into a raffle in which the selected student wins a prize.

Participants

Participants for the current study were recruited from the 3rd and 4th grade classes that participated in the Sport Hartford Grows program. Each lead classroom teacher and 4 students from each of the 5 classes were selected to participate in the study. I, along with the lead classroom teacher identified 4 students from each respective class that had consistent attendance in class, consistent attendance in the Sport Hartford Grows program, and was engaged during their participation in the Sport Hartford Grows program. In addition to the above-mentioned criteria, further inclusion criteria for students included interest in participating in the study along with the completion of an informed assent form. Inclusion criteria for teachers were a class that participated in Sport Hartford Grows programming, being a classroom teacher, and interest in participating in the study. The demographics for the participant pool can be found in Table 4.

Table 4. Participant pool demographics

Participant	Gender	Grade	Class
Ms. Dominguez	Female	3	N/A
Ms. Johnson	Female	3	N/A
Ms. Emerson	Female	3	N/A
Mr. Kastner	Male	4	N/A
Ms. Allison	Female	4	N/A
Emmanuel	Male	3	Dominguez
Nick	Male	3	Dominguez

Jeremiah	Male	3	Dominguez
Deja	Female	3	Dominguez
Aniyah	Female	3	Johnson
Isaiah	Male	3	Johnson
Jonathan	Male	3	Johnson
Sam	Male	3	Johnson
Eduardo	Male	3	Emerson
Freddie	Male	3	Emerson
Neziah	Male	3	Emerson
Janet	Female	3	Emerson
Liliana	Female	4	Kastner
Andrea	Female	4	Kastner
Javonte	Male	4	Kastner
Gregory	Male	4	Kastner
Amari	Male	4	Allison
Oscar	Male	4	Allison
Charlotte	Female	4	Allison
Kelly	Female	4	Allison

Subjectivity Statement

My motivation for conducting such a study stemmed from my experiences as a youth. During my childhood years, I was not privy to participation in structured physical activity programs due to the lack of affordability of such programs. However, due to a greater presence

of scholarship opportunities and offerings in high school and college, I was able to participate in

more structured physical activity programs and benefit greatly from those environments. Sport

programs created a sense of belonging, allowed me to build lifelong relationships, and motivated

me to succeed academically. While I personally attest that my development thrived through

being able to participate in such programs (even though later in adolescence into young

adulthood), I was interested in examining if such factors and experiences existed at the

elementary level where I was not privy to such opportunities.

I previously served as a program leader for the Sport Hartford Grows program and had

developed and implemented lessons for the program. I also served as a substitute teacher in the

school that all of the participants attended. As a result, I established relationships with the

student and teacher participants and a strong understanding of the four main areas of youth

development in relation to the program. Prior to data collection and method development, one of

the main concerns was that students would be reluctant to share certain information due to being

in a group setting with peers. This concern somewhat subsided by the fact that I had prior

relationships with each of the students being interviewed. Bowers et al. (2012) state that "the

presence of important nonparental adults (INAs) in young peoples' lives has been shown to

influence adolescent outcomes such as educational accomplishments, risk and problem behaviors

and depressive symptoms" (p.299). This reluctance was further alleviated as students were

notified what the focus group would be like prior to the distribution of the assent forms.

However, because the I had a solid understanding of the relationships each of the participants

had with one another and with me, in addition to an understanding of the lives of some

participants outside of a school/SBYD program setting, probing was tailored to get some of the

participants to share further experiences as it pertained to their overall development.

As previously mentioned, I also served as a program leader in the Sport Hartford organization for 2 years, one of those years being with the Sport Hartford Grows program. As a program leader for the Sport Hartford organization, numerous professional development workshops are conducted to give further understanding to the importance of relationships in the Sport Hartford program, the tenants of SBYD, and the tenants and goals of the Sport Hartford organization. The professional development workshops further examine how all of those factors work together in affecting the work conducted by the program leaders of the organization.

In addition to my roles as a Sport Hartford program leader and substitute teacher, I also conducted a weekly group for all boys in the school grades 3-8. The program focused on healthy masculinity, healthy relationships, conflict resolution and other life skills. This provided yet another experience where I was able to establish strong connections with the [male] participants. It also provided a setting where the male participants were able to openly express their feelings, emotions and thoughts about themselves and others in the school. Additionally, while the boys group was independent of the Sport Hartford program, many of the male participants that were interviewed alluded to the impact that the program had on their development, touching base on their new-founded ability to make friends and deescalate themselves and others in high tension situations

Because of my involvement and consistent presence in the school and with the participants, I have been able to see firsthand the ways in which participants have developed, both positively and negatively. I also had a good understanding of the ways that the adults and students in the program interact with one another, and the reasons why they interact in those ways.

Although I played many roles within the school and community, given the scope of the study (being focused on Sport Hartford), participant responses may have been more so focused on their relationship with me as a Sport Hartford program leader and not within the context of their other roles. Furthermore, selected participants in the study were selected based on consistent attendance in the program, meaning these individuals had a greater sense of engagement with the investigator (as a Sport Hartford program leader). Therefore, their responses in regards to their relationship with the investigator may have been skewed towards more positive feedback than negative.

Furthermore, it possible that the strong relationships that I had with the participants contributed to much richer data and in-depth responses than in previous focus groups that were conducted by the Sport Hartford program. In my first year as a Sport Hartford program leader, I did not take on as many roles in the school and community and was not as immersed in those environments. In my second year, I increased my presence at the school and my involvement within the community also increased through my volunteering with community organizations and the development of my own non-profit basketball organization that engaged numerous youth in the community. My increased presence in the school and community allowed for additional opportunities for me to interact with the youth and their families. These interactions, in turn, strengthened my relationships with the students as well as the level of trust they had with me. The level of trust and comfort these students had may have led to their openness with me, therefore leading to more detailed responses to their answered questions.

Procedure

General Procedure

Upon institutional review board (IRB) approval, all students in grades 3 and 4 were provided with assent forms translated into both English and Spanish. Gibson (2007) states that reducing a child's anxiety in regards to participating in the study starts during recruitment. Prior to the distribution of the assent forms, students and lead classroom teachers were verbally notified what the nature of the study was, what it was about, what they would be expected to do, and a brief introduction to what the focus group would be like. Kennedy, Kools & Krueger (2001) state that for children aged 6-10, groups of 4 to 6 provoked more lively discussion and more manageable activity. Once the inclusion criteria were established, I and the lead classroom teacher identified 4 students from each of the 5 classes that met the criteria. Students were given one week from the date of distribution to return their assent forms if they did not wish to participate in the study. After the one-week period had passed, students were identified/selected and interviews/focus groups were scheduled.

2017 Spring Focus Groups

In the spring of 2017, a similar set of focus groups were conducted focusing on student participants' overall experience in Sport Hartford programming. A section of these questions focused on relationships, thus data from that set of questions were analyzed for this study. While data was collected from students in grades K through 8, only data from the student participant group of interest (Sport Hartford Grows, 3rd and 4th grade) were re-analyzed.

After examining the data of all age groups, it was discovered that responses from the 3rd-4th grade group (Sport Hartford Grows) seemed to lack the most detail. When asked about what they liked about the Sport Hartford program, most students talked about their favorite activity or favorite snack. When asked what they liked about the Sport Hartford people, they responded with one- word answers like "fun," "helpful," "nice," and "awesome," among others. However,

none of the students in this age bracket expanded on why they described Sport Hartford staff

members as such. This also seemed to be the section (relationships) that seemed to have the least

amount of discussion, particularly within this age group.

In focusing on the 3rd-4th grade group, all participants were African-American or LatinX

that had participated in the Sport Hartford Grows program at the same school. Students were

selected to participate based on the same inclusion criteria used in the current study, following

the distribution of assent forms. Similarly, four focus groups of 4-6 students were conducted.

Each focus group interview lasted approximately 20-30 minutes.

Teacher participants were sent an online survey. The online surveys were separated into

two sections; section 1 used a 5-point Likert scale with section 2 being an open-ended section.

Similar to the student focus groups, section 1 focused on the overall experience of the Sport

Hartford Grows program and did not specifically hone in on the relationship aspect of the

program. Section 2 focused entirely on Sport Hartford's implementation of PBIS via the school

store. In further examining teacher responses to the open-ended questions, many alluded to the

connection that students had with Sport Hartford staff (and vice-versa) as well as how Sport

Hartford staff held students accountable and taught the students certain life skills. However,

teacher responses to the open-ended questions on the online survey were very brief and vague

and did not allow for further analysis, thus a more descriptive prompt was created for the

purpose of this study and later probed.

Taking into account teacher and student responses within the focus groups and on the

surveys, I came to the conclusion that further analysis was needed on the presence of

relationships in the Sport Hartford program, specifically with the Sport Hartford Grows program.

