A RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SPORT

by

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Education in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

A developmental perspective was used to identify the socializing situations and significant influences that may have fostered the development of leadership in six interuniversity leader-athletes. Athletes from three university teams constructed a definition of leadership specific to their sport needs and voted for two teammates who best fit this definition. Using a retrospective qualitative interview method (Côté, Beamer, & Ericsson, 2001; Dale, 1996) based on an adapted version of Schuman's (1982) three series phenomenological interview format, the current study examined the activities and social influences that shaped leader-athletes. The interviews elicited two types of information: 1) specific descriptive knowledge of the types of activities in which athletes engaged throughout their development and 2) in-depth information about the social interactions and contextual influences that stemmed from those activities (Patton, 1990; Seidman 1991). All athlete interviews were transcribed verbatim and the unstructured qualitative data was inductively analyzed using grounded theory techniques (Côté, 1993; Côté, Salmela, Baria, & Russell, 1993, Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Inductive analysis permitted the regrouping of 648 meaning units in 19 categories and 4 components. While the categories emerged from regrouping meaning units, the categories fit naturally back into the original socializing influences used to ask the interview questions. The four components represented in the data were: 1) peer influence, 2) teacher/coach influence, 3) parental influence, and 4) personal involvement.

Results indicated that leadership development in sport arose from four central components: high skill, strong work ethic, advanced tactical sport knowledge and good rapport with people. From a developmental perspective it would seem that the type of activities as well as receiving feedback, acknowledgement, support, cognitive engagement, mature conversations
with adults, and physical encounters with older peers are important social influences that can play an instrumental role in the formation of these four central components.
A Retrospective Analysis of Leadership Development Through Sport

Introduction

Whether it is a child picking teams in street hockey games or a chief executive officer making decisions on the future of a company, people are continually leading or looking to be led. It is often taken for granted that involvement in school and other learning activities such as sport, drama, or youth groups will prepare our children to assume leadership roles; however little is known about the nature of this process. In fact, educational institutions have often advertised that their programs foster and groom leadership qualities in youth and yet program evaluations on the methods and amount of time devoted to this practice reveal little evidence to support this claim (Roach, 1999). Further the difficulties of evaluating the development of leadership is made more complex since people have different implicit and explicit ideas of what constitutes leadership and how effective leaders behave and function (Bryman, 1986).

General leadership theory to date reveals that academics have created numerous theories primarily to increase the production in public and private sectors. These theorists espouse different styles and behaviors to assist business and military in meeting the growing needs of their subordinates (House, 1971; Bass, 1989; Howell & Avolio, 1993). Very little research has examined leadership emergence and development (Atwater, Dionne, Avolio, Camobreco & Lau, 1999). This is peculiar considering that Bass (1990) stated that, “... leadership development is a continuing process. Thus researchers need to learn a lot more about how experience with subordinates, peers, superiors as well as family and friends, shape one’s subsequent performance as a leader” (p. 911).
Research on leadership in sport has primarily explored the role coaches play in leading athletes (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978; Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995). The work conducted on athlete contributions to leadership in sport has been limited and thus, little is known about the factors that may contribute to leader-athlete development (Grusky, 1963; Melnick & Loy, 1996; Mosher & Roberts, 1981; Weese & Nicholls, 1986). Although leaders play a pivotal role in sport performance researchers have not suggested methods of developing leadership in youth. This study traces the development of leader-athletes in an effort to identify influences and factors that help mold young athletes into leaders. Further, learning about leadership development in sport may provide insight for the development of leaders in other disciplines. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of social and contextual variables in leader-athlete development. More specifically it will explore the various activities that leader-athletes engaged in throughout the course of their development, and their roles within these activities. Additionally, the role that peers, teachers/coaches, and parents played within these activities will be examined.

A Developmental Approach

Researchers interested in human development strive to identify the people, activities, and processes responsible for bringing an individual closer to an ideal ability. Kaplan (1983) stated that “development pertains to a rarely, if ever, attained ideal, not the actual” (p.188). To this end, the present study is concerned with the process by which athletes develop leadership in order to identify factors that may facilitate development of leadership in others (Sugarman, 1986).

This study examines the processes that people who have been identified as leaders have engaged in during their maturation and how changes in those processes may result in differences
in development. Using structured and unstructured interview methods (e.g. Côte, Beamer, & Ericsson, 2001; Dale, 1996) to examine the development of leader-athletes allows the researchers to trace the participant’s growth while paying attention to changes in activities, people’s influences and the participant’s behavior. Therefore, this study explores both the types of influences associated with leadership development as well as when and how these influences change over time.

It is important to note that the word ‘development’ is not an empirical term (Reese & Overton, 1970). It is highly likely that leadership development is contextual regardless of the amount of corroborating data collected on factors that contribute to leadership growth in individual lives, researchers will still be unable to ensure that these factors form the correct method to develop leadership in all youth. This study does not try to generate absolute components to leadership development to serve as a recipe for producing future leaders. Rather the purpose of this research is to provide an overall picture of development suggesting that there may be certain processes, people, and activities that could enhance one’s leadership potential.
Review of General Leadership Theory

Leadership is an important and complex concept. An examination of the post World War II political, social, and economic environments in North America shows an emphasis on increasing production and performance, particularly in business and industry sectors. At this time, it was believed that skilled business leaders could increase employee productivity and thereby improve company production (Bond, 2001). In other words, good leadership transfers to increased organizational performance. This important idea became the foundation of several leadership theories. Further, business scholars became immersed in developing theory that would help make leaders more effective (Fiedler, 1967; House, 1971). Early work such as the Ohio Leadership Studies were limiting, with restricted investigations of men who were presidents of companies and industry (Stogdill, 1974). Findings originally drawn on data collected from a relatively small number of men heading larger businesses or military operations shaped the collective thinking in North America about who could be a leader and how leadership was defined.

Currently, the study of leadership is an evolving discipline devoted to identifying the multifaceted underpinnings of leader behaviour within different organizations and under different contexts (Rost, 1991). Most scholars study leadership within the context of a particular discipline such as education (Sergiovanni, 1996), sport (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980), or business (Barker, 1997). However, despite the more recent (1975 – 2001) multidisciplinary approach to understanding the concept and practice of leadership, the foundations and dominant thinking that originated from a business context (both in practice and scholarship) remains. Contemporary leadership thinking continues to be dominated by business scholars who write for the corporate world (Rost, 1991).
Leadership has been defined in many ways. For the purposes of this study, leadership definitions will be borrowed from Rost (1993) and Gini (1998). Specifically for this study leadership is considered to be an action represented through an influencing relationship between a leader and followers who intend changes to reach common goals (Rost, 1993). Further, leadership is thought of as getting people to work together to accomplish objectives that might not otherwise occur (Gini, 1998). Bearing these definitions in mind, the question of why some leaders succeed in one context and not in others, even though they employ similar leadership skills and styles, has been overlooked. Stated differently, why are certain individuals able to successfully lead in a multitude of different contexts and environments while others cannot?

Many theories and ideas (great man, trait, environmental, situational, transaction, etc.) have been constructed to explain the leadership phenomenon. While each take a slightly different approach, they presume leadership to arise due to nature or nurture; either you are born a leader or you can learn to become one.

This section of the literature review is designed to highlight frequently cited works that have helped shape contemporary leadership thinking. It is important to note that although these leadership approaches appear in the chronological order of their inception in the literature, leadership theory has not evolved in a linear fashion where early theories have been discarded for newer theories. Newer theories often adopt components of previous research and then add further components to present a fuller picture or present a different leadership style. Also, it will become clear in this section that over time theories have evolved supporting either a nature or nurture approach to leadership. Finally, this section will draw attention to the dominant knowledge paradigm that has directed leadership research over the last 50 years.
‘Great-man’ and Trait Approaches To Leadership

Early work on leadership would lead one to believe that our past has been shaped by the leadership behavior of great men, such as Winston Churchill and Mahatma Gandhi, who held positions of power. Advocates of the ‘great man’ approach conducted research on the influence of heredity among great people, attempting to explain leadership ability on the basis of inheritance (Jennings, 1960). The basic premise is that leaders are born endowed with specific qualities such as intelligence and energy that predisposes them to leadership roles, making them more able than most to lead.

Concurrently, researchers of the trait approach hypothesized that individuals could inherit leadership characteristics and traits. If character traits could be inherited, it was logical that these characteristics could also be identified (Bird, 1940). This supposition prompted researchers (Bird, 1940; Jenkins, 1947) to identify leadership as the product of a number of qualities and characteristics, such as high energy levels. Accordingly, leadership ability could be measured by the number of desired qualities that a leader possessed (Bass, 1981). Both ‘great man’ and trait theorists support the nature approach to leadership. If leaders were born predisposed to lead, it would seem reasonable for a leader to be able to demonstrate successful leadership behavior in all situations. However, as this is not the case with leaders, it became important to examine other plausible factors, which might explain both why and how leaders are successful in different environments.

Environmental Approaches to Leadership

The environmental leadership approach identifies leadership as the product of environmental conditions such as time, place, and social circumstance. Consequently, a specific
situation would dictate an individual to have specific leadership qualities and thus a leader appropriate for that isolated situation would emerge. Moreover, the necessary qualities to lead in a specific situation would have been developed in the leader as a result of exposure in prior situations (Person, 1928). Environmental researchers support the notion that each situation requires action and the leader “does not inject leadership but is the instrumental factor through which a solution is achieved” (Bass, 1981, p.28). The environmental leadership approach advocates the nurture position in that leaders develop as a result of their experiences in a given situation. However, environmental leadership does not account for individuals who emerge as effective leaders in many different environments and contexts. It is possible that the environment only provides one part of the explanation of how leaders and leadership works.

Path-goal and Contingency Approaches to Leadership

In this section two theories introduce the importance of relationship development between leaders and followers. House’s (1971) Path-goal theory and Feidler’s (1967) Contingency theory both attempt to address the complexity of leadership relationships by acknowledging both the leader’s and the environment’s (followers) contributing roles. Both theories concede that leadership includes environmental factors as well as stable characteristics that allow an individual to act as a leader within particular environmental conditions. That is to say, in any situation, some of the leadership behavior can be attributed to context while some of the behavior can be attributed to the individual’s interaction with the context (Bass, 1960). Although both theories concede that person and environment play a role in leader outcome, they deviate in how the interaction takes place. The path-goal theory espoused by House stipulates that a leader in the work place can enhance the psychological states of subordinates thereby arousing them to perform and achieve satisfaction from their job. A successful leader will
increase the rewards to their subordinates for goal attainment and make the route to achieving goals and rewards easier by clarifying the path (House, 1971). However, according to House increased subordinate satisfaction and attainment of extrinsic rewards is contingent on subordinate performance and ability to reach the preset goals (Bass, 1981).

Feidler's theory suggests that personality and context play a crucial role in determining leader effectiveness. He postulates that leaders, who are largely task-oriented, will enjoy success in situations that are either highly favorable or highly unfavorable to success. Conversely, a leader motivated by interpersonal relationships will enjoy success in situations that fall between highly favorable or highly unfavorable ends of the situation continuum (Fiedler, 1967). A situation's degree of favourability is dependent on the "quality of leader-member relations; the nature of the tasks to be performed by subordinates; and the position power of the leader" (Hunt & Larson, 1976, p. 10). Feidler used contingency theory to match leaders with situations that will be conducive to their success (Bass, 1981) and tested the hypothesis by developing a training program that helped leaders identify their specific leadership style. Those leaders were then instructed on methods that they could employ to change their style to best fit each situation. For example, a relationship-oriented leader would be taught to adapt a more task-oriented style of leadership when involved in a situation with a highly unfavorable chance of success (Fiedler, Chemers & Mahar, 1976).