These focus groups and surveys served as the basis for the relationship aspect of this study, including student responses and the multiple references to relationships in the teacher surveys.

Due to the fact that the current study operated under the same IRB as the 2017 Focus Groups, the interview guide from the current study was derived from that used during the 2017 Focus Groups. The interview guide from the 2017 Focus Groups encompassed a broader range of questions, including students' opinions on PBIS (school store), what students liked and disliked about the Sport Hartford program, and the four pillars of the Sport Hartford program, among other things. For the current study, the interview guide was condensed to include only questions having to do with relationships and the people in the Sport Hartford program.

2017 Pilot Study

In the fall of 2017, I conducted a phenomenological study to analyze teachers' experience with their students' participation in structured sports/physical activity programming. This study placed a strong focus on the fact that all students were from a low socioeconomic background. Participants in this study were 4th-6th grade teachers who had classes that participated in Sport Hartford programming. These participants were also teachers from the same school used in the current study. One teacher from each grade (4th, 5th and 6th) was interviewed. Separate IRB approval was obtained and each participant signed and returned the required informed consent form.

Two of the three teachers (4th and 5th grade) interviewed had students that participated on Sport Hartford Grows the year before (as a part of the 2017 Spring Focus Groups). One of the teachers (4th grade) had students that actively participated in the Sport Hartford Grows program.

Of the 7 main themes (see Table 5) that were uncovered in the analysis process, 4 of them were relationship-based. Within each of the seven themes, all of the teachers spoke to the numerous development characteristics witnessed through their students' experience in Sport Hartford program. Such characteristics included leadership, self-efficacy, behavior management and teamwork. All 7 themes had relationships as the core of the developmental characteristics. Data from each of the 7 themes will not only be used in the current study, but served as its impetus.

This pilot study enabled me to collect more in-depth responses from teachers about their students' development and how Sport Hartford has impacted it. The findings of the pilot study served as the basis for the developmental outcomes aspect of this study. By analyzing the 2017 Focus Groups and the pilot study, I was intrigued to find out what the connection was between relationships and student development. While more in-depth responses were received from teachers, a firsthand account and perspective from students was needed to further investigate the connection.

Table 5. Pilot Study Themes

Theme	Theme Description
I Didn't Know My Own Strength	Sport Hartford created a sense of self-discovery for students, and uncovered student traits that they themselves were not aware they possessed

Tell 'Em Why You Mad	Students that often times expressed anger and aggression found alternative ways to express those feelings in a positive manner
All for One, One for All*	The culture of sportsmanship and teamwork within Sport Hartford cultivates students' support, encouragement and appreciation for one another
The Little Engine That Could*	Students' self-confidence and ability to trust themselves and others increased participation throughout the school day
I Love College	Students take greater interest in post-secondary education
Someone Who Understands*	Students are provided with multiple outlets to discuss their feelings and express themselves
I Care About You*	Genuine adult investment in relationships with students increased trust, happiness and engagement with students

*Relationship-based theme

Student Data Collection (Focus Groups)

The interviews were conducted in focus groups, in which the four students selected from each respective class were interviewed at the same time in a group setting. Focus groups have been used with children more recently to explore their views and perspectives on a variety of

[sensitive] topics (Gibson, 2007). Gibson (2007) states that focus groups employ an interviewing technique with discussion taking place with the guidance of a moderator, with a second moderator present to take notes and observe group interactions. For this study, only one moderator was present [the investigator] for all interviews and also served as the notetaker while conducting the interviews.

Kennedy et al. (2001) state that new environments and unfamiliar adults can be anxiety provoking to younger children. The focus groups were held in a quiet classroom in the same school that programming took place and conducted by the lead investigator, whom had established prior relationships with the participants. Gibson (2007) states that use of first names, informal introductions and icebreakers to make for a more comfortable environment. Interviews began with each student stating their name and telling the group what their favorite thing about the Sport Hartford program was. Additionally, because the focus groups were determined by the student's class, and were conducted during the second semester of school, the student's already had an established rapport with one another and the moderator.

Each interview lasted anywhere from 20-35 minutes. I conducted all student interviews and audio-recorded them. Consent was given for the students to be audio-recorded through parental consent forms that were sent home, signed and returned, as well as verbal confirmation from each participant at the beginning of the interview.

Teacher Data Collection

Teacher participants were identified through the inclusion criteria of the study for teachers. Once identified, teacher participants were notified they would be receiving an email prompt to respond to in 5 days. Following this notification, teachers were sent an email prompt,

and were given a deadline to respond to. Teachers individually submitted their prompts to the

lead investigator via email. If necessary, the lead investigator asked follow-up questions to the

respective teachers through email, asking for further detail to original responses. Only one

follow-up email was sent to Mr. Kastner asking him to provide greater detail and specific

examples to his original response. No response was given. No in-person interviews (initial or

follow-up) were conducted with the teachers.

In total, 10 data sets were collected; 5 focus groups (interviews) for each of the five 3rd

and 4th grade classes, and one written prompt from each of the 5 lead classroom teachers.

Interview Guide

For student participants, a semi-structured interview guide was used in this study. For

lead teacher participants, a single open-ended prompt was sent to each participant via email. The

interview guide was created through evaluation of the original IRB and an in-depth review of

previous focus group data. As previously mentioned, questions pertaining specifically to

relationships and people within the Sport Hartford program were intentionally selected to create

the interview guide. Furthermore, the selected questions were all related to the 'C' of connection

and further focused on students' personal experiences and development within the Sport Hartford

program. The following questions were used as a part of the semi-structured student interview

guide;

- What do the Sport Hartford people do?

- When you think about Sport Hartford staff and volunteers what first comes to
  mind?

- Think about a Sport Hartford staff or volunteer you felt connected to. What about that person did you like? Is there anything you do not like about what we do?

- If you could give a message to a Sport Hartford member, what would you say?

- What are your thoughts on how the Sport Hartford staff interact with one another and with you all? What are your thoughts on the relationships with have with each other and with you all?

- What are your thoughts on the student volunteers that come in?

Certain questions were lengthy and multi-step, therefore difficult for some students to understand. As such, those questions were broken into parts and asked separately. For those questions listed above that have more than one question within, each one of those questions was asked independently of the others to provide further clarification for the student participants.

Teacher participants received the following prompt via email:

"From your perspective, please provide a grade (on a scale from 1-5 with 1 being not positive at all and 5 being very positive) for how well Sport Hartford staff are building positive relationships with your students. Why did you give this grade? In what ways (if any) have the Sport Hartford staff relationships with your students impacted any aspect of their overall development? Is there a specific experience or example that you can think of how a positive relationship between a Sport Hartford staff member and a student has impacted the student?"

Data Analysis

Audio recordings of the 5 student focus group interviews were transcribed verbatim (by the investigator) and reviewed for accuracy. Once transcribed and reviewed, all focus group

interviews and email responses from the lead teachers were loaded into NVIVO 11 qualitative

data software. I coded the data individually based on the research questions and 5 C's framework

(confidence, competence, connection, character and caring/compassion), mostly as it related to

the 'C' of connection (Lerner et al. 2005). Through the initial round of coding numerous, more

specific codes were identified. It was determined that these codes needed to be broadened and

further categorized. After a second round of coding, 4 mother nodes emerged (see Table 6) with

the emergence of numerous sub-themes within each mother node.

Table 6. Mother Nodes and Descriptions

Mother Node	Description
Adult Investment	The investment that the adult figures in the program (specifically Sport Hartford staff) invest in the student participants of the program; what the adults put into the students
Adult Influence	How adult behaviors, actions and interactions influence student development
Peer Relationships and Behavior	The interactions and behaviors between two peer groups (adults and students) and how the interactions and behaviors within these peer groups impacts student [youth] development

Conflict Resolution	Students ability to resolve conflict on their own or with assistance of a peer or adult

After all coding took place by the lead investigator, some of the data was further coded and peer debriefed by another member of the Sport Hartford staff. In the peer debriefing process, the researcher and an impartial peer conduct extensive discussions about the findings (Spall, 1998). Furthermore, the researcher and peer debriefer may compare perspectives on the findings and the process, while the peer debriefer also asks questions to help the researcher understand how personal perspectives, values and experiences may affect the findings. The peer debriefing process in qualitative studies serves as a validation process, confirming that the findings are worthy, honest and believable. The peer debriefer to that point was a Sport Hartford staff member for 2 years and conducted programming for the middle school students at the school. The peer debriefer was selected as someone that has strong familiarity with the values, objectives and operation of the Sport Hartford organization and its' programs. Although the peer debriefer conducted programming primarily with middle school students, the individual still had relationships with staff, students and teachers within the school, some of which were included in this study. Furthermore, the peer debriefer has familiarity with similar research and coding processes (i.e. NVIVO) such as those that were used for this study.

For the peer debrief process, the peer debriefer was sent the lead investigator's original coding scheme, the full verbatim transcript from Ms. Dominguez's class, and the email response/testimony from Ms. Dominguez. Once this was done, the peer debriefer coded the data according to the coding scheme that was sent.

Following the coding of the data set by the peer debriefer, the lead investigator and the peer debriefer discussed the process used by the peer debriefer, as well as similarities and differences between both coding processes. While the peer debriefer and lead investigator did have certain pieces of data coded under different sub-nodes, generally, both coded such pieces of data under the same mother node. In this particular data set, a decent amount of the data was coded [by both the peer debriefer and lead investigator] under the mother nodes of "Adult Investment" and "Adult Influence", primarily under the sub-nodes of "Caring Nature" (Adult Investment) and "Adults model positive behavior for students" (Adult Influence). Through further conversation and examination, the peer debriefer suggested retitling the sub-node of "Adults model positive behavior for students" to "Adults affect positive behavior for students". It was felt that the language was more intentional and related more to the data that was coded under it.

Results

I was the sole individual involved in the coding process. Data were coded based on the specificity of the research questions along with the 5 C's framework, specifically as it related to the 'C' of connection. The research questions asked what impact do student, Sport Hartford staff and teacher relationships have on overall student development, within the context of the Sport Hartford program. Thus data were coded based on patterns describing how various relationships and interactions during or as a result of the Sport Hartford program impacted student behaviors/actions, and furthermore student development.

First, results detailing participants' observations and impact as they pertain to adult investment will be presented, organized around the 'C' of connection and the research question pertaining to the direct relationship(s) between Sport Hartford staff members and student participants in the program. Second, results detailing participants' observations and impact as it pertains to adult influences on the students will be presented, organized around the 'C' of connection and the research question pertaining to the collective interaction and relationship(s) between Sport Hartford Staff members, teachers and students in the program. The distinction between Adult Investment and Adult Influences will be expanded on further in later sections.

Next, results detailing participants' observations and impact as they pertain to peer relationships and behaviors that influence the students will be presented, organized around the 'C' of connection and the research question pertaining to student to student relationships/interactions and staff to staff relationships/interactions. Lastly, results detailing participants' observations on the prevalent developmental factor of conflict resolution will be presented, organized around the research question pertaining to the relationship(s) between Sport Hartford staff and students in the program.

Adult Investment

One of the main connections is the adult's relationship with the student and how that is reciprocated. The Sport Hartford program heavily stressed building relationships with all parties involved in the campus-community partnership, especially the students. Adult investment was coded 27 times. This included all codes within the mother node and subnodes. Adult investment shall be defined as the investment that Sport Hartford staff members invest in the student participants of the program. Students and teachers noted that a sense of consistency in adult

presence, non-sport related investments, the caring nature of the adults and out-of-school

relationships all played a crucial role in student development.

Table 7. Adult Investment Breakdown

Node	Meaning	Sample Quote
Adult Investment	The investment of adult figures in the Sport Hartford program into student participants of the program; what adults put into student participants (ex. time, care, etc.)	**Liliana:** It make us happy because some people, when they ask for something, people will stop right away just to do something, because some people get mean, and if someone asks them if they could get something for them they'll be mean and start yelling and going off on them. So that's why I like y'all because you take the time off to do something for the kids. And they play with us.

Consistent Presence Leads to Stronger Relationships	The high frequency and consistency of times that adults met with students led to a strengthening of relationships between the two.	**Ms. Emerson:** The majority have developed strong relationships with students through consistently attending and participating in Fun Recess and classes.
Interest in non-sport related aspects of students' lives	Adults taking interest in aspects of students' lives that did not include sports, such as academics, well-being and social life.	**Ms. Allison:** This year, my students have not only struggled academically, but emotionally and socially. I truly believe we need to create a happy, stable and reliable environment before we can address any academic concerns. Sport Hartford has

		played a huge part in my students' success.
Caring Nature	Adults showing genuine concern and care for students [welfare].	**Javonte:** And you help others too. You always help them cool down, you always (inaudible), you always make the situation and you always help them.
Out-of-School Relationships	Adult relationships with students outside of the school and how out-of-school relationships influenced development	**Ms. Dominguez:** Those relationships have carried over into the school, and on days that this student is struggling with his behavior, staff members are able to get him to cooperate.

Mother Nodes*, Sub Nodes*

Consistent Presence Leads to Stronger Relationships

The subtheme of a consistent presence was coded 6 times. This can partially be attributed to Sport Hartford's intentional scheduling. Program leaders are assigned specific days and times of the week to conduct their programming. For the Sport Hartford Grows program specifically, program leaders met with each class for 1 session per week for 40 minutes. It is also important to note that some program leaders had roles within the [school] community aside from their Sport Hartford Grows position. Additionally, some program leaders had been involved with the Sport Hartford organization and their respective programs over the course of multiple years. A student described the impact their long-term relationship with a Sport Hartford staff member has had on them. Of the staff member, the student said, "I feel connected to her because I knew her since first grade and second grade." Thus, it appeared that students that had a long-term relationship with a Sport Hartford staff member felt a greater sense of connectedness to them. Such a connectedness with a "caring adult" may have further resulted in "improved peer interactions, self-motivation and behavior" (Perkins & Noam, 2007).

As a part of it's campus-community partnership, Sport Hartford had student volunteers that partook in an elective service learning course at the university and volunteer at the school with the various Sport Hartford programs. While some volunteers came on the same days and times, others did not and their presence was not typically as consistent as that of the program leaders. Additionally, because the service-learning course is only a semester-long course, there is typically a large amount of [student] volunteer turnover halfway through the school year. Mrs. Emerson described her observations with student volunteers that do not have a consistent presence:

> There are some staff members who are not present as consistently (scheduling?) and have
>
> a more difficult time connecting with students. They have not been able to learn names
>
> and do not participate as enthusiastically as the others.

It is much harder to connect with youth and positively impact their development if your presence

is not consistent, especially given the regular presence of other key figures (i.e. program leaders)

within the Sport Hartford organization. On the contrary, some student volunteers were able to

show up consistently on the same days and weeks, in which Mrs. Emerson also said: "The

majority [of student volunteers] have developed strong relationships with students through

consistently attending and participating in the Fun Friday Recess and classes."

With this, it was discovered that a more consistent presence of [adult] staff led to stronger

relationships with students which in turn affected student development.

Interest in non-sport Related Aspects of Students' Lives

The subtheme of non-sport related interests was coded 6 times. While the core

component of a sport-based youth development program is the sport itself, it is often times the

non-sport related components (such as relationships) that have a greater impact on the students'

development. This subtheme was discovered based on the adult investment beyond a sport

context. Mrs. Allison described how a Sport Hartford staff member's relationship with a specific

student led to enhanced academic performance and motivation for a student:

> A student who has no stability at home and is significantly below grade level. Since the
>
> fall we have struggled with behavior because the student lacked the motivation and
>
> confidence to try when it came doing school work. This student increased their reading
>
> sight words by 40 words. They went from reading only 7 words in the Fall of 4th grade to

reading 47 in January. This child is usually shy with sharing how well they actually do but wanted to share with 2 Sport Hartford staff members. He was so excited to share this accomplishment with these 2 Sport Hartford staff members.

The same teacher went on to say:

Sight words have nothing to do with Sport Hartford but they made it possible. Every Sport Hartford student celebrated this child's success. What mattered to those students was building up the student emotionally and that led to building him up academically.

The investment that Sport Hartford staff put into building a relationship with the students led to an increase in their emotional development and self-motivation which in turn positively affected the students' academic enrichment. The teacher went on to describe the environment the Sport Hartford program had created for their students:

This year, my students have not only struggled academically, but emotionally and socially. I truly believe, we need to create a happy, stable and reliable environment before we can address any academic concerns. Sport Hartford has played a huge part in my student's success.

In a separate situation, Mrs. Emerson said, "the staff members chat with the kids, learn their names, and have fun with them."

Many of the conversations that staff members engaged students in are simple check-ins to see how the students are doing and feeling that day. Staff would check-in to see how students are doing in their classes, extracurricular activities or simply to see how their weekend was, in turn creating supportive relationships (Perkins & Noam, 2007) with the students. This again

humanizes the adult staff members and exemplifies instances in which staff take genuine interest in the well-being of the student participants.

The time that Sport Hartford staff members invested into the non-sport related aspects of the students lives, particularly in terms of building strong relationships with the students, directly led to the enhancement of student emotional, social and academic development.