When examining these two theories, support for the nurture approach to leadership resurfaces. Both House and Fiedler's theories emphasize the importance of leaders identifying the needs of the situation and subsequently prompting followers to meet those needs. Further, leaders have to adapt their leadership style to the requirements of their followers and build relationships to help followers meet their objectives. This type of behavior is learned as a result
of environmental opportunities and demands. Also, as the environment and leader-follower relationships change so too does the style of leadership. The leader in essence has to re-learn the requirements of the new situation, an element that supports the nurture approach.

**Transactional Approach to Leadership**

Recently, elements of path-goal and contingency theories have been included into the transactional leadership approach. Howell and Avolio (1993) describe transactional leadership as "leader-follower relationships based on a series of exchanges or bargains between leaders and followers" (p. 891). According to Bass (1985), contingent reward and management by exception are two elements of transactional leadership that compose the leader-member relationship. Similar to path-goal, contingent reward is an exchange that takes place between the leader and subordinates whereby subordinates receive attribution for meeting preset objectives and goals. Management by exception focuses on the type of feedback that leaders provide their subordinates when detours occur while on route to desired objectives. Feedback can come in the form of active transactions where a leader is proactive, intervening when the problem first arises, or through passive transactions whereby disciplining occurs after something has gone awry (Bass, 1989). In considering the elements of transactional leadership, it becomes evident that this type of leader behavior is dependent on individual relationships with followers further supporting the notion that leader behavior is learned.

**Transformational Approach to Leadership**

In reaction to the transactional leadership approach that focuses on positional leadership, transformational leadership takes a fundamentally different approach by presuming that everyone has the potential to be a leader and that leadership can occur in both formal (positional) and informal (non-positional) contexts. A transformational leader is charismatic and provides an
intellectually stimulating environment, inspiration, and increased individual consideration for each subordinate. The leader encourages members to help mold the organizational vision and share in the leadership responsibility by fostering his/her intrinsic motivation and providing followers with a sense of purpose (Bycio, Allen, & Hackett, 1995). Simply stated, the objectives of a transformational leader are to increase awareness of organization goals and encourage all organizational constituents to invest in advancing towards those goals. “These expansions or shifts in values are thought to result in superior otherwise unexpected levels of follower effort and performance” (Bycio, et. al., 1995, p.468). Research in applied business has illustrated a positive relationship between increased organizational performance and transformational leadership (Barling, Weber, & Kelloway, 1996). Crossing out of the traditional business setting and into the education discipline. Koh and colleagues found a positive relationship between school principal’s use of transformational leadership and student performance (Koh, Steers, & Terborg, 1995). Once again, the nurture approach to leadership development is supported by transformational leadership behavior. Encouraging non-positional leadership indicates that people can learn to take leadership roles within the organization, reinforcing that leadership can indeed be learned.

Dominant Knowledge Paradigm Used in Leadership Research

There is one common approach to the generation of knowledge that ties together the various approaches and theories discussed. Most of the leadership approaches employ the same method to investigating the factors associated with leadership. ‘Great man”, trait, environmental, path-goal, contingency, transactional and early transformational leadership approaches have been studied using quantitative methods of exploration. This stemmed from a knowledge paradigm that has dominated research in the social sciences since World War II, a paradigm that
emphasizes the identification of definitive, quantifiable statistical evidence to support findings in complex social contexts. However, the dynamic and complex nature of leadership may require a qualitative approach to probe the importance of such factors as interpersonal relationships, motivation, leader energy levels, and leader development and learning – factors that are difficult to quantify.

**Linking Previous Research Together**

Also worth discussing are some of the important threads that tie path-goal, contingency, transactional, and transformational leadership approaches together. First, each theory describes the role effective leadership plays in guiding groups to accomplish common objectives. Second, all four theories support the nurture argument, suggesting that leadership is teachable to others. Also, each approach identifies a specific leadership style that, if learned and adopted, can increase leadership potential and advance group performance. Each approach advocates the merit of organizational leaders learning and applying new leadership styles rather than examining the possibility of applying leadership methods in an instructional setting with youth or non-leader groups. Finally, the focus of each theory, with the exception of transformational leadership, is on positional leaders within organizational structures. Simply stated, the preponderance of published work focuses on the leadership of a few individuals who hold powerful decision-making positions.

**Importance of Transformational Leadership**

The transformational approach with its premise that anyone can develop leadership abilities may be particularly helpful in trying to observe and develop increased leadership in youth and non-leader groups. A leadership approach that creates an environment rich with
inspiration, intellectually stimulating engagement, and individualized consideration for all participants may foster leadership skills in increasing numbers of people.

Education curriculums emphasize the importance of developing children's leadership talents and abilities (Oakland, Falkenbuerg, & Oakland, 1996). Oakland et al (1996) stipulated that "schools are expected to promote cognitive and affective qualities that enhance students' leadership, thus enabling them to assume positions of leadership within the many vocations, professions and institutions that provide critical services and stability in society" (p.138). In addition, leadership is frequently listed as an important quality to develop in gifted learners, yet it remains under-represented in most curriculums (Smyth & Ross, 1999). In a review of research conducted on youth learning environments outside of schools it was found that organizations such as Boys and Girls clubs, and 4-H clubs were positive leadership development initiatives. Clubs that subjected their youth to positions of accountability, responsibility, and decision-making yet also held all members to standards of excellence in demeanor and performance, led to positive leadership outcomes (Roach, 1999). Each group centered activity on athletics (with a strong academic component), community service, or the arts (Roach, 1999).

Although recent leadership literature supports the nurture approach and identifies the potential merit of youth leadership development initiatives, little research has been conducted examining the potential of leadership development from an early age. With this in mind, the sport environment provides a number of advantages for the study of leadership development. This naturalistic setting provides: a) a time frame that is adequate for evaluating leadership, b) an environment high in psychological involvement, and c) an opportunity to investigate leadership in a variety of situations (Smoll & Smith, 1989). Further, a sport setting may allow researchers to examine leadership from a developmental perspective.
Review of Leadership and Sport Literature

Sport Leadership and Coaching

Whether it is from a coach, manager or teammate, the demand for effective leadership to increase performance is an ever-present phenomenon in the domain of sport. It would be unusual to read a sport page in the newspaper or watch a sport broadcast on television without some reference to an athlete demonstrating effective leadership within his/her team. Weese and Nicholls (1986) stipulated that in any specific game, an athlete emerges as a leader and is able to motivate and organize his/her teammates to play as a cohesive squad. Mosher and Roberts (1981) suggested that athletes on sport teams are not utilized to their full potential and that the realization of that potential could mark significant changes in athletic performance. Despite sport literature recognizing that athlete leaders may play a key role in increasing team performance, research has concentrated primarily on studying coaching leadership (Case, 1984; Case, 1987; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978, Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980; Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995). Similar to other disciplines, most leadership research has concentrated on providing adult leaders, such as coaches, with different styles and techniques to improve their skills rather than examining factors that may contribute to developing leadership in youth. This section will provide a review of the leadership research in sport and provide a rational for further exploration of athlete centered leadership development.

The Leadership Scale for Sport

It is difficult to review leadership in sport without recognizing Chelladurai and Saleh’s (1978) pioneering development of the widely used Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS). Premised on House’s (1971) path-goal theory, the LSS is used to ascertain characteristics and behaviors that athletes prefer and perceive as well as actual coaching behaviors. The LSS developed from
the notion that a leader’s function is to increase the reward to goal attainment while identifying and removing obstacles that interfere with reaching those goals. The scale provides researchers with a quantitative means for assessing leadership and has been widely used to measure and evaluate how different coaching behaviors influence athlete involvement in sport (e.g., Chelladurai & Carron, 1983; Hume, Hopkins, Robinson, Robinson, & Hollings, 1993; Laughlin & Laughlin, 1994; Peng, 1998; Zhang, Jenson, & Mann, 1997).

The Multidimensional Model of Leadership

Chelladurai (1980) furthered his coaching research by introducing the Multidimensional Model of Leadership (MML). The model was developed by combining essential components from various leadership theories (Fiedler, 1967; House, 1971; Osbourn & Hunt, 1975; Yulk, 1971) to formulate a model conducive to sport settings. While previous researchers have only focused on one component (e.g., leader, members, or the situation) of how leadership changes, the MML brings all elements together, placing equal emphasis on each respective component (Chelladurai, 1991). The MML stipulates that athlete performance and athlete satisfaction are a function of the interaction among the behaviors required by the situation, preferred by the athlete and actually demonstrated by the coach. The precursors to leader behaviors are the specific situations, leader characteristics, and member characteristics. The MML, like the LSS, has played a significant role in sport leadership research because it takes into account the relationship between leader and members while considering the role context can play in leadership behavior. The MML has become a permanent fixture when discussing leadership in sport due to its frequent application (e.g. Chelladurai, Imamura, Yamaguchi, Oinuma & Miyauchi, 1988; Dwyer & Fischer, 1990; Reimer & Chelladurai, 1995; Serpa 1999; Westre & Weiss, 1991). Although highly credited, Chelladurai’s LSS and MML do not examine leadership in sport beyond
coaching. As well, neither the LSS nor the MML address how individuals develop skills that enable them to become effective coaches.

The Captain’s Role

The sport literature focusing specifically on the development of athlete leadership is limited. Mosher (1979) and Mosher and Roberts (1981) discussed the role that captains can play within a sport team. Both papers identified roles such as acting as a liaison, promoting communication, assisting in planning and disciplining, interacting with officials and the public, and setting a good example for other players. However, neither paper provided any method of investigation upon which to base these findings. Therefore, the credibility of their findings may be questionable.

Weese and Nicholls (1986) used a number of paper and pencil questionnaires and selection interviews to identify leaders among varsity high school baseball teams. The results illustrated that the number of years experience on a varsity team and a player’s popularity as perceived by their teammates were significant in identifying emergent leader-athletes. Further, number of years at school, relative skill, and player position were not significant factors in emergent leaders. Unfortunately, the study does not disclose the validity of the measurement tools used, nor does it give a clear illustration of the demographics of the participants of the study. The methodology used in the study asked specific questions in order to identify possible trends that prompt leadership selection. However, Weese and Nicholls did not investigate factors that contribute to developing these trends. Thus, factors contributing to an emergent leader-athlete’s popularity and his/her years of experience in a sport may be significant in identifying contributing components of leadership development.
Formal Structure and Central Positioning

Grusky (1963) and subsequent researchers (Leonard, Ostrosky, & Huchendorf, 1990; Loy, Curtis, & Hillen, 1987) examined the role of formal structure in developing leadership in athletes. Formal structure, "conceived as the environment within which the informal develops, patterns the behavior of its constituent positions along three interdependent dimensions: 1) spatial location, 2) nature of task, and 3) frequency of interaction" (Grusky, 1963, p. 345).

Spatially participants could be positioned centrally or peripherally to other individuals within the organization. Participants could be engaged in tasks of an independent or dependent nature (dependent tasks require the coordination and cooperation of two or more people to complete the task). Finally, the regularity with which people interact with others could be frequent or infrequent.

In his study, Grusky focused on baseball and drew his sample from randomly selected players listed in The Official Encyclopedia of Baseball. Four hundred and sixty five players were selected and of that sample thirteen players had eventually become managers. An additional 94 managers were selected from 16 professional teams between the years of 1921-41 and 1951-58. The data was then analyzed to determine the number of managers recruited from professional baseball players and compare the field positions of those recruited managers to determine if a particular position tended to produce more managers.