Caring Nature

The subtheme of caring nature was coded 13 times. Simply defined, 'caring nature' reflected that adults in the Sport Hartford program consistently showed genuine care and concern for students. Through professional development sessions and orientations, Sport Hartford places a strong emphasis on the development of relationships with community partners, including community members, school staff and students, among other groups. Through this study, the effectiveness of such trainings was validated through testimony that showed a strong sense of care and concern being shown towards community partners, specifically the students. The demonstration of such acts led to an increased sense of self-pride and self-motivation for students. Emmanuel described such an instance:

> I feel like every time I do my jokes, nobody [Sport Hartford staff] judges me. They [students] might shut me down, but Sport Hartford people will laugh at my jokes and that makes me feel good inside. You know that feeling? You feel good that someone actually cares about what you're saying.

This connection provided Emmanuel with a space where he felt like he belonged (Perkins & Noam, 2007). By simply listening and validating what students were feeling and saying, it instilled a sense of pride and value within the students. Emmanuel further expanded upon

another instance in which he felt validated: "So they do have to do that kind of stuff and I feel

like they're going far just to see a class. And that makes me feel special."

This quote not only further supported the claim of self-validation and self-pride, but further

spoke to the fact that an increased sense of commitment and care to student [relationships]

heavily impacts students' feelings and intrapersonal [social] development.

Furthermore, the traits that adults personified [in a caring matter] further led students to

feel valued and affected their mindset, feelings and engagement for the day:

I: You said I have a bunch of traits. So if you think about all the traits that I have, how do

they affect you?

Emmanuel: It makes me feel really really great.

I: Does you feeling great help and affect how you act during the day?

Emmanuel: I'm not gonna lie, yes it does. So if ya'll come into Sport Hartford, and I see

Sport Hartford at the door I'm just like YES!! Yeah it sets the mood for the day.

Students also expressed appreciation for Sport Hartford staff members taking the time out of

their day to assist students when they were upset or feeling down: "And you help others too. You

always help them cool down, you always make the situation and you help them" (Javonte).

Other students shared similar experiences, stating that "You help me if I'm having a bad day"

and that [Sport Hartford staff] are "kind and always help me calm down". These quotes captured

the sentiment that Sport Hartford staff are assisting students in coping with the frustrations and

emotions in numerous circumstances and instances.

When discussing the relationships that influential adult figures have with youth, it is

crucial to examine external factors such as the understanding and knowledge of the students' life

outside of a school [academic] setting. Sport Hartford staff's caring sentiments extended beyond the classroom as described by Mrs. Allison:

> Another student of mine struggles financially. He wanted a tie and dress shirt from the school store. This child's parents cannot afford a shirt and tie. Along with the program students, my student was repeatedly recognized for his amazing behavior. Our goal was for him to help his parents out by earning positive passes that would pay for items he wanted. Once the student had enough tickets he was able to shop.

Arguably one of the most important aspects of building a strong relationship with youth is understanding the personal life and background of the youth outside of the context in which you work with them. This aspect gives us a sense of some of the underlying factors in regards to potential behaviors, acts, feelings, etc. Furthermore, it provides us with the small pieces of information to find ways in which we may be able to [further] support the youth/student. The genuine acts of Sport Hartford staff outside the context of sport led to the self-empowerment of the students.

Out-of-School Relationships

The subtheme of out-of-school relationships was coded 2 times. Some Sport Hartford staff also invested in student development outside of an educational setting. Having a relationship with students and them seeing you out of [to them] your natural environment almost humanizes the adult figure in a sense. It provides the youth the opportunity to see the adult in a different environment other than what they are used to, as well creating a sense of personability outside of the school. Of the relationship a student had with a Sport Hartford staff member outside of school, Mrs. Dominguez said this:

> Many of my students received support from the program outside of school. Many of my
>
> students have had the benefit of working with many of the staff members at either Care 4
>
> Kids or other programs outside of school which has further strengthened the relationships
>
> with the students at our school.

Such strengthening of relationships had been influential on Sport Hartford student development.

The same teacher further described the impact these out-of-school relationships had on students:

> Those relationships have carried into the school, and on days that this student is
>
> struggling with his behavior, staff members are able to get him to cooperate.

The strong relationships built with students outside of an educational setting in turn not only

enabled the student to entrust in the staff when going through difficulties, but further allowed for

the students' behavioral development.

Adult Influence

While adult investment examines what adults contribute to the relationship, adult

influence examines how adult behaviors and interactions influence student development.

Furthermore, this section will examine how adult behaviors with one another and with students

(staff to staff, teacher to staff, teacher to student, staff to student, etc.) influenced student

development across various areas. Adult influence was coded 55 times. Teachers and students

expressed that they had changed as a result of how adults interacted and acted with one another

and within the group, as well as how adults treated the people around them.

Table 8. Adult Influence Breakdown

Node	Meaning	Sample Quote

Adult Influences	How adult behaviors and interactions influence/impact the students	**Investigator:** Do you think that you feeling better because of us, do you think that has any other impact or does that affect the rest of your day and how you act and what you do?
		Nick: It helps the rest of my day. Like I listen to the teacher and stuff like that. I get happy.
Instilling a sense of independence in students	Certain adult actions, such as giving choice(s), makes students feel independent	**Emmanuel:** I really like that you give us choices. When I was in kindergarten a long time ago when I wasn't even in this school, some people that let us have fun just came in and decided what we want

without us having a choice. We can't do nothing about it but you guys let us vote and let us pick which one and you guys see for yourself what it do (inaudible). So that's what I also like about Sport Hartford, ya'll don't just come into our class and say "We're gonna do this and that…"

Adults make students feel safe and comfortable	Providing a safe and comfortable environment for students to be in and come to	**Freddie:** When I think in mind when we go in there…I feel safe because…well every move we do y'all always watching us, so I feel safe, I feel calm.

Adults model positive behavior for students	Positive role modeling; leading by example	**Mrs. Emerson:** They [Sport Hartford] have established a high level of respect and trust by way of establishing clear expectations, reciprocating respect, modeling kind interactions, following through with promises, rewarding with positive passes, and having a blast in the meantime.
Adults exemplify mutual respect	Adults did not treat kids any lesser than they would treat themselves or peers; treated students as equals	**Jonathan:** You respect us. You show us how to be respectful, by helping us be respectful.
Personability and Relatability	Adults were able to relate to student experiences and be personable in their interactions with students	**Nick:** I like Mr. Dan. He's a good friend. He doesn't be mean to me.

	Every time he comes
	every Friday he says
	what's up to me and
	everything.

Mother Nodes*, Sub Nodes*

Instilling a Sense of Independence in Students

The subtheme of student independence was coded 3 times. Students enjoyed the fact that Sport Hartford staff gave them choice. Emmanuel said:

> I really like that you give us choices. When I was in kindergarten a long time ago when I wasn't even in this school, some people that let us have fun just came in and decided what we want without us having choice. We can't do nothing about it but you guys let us vote and pick which one and you guys see for yourself what it do. So that's what I like about Sport Hartford, y'all don't just come into our class and say 'We're gonna do this and that…'"

In a direct response to Emmanuel, Nick said, "you make us do our choices, like vote."

Instead of dictating specifically what each student was going to be doing, Sport Hartford gave students a sense of freedom within a structured environment. This sense of freedom led to a further sense of empowerment. This allowed students independence via choice which differs from the typical "This is what we're going to do and this is how we're going to do it". Students enjoyed and benefited from being in control of what they could do and participate in.

Safety and Level of Comfort

The subtheme of student safety and level of comfort was coded 12 times. Perkins & Noam (2007) cite physical and psychological safety as one of the main characteristics of a SBYD program, as it should provide a physical and emotional safe haven with a positive emotional climate with few negative behaviors. Students from 3 out of 5 classes described in instance in which they felt safe, protected or comfortable as a result of what a Sport Hartford staff member did, or as a result of the environment that was [habitually] created. For example, Emmanuel speaks to how his years of bullying were alleviated when interacting with Sport Hartford staff members: "For years of school I've been bullied; kindergarten, first grade, second grade, third grade. And every time y'all come in, I don't feel that way anymore."

Eduardo spoke to a direct action that Sport Hartford staff members took in assisting with the creation of a safe environment: "The thing that makes me feel safe is how y'all, like when somebody you try to get in, you be like 'Don't answer it' because it might be a teenager that's trying to hit people."

In a K-8 school setting, younger students may be susceptible to [negative] interactions and perceptions with [older] middle school students. Because Sport Hartford programs within the school across all grade levels, they had the relationships will all of the students to take such actions, therefore creating a safer environment for all, in which the students feel comfortable.