The results indicated catcher and in-fielder positions produced the greatest percentage of managers. Grusky theorized that central positioning was pivotal to leadership development, as individuals in central locations interact with others more frequently than peripherally positioned players. These interactions can be either task related or social related. Formal structure research supports the notion that individuals in high interaction positions, such as catchers in baseball, are
more likely to be selected for managerial positions over individuals in low interaction positions (Leonard, Ostrosky, & Huchendorf, 1990; Loy, Curtis, & Hillen, 1987; Loy & Sage, 1970).

Melnick and Loy (1996) provided further support for Grusky’s theory that central positioning promotes leadership development. In their study, data was collected from the National Mutual Rugby Almanac of New Zealand on the positions of 76 player captains. The data was then analyzed quantitatively to provide ratios of the number of captains produced from each position. The results indicated that a high percentage of captains came from halfback and number 8 positions. Melnick and Loy, like Grusky, supported the notion that captains emerge from spatially central locations that are high in propinquity, visibility, and observability. Their study indicated that half back and number 8 positions “scored high on the personal attribute, propinquity, that is, both are very proximal to other players in a spatial and population density sense” (Melnick & Loy, 1996, p. 99). The central nature of each position makes them highly visible and highly observed by others within the team. Finally, the nature of both positions requires a high degree of game knowledge and understanding of strategy and tactics (observability). These three characteristics also make the players in these positions perform tasks interdependently with teammates to reach game objectives.

The methods used to examine the various studies on the effect of formal structure on leadership development were very similar. Each project (Grusky, 1963; Melnick & Loy, 1996; Leonard et. al., 1990; Loy, et. al, 1987) involved obtaining data from primary resources, such as player encyclopedias or almanacs, and conducting correlation analyses to identify if certain playing positions increase one’s leadership potential. The researchers found that spatially central positions that are high in propinquity and observability promote leadership potential. However, none of these studies explored other alternatives. For example, players who demonstrate
leadership potential could be better equipped to play central positions than others who fail to demonstrate potential. Further, the research methods used in these studies excluded examining the positions of the participants prior to playing professional sport. It may be important to discover whether the position develops leadership or is it that leaders are funneled into these demanding positions. To understand the role that central positioning may play in leadership development in sport it is necessary to examine player positions beginning at a young age.

Tropp and Landers (1979) conducted work with women’s varsity field hockey players to examine the role of formal structure among younger athletes. The purpose of their investigation was to: 1) determine positions of high and low interaction by recording the number of interactions for each position and 2) to measure the relationship between frequency of interaction and emergence of team leadership. Fifteen varsity collegiate hockey teams were involved in a two-fold methodology. First, researchers recorded each interaction among teammates for three varsity teams and their opposition in fifteen games. At the conclusion of each game, a total interaction score was accumulated for 11 player positions on each of the three teams. An interaction was scored every time the ball was passed directly to a player by a teammate, without interference from the opposition, as well as every time a pass or shot was initiated or received. Second, the empirical data collected in part 1 of the methodology was used to ascertain the emergence of leadership within the team. A two-item questionnaire was provided to the athletes of each team asking the participants “to rate their teammates on leadership (How much of a team leader is she?), and interpersonal attraction (How well do you like her?)” (Tropp & Landers, 1979, p. 232). Ratings were then accumulated with high scores signifying high leadership and attraction (Tropp & Landers, 1979).
Unlike other studies conducted on formal structure, (Grusky, 1963; Melnick & Loy, 1996; Leonard et. al., 1990; Loy, et. al, 1987) positions of low interaction rated higher in leadership than positions of high interaction (Tropp & Landers, 1979). Goalies were rated highest in leadership and attraction despite being among the lowest interacting members of the team. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is that a goalie has some control over the outcome of the game. Goalies perform a unique, independent task that greatly impacts the team's results. Loy and Sage (1970) advocated that it may be important for a team leader to be able to perform independent tasks that his/her teammates are unable to perform.

Tropp and Landers suggested that spatially central, high interacting positions may not be an essential element in developing leadership. Instead, they proposed that the nature of the task may be of greater importance. However, the researchers did not account for the social and vocal interactions of various player positions. Player's social and vocal interactions were an important factor in Melnick and Loy's (1996) research, classified as visibility and observability. Further research examining the social and vocal interactions of a player who performs unique independent tasks may be important to fully explain the role of player positioning in leadership development.

Performance and Group Maintenance Leadership

The types of interactions that are most significant to leadership development may also be important to explore. Rees (1983) and Kim (1992) conducted research that partly examines this issue by investigating the importance of both instrumental (task) and expressive (social) leadership within sports teams. Rees (1983) administered questionnaires to 23 intramural basketball teams consisting of 188 athletes involved in an eight-week round-robin tournament. Questions examined the importance of instrumental leadership roles (best player, highly skilled)
and expressive leadership roles (contributes to team harmony). Results illustrated that being recognized by teammates' as someone that demonstrates ability in both roles will be rated highest for leadership among teammates.

Kim (1992) conducted similar research examining four types of leadership based on the components of performance and group maintenance. The purpose of his study was to investigate whether leadership style among school athletic team captains influenced performance differently. Banzai’s (1989) leadership style scale was given to 1972 athletes from 114 different schools. The scale focused on the degree to which team captains demonstrated task achievement or a group-relation function. Captains could be characterized under four leadership categories: 1) above average in performance and group maintenance, 2) above average in performance and average in group maintenance, 3) average in performance and above average in group maintenance, or 4) average in both performance and group maintenance. The results supported Rees’ (1982) findings that captains who are above average in performance and group maintenance increased team success. However, neither Rees nor Kim illustrated any significant difference in group satisfaction or increased team performance when the leader demonstrated either high performance or high group maintenance behavior. While both studies administered questionnaires exploring the type of behavior that satisfied teammates and increased team performance, they failed to examine how these leader-athletes learn group maintenance skills or why they decide to demonstrate this skill more so than their peers.

Leadership Characteristics and Behaviors

Unlike the work discussed to this point, focusing on leadership characteristics or methods of recognizing leadership and leadership behavior, Glenn and Horn (1993) examined a number of psychological and personal characteristics that partially explain emergent leadership behavior
The researchers interviewed seven head coaches and administered a number of questionnaires, scales and inventories to 106 female high school soccer players from the same seven teams. The measurement tools rated a number of characteristics, including perceived competence, competitive trait anxiety, global self-worth and sex role orientation. Participants were also asked to fill out a Sport Leadership Behavior Inventory (SLBI), an inventory that consisted of “25 items, 19 of which describe various personal characteristics or behaviors which are deemed desirable for team leaders in soccer, and 6 of which are filler items” (Glenn & Horn, 1993, p. 22).

The results indicated that peer and coach’s ratings of an athlete’s leadership tendencies were most strongly associated with athlete skill level. Coaches placed little emphasis on an athlete’s psychological characteristics (e.g. androgyny and competitive trait anxiety), instead rating leadership potential solely on the athlete’s skill level. Conversely, Glenn and Horn (1993) suggested that peer evaluations revealed athletes who were perceived to have “high self-esteem, soccer competence, psychological androgyny, and lower competitive trait anxiety” (p. 30) would more likely demonstrate leadership tendencies than their peers who scored lower in such characteristics.

**Summation of Sport Leadership Research**

Glenn and Horn’s (1993) contribution advances leadership thinking by further exploring important psychological and personal characteristics of leader-athletes in sport. However, like previous leadership research in sport, it failed to explore how these characteristics and behaviors develop. Despite research signifying the important role that athlete leadership may play in sport, there are several areas that have been ignored. First, in order to gain insight into leader behavior the complex relationships between team members, the situation, and the emergent leader-athlete
needs exploration. Second, research to date has neglected to examine leadership development from a young age considering past social and contextual influence. Finally, important social and contextual factors that contribute to leadership have yet to be examined using qualitative methods that may be more appropriate for this type of investigation.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of social and contextual variables in leader-athlete development. More specifically it will explore the various activities that leader-athletes engaged in throughout the course of their development, and their roles within these activities. Additionally, the role that peers, teachers/coaches, and parents played within these activities will be examined.
Methods

Participants

Six male varsity athletes were selected to participate in this study. All the participants were Caucasian with a medium to high socio-economic status and five of the six participants were from nuclear families in urban communities. The participants had a mean age of 22.3 years (SD = 2.7). Each athlete was a member of a middle-sized Canadian university sport team who participated in the Canadian Intercollegiate Athletic Union (CIAU). Two athletes from each of three teams (basketball, volleyball, and ice hockey) were chosen. Basketball, volleyball, and ice hockey were selected because of their structural similarities. For example, number of players per team, length of season, game objectives, member interaction, and playoff format are comparable for all three sports within the CIAU. In addition, each of the three sports not only requires interdependent team effort to reach game objectives but also involves high variability in that the environment is open and continually changing (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978)

A qualitative methods approach was used that required a small, purposefully selected sample of participants who could provide in-depth information about issues central to the research question (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). In phenomenological research, participants are selected because of their extensive experience with a specific phenomenon. Phenomenological researchers do not select participants randomly to obtain statistical significance but rather for the explicit purpose of gaining a rich description of the phenomenon (Dale, 2000). The nature of phenomenological research warrants a detailed in-depth interview process. Men and women differ physically, psychologically, and the manner in which they are socialized. In order to limit the number of variables that will be considered in the analysis only men have been included. A leader-athlete selection process was designed to ensure that chosen
participants demonstrated outstanding leadership within their teams and therefore would provide the richest source of information.

**Leader-Athlete Selection Process**

Each team was contacted and informed of the purpose and significance of the research project and provided with a letter of information (Appendix A). During the initial contact a request was made to meet the team on two separate occasions for 15 minutes. All teams agreed to the request. During the first meeting players were reminded of the purpose of the study and asked to complete an informed consent form (Appendix B) recognizing that their participation in the two meetings was completely voluntary. The first meeting also required each athlete to answer a two-item questionnaire from which a team specific definition of leadership was constructed.

As the term leadership is ambiguous, and could potentially have numerous meanings to different athletes, each team member was asked to personally define leadership. All athletes were asked to answer two open-ended questions regarding their opinions of the characteristics and roles important to leadership within each of their respective sports. The two questions were: 1) What are the characteristics of a good leader in your sport, and 2) What are the roles that you would expect a good leader to play? Individual responses were cumulated and summarized to construct a definition of leadership specific to each sport (Appendix C). Answers to the two questions were coded and repeated words and themes were used to formulate a sport-specific definition that included the view offered by all the athletes on the team. The following is the definition of leadership compiled from the responses of volleyball players:

A leader is defined as someone who is a role model and leads by example both on and off court. He is respected and shows respect to other players and coaches. He is someone who is approachable, open-minded, confident, vocal, determined, hard-working, and good at motivating teammates. He is someone who
demonstrates good game knowledge, skill, problem solving abilities, and calmness in clutch situations. He acts as a liaison between players and coaches, players and other players, as well as coaches and referees. Finally a leader is enthusiastic, passionate about his sport, supportive, and encouraging of his teammates.

A definition such as this was constructed from the input of all the athletes from each team. In a second meeting athletes were presented with their definitions and were asked to list three players in rank order that best met the defined criteria. The athlete that best fit the definition would be ranked 1, the second most fitting would be ranked 2, and the third most fitting would be ranked 3. At the conclusion of the second meeting the players of each team were informed that if selected by their teammates they would be contacted via telephone by the researcher. At this time participants were also provided a second letter of information explaining the interview process and how the anonymity of each participant would be maintained. The two athletes who received the most votes from each of the three teams were contacted and asked to participate in the study. All players that were contacted agreed to participate and interview dates and times were arranged.

For the purpose of anonymity each athlete was coded so that specific attribution quotations could be explored. A letter was given to participants to identify them as volleyball players (V), basketball players (B), and hockey players (H). To distinguish between the two athletes within each sport numbers 1 or 2 were given to each athlete respectively (i.e. V1 represents the first volleyball player and V2 the second volleyball player).

**Interview Protocol**

The current study used a broad-based approach to examine involvement and development in all activities of 6 participants from age 6 until their current age. Retrospective techniques (Côté, Beamer & Ericsson, 2001) were used to explore the activities that each athlete was involved in, as well as the social and contextual variables associated with those activities. In-
depth phenomenological interviews were employed to provide a method of understanding each player’s life history, details of his experiences and the meaning associated with those experiences (Dale, 1996; Schuman, 1982; Seidman, 1991).

Pivotal to the success of phenomenological interviews is a researcher’s ability to build a rapport with the participant. Participants need to feel at ease and have a sense of trust with the researcher. This relationship allows the participant to feel comfortable in providing detailed personal information (Dale, 1996). To develop this rapport each participant was assured of the confidentiality measures to be taken and that all of a participants’ experiences would be helpful information (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Retrospective methods dependent on the participant’s memory to recall and reconstruct past development have already demonstrated success (Côté, Beamer, & Ericsson, 2001). Research has indicated that successful recall is more accurate when people are reporting significant experiences (Rubin & Kozin, 1984; Bahrick, Hall, & Berger, 1996). Further, Bahrick et al. illustrated that experiences that are repeated and continuous are often recalled more accurately. Athletes completed a three part phenomenological interview that lasted between four and five hours. The goal of this three-part interview structure was to have athletes reconstruct whole experiences throughout their life history so that a comprehensive description of each activity could be obtained (Dale, 1996; Seidman, 1991). All interviews were audio recorded and conducted in the researcher’s office with a 45 minutes break between sections 2 and 3. Prior to commencing the interview each athlete completed an informed consent form recognizing that their participation was voluntary and consenting to having the interview audio recorded (Appendix D). The consent form also indicated that each athlete was not required to answer any question that they found uncomfortable and they could stop participating in the study.
completely at any time without repercussions. The first part of the interview was designed to gather information about the activities that each athlete participated in from age 6 until the present. Athlete recall was stimulated by a number of different activity categories provided by the researcher (Appendix E). This information was recorded in chart form (Appendix F) and was designed to have the athlete provide information about his history, placing his various experiences into proper context (Schuman, 1982). Patton (1990) explained that without proper context participants will have little chance of describing the meaning of the experience.

The second part of the interview allowed the athlete to reveal specific details of each activity and experience. A second chart was used to record specific information of each activity including: 1) hours of participation, 2) height for age, 3) leadership role held, 4) position held or played, and 5) age compared to peers (Appendix F). These categories were developed to obtain specific objective information to elicit details of each activity, thus providing researchers with insight into each athlete’s experiences (Seidman, 1991). Categories were selected based on previous research in sport leadership studies (e.g., Grusky, 1963; Klonsky 1991; Weese & Nicholls, 1986). Part 1 and 2 of the interview provided a detailed longitudinal account of the athlete’s activities and created an excellent point of reference to begin qualitative questioning (Côté, Beamer, & Ericsson, 2001; Soberlak, 2001). Part 1 and 2 of this interview protocol used a similar format to obtain a chronological listing of activities within the participant’s life history and specific details associated with each of those activities. Part 1 and 2 of the protocol represent a modified version of interview 1 and 2 of Schuman’s (1982) three series phenomenological interview format.

Part 3 of the interview was designed to have athletes provide a comprehensive account of each activity previously described. Three open-ended questions were asked intending to elicit
responses that provided a detailed picture of each reported activity, including the athlete’s behaviours, social influences and relationships (Appendix E). The three questions addressed the influence of three major socializing groups: peers, teacher/coach, and parents. Peers, teachers/coaches and parents were selected because they have been identified as primary socializing agents in sport (e.g. Bloom, 1985; Côté, 1999; Côté & Hay, 2002; Overman & Prakasa, 1981; Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992) Further peers, teachers/coaches and parents have been identified as sources of information for children to evaluate themselves in an achievement environment (Stipek & Maclver, 1989; Horn & Weiss, 1991). During this section of the interview athletes concentrated on making meaning and expressing their understanding of each previously identified experience (Seidman, 1991). The charts from part 1 and 2 of the methods section were placed in front of the researcher during the interview and the concrete activities within those charts were used to direct the questions. Thus, questions were asked on specific real-life experiences from the athlete’s background, assisting them in reconstructing their experiences. This technique was employed to stimulate recall and to this end, add to the depth and quality of athlete responses (Soberlak, 2001; Côte et al., 2001). For organizational purposes athletes were asked to regroup activities into years that identified major periods in their development. All athletes regrouped activities into three: 1) primary school years (ages 6 to 10), 2) middle school years (ages 11 and 13), and 3) high school years (ages 14 to 18).

Throughout the interview, probes were used to encourage the athlete to provide fuller descriptions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Probes consisted of redirecting athletes to social or contextual variables with questions like “What was your parents’ role in that experience”. Leading questions that influenced the athlete’s responses were avoided. The role of the researcher was to listen actively and guide the athlete’s sharing of information. Flow and rapport
between the researcher and athletes was maintained by the use of positive body language such as head nodding and words of reinforcement designed to make athletes feel that their contributions were valuable (Patton, 1990; Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

**Bias Exploration**

The researcher was a former CIAU team sport athlete and to this end it was important for the researcher to explore and identify his own a priori assumptions before commencing the interviews with each of the participants (Dale, 1996). Recognizing one’s assumptions and biases is important in qualitative methods to prevent influencing the research findings. To effectively accomplish this objective requires the researcher to engage in self-reflection of the specific topic (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989). Identifying and paying attention to biases during the interview process allows the researcher to avoid asking the participants leading questions. Self-reflection was assisted using a bracketing interview conducted by an experienced colleague not connected with the study. The process required the researcher to answer questions regarding his personal leadership development. The interview was then transcribed verbatim and analyzed to identify any preconceived assumptions and thoughts that the researcher might have had (Dale, 2000). Uncovered biases and assumptions were written down and made visible at the onset of the interview process. Results of the bracketing interview revealed that the researcher emphasized the following important leadership components: 1) early peer and coach recognition, 2) paternal influence and recognition, 3) physical strength and size, 4) good communication skills, and 5) frequency of opportunity to play leadership roles. Throughout the interview process the researcher made a conscious effort to continually recheck his presuppositions to ensure questions were not leading but instead driven by the participant’s experiences.
Pilot Interviews

After identifying and becoming aware of personal researcher biases, two pilot interviews were conducted using the in-depth three-stage interview protocol. Two CIAU varsity athletes with similar backgrounds and leadership experiences to those of the participants were selected to pilot the process. The pilots were used to help refine the interview questions as well as, to help the researcher practice a structure that would instill flow throughout the interview. The two interviews also refined the researchers' familiarity with the audio recorder and helped develop efficient methods of charting athlete experiences for part 1 and 2 of the method.
Data Analysis

Descriptive Analysis

The primary purpose of parts 1 and 2 of the interview process was to provide a detailed longitudinal account of each athlete’s activities thereby providing the interviewer with prompting cues to derive further information during the in-depth interview section. The information recorded in chart form also provided the researcher with some concrete descriptive information. The purpose of analyzing the descriptive information was to ascertain the following: 1) the types of activities in which athletes were engaged from a young age, 2) the number of hours of participation in the various activities, 3) athlete height compared to his peers, 4) the number of hours the athlete was engaged in formal leadership roles (captain or assistant captain), 5) the position that each athlete played within the activity, and 6) the athlete’s age compared to his peers within each activity.

All activities listed by the athletes were grouped into five categories to provide structure to the synthesis of information. The first category ‘primary sport’ included all participation in the sport in which the athlete was still currently involved at the varsity level. ‘Other organized sport’ is the second category and included participation in all sports outside of the primary sport that were conducted in organized leagues, school or otherwise. The third category, ‘unorganized activities and sports’ included involvement in play activities such as sports on the street after school, strategy games, or ice-skating with friends or family. ‘School and church related activities’ such as boy scouts, student council, and altar boy were included in the fourth category. The fifth category ‘vocation and volunteer’ related activities included involvement in such things as schoolboy paper routes, volunteer experience, and summer jobs. The fourth and fifth categories were withdrawn from discussion in the results section because participants spent so
few hours engaged in activities in these categories. Further, the first category ‘primary sport’ and the second category ‘other organized activity’ were combined to form one category named organized sport activities.

Number of hours of participation in various activities as well as the number of hours spent in formal leadership roles were computed for each year of development beginning at age 6. Height compared to peers, position within activities, and age compared to peers were examined for trends and as a guide to qualitative questioning.

Part 1 and 2 of the methodology also contributed to recognizing stages and areas of transition that were consistent in the athlete’s lives. Athletes remembered and discussed activities in clear, age related segments. These stages were related to the most time consuming event in their life, which was school. The stages were as follows: 1) the primary years (grades 1-5 or ages 6 - 10), 2) the middle school years (grades 6 - 8 or ages 11 - 13), and 3) the high school years (grades 9 - 13 or ages 14 - 18). The stages seemed to provide each athlete with a base timeline from which to remember other important events, figures, and influences. Each athlete described similar stages with a few discrepancies, such as the primary years going to grade 6 and the high school years ending at grade 12.

Qualitative Analysis

The objective of the qualitative analysis was to identify various categories imbedded in the unstructured data set that represented each athlete’s perceptions of his development (Tesch, 1990). The six athlete interviews were transcribed verbatim to produce 220 pages of single spaced typed text. Each transcript was read and minor editing modifications were made to the data. Editing concentrated on omitting names and references that threatened the anonymity of the athletes and relevant information was added in brackets to clarify and explain vague sections
of text. Following the editing procedure, each interview was read several times by the researcher in order to: 1) allow the researcher to become very familiar with the content of the data, 2) provide the researcher with a sense of the athlete’s whole experience or entire development (Dale, 2000), 3) to monitor the plausibility and credibility of the interview process (Kvale, 1989), and 4) to provide the researcher with the background to progress to deeper stages of analysis.

Creating tags. The first stage of the analysis involved creating tags that represented and identified accurately the information within the transcripts. The researcher coded each interview to capture important pieces of information (Strauss, 1987). The text was essentially divided into single pieces of important information called ‘meaning units’. According to Tesch (1990) a meaning unit (MU) can be defined as a section of text that contains one idea and is understandable by itself. At this stage, the researcher was not concerned with the number or the suitability of each tag because the tags could be changed or combined with other tags of similar meaning at a later point of the analysis (Côté, 1993). Rather the focus was to tag ‘meaning units’, taking the relevant important pieces of text out of the context of the transcript and thus ‘de-contextualizing’ the information (Tesch, 1990).