As a sport-based youth development program, Sport Hartford sometimes required participation in activities which may have taken students out of their comfort level. Students may have been asked to perform tasks or exercises they are not familiar with or might be scared to try. One student spoke to their comfortability of being chosen to complete a certain task:

Kelly: Sometimes when I get picked I get nervous.

I: You get nervous? Why do you think you get nervous? Do you think of any Sport

Hartford people that help you or calm your nerves a little bit?

Charlotte: Sometimes they do that with the exercises. They do the exercises with you.

Joint participation between adults and students led to a greater sense of confidence and

comfortability with completing the exercise. Kelly references another Sport Hartford member

that has assisted her in a similar way: "Yeah her. She helps me a lot when I'm so nervous and I

get picked. And she helps me a lot with my exercising." Kelly was able to develop self-

confidence through her interactions with a Sport Hartford staff member in a team-building

experience/activity (Perkins & Noam, 2007).

This joint participation leads to what I call a 'developmental chain reaction'. The adult

participating in the exercise with the child leads to increased self-confidence and comfortability

which in turn affects the students' physical development (health, physical fitness, etc.).

Modeling of Positive Behavior

The subtheme of modeling positive behavior was coded 14 times. This sections speaks to

how the intentional (and non-intentional) actions and behaviors of adults in the Sport Hartford

program in turn affect student behaviors, actions and thought processes. Mrs. Emerson attests to

why she believes Sport Hartford staff had such a large influence on the students and their

development:

They have established a high level of respect and trust by way of establishing clear

expectations, reciprocating respect, modeling kind interactions, following through with

promises, rewarding with positive passes, and having a blast with students in the

meantime.

As an educator and coach, I am a firm believer in the saying 'I hear what you say, I believe what

you do." King (1992) states that we cannot overlook the impact that a coach's actions and

behaviors have on those of their students and athletes, further claiming that the philosophy of 'do

as I say and not as I do' does not and will not produce positive traits in youth. As adults,

especially given the influence we have, our actions truly do speak louder than our words,

especially when establishing trust and building strong relationships with youth. We cannot hold

our youth to a higher standard if our actions do not equate or exceed just that. These actions have

an even greater impact on youth development when reinforced and reciprocated across the board.

Deja said of Sport Hartford staff that: "I feel that they are the nicest people on Earth. They have a

good attitude and always stay positive like our teacher tells us."

When teachers and other [adult] individuals work collaboratively to reinforce similar

concepts, values and principles, the impact on student development is profound.

Sport Hartford staff also promoted positive behaviors through their teachings of sportsmanship

and teamwork. As Freddie put it: "I like Sport Hartford because everybody in Sport Hartford is

my friend and y'all teach us how to be a good sport. And all our friends around us."

Liliana said that:

They [Sport Hartford] teach us a lot of things that we need to know and how to act

around other people when people are hurt. When someone gets hurt, they tell us to stop

doing what we're doing and help the other person.

By instilling these specific principles into youth and modeling how to (within the context of students getting hurt), students begin to develop empathy and how to act and react in similar situations. Furthermore, it creates provides a physical safe haven for youth participants (Perkins & Noam, 2007). Eduardo said that: "What I like about y'all guys [Sport Hartford] is that y'all always helpful and helping people." By consistently showcasing these actions of help and assistance in various contexts, it is an image that these youth get to see constantly. With this, they further develop their empathy skills and ability to go out of their way to assist others.

   Exemplification of Mutual Respect

   The subtheme of mutual respect was coded 11 times. Students appreciated how they were treated by staff in the Sport Hartford program, which in turn led to an increased sense of respect towards Sport Hartford staff and other adults. The respect that was given to the students by the Sport Hartford staff was in turn reciprocated. In my years in education, a majority of student to teacher conflicts and class behavioral disruptions were largely in part because the student did not have respect for that teacher. This sense of disrespect for the teacher did not just stem from out of nowhere, but it was typically a contributor to a strained [negative] relationship between the teacher and the student. Students took pride and developed stronger relationships with adults that treated them how they perceive to be "positively". Furthermore, they respected adults that respected them. As Jonathan put it: "You respect us. You show us how to be respectful, by helping us be respectful."

   Of one staff member, Nick said, "I like them. He's a good friend. He doesn't be mean to me. Every time he comes every Friday he says what's up to me and everything."

Through my experiences, many students felt that by an adult being "mean" to them was a sign of the teacher disrespecting the student, which in the student's mind justified them being disrespectful back. The word "mean" is ambiguous in itself but is perceived by the youth as a sign of disrespect. "Mean" could be interpreted by the youth as an adult yelling at them for no reason. As Freddie described of Sport Hartford staff: "Yeah, they're very nice. And they don't yell at nobody. They keep their patience."

"Mean" could also be interpreted based on the language and tone that is used by the adult toward the youth. Freddie went on to further say: "It's pretty nice because the afterschool people cuss at them, and I'm glad Sport Hartford's not like that."

Eduardo said:

I like when y'all be nice to us and not forcing us to do stuff...like "Get over here now!". I don't like when y'all do that but y'all actually like help us with stuff. Instead of just being rude with us y'all help us with doing stuff.

When building a relationship in efforts to impact youth development, it is crucial that adults were intentional with their language. Students that do not feel supported by non-parental adult figures are twice as likely to be disengaged than those who do feel supported (Klem & Connell, 2004). Anything even perceived as "mean" or disrespectful will led the youth to shut down and in turn strain the relationship which limits, prohibits or inhibits youth development.

Personability and Relatability

The subtheme of personability and relatability was coded 11 times. Students found a greater sense of belonging and happiness due to their ability to relate to the Sport Hartford staff members. On the flip side, Sport Hartford staff were able to connect and relate to the students

which greatly impacted the relationship(s) they had with students. One of the biggest ways this was done was in how the Sport Hartford staff interacted with students during certain activities. Emmanuel said:

> Y'all act like adults but y'all are fun like a 3rd grader. You have fun like a 3rd grader and then you're very mature like an adult. I feel like those 2 combinations should be with every adult because that's awesome. Some adults can't do that. Some adults just have maturity and then…

When working with youth in efforts to build a relationship, it is crucial to find the balance between setting boundaries and guidelines while at the same time relating to them on a social level. Weiss et al. (2013) states that building rapport and trust with youth leads to optimal social relationships. Relating to youth on a social level also leads to an increased connectedness:

> Deja: I feel connected to Ms. Sarah…I feel connected to Ms. Sarah because she's kind of like me. We both like smiling, we both like playing, and we both have dreams.

Building strong relationships and connections with the students enabled the students to envision their future and create discussions around goal-setting and what needs to be accomplished for them to achieve those "dreams". Of Ms. Sarah, the same student also said:

> She's amazing. She's always happy. She's always happy when she sees students…when she sees all the students. And she loves when we all come.

The traits possessed by Sport Hartford staff played a large role in their ability to connect with students:

Emmanuel: You're one of those teachers…so every Sport Hartford person has like a

different personality, so to me, thinking about you, every time I talk to you, you have all

of the traits in one person. That's amazing because all of the Sport Hartford people are so

many different, amazing, awesome things so I think that is you.

Peer Relationships and Behaviors

Peer relationships and behaviors was coded 14 times. Peer shall be described as an

individual of an "equal" group, whether it be classified by age or status [as a student, adult, staff

or teacher]. The emergence of this theme is arguably the most relative to the research questions

that examine the interactions and behaviors specifically between each peer group, and how those

interactions and behaviors impacted student development based on the peer group itself. This

section will examine the interactions and behaviors between two peer groups and how the

interactions and behaviors within these peer groups impacts student [youth] development. It was

observed the adults with in the Sport Hartford program had more positive peer interactions while

students had more negative peer interactions. While adult peer interactions had positive

developmental outcomes, student peer interactions were split, having both negative and positive

developmental outcomes.

Table 9. Peer Relationships and Behaviors Breakdown

Node	Meaning	Sample Node
Peer Relationships and Behaviors	Interactions and behaviors between two peer groups and how the interactions and	**Liliana:** We need to treat each other

	behaviors within these peer groups impacts student [youth] development	better because it's a place where we do fun things altogether and we got to get used to people being around us and making new friends or people that we don't like.
Adult to Adult	Peer interactions between adults involved in the Sport Hartford program	**Emmanuel:** I feel like every Sport Hartford person relationship together, they really bond. I feel like at one point you guys all saw each other at like a basketball game or something and just like did a program

		together and became friends.
Student to Student	Peer interactions between students involved in the Sport Hartford program	**Jeremiah:** Like for example, you have like everybody to be friends; be family. If you wasn't there, like to bring the boys program, I would have like 6 friends only. (Other students affirm).