Creating categories. The second stage of the analysis involved comparing and grouping the tags derived in the first step of the analysis. Tags with similar meaning were grouped together to form categories of information. Each grouping was labeled to describe adequately the information captured within each category. This step of the analysis allows the researcher to ‘re-contextualize’ the information into a set of categories with distinct characteristics (Tesch, 1990). These categories provided the rudimentary organizing structure for further analysis. At this stage in the analysis categories remained flexible. Categories could be modified, combined, or omitted, as the classification system was refined.
It is important to recognize that the preliminary groupings of meaning units evolved from three important characteristics of categorization: 1) tagging experience, 2) inductive inference, and 3) similarity (Smith, 1990). First, the tagging experience was the initial step to narrow the information from the text to smaller more manageable pieces of meaningful information. This step merely separated and labeled information. Second, the inductive inference was used to help create categories. Prior to this stage of analysis there were no themes or predetermined ideas before data collection, rather prevalent patterns simply emerged from the tags or MU’s (Patton, 1990). Lastly similarity refers to the idea that characteristics of MU’s within each category were similar while distinct from the characteristics of MU’s in other categories. Patton (1990) refers to this concept as internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity.

**Developing components.** The next step involved developing major components by grouping each category and the content within that category. During the interview process athletes were prompted with open questions about the influence of peers, teachers/coaches, and parents on their development in each activity. The categories therefore seemed to fit naturally back into these major components (peers; parents; teachers/coaches). Further, because the athlete was always speaking about his development, a ‘personal involvement’ component was also included to capture that specific information.

**Refining categories.** This stage of the analysis involved refining the categories and regrouping of some of the meaning units found within each category. To ensure that each category was consistent with the content within the transcripts, a second researcher read the transcripts and formulated categories. The two researchers met to discuss and examine the consistency between category ideas. Some refinement was necessary and both researchers agreed that further grouping of the meaning units found in each category was necessary. Using
the NVIVO (1998) organizing software, MU’s within each category were divided into the three development stages that the athletes had experienced (i.e., primary years, middle school years, and high school years).

**Developing dimensions.** Developing dimensions involved examining the MU’s of each category for content. The goal was to identify both similarities and uniqueness of the segments within each category (Tesch, 1990). For example, a coach may provide athletes with special attention, which is a category. However, not every coach provides athletes with special attention in the same manner, thus the dimensions of the category could include: 1) coach has athletes lead skill demonstrations, or 2) coach compliments athletes on skill in front of peers. Providing dimensions for each category reveals the full depth of information from the data set and imparts meaning to the category.
Establishing Trustworthiness

The data obtained from the interview procedures relied solely on the leader-athletes' retrospective recall. Measures were implemented to validate and ensure a level of trustworthiness from the information gathered. Patton (1990) suggested the importance of finding similar results using different data-collection techniques. This section discusses the safeguards taken to ensure the trustworthiness of results.

Purposeful Selection

The objective of purposeful sampling is to ensure selection of information-rich subjects. Patton (1990) suggested that these are subjects who can yield in-depth information about the issue. Therefore proper participant selection can increase the credibility of the research findings. The current study implemented a novel approach to leader-athlete-selection. Having each team construct the leadership definition and then vote for two teammates who best fit this definition ensured that the participants selected are the most information-rich among their peers in this area. Traditionally, leader-athletes have been included in research because they hold the formal leadership position (captain) (e.g., Mosher, 1979; Mosher & Roberts, 1981; Weese & Nicholls 1986). The difficulty with formal positioning being the criteria for inclusion is that those athletes may not be selected solely for their leadership capabilities but rather for other reasons such as seniority or skill. Further, captains are often selected by coaches and represent only one dimension of leadership. The novel approach introduced in this study increased the credibility of the participants as leaders by having a systematic selection process with the criteria for inclusion set by each team.
Triangulation of Methods

Patton (1990) discussed the importance of triangulation of data suggesting the “importance of using different data-collection techniques and different evaluation research” (p. 464) strategies to study the same program. Part 1 and 2 of the interview procedure required each participant to recall the activities and the number of hours spent engaged in those activities from a young age. All information provided from these two parts was recorded in chart form as well as audio recorded so that verification checks could be made at a later time. In the third part of the interview, subjects were asked to provide a detailed description of their involvement within each activity. In this section, athletes would again describe their hours of participation, who was involved, major events etc. Comparing the information gathered in part 1 and 2 of the interview to the information accumulated in part 3 allowed the researcher to examine the consistency of the participant’s responses. In all the interviews data collected in stage 1 and 2 was consistent with the data collected in stage 3.

Triangulation of Analysts

Two reliability checks using different independent researchers were performed at two different stages in the analysis. The first check was to ensure that each category formulated was consistent with the content of the transcripts. Both the researcher and an independent analyst read the transcripts and formulated categories. The two researchers then met to discuss and examine the consistency between category ideas. Some refinement was necessary until both researchers agreed that the selected categories were consistent with the data.

The second category check was performed at the completion of the analysis to ensure that the data from the participant interviews (meaning units) were again categorized correctly. A random sample of 40 (out of a total of 685) meaning units from the interview transcripts were
analyzed by an independent analyst (different from the analyst used in the first step) and placed into the categories provided by the researcher. The meaning units were selected from every interview transcript and from different sections of the interviews. This procedure was designed to ensure that each category was represented. After this procedure was completed, one category remained not represented (i.e., influence of peers on environment).

The independent analyst was provided with a half hour training lesson on the content of the categories and was provided with a written synopsis of the training to refer to during the placing of meaning units. The independent analyst and primary researcher were in agreement for 35 out of 40 meaning units (87.5%) (Table 1). According to Patton (1990) using multiple analysts to review the same data set provides a concrete method of ensuring that the analysis of information is trustworthy.

**Electronic Data Handling**

To facilitate the organization of data a software package (NVIVO, 1998) specifically designed for sorting, storing, and analyzing qualitative research was used with all athlete interviews. The software allowed the researcher to systematically sort and categorize all MU’s as well as re-categorize as required. Further, all MU’s belonging in one category could be grouped in one location allowing the researcher to read them in a continuous fashion. Using this system, no information was lost as each piece of information was tracked and could be moved between categories with relative ease. The process of handling data electronically rather than manually, limited the risks of making tagging and categorizing errors (Côté, Salmela, Baria, & Russell, 1993).
Table 1

Multiple Analysts Check – Consistency of Placing Meaning Units Into Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th># of MU Sampled</th>
<th># of MU Correctly Placed</th>
<th>% of Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peers</strong></td>
<td>- Characteristics</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Influence on the environment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Leader-athlete demonstrates strong work ethic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Recognized skill level</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Rapport</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Roles with in play activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Roles in organized sport</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>84.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers &amp; Coaches</strong></td>
<td>- Are nice people</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Provide special attention</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Develop skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Are stimulating figures</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Designate leader roles</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Engage in mature conversation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents</strong></td>
<td>- Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Support</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Coaching role</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mentorship</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Involvement</strong></td>
<td>- Play activities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Organized sport activities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Totals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

Results from step one and two of the interview process involved the systematic gathering of variables for each participant. These variables consisted of: 1) hours of participation, 2) height for age compared to peers, 3) leadership role held, 4) position held or played, 5) age compared to peers. The types of activities that athletes were engaged in from a young age were used to prompt the qualitative interview process and to validate athlete recall. The number of hours athletes spent engaged in various activities and the number of hours spent engaged in formal leadership positions (captain or assistant captain) were also used to validate athlete recall and will be displayed in tandem with the qualitative results.

Height of Participants

Little consistency was found from the descriptive information regarding the height of participants. Data was collected on each participant’s height as compared to their school peers and the peers of each specific activity (e.g. within their primary sport). Three participants (V1, V2, & H2) were above average in height compared to all peers during the primary and middle school years (ages 6-14 years). Two (V1 & V2) of those three participants continued to be above average height compared to their class peers during the high school years (age 15 – present), but only average height among their primary sport teammates at this same time. The third (H2) was average height among all his peers from age 15 until the present. Two participants (B2 & H1) were average height amongst all their peers throughout the primary and middle school years. H1 continued to remain average amongst all of his peers during the high school years. B1 remained average height compared to his classmates however was below average compared to his primary sport teammates. Finally, one participant (B1) was below average height as compared to both his classmates and his sport peers throughout the primary and middle school years. During the
high school years he grew to be average height amongst all his peers. After inspection of the
descriptive information, no obvious connection can be made between the height of participants
and leadership development.

**Position Played**

The descriptive information gathered on player position revealed consistency within each
athlete’s primary sport but no positional consistency in any other sports or activities. The
volleyball athletes were both in hitting positions throughout their primary sport careers, the
basketball athletes both played guard positions (B1 being a central position – point guard) and
the hockey athletes both played forward positions throughout their primary sport careers. In
observing all other sports and activities that the athletes engaged in, no apparent trend was
distinguishable. To this end, each participants involvement across all sports in their development
indicated that athlete’s played in a plethora of different positions depending on age compared to
others, height compared to others, and type of activity being participated in.

**Age Compared to Peers**

The descriptive information regarding the age of the participants compared to their peers
reveals that each participant played with an older athlete at some point in their development.
Most leader-athletes participated with older competition throughout their development. In all
cases, participants would qualify for teams at the youngest age of admittance, often making them
the youngest on the team. Also, most participants often advanced to higher levels of competition
at an earlier age than necessary especially for their primary sport (e.g. V2 advancing to senior
volleyball in grade 11 instead of playing his last year of eligibility at the junior level). Many of
the participants spent considerable lengths of time with older people and this component will be
expanded on in the qualitative results section.
Nature of the Qualitative Results

The total number of meaning units elicited from the interview transcripts was 648. The inductive qualitative analysis permitted the regrouping of these meaning units into 19 categories and 4 components (Table 2). While the categories emerged from the regrouping of MU's, they fit naturally back into the original socializing agents used to ask the interview questions. Therefore, the components were not developed inductively but rather stemmed from the original interview questions.

Examining the Participant’s Development

The results from the inductive analysis of each interview transcript are presented in this section. The description will explain the inductive process from the second highest level organizing unit (categories) and progress downward to dimensions and finally meaning units. This progression will permit the retracing of information through the inductive process to the original starting point. It is important to note that the original inductive process was initiated with meaning units pulled directly from the text that were then progressively placed in higher ordered categories. Further, the inductive process ended at the category level.

Table 2 illustrates the number of athletes and meaning units that fell into each component and category. All athletes were represented in each component and the majority of athletes were represented in each category. It is noticeable that some categories have more athlete representation and are supported by more meaning unit quotations than others. Fewer supported categories have been included because they represent an important part to formulating the most complete picture of the leader-athlete’s development. Further, meaning unit support is not indicative of the importance of the category. Rather, some categories are more complex than
others, thus requiring participants to discuss and explain in greater detail the content of that category.

Table 2

Number of Athletes and Meaning Units Within Each Component and Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th># of Athletes</th>
<th># of MU's</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>- Characteristics</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Influence on the environment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Leader-athlete demonstrates strong work ethic</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Recognized skill level</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Rapport</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Roles in play activities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Roles in organized sport</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers &amp; Coaches</td>
<td>- Are nice people</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Provide special attention</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Develop skills</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Are stimulating figures</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Designate leader roles</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Engage in mature conversation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>- Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Support</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Coaching role</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mentorship</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Involvement</td>
<td>- Play activities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Organized sport activities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables 3 to 6 illustrate the division of the interview material into initial meaning units and subsequently into smaller categories. Each table presents the dimensions formed from meaning units to describe the content of the categories. For example, within the ‘peers’ component is the category ‘rapport’ which has two dimensions ‘good’ and ‘competitive’ stipulating that
participants could have a good or competitive rapport with peers. Often the dimensions varied throughout the participant’s development (Côté, 1993). To this end, the dimensions are presented for each stage (primary school 6-10 yrs; middle school 11-13 yrs; high school 14-18 yrs) within each category.

In the following section the categories and dimensions of each component are described. An inspection of the categories and dimensions are provided along with supportive meaning unit quotations. Because of the large number of meaning units, the purpose of presenting these quotations is not to illustrate all the data but rather provide examples that represent the participant’s development. An unequal representation of participants and meaning units is found within each dimension. Dimensions with less representation are included in the results because specific information contributed from each participant may provide a “broader base from which to study” leadership development (Côté, 1993, p. 77).

Peers

The meaning units classified into the peers’ component were defined as the elements involved in group-peer relationships. Seven categories were created: 1) characteristics of peers, 2) influence of peers on leader-athlete’s environment, 3) leader-athlete demonstrates strong work ethic, 4) peers recognized leader-athlete’s skill level, 5) rapport with peers, 6) roles in play activities, and 7) roles in organized sport (Table 3). Meaning units were gathered for each category and at each stage of development (stage 1 - primary school ages 6-10 years, stage 2 - middle school ages 11-13 years, or stage 3 -high school ages 14-18 years).

Characteristics of peers. This category focused on two unique characteristics displayed by the leader-athlete’s peers both in play and organized activities. This category was defined by the participant’s experience competing with peers of various ages and skill. The first dimension
of the category included competing with an older peer group during play and organized activities. This dimension occurred for the majority of participants throughout their development (stage 1, 2, and 3). An example of this dimension is presented in the following MU,

**Stage 3**: Most of the guys were in grade 11 because they only picked 10 people for each team, so I was right in the middle skill wise. I was the top rookie, top grade 9, I think I might have been the only grade 9 that made the team. (B1)

The second dimension involved peer skill level, specifically peers being more skillful and thus providing a more competitive environment for leader-athletes. This dimension became prevalent at stage two of the leader-athlete’s development and was an important element during stage 3 for all participants. The following MU provides an example of this dimension.

**Stage 2**: That was the first peewee team and so it was completely new, new people etc. But it was really good because as far as the competition that I had been used to it was 100 times better. (H1)
### Table 3

**Occurrence of Participant Identified Dimensions Within Each Category of the Peers Component**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th><strong>Stage 1</strong> (age 6-10)</th>
<th><strong>Dimensions</strong></th>
<th><strong>Stage 2</strong> (age 11-13)</th>
<th><strong>Stage 3</strong> (age 14-18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Characteristics of peers</td>
<td>Older (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>******** (5)</td>
<td>(******** (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Competitive (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Influence of peers on leader athlete's environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stimulating (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Leader athlete demonstrates strong work ethic</td>
<td>Helped gain respect (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>******** (5)</td>
<td>(******** (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Helped set example (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Helped me improve skills (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Peers recognized leader athlete skill level</td>
<td></td>
<td>High skill (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(******** (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Rapport with peers</td>
<td>Good (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>******** (5)</td>
<td>(******** (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Roles in play activities</td>
<td>Organizing games, selecting teams, providing motivation, and constructing rules (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>******** (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Roles in organized sport</td>
<td>Acknowledged leadership (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>******** (5)</td>
<td>(******** (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vocal instruction and motivation (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Organizing and tactical strategy (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

( ) number of participants in dimensions

**** same dimension description
Influence of peers on leader-athlete’s environment. This category includes all the things that peers contributed to the environment to increase the level of performance of the participants. It was found that certain peer groups contributed to making a stimulating environment during the third stage of development. For example, peers provided an opportunity to compete against good competition, play with quality teammates, and provided the experience of motivating and working hard with talented peers. Further, this category examined how peers influence the environment before, after, and during games, tournaments, and practices. Higher skilled teams and specialty groups could provide a stimulated atmosphere for development. For example V2 said the following point:

**Stage 3 – Stimulating:** So if I had a summer practicing with these good guys (Regional volleyball team), I could get better! So that is what really convinced me to play and I realized that it would be a good experience and stuff. (V2)

Leader-athlete demonstrates strong work ethic. This category describes the role work ethic played in contributing to the participant’s development. It was found that all participants reported that they continually worked as hard or harder than their peers. This strong work ethic resulted with the participants gaining recognition from their peers. In each stage of development a strong work ethic enabled the participants to gain respect from their peers as denoted in the following MU from the first dimension of this category.

**Stage 3:** Ya respect for him – Just to watch him work basically like whether it be sticking around after practice doing extra s***, or whatever in the gym, or like during games going right up to their (opposition) team’s toughest guy who is 6’3” and pushing him around. (H1)

A second dimension within the category illustrated how strong work ethic also provided the participants with a method of setting a positive example for their peers. However, this dimension was only prevalent during the third stage of development and is illustrated by the following quote.
Stage 3: I’d try and like pick up the level of practice – I’d work hard just because there’s a lot of guys that don’t really know how to play too well. I wouldn’t say I really helped them out too much, but I’d just try and pick up the general intensity of practice. (V2)

Finally, the third dimension extolled how a strong work ethic helped participants to improve their sport skills. Skill improvement was attributed to strong work ethic only in stage 3. A meaning unit illustrating this dimension is:

Stage 3: It was a pretty dismal season, and like (team’s name) had always had a pretty solid basketball team. … I was pretty embarrassed that I was part of the team that was probably the worst team in the last 20 years. And so that summer, I didn’t go to any camps that summer, but I worked from 12 in the afternoon until 8 at night at, … the outdoor pool, … three or four mornings average, I’d get up and I’d bike to St. Mike’s, which is probably about a 45 minute bike ride, to get there around 10. I’d shoot for an hour, and then I’d bike to work, which was another 45 minutes. I remember just working extremely hard in that off-season, thinking ‘that’s not going to happen. I’m not going to have this coach sit me again. I’m going to force him to play me because I’m going to be a lot better. And I’m not going to be part of one of the worst teams ever again’. Ya, I came back in grade 13, was a lot better and started again. (B2)

Peers recognized leader-athlete skill level. During stages 2 and 3, peers were recognizing the participants for their high skill level. Specifically, peers recognized that the participant’s physical talents such as speed, and jumping, as well as technical skills like spiking, ball, and puck handling were noticeably better compared to peer groups. Participants reported that peers were able to recognize the participant’s skill because they were scoring the most points, were put on specialty teams (provincial team), received awards such as MVP. A meaning unit illustrating this dimension and category is presented below.

Stage 3: He (captain) had gone and broken his ankle and after him I was the guy that was doing the next most stuff physically and scoring more points. I took more of a leadership role and I was more into it. I think I was MVP that year, I think it was because I ended up becoming junior athlete of the year. I was the MVP in volleyball too. (B1)
Rapport with peers. This category was defined as the way in which each leader-athlete got along with his peers in all activities. In other words this category explored each athlete’s likeability. Participants spoke of having excellent rapport with their peers throughout their development (i.e., all stages). All participants articulated that they shared a good relationship with all team members rather than bonding with only a few select members of the team. Participants explained that establishing a good link to all their peers was important to them because it helped create a mutual trust that allowed for honest communication. The rapport dimension is characterized by the following meaning unit:

Stage 1: Ya, I still know a lot of guys from that team. Even back then though I remember,... like I know I’ve never really had a problem getting along with anybody really, it was the same back then. I remember not wanting to leave because we had such a,...like we were kind of close. (H2)

Roles in play activities. It was found that from an early age the majority of participants were playing a number of roles during play activities. This category is most prevalent during stages 1 and 2, at which time participants were spending a great deal of their free time engaged in play type activities with peers. Participants played different roles when playing with peers including organizing games with and for peers, selecting teams, motivating peers to participate and compete, as well as constructing and monitoring rules. A meaning unit comprising this category was:

Stage 1: Well just like street hockey, say, there would be the usual kinda group of guys that would all go to this one guy’s house who had this huge driveway, and we’d break off into teams. Usually I’d be one of the guys who would get things started. Everyone’s screwing around playing at first and once we got enough guys I’d kinda be like “alright let’s get’er started and make some teams” (H1)

Roles in organized sport. This category denoted the participant’s roles in organized sport throughout the three stages. The first dimension within this category illustrates how participants were acknowledged from an early age (stage 1) as playing leadership roles. Peers recognized the
participant’s skill level as being higher than average and either voted them into a formal leadership position (captain) or acknowledged the coach’s decision to elect these athletes as captain. A meaning unit comprising this category is:

**Stage 3**: I was voted captain of my rugby team or assistant captain every year from grade 9 up through. It was more I think on paper – I was captain but because there was 12 or 13 of us that were pretty even but they (teammates) voted me. (V1)

In stages 1 and 2 formal leadership seemed highly dependent on skill level relative to peer groups. While the skill component in stage 3 was still an important role that participants had, two further roles also became apparent. The second dimension within this category is the role of vocal instruction and motivation. This dimension was only prevalent in stage 3 of participant development and can be described as participants helping peers with skill development, and directing and driving peer goal setting and motivation.

**Stage 3**: Ya, I felt more comfortable and confident or whatever, within the team. Like I was an older guy so,… there weren’t older guys anyways. So I’d help out guys in practices and stuff. I had more confidence to be more vocal I guess – get guys going by speaking up a little more. (V2)

Finally, a third dimension was also introduced in the third stage of development, which entailed the participant helping to organize peers on the playing surface and orchestrate tactical strategy. This involved helping peers execute strategy while in play during practice and competition. A meaning unit illustrating this dimension is presented below.

**Stage 3**: Competition. Like I said I got pretty competitive there so I’d always - I’d get more vocal in competition. Like asking for the ball and stuff because our setter might not have a clue who should get the ball. So I’d be like telling him where to set it. So I guess more vocal in competition. (V2)
Teachers and Coaches

The meaning units classified in the teacher’s and coach’s component defined the roles and contributions that teachers or coaches played in leader-athlete’s development. Teacher/Coach contributions took place throughout the participant’s development and can be captured in six categories. These categories include: 1) are nice people, 2) provide special attention, 3) develop skills, 4) are stimulating figures, 5) designate leader roles, and 6) engage in mature conversations (Table 4). Meaning units were gathered for each category at each stage of development (stage 1 - primary school ages 6-10 years, stage 2 - middle school ages 11-13 years, or stage 3 - high school ages 14-18 years).

Are nice people. All participants articulated that at each stage of their development there were teachers/coaches who were nice to them. In all stages, leader-athletes described these individuals as people who spent time speaking with them about problems or things that were important to them as young people. Participants felt that these were individuals who they could go to for advice on difficult decisions because these teachers/coaches seemed to understand the participants and were genuinely interested in their lives. Further, they provided positive reinforcement and attention. A meaning unit that characterizes this dimension is:

Stage 2 – Helped with problems and spent time with me: He was this big guy and he really loved being with kids. Almost all the first two years in minor you would want to make it to major all-star so you could go on this two week trip – you go in a big van and are billeted around down south. It was a big deal! I remember going on the trip and he was pretty big. He always liked me and I can always remember I would talk to him, which was kind of different than most of the kids. He was kind of scary looking so nobody wanted to talk to him. He always liked me and I could talk to him (B1)
### Table 4

**Occurrence of Participant Identified Dimensions Within Each Category of Teachers/Coach Component**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Stage 1 (age 6-10)</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Stage 2 (age 11-13)</th>
<th>Stage 3 (age 14-18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are nice people</td>
<td>Help with problems and spent time with me (6)</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provide special attention</td>
<td>Encourage me to lead demonstrations, provide recognition in front of peers, challenge and pushed me (4)</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Developing skills</td>
<td>Through instruction and role modeling (3)</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Are stimulating figures</td>
<td>Create competitive environments (3)</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide accolades (4)</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create opportunities (5)</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Designate leader roles</td>
<td>For high skill and strong work ethic (5)</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Engage in mature conversations</td>
<td>Encourage a liaison between themselves and athletes (2)</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ask for input from players, allowed athlete to question them, cognitively involved athletes in strategy development (6)</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have athletes speak with officials (4)</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

( ) number of participants in dimensions
**** same dimension description
Provide special attention. This category was defined as a teacher/coach providing special attention to the participants. Special attention was characterized by a teacher/coach encouraging participants to lead demonstrations, providing recognition to participants in front of peers, and challenging participants to push themselves beyond their previous limits. Further, this treatment was personalized and was only provided to a select few. Special attention was prevalent at all stages of development and is illustrated in the following meaning unit.