Mother Nodes*, Sub Nodes*

Adult to Adult

The subtheme of adult to adult relationships and behaviors was coded 2 times. Overall, students were very responsive to the Sport Hartford staff's interaction with one another. Students' perceptions towards the positive interactions and relationships that Sport Hartford staff had with one another led to positive feelings that the students had. These positive feelings in turn affected other aspects of student development already discussed, particularly as it pertains to

adult influence (safety and comfortability, respect, personability and relatability). Emmanuel

described the positive bonds that Sport Hartford staff members had created with one another:

> I feel like every Sport Hartford person relationship together, they really bond. I feel like
>
> at one point you guys all saw each other at like a basketball game or something and just
>
> did a program together and became friends.

The quote captures students' perceptions on the positive environment that Sport Hartford staff

create through the positive relationships they have with one another. These interactions between

adults in turn are reciprocated with the interactions that students eventually began to have with

one another. These positive adult peer interactions were further described by Emmanuel who

said, "You live until it's your time. I feel like y'all reacting to one another is amazing."

Emmanuel responded after being asked how the bond the Sport Hartford staff have with one

another impacts the students. The joyous interactions that Sport Hartford staff have with one

another inspired Emmanuel to live his life to the fullest and to enjoy the positive moments that

he comes across. Furthermore, these interactions exemplified a way and further inspired

Emmanuel to have similar actions with his own peers. This quote captures student's perceptions

on how Sport Hartford staff members live their lives to the fullest; and highlights how Sport

Hartford staff members do not allow the "small things" to get to them, thus enhancing their

relationships and bonds with one another. Having worked with youth, particularly in the school

of the study, students are often times bothered by miniscule matters which lead to larger conflicts

or issues. For example, two students may engage in a verbal, even physical altercation because

one student took the other's seat. In a sport context, similar altercations may occur because a

teammate makes a mistake during a game or competition. By Sport Hartford staff nurturing

positive relationships and a sense of belonging amongst themselves (Perkins & Noam, 2007),

they are modeling ways to not let the "small things" prevent them from having a good time. Sport Hartford staff members may joke and laugh off a mistake and continue playing the game, rather than stopping and yelling at their teammate. It was moments like these that promoted a positive group environment for the Sport Hartford staff and students alike (Perkins & Noam, 2007). Such relationships and bonds were further reflective of students' interactions with one another.

Student to Student

The subtheme of student to student relationships and behaviors was coded 11 times. Of the 14 references to student to student interactions, only one of them reflected a positive developmental outcome. The remainder detailed negative student interactions that led to both positive and negative developmental outcomes. Jeremiah spoke to the avenues the Sport Hartford program gave him to interact with his peers and make new friends: "Like for example, you have everybody to be like friends; be family. If you wasn't there, like to bring Brothers for Brothers, I would have like 6 friends only." Yet again, this speaks to the familial and comforting environment that Sport Hartford creates to allows these interactions to take place. This quote highlights students' ability to increase their interpersonal skills which led to positive interactions and friendships with their peers.

However, on the contrary, any sports program also creates an environment where students who are not as athletic or skilled may be teased for their deficits or actions. Charlotte described multiple instances when she witnessed a student being singled out:

I don't like that some people make Emmett feel left out, because of the things he do. Like

when he put his fingers in his mouth and they all just like walk away from him and be

rude to him. It make him feel sad because he start crying.

This quote highlights negative and positive developmental outcomes as a result of student peer

interactions in Sport Hartford. It first off exemplifies a sense of empathy in that Charlotte was

able to acknowledge Emmett's feelings and that the actions of their student peers are wrong. It

also, however, shows how such isolating acts can lead students to emotional breakdown and

isolation in a comforting environment that promotes teamwork and sportsmanship. This instance

supports Holt et al. (2012) claim that sport participation can lead to negative behaviors as a result

of losing and negative peer interaction, it also shows another side not often thought of, in which

students developed empathy for others being isolated and teased.

There were also instances where if Sport Hartford Grows classes could not follow the

directions and expectations set forth by the staff, the session would end early or not happen at all.

This would also happen if a class was struggling behaviorally outside of Sport Hartford time per

teacher recommendation. One student described their feelings when their class was struggling

with behavior one day:

Amari: Sometimes the class be a hot mess. Sometimes we be screaming and not listening.

I: Ok and how do you think that affects you? And what you all do in Sport Hartford.

Amari: Sometimes when they get a hot mess I just like feel, feel like nervous and God

we're gonna leave.

Amari also said:

> The thing I don't like about Sport Hartford because sometimes we waste our time from
>
> people talking and talking and they don't stop talking so we have less time than more
>
> time to play.

This shows that Sport Hartford created a fun, exciting and engaging environment for students that then became disappointed when they lost programming time as a result of disciplinary actions. These disciplinary actions are usually social engagements between students in the class. At the same time, these intentional actions show that Sport Hartford instills a sense of discipline and accountability in its students by holding them to a high standard and by setting forth rules and expectations for students to meet, and acting if those rules are broken or expectations are not met. There is also a sense of self-accountability observed, as when the collective whole becomes loud or disruptive, certain individuals step up to try to regain control so that program time is not lost. Students began to take on leadership roles by trying to quiet down their classmates so no time was lost. Additionally, students began to check themselves and their peers when they became loud or disruptive, which in turn created a social norm for the group (Perkins & Noam, 2007).

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution was coded 24 times. Due to the positive relationships that Sport Hartford staff had built and established with students in the school, it enabled students to resolve conflicts by themselves or with the assistance of another individual(s). This theme/node emerged as more of a developmental factor, particularly examining the relationship between Sport Hartford staff and students. At least one student from each class described a time when they witnessed a Sport Hartford staff assist another student with a conflict or an incident in which the student themselves were assisted in dealing with a conflict.

Table 10. Conflict Resolution Breakdown

Node	Meaning	Sample Quote
Conflict Resolution	Ability to problem solve and resolve conflicts on own or with assistance of others	**Sam:** You also help people calm down every time they have a temper tantrum.
Behavioral Assistance	Student assistance (from an adult) with behavioral issues.	**Eduardo:** When y'all help us with is when we're like in trouble you come to help us. Like when somebody's hitting people. And when somebody's being mean to each other.
Behavioral Intervention	Stepping into (intervening) a situation where conflict with at least one student was present (i.e. Between a student and another student, student and teacher)	**Charlotte:** Like if you see somebody and they're not doing something right you'll like take them with you and walk to the office.
Redirection	Getting a student "back on track" after a conflict solution; or any time a	**Mrs. Johnson:** For example, I had a student walking around the hall because he

	student was re-focused the back to where they were prior to the conflict	was upset he didn't get a turn in PE and someone from Sport Hartford talked to him. She made him feel better and walked him back to class.

Mother Nodes, *Sub Nodes*

Behavioral Assistance

The subtheme of behavioral assistance was coded 10 times. Behavioral assistance in the context of the study is defined as a time a Sport Hartford staff assisted a student with a behavioral issue. Mrs. Dominguez said, "This year Sport Hartford has been very helpful with one of my students who has extremely challenging behavior."

Liliana said:

There was one time when I was mad and I walked out the class and she saw me walking around and she was like 'What are you doing?' and said I'm mad and she said 'Why are you mad?' and I said because of the kids in my classroom. And she was like it's gonna be okay just ignore them and everything will be fine. So she helped me get back to class so I wouldn't get suspended.

Eduardo said:

When y'all help us with is when we're like in trouble you come to help us. Like when somebody's hitting people. And when somebody's being mean to each other.

After a discussion with trusted Sport Hartford staff members with whom the student has a

relationship with, the Sport Hartford staff were able to deescalate the situation and lead the

student to a decision that was beneficial to them, and prevented them from further consequences.

Through the relationships with Sport Hartford staff and repetition of such discussions, long-term

effects were also noticed as mentioned by Mrs. Dominguez. These conversations helped shape

further dialogue about clear standards for the students' behavior (Holt et al, 2012).

Behavior Intervention

The subtheme of behavioral intervention was coded 6 times. Behavioral intervention in

the context of the study is any time a Sport Hartford staff member stepped into a conflict

situation that involved at least one student. In tense situations where conflict arises, Sport

Hartford staff also provided students with coping and resolution strategies: "When someone's

being mean you tell us not to do that and say sorry like hug or shake hands" (Liliana).

Jonathan said, "How you not get people in trouble is, just um, when they, when the Sport

Hartford people tell them to go take a walk with them or either you just go sit down and calm

down."