**Stage 1:** Just he seemed to like me. I don’t know I remember when I first tried out for the basketball team I was in grade five, and my brother told me that basically I wasn’t going to make it and I shouldn’t go. And so I went anyway and we were doing a lay-up drill. I’d never played basketball before in my life, but for some reason I could do a lay-up. And the coach was there and he was pretty supportive of it. Like he mentioned my name in front of the entire gym, you know, trying out there. Ya I just kind of... I enjoyed that, like the recognition. He always seemed to give me that kind of recognition. You know like I’d see him in the hall and he’d make a comment to me in front of my friends and that kind of stuff. (B2)

Develop skills. At each stage in their development leader-athletes experienced improved physical skills and game knowledge. Teachers/coaches aided participants by providing quality instruction specifically on technique, rules, and positioning. Instruction took place within a team forum where all teammates were involved in the learning as well as in one on one sessions. Further, teachers and coaches acted as role models and led demonstrations for specific skills. A meaning unit characterizing this category is:

**Stage 2 – Instruction and role modeling:** Again, hockey focused more on skills and stuff,... Like you know in hockey practice you know you’re working, going to work on power play or break outs, and stuff like that. It’s kind of more geared towards plays. And so we just worked on skills stuff and kind of went over like quick triangle drills. But usually you’re just kind of doing stuff you need to do for games. (H2)

Are stimulating figures. This category captured the various methods that teachers/coaches employed to stimulate the leader-athletes. The first dimension within this
category involved creating competitive environments for the participants. This could entail orchestrating practice situations to ensure that participants are engaged in highly competitive activities that challenges their ability. For example,

**Stage 3:** When I was in grade 9 and Greg was in grade 11, there were one or two practices a week, the junior team would practice with the senior team, ...so when we practiced with seniors I used to just love it. It was competitive for me. When I was playing for my own team, I was taller than everyone else, bigger than anyone else, I jumped higher than anyone else, had better skills than everyone else and the competition wasn't there. When I played with them, it gave me a chance to be pushed, so I enjoyed it. (V1)

The second dimension involved teachers/coaches providing attribution to the participants. Attribution came through a number of forums, the most prominent being providing leader-athletes with accolades such as MVP awards. Interestingly, participants recalled considerable attribution being provided during stage 1 and 3 of development but an absence of attribution during stage 2.

**Stage 1:** My teacher in grade 4 and 5 was big time into sports. He was probably, Well, my favourite teacher, basically. He would always have things set up for us at lunch time and recesses. He would have all these leagues set up and always had things to reward us with at the end. He would keep you competitive too, which I liked. The winners got trophies but everybody else probably got like medals or something. He would have like an MVP trophy and little things like that. (B1)

The final dimension within this category includes a teacher/coach's ability to create opportunities for the participants. This involves exposing and selecting participants to specialty teams and exceptional competition, as well as providing scouting chances and leadership opportunities. This dimension was prevalent throughout the leader-athlete's development. This dimension is characterized in the following meaning unit:

**Stage 2:** Yup, that was again the same principal guy. He just kinda,... I remember there was a couple of us. Like there was the original track and field program, and then there was a couple of us that did well for our age group so he kinda keyed in a little more on us and we'd kinda practiced separately kinda of thing. But we were still part of the team. Like he would take us to,... there
would be some open track events, and he would take just like 3 of us instead of taking the whole team. Just for like feasibility and other reasons, so it was really good. And again just to get the experience of going to the track meets and seeing the other kind of elite athletes at that time was pretty neat (H1)

**Designate leader role.** This category involved teachers/coaches designating formal leadership roles (captain or assistant captain). Participants said that they were selected for leadership positions by teachers/coaches for primarily two reasons: 1) their high skill level among their peers or 2) their demonstrating strong work ethic among peers. These two reasons were represented in stage 2 and 3 of development. Meaning units that characterized these two dimensions are presented below.

**Stage 3 – High skill:** Oh ya grade 9 was the year. I guess I was the most skilled. For that reason I got named captain, and there was a couple of guys that were two years older than me. So that was kind of hard to like,... cause once you get into grade 9 the captain has more to do with the team I guess. So that was kind of hard, grade 9, to sort of be the new guy and the young guy. (V2)

**Stage 2 – Strong work ethic:** I remember the very first camp I went to. I was captain and got the Mr. Hustle award or something like that. Again, that was the kind of thing I took a little bit of pride in, or at least I thought I could make up for a lot by just working a little harder then the other guys. You know steal a ball get a lay-up. That kind of thing! (B2)

**Engaged in mature conversations.** This category illustrated ways in which teachers/coaches engaged leader-athletes in mature conversations during stages 2 and 3 of their development. The first dimension of this category illustrates how participants were encouraged to act as liaisons between fellow athletes and the teaching/coaching staff. The participant provided a method for the team to voice opinions and concerns to the teacher/coach. Leader-athletes began to play a minor liaison role during stage 2 that became increasingly common in stage 3 of their development. For example,

**Stage 2:** Once we got better I remember talking to the coaches and asking for the team if it would be okay,...could we try 3 hits or hit it (volleyball) on the
third time. And they were well yes you can and we would try to do it and I always wanted to hit but nobody could set the ball. (B1)

The second dimension within the category involved engaging participants in the cognitive aspects of their team’s performance. The leader-athletes were asked for input on player placement, allowed to question coaching decisions, and were involved in team strategizing. This dimension was only apparent in stage 3.

Stage 3: But actually I had a good relationship with him, because especially after I played on that regional team, he’d come and ask me for, like, drills to do. Like, I helped him pick the team one year and stuff like that. Stuff I shouldn’t be doing, but I’d go in there and, like, he’d ask me to come in to his office after and we’d talk about who should play and this stuff. So, basically, by my last year, like I was an assistant coach. Which was good at that time because that’s when you’re really competitive and we needed to make sure the right people were playing and stuff. (V2)

The third dimension focused on participants representing their team with game officials. This role involved leader-athletes making game decisions and clearly understanding all the rules and nuances of the game so that they could ensure that their team was treated fairly by the officiating staff. Again, this dimension was only apparent during the third stage of leader-athlete development. A meaning unit comprising this category was:

Stage 3: I motivated and spoke with officials all the time. Ya, like anytime I was a captain with the hockey team there was always stuff like that. It was the same in soccer I guess too. Around that age you start speaking for yourself cause you kind of knew where to go with the questions. Back then I think you just kind of,... coach would be like “ask him why the....”or whatever, you’d go over and do that. (H2)

Parents

The meaning units in the parents’ component demonstrated the roles and contributions that parents played in leader-athlete’s development. Parent contributions took place throughout the participant’s development and can be captured in four categories, including: 1) introduction to sport, 2) support, 3) coach role, and 4) mentoring role (Table 5). Meaning units were gathered
for each category at each stage of development (stage 1 - primary school ages 6-10 years, stage 2 - middle school ages 11-13 years, or stage 3 - high school ages 14-18 years).

Introduction to sport. This category examined the role that parents played in encouraging active living and introducing the participants to organized sport. The first dimension of this category focused on parents' role in modeling and emphasizing the importance of being physically active. Parents supported children's decision to be involved and engaged in playing sports and being active with their friends. This dimension was prevalent during stage 1 of leader-athlete development and is illustrated in the following MU.

Stage 1: Well I mean, they always encouraged me to get involved and to kind of like get in there and do my best. They encouraged activity... they were just supportive of whatever I really wanted to do. I can't really think - they're always happy just to come to my games and watch me play. It wasn't important how well I was doing as long as I was active. (B2)

Dimension two of this category concentrated on parents exposing and signing up the leader-athletes to a number of organized sports. Parents enrolled participants in organized leagues so that the participants could sample a variety of sports. Parents would also take leader-athletes to watch sports so that they would be exposed to different games. There was very little pressure to play, rather all the participants were simply asked to try activities for the sake of having fun and being involved. Again this introductory behaviour was apparent during stage 1. A meaning unit comprising this category was:

Stage 1: My parents wanted to keep me busy and make sure I was doing stuff and not just sitting doing nothing. I think that was a big part of it. It was good for me, the idea of being involved in group activity. My parents wanted to make sure I was having fun, they put me in soccer and Scouts. It wasn't to the point whether you are going to play soccer or not, if I had said I didn't want to be playing soccer I wouldn't have been playing soccer but it was fun. (V1)
Support. This category includes the types of support that parents provided leader-athletes throughout their development. The first dimension within this category is parents provision of material support such as league fees, equipment, and traveling costs. Also, included in this dimension is parents provision of transportation to and from sporting activities such as practices, games, and tournaments. For example,

**Stage 3:** So I’d have to go all the way out to (far away city) every Wednesday. My mom, cause like I was in OAC - my mom wouldn’t let me drive, she figured I’d be too tired on the way back from practice and I’d fall asleep, so my dad had to friggin drive me every Wednesday to practice. (V2)

The second dimension involved parents morally supporting the leader-athletes. Parents regularly attended sporting activities and cheered for the participants. The third dimension focused on parent’s encouragement of leader-athletes. Parents provided words of encouragement, motivation, inspiration and positive reinforcement to the participants before, during, and after activities throughout their development. Encouragement often occurred at difficult moments and reinforced positive experiences and optimism. Meaning units illustrating dimensions 2 and 3 are:

**Stage 1 – Attendance and fan support:** My parents never missed a game when I was younger. Really supportive! They were always around. With the track team we one time went to the (City) final, I was doing high jump in grade 5. It was a full day event on a day when my parents should be working, and they were there from the first we got there until the end. It was really good – they were always around cheering and stuff. (V1)

**Stage 2 – Encouragement:** Oh ya! Just like moral! One practice a week was at 6 in the morning so they would take turns driving us. and we’d ride share with other parents. So that was a big commitment just in itself, that. Cause I remember even though I wanted to go to practice in the morning it was always my dad who woke me up and he always had breakfast ready for me and stuff. If it wasn’t for him I probably definitely wouldn’t have got out of bed - he could be motivating in the mornings. (H1)
Table 5

Occurrence of Participant Identified Dimensions Within Each Category of Parents Component

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stage 1 (ages 6-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction to sport</td>
<td>Encouraged active living and being involved (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction and exposure to sport (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Support</td>
<td>Financial and transportation (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attendance and fan support (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encouragement (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Coaching role</td>
<td>Cognitive engagement (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Play partner (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role model (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mentoring role</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enriched cognitive engagement and feedback (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help with important decisions (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

( ) number of participants in dimensions
**** same dimension description

Coaching role. This category concentrated on parent’s ability to play a coaching role throughout stages 1 and 2 of the participant’s development. The first dimension centers on parents engaging participants in the cognitive elements of sport. This involved positioning on
The play surface, dealing with fouls, fair play principles and error correction. Parents would engage participants in a constructive manner before, during, and after games and practices.