By removing the student from high energy situations where conflict may be present, and

presenting them with alternatives such as taking a walk or sitting down allows the student the

time to cope and resolve their issue. A more interpersonal solution may be hugging or shaking

hands in which students are able to resolve a conflict between one another. Such a solution, like

hugging or shaking hands, was an established social norm in the Sport Hartford Grows program

that fostered more positive relationships within the group (Perkins & Noam, 2007). Prior to

shaking hands or hugging, a Sport Hartford staff member may have also had a conversation

[individually and then together] with the students involved in the conflict, which allowed the students to communicate what happened and how they were feeling, to a trusted adult and then their peer.

Redirection

The subtheme of redirection was coded 7 times. Redirection in the context of the study is any time a Sport Hartford staff got a student "back on track" after a conflict solution; or any time a Sport Hartford staff member re-focused the student back to where they were prior to the conflict. In speaking to a relationship a Sport Hartford staff had with a student outside of the school, Mrs. Dominguez said this: "Those relationships have carried into the school, and on the days that this student is struggling with his behavior, staff members are able to get him to cooperate."

Due to the relationship this staff had with the student outside of school, they were able to use that as a strength to refocus the student in school. It is important to note these interactions are usually one. While sometimes a group interaction is helpful, a majority of conflict resolution issues, particularly in regards to redirection, involved a one-on-one relationship between an individual staff and an individual student. Such interactions typically happen in isolation where the student is not singled out in front of the class or the larger group:

> Mrs. Johnson: When a student is having a difficult time in Sport Hartford Grows, they positively impact their behavior by quietly speaking to the student and encouraging them to do well.

This is further exemplified by another instance Mrs. Johnson observed:

I had a student walking around the hall because he was upset he didn't get a turn in PE

and the staff member turned to him. She made him feel better and walked him back to

class.

This quote highlights how Sport Hartford members, due to their relationships with students, are

able to redirect students outside of the Sport Hartford program. While the student was upset, a

simple conversation and act of sympathy put the student at ease and re-engaged them [with their

class]. In regards to the 'C' of connection, Perkins & Noam (2007) state that trusted connections

and relationships improve different developmental factors. The Sport Hartford staff member was

able to work with Mrs. Johnson's student so that the student was no longer upset, prevented a

potential behavioral disturbance, and re-entered the student back into the classroom environment

where the student could now interact with their peers.

All in all, many of the developmental factors that were noted directly correspond to and

are interwoven into the 5 C's of positive [sport-based] youth development. The relationships that

students, teachers and Sport Hartford staff had with one another played a crucial role in

interpersonal interactions, behavioral problems, academic performance and self-confidence of

the students.

Implications

The presence of Lerner's (2005) 5 C's in a sport setting was validated in this study.

Furthermore, the necessity of positive relationships played an essential role in positive youth

development through the Sport Hartford program. Evidence suggests that relationships [through

the 'C' of connection] directly impacted each of the developmental characteristics. The 'C' of

"connection" served as the core of the 5 C's framework; that is each 'C' (competence,

confidence, connection, character and caring/compassion; contribution as the 6th 'C') was

directly impacted by the positive bonds that SBYD programs can create (Zarrett & Lerner,

2008).

Sport Hartford hosted monthly professional development sessions focused on relationship

building, relating to students, and putting the acquired strategies into practice. Such sessions

focused on increasing classroom effectiveness in classroom engagement, sharing lived

experiences to broaden perspective and better understanding the culture and climate of the school

of focus. The implementation of such professional development played a large role in the ability

of Sport Hartford staff to relate and connect with students. Numerous developmental

characteristics that were derived from positive relationships were detailed, as were the aspects of

those positive relationships. Students and teachers detailed what specifically about the

relationships impacted them in the Sport Hartford program. Students were impacted by adults

that were relatable, showed mutual respect, made them feel safe and comfortable, and that

showed a consistent presence with the student. These relationship characteristics validated the

effectiveness of Sport Hartford training and professional development, and further show that

Sport Hartford's training and professional development for its staff could serve as a model for

other SBYD programs.

Mrs. Allison and Mrs. Dominguez spoke strongly to the impact that Sport Hartford

relationships had on their students' academic performance and [behavior] decision-making

skills—or the 'C' of [social and academic] competence. Zarrett & Lerner (2008) simply describe

social competence as interpersonal skills such as conflict resolution, and academic competence

in terms of grades, attendance and test scores (school performance). Mrs. Allison shared how one of her student's relationships with a Sport Hartford staff member motivated the student to the point where they increased their reading sight words from 7 to 47 in a 4-month span (academic competence). Mrs. Dominguez spoke to how one of her student's relationships with a Sport Hartford staff member has helped him to re-focus when he struggles behaviorally (social competence).

Zarrett & Lerner (2008) describe the 'C' of confidence as one's internal sense of self-efficacy and self-worth. Emmanuel, who had been bullied in his previous years of school, mentioned how his relationship with Sport Hartford staff members made him "feel good inside" and enabled him to "feel like he fit in". He did not feel judged and shared how the Sport Hartford staff genuinely cared about what he was saying. Mr. Kastner referenced the sense of pride that the boys demonstrated by wearing a shirt and tie as a part of the Brothers 4 Brothers program. Mrs. Allison further touched upon the boys' sense of pride when discussing the excitement five of her students felt when Sport Hartford staff assisted them with purchasing a shirt and tie from the school store and teaching them how to tie their tie. Mrs. Allison also shared an instance in which one of her students, who was typically shy about sharing their academic accomplishments, was ecstatic to share their progress with two Sport Hartford staff members with whom they had developed a strong relationship.

Zarrett & Lerner (2008) describe the 'C' of character as the possession of standards for correct behaviors (e.g. respect, accountability), integrity and a sense of right and wrong. Students were aware of Sport Hartford staff expectations and what consequences would be if those expectations were not met:

> Like somedays if we don't behave, if some of us don't behave some of us may have to sit down and then we have to watch the other people play. (Gregory)

> The thing I don't like about Sport Hartford because sometime we waste our time from people talking and talking and talking and they don't stop so we have less time than more time to play. (Amari)

With Sport Hartford staff holding students accountable, they were not only aware of consequences that may occur if certain behaviors were not put forth, but furthermore hold their classmates accountable so they do not miss out on a good time.

Students also had a high regard and respect for Sport Hartford staff which in turn translated to how they interacted with their peers:

> Because you help others and you respect your elders…[and] when they come in, they respect me and shake my hand, make eye contact. (Jonathan)

> They [Sport Hartford staff] have established a high level of respect and trust by way of establishing clear expectations, reciprocating respect, modeling kind interactions and following through with promises. (Mrs. Emerson)

Jonathan confirmed that Sport Hartford staff respecting him, shaking his hand and making eye contact helped model for him how to act and ways to treat and interact with his peers.

Zarrett & Lerner (2008) describe the 'C' of caring/compassion as a "sense of sympathy and empathy for others". Charlotte revealed her sympathy and displeasure with how one of her classmates was treated:

I don't like that certain people make Eric feel left out because of the things he do. Like

when he puts his fingers in his mouth and they all just like walk away from him and be

rude to him. It makes me feel sad because he start crying.

Charlotte's showing of emotion as a result of her classmates teasing of another classmate

exemplifies her sympathy as a result of this peer [student to student] relationship.

With a physical activity, you are always running the risk of injury. Liliana describes how

Sport Hartford staff helped her be compassionate when her peers get hurt:

When someone gets hurt, they tell us to stop what we're doing and help the other person.

Liliana goes on to further describe how she learned how to treat people when conflict may arise:

When someone's being mean you tell us not to do that and say sorry like hug or shake

hands.

Sport Hartford staff acted intentionally in every aspect of the program's planning,

implementation and individual actions. This intentionality heavily contributed to the identified

developmental outcomes in the study. Program schedules and assignments were intentional to

ensure the consistent presence of Sport Hartford staff for each session. Lessons were designed

intentionally to teach a specific skillset for that session. Students were held accountable

intentionally for certain behaviors to develop an understanding of expectations and what

behaviors were positive [rewarded through "positive passes"] and what behaviors would not be

accepted. SBYD programs should maximize the intentionality of their programming and the

individuals that conduct the program. Each facet of an SBYD program should be constructed and

conducted with a purpose. SBYD organizers should have a clear plan for what their specific

program goals and focuses are, and develop intentional strategies to go about attaining those goals and focuses, so that an environment for optimal youth development is created.

  This study showed the presence of a strong relationship between certain youth developmental outcomes and PBIS, within an SBYD context. PBIS sets out to reduce disruptive problem behaviors (Bradshaw et al., 2008). It is my recommendation that SBYD programs implement PBIS principles into their programming. The trusted relationships that youth had with adults, in conjunction with the implementation of the "positive pass" system enabled students to learn how to manage and in some instances, limit certain disruptive problem behaviors. This is detailed in an instance when Liliana disrupted the learning environment in her classroom by angrily walking out of class, to then be met by a Sport Hartford member that got Liliana back on track to rejoin the class. A similar situation happened with one of Mrs. Johnson's students who was roaming in the hallways because they did not get a turn in gym class. Situations like these were detailed on numerous occasions. Additionally, Sport Hartford set clear expectations and rules from the beginning of their program and held students accountable when those expectations and rules were not met or followed. This led to an increased sense self-awareness in students as far as what were considered to be positive and negative behaviors: "Like when sometimes we be bad; not following directions, keep on talking, keep on complaining about a game we want to play or not" (Sam). Providing a guideline and set of clear rules and expectations provides youth with a structured, controlled and predictable environment to foster positive youth development (Hamilton, Hamilton & Pittman, 2004).

  As previously mentioned, a majority of SBYD programs that have been studied to date occur in OST settings. With Sport Hartford occurring during the school day, it is also important to note the frequency that Sport Hartford staff and students were able to interact with one

another. Many students described being assisted and impacted by a Sport Hartford staff member outside actual Sport Hartford programming time (e.g. in hallway, cafeteria). In addition to Sport Hartford's scheduled program times, Sport Hartford staff also took on other roles in the school which required them to be physically present in the building. With this, the amount of time spent between students and staff was further increased which may have led to heightened levels of trust and assistance, therefore affecting various developmental factors. An increased presence and involvement in the school and in school activities led to more effective and trusting relationships, therefore enhancing positive youth development for the student, and within the Sport Hartford program. SBYD programs should consider partnering with community schools to conduct programming during the school day, as this practice garnered impactful relationships that positively affected youth behavior and development. Furthermore, staff of other SBYD programs may consider increasing their presence outside of the program itself, ranging from attending intramural and school activities of the youth participants.

All of the students interviewed in the study detailed a positive connection they had with a particular Sport Hartford staff member, or a time where that staff member impacted or assisted them. Many students detailed situations where they were upset, angry or sad, and a trusted Sport Hartford member intervened to make the situation better; instances where youth did not know how to manage the negative emotions they were dealing with. With this, I would recommend the implementation of mentorship-pairing groups in SBYD programs. This would entail matching an adult figure (mentor) with a group of students based of similar interests and the establishment of natural bonds and connections. Many of the relationships that were formed in the Sport Hartford program were formed naturally. This would provide the youth with a trusting individual to help them manage something personal or difficult they may be dealing with. Furthermore, it would

allow the adult mentors to get to know the youth outside the context of the program; such as

student interests, external hardships, home life, etc. Having an external perspective to what a

child is dealing with outside the context of the program provides insights to their behaviors, how

to better engage them and what a youth's specific needs are, allowing one to further the youth's

development.

One of the themes uncovered was that a consistent presence of adults led to stronger

relationships with youth, therefore having a greater influence on positive youth development.

However, throughout the data, it was noted that student volunteers in the Sport Hartford program

had a more difficult time relating to students due to lack of a consistent presence. Sport Hartford

currently utilizes a sign-up sheet for student volunteers to sign-up in different time slots to attend

different Sport Hartford programs. Program leaders submit their schedules to Sport Hartford

administration, who then assign the program leaders to specific, consistent time slots and

programs. For further effectiveness, it is recommended that Sport Hartford use the same system

for scheduling student volunteers as it does for program leaders. Student volunteers will submit

their general schedules at the beginning of the semester, to then be assigned a consistent time to

attend Sport Hartford programming. In turn, this will allow the student volunteers to build

stronger relationships with students and engage both groups of individuals further, therefore

having a greater impact on the development of the student participants. In a broader sense, the

intentionality of SBYD programs can be further maximized by how programs schedule their

staff. SBYD programs should schedule their staff in a way that ensures a staff member's

consistent presence not only with the program, but also with the youth.

Additionally, multiple students and teachers noticed a lack of participation and

engagement by student volunteers. Teachers and students noted that some student volunteers did

not participate enthusiastically, while some did not even participate at all. It is with this that I

would recommend a random on-site evaluation(s) of the student volunteers as a part of their

grade for the service-learning course. Evaluations could be conducted randomly throughout the

semester by a program leader or Sport Hartford administrator. In a broader sense, SBYD

programs should include participation and relatability into their evaluation of staff members.

Students took great pride and showed immense enthusiasm in adults that participated in activities

with them. Adult participation showed to be infectious and led to various positive developmental

outcomes.

This study showed how crucial relationships were in youth developmental outcomes.

Numerous [intentional] strategies and techniques were implemented to ensure optimal outcomes.

This study validated the presence of the 5 C's in a sport-based program, and further validated the

importance of relationships ["connection"] as it pertains to positive youth development. It

essential that SBYD programs closely examine the behaviors and relationships that their staff

have with youth in order for youth to develop such positive outcomes.

Future Research and Limitations

As previously mentioned, I had very strong relationships with a majority of the student

participants in this study. The strength of these relationships stemmed from my role in the school

and an established level of trust and respect. The strong rapport that I had with students may have led them to be biased in their answers. While likely truthful, responses from student participants could have been tailored more towards what they wanted me to hear as a trusted adult. Furthermore, students may not have been as likely to share their dislikes or negative aspects about the Sport Hartford program in potential fear of upsetting me or harming the positive relationship we had. This was seen throughout the data as a majority of student responses were positive in nature, praising Sport Hartford and the Sport Hartford staff for what they did. While the relationship I had with students was beneficial to the received responses, future researchers may want to consider multiple interviewers for one focus group, or potentially two separate focus groups conducted by two separate individuals in hopes of drawing out responses highlighting improvements to the program.

Additionally, the relationships that I had with the students could have also affected my questioning during the focus groups. Because of my understanding and interactions with students on a daily basis, I saw firsthand their behaviors and actions over the course of two years. With this, certain follow-up questions and probes during the focus groups may have been seen as leading, therefore affecting not only the flow of the focus groups, but potentially the results.

Though not explicitly discussed in the results or shown in the data, the impact of relationships across different identities was also noted. As previously mentioned, I also conducted a young men's group in the school which enhanced my connection with some of the male participants. Many of the male participants referenced this program in the focus group as well as how I helped influence their actions and behaviors throughout the year. Additionally, when asked what Sport Hartford staff member students had a strong connection with, all participants in the study (male and female) spoke to someone of the same gender as their main

influence. While connections across genders were noted and spoken to, female students had a stronger connections with female adults, and the same for male students and adults. Future research could further dissect the impact that gender of both the youth participant and the adult leader has on relationships and youth developmental outcomes.

Student participants did not reference their own teachers much in the focus groups, but when teachers were discussed students spoke more to their dislikes with the teacher rather than what they liked about their teacher. A majority of Sport Hartford staff members are comprised of individuals in their 20s and early-30s, a younger demographic than that of the teachers. Through the data, it was determined that many students had stronger connections with Sport Hartford staff than some of the teachers. While in some instances it was not explicitly stated, it is also important to note the lack of mention of teachers in the focus groups. Future research could further dissect the impact that age has on relationships and youth developmental outcomes.

All students in the school were students of color with a majority coming from African-American or LatinX backgrounds. All participants in the study were from African-American or LatinX backgrounds, with Sport Hartford staff members representing a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds. As a Spanish-speaker, many LatinX students in the school connected me due to my LatinX background. However, this was not a note from the study but simply from personal experience. Racial and ethnic identity were the least apparent of the identities apparent in the data. This may have been due in part to the overlapping racial and ethnic identities between student and the adult leaders. Future research could further dissect the impact that racial and ethnic backgrounds across groups has on relationships and youth developmental outcomes. Furthermore, future research could examine how relationships within intersecting identities impact relationships and youth developmental outcomes.

Conclusion

Because there has been little empirical research conducted using Lerner's (2005) 5 C's model in a sport context (Vierimma et al. 2012), the purpose of this study was to examine the impact that the 5 C's had on student development in a sport setting, particularly examining the 'C' of connection. Literature was presented on the key components of SBYD programs while highlighting tenured SBYD programs that possess those components and how those components are implemented into such programming. Furthermore, I also presented literature that highlighted the importance of meaningful [adult] relationships in SBYD programs. I used Lerner's (2005) 5 C's model to show the connection between the 5 C's and how the 'C' of connection played a large role in the development of youth in the Sport Hartford program.

In my thesis, I focused on the importance of supportive relationships (Perkins & Noam, 2007) and how those relationships influence positive youth development. I outlined Lerner's 5 C's and Perkins & Noam's (2007) characteristics of an SBYD program and presented ways that the presence of each in the Sport Hartford program contributed to positive youth development(al) factors. Such developmental factors included increased academic and social competence, coping strategies as pertains to behavioral management, increased presence of self-pride and self-efficacy and the development of social/moral standards, among others.

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