**Stage 2:** But my dad, especially in hockey I would say, he would always, you know, kinda whether it be X’s and O’s type things—“like you should be here”...like he was never getting mad at me for it if I screwed up or something. Or he said, you know, “maybe you should try this or maybe try that.” So he was always kinda of constructive criticism at worst. (H1)

The second dimension entails parents participating in sport with leader-athletes as play partners. This dimension involved simple playing and teaching of physical skills to leader-athletes. This sport activity was primarily invoked by the participants’ desire to play and learn certain sports and parents subsequently making time to participate with their children.

**Stage 1:** It was a big deal. I remember going behind our house and just tossing the rugby ball back and forth. I don’t know how it could be that fun now. It seemed like a hell of a lot of fun when we were doing it. I remember going 400, don’t drop that ball. My dad was always there, he would stay out there and play with me the whole time. I never got tired. We would go out there for like an hour, two hours just throwing the ball back and forth. Doing whatever, we would have maybe badminton rackets or something just to hit back and forth, or just play catch with a baseball, or something like that. We would always have something going on in our back yard. He was big for that. I would always get him to come out with me. (B1)

The final dimension involves parents influencing leader-athletes to participate in sport through a role modeling effect. Participants parents acted as role models because of their previous and current engagement in physical and sporting activity. A meaning unit that characterizes this dimension is:

**Stage 1:** My whole family probably just from tradition, but it’s very Italian background and I don’t look at it at all. So Dad and my uncle were big role models, they played varsity or whatever, had scholarships and stuff. That was just a big family influence I think. (H2)

**Mentoring role.** This category was defined as the way in which parents mentored the participants on complex cognitive sport issues and decision-making. This category has two
dimensions within it – enriched cognitive discussion and helping participants with difficult decisions. Both dimension are only apparent in stage 3 of development. Enriched cognitive discussion involved parents engaging the leader-athletes in discussions focusing on complex game strategy, fair play concepts, leadership, team dynamics, team structure issues and constructive criticism of their specific performance during games and practice. For example,

**Stage 3:** Starting right around that time it would be like after games on the drive home. He’d (dad) actually watched a lot of games. And ya, again it was constructive criticism. He wouldn’t rage on me or anything but it was something that he noticed that would help me out – technically or positioning. Or just general discussion about – you know game breakdown like “what did you think about when this happened, or that happened?” Like whatever, someone takes a bad penalty and we’d just talk about how bad it looks and this and that. (H1)

The second dimension included parents helping participants to understand and make difficult decisions around complicated issues regarding their future. Issues such as school selection, scholarship attainment, draft entry, club changes, and dropping other sports to specialize in one sport are examples of some of these decisions. A meaning unit that comprises this dimension is:

**Stage 3:** I remember talking to him about it and I think he quit right around that same time. I guess he kind of realized what maybe I was going to do. I just told him I played hockey for so long and right now basketball is more important to me than hockey is. He never really had a problem with that and we talked about going to the next level in hockey and it would mean that I would have to go play in this junior B league in (city) which wasn’t a really great league. (B1)

**Personal Involvement**

The meaning units classified into the ‘personal involvement’ component were defined as the leader-athlete’s total participation in sport. Personal involvement contributions took place throughout the participant’s development and can be captured in two categories. These categories included: 1) physical activities and 2) organized sport activities. Meaning units were
gathered for each category at each stage of development (stage 1 - primary school ages 6-10 years, stage 2 - middle school ages 11-13 years, or stage 3 - high school ages 14-18 years). To supplement the information captured in the meaning units, the number of hours spent in each type of activity will be provided with the presentation of each category (Table 6).

**Play activities.** This category focused on the types of activities that leader-athletes engaged in during play activities. Play activities consisted primarily of sport play and physical activity such as mountain biking, playing pick up basketball or hockey as well as participating in active games such as hide and seek with friends. Participants engaged in play activities throughout their development however these activities were most prevalent during stage 1 of development with the mean number of hours participation per year being 2686 hours. Engagement in play activities in stage 2 and 3 dropped considerably with the mean number of hours participation being 1278 and 1129 hours per year respectively. A meaning unit that characterizes this category is:

**Stage 1:** I remember just like swimming around in the pool and just skating around with my brother and dad. As far as the other stuff goes, my (town) days I just remember playing sports with my friends a lot – nothing organized street hockey and stuff whenever we had free time. (B2)

**Table 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Stage 1 (ages 6-10)</th>
<th>Stage 2 (ages 11-13)</th>
<th>Stage 3 (ages 14-18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Play activities</td>
<td>Participation in many</td>
<td>*2686</td>
<td>*1278</td>
<td>*1129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>different play activities</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Organized</td>
<td>Participation in</td>
<td>*622</td>
<td>*895</td>
<td>*2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sport activities</td>
<td>organized sport</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

( ) number of participants in dimension
Organized sport activities. This category focused on the types of activities that leader-athletes engaged in during organized sport. Organized sport included all leagues, specialty teams, and school teams that participants were involved with. This involvement included practices, competition, specialty tournaments, and a playoff schedule. All leader-athletes were engaged in organized sport from a young age, however their greatest participation occurred during stage 3 of development with a mean of 2002 hours per year involvement. During stage 1 and 2 participants were much less involved in organized activities averaging 628 and 895 hours per year respectively. An example of a meaning unit comprising this category is:

**Stage 3:** We always had a really good all-star team. We would do really well. I played two years in big league. So I guess this would be one of them, grade 9 final year. It was the whole city all-star team and we would go and play. There were two city teams because (City) is kind of split into two sides. We would play against each other and the winner would play (Provincial). Big league championship was a pretty big deal. I remember playing that and making the team and being one of the contributing players. (B1)
Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine the impact of social and contextual variables in athlete leader development. More specifically it explored the various activities that leader-athletes engaged throughout the course of their development, and their roles within these activities. Finally, the role that peers, teachers/coaches, and parents played within these activities was also examined. It is important to reiterate that leadership is contextual and all the participants in this study were male Caucasians with a medium to high socio-economic status and five of the six participants were from nuclear families in urban communities. For the purpose of this study leadership was defined as an action represented through an influencing relationship between a leader and followers (Rost 1993). In addition leaders were considered to be those who could get others to work together to reach common objectives (Gini, 1998).

Despite there being few studies that examine the role of athlete leadership, these leader-athletes are unique and play a contributing role in the overall performance and functioning of their teams. This section will look at the social and contextual influences that shaped six leader-athletes throughout their development. A developmental perspective is provided by mapping the athletes’ progress throughout their sport careers. The categories within each component and the dimensions within each category will be discussed as they progress and change throughout the three stages of development.

Peers

Researchers (Horn & Weiss, 1991; Weiss, Smith & Theeboom, 1996) have recognized the importance of peers on issues that involve sport participation and development. Weiss et al (1996) have recently indicated that peer relationships can be classified into two categories: peer
acceptance and peer friendship. Peer acceptance addresses two attributes, peer status and popularity, whereas peer friendship refers to such things as quality of friendship between two people (Weiss et. al. 1996). The type of peer influence that emerged in this study was of the ‘peer acceptance’ nature.

**Characteristics of peers.** From an early age (stage 1) leader-athletes were often exposed to competition with older peers as frequently as they engaged with same aged peers. In addition, commencing in stage two, participants were subjected to increasingly challenging competition. Older peers and challenging competition often provided physically stronger, taller, and faster teammates and opposition as well as providing a forum where exposure to advanced technique, strategy, and team structure was eminent. Athletes also articulated that all peer groups in stage 2 and 3 (older and same age) were becoming more competitive in nature, contributing to an increased level of play. A culmination of these factors provided leader-athletes with an opportunity to develop skills early and a means of preparing for more advanced levels of play. While engaged with older peers the participants seldom played leadership roles but rather used the time to develop their skills and game knowledge. Upon returning to competition with same age peers they would then assume a leadership role based on their accelerated ability.

This study indicates that getting athletes involved with older peers is likely to play a positive role in developing leadership. Benefits of having young athletes play with older peers is contradictory to other findings in age related athlete development literature. The ‘relative age effect’ suggests that those who are born just before the beginning of league registration period are often physically more mature (larger and stronger) and thus, are better competitors and selected for ‘rep’ or ‘select’ teams (Barnsley, Thompson, & Barnsley, 1985; Starkes, 2001). In the present study leader-athletes frequently had the skill level to advance to either older aged
teams or 'select' teams. This superior skill level may be attributable to such things as:
participating in non-threatening, non-competitive play environments with older peers at a young
age or engaging with challenging competition.

It seems logical for peer groups to become increasingly competitive during stage two and
three of development because it is at this age (11-18) that athletes begin to depend on peers to
gauge their relative level of performance. According to Horn and Weiss (1991), children's
ability to make judgments about their physical competence compared to their peer's increased in
their middle and late childhood years. Further, the criteria that children used to gauge their
abilities was also age dependent. Children under the age of 10 (stage 1) placed greater emphasis
on feedback from their parents and on their individual attraction to sport. Conversely, children
aged 10 and older (stages 2 and 3) placed greater emphasis on comparing themselves to their
peers as a method of evaluation (Horn & Weiss, 1991). This finding provides support as to why
leader-athletes may describe their peers as becoming more competitive during stage two and
three of development. Further, if children begin to rate their performance compared to their
peers at this age they are likely to make greater efforts to remain competitive. Therefore, from a
leadership development perspective it is likely important for youth to have a non-threatening
sport environment (both in organized and unorganized sport) at a young age (<10) and then be
exposed to increasingly challenging competition during the older years (>10).

Influence of peers on leader-athlete's environment. During the participant's older years
(stage 3) they articulated that being involved with stimulating environments became important to
their overall development. These environments were characterized by quality teammates and
challenging opposition. Often they involved being part of 'specialty' or 'select' teams that
provided them with the experience of motivating, playing hard, and competing under pressure with equally successful athletes.

Participant motivation to continually be engaged in quality competition concurs with some previous research conducted on athlete motivation to maintain sport participation (Weiss, 1993). Young athletes frequently cite reasons such as "skill improvement, friendships, and competition aspects as important reasons for staying involved in a particular sport program" (Weiss, 1993, p.51). Therefore, it seems fitting that participants enjoy being exposed to stimulating environments where their leadership potential is practiced and stretched.

**Leader-athlete demonstrates strong work ethic.** In the interviews participants continually made reference to the importance of demonstrating strong work ethic among their peers. Work ethic was demonstrated by maintaining their intensity and energy throughout practice and games, being early and attending every practice, as well as spending additional time outside of practice to improve skills. The result of this hard work was threefold: 1) leader-athletes received recognition and respect from teammates, 2) leader-athletes used strong work ethic as an instrument to set a positive example for their teammates, and 3) continuous hard work improved leader-athlete's proficiency in specific sport skills.

The findings on work ethic from this study support previous research conducted on peer relationships in a sport setting. Weiss and Chaumeton (1992) argue that athlete actions are motivated primarily by perceived social regard. An athlete’s perceived social regard is formulated by various components such as “self-perception, affect, activity choice, effort and persistence” (Weiss, Smith, & Theeboom, 1996). In the present study, leader-athletes perceived work ethic as a means of gaining respect, setting an example and developing their skills. All of these results would improve their social regard among their peer groups.
Peers recognized leader-athlete’s skill level. Participants beginning at age 11 and continuing to age 18 (stages 2 and 3) were recognized as having advanced skills. This included being physically faster and stronger as well as being more technically and spatially aware than most of their peers. Peers often recognized this skill by voting for leader-athletes to receive such accolades as MVP awards. The findings of this study support previous work in sport (Kim, 1992; Rees, 1982; Glenn & Horn, 1986) highlighting the integral importance of advanced skill levels in identifying leadership.

Rapport with peers. Maintaining good relationships with peers was a common theme among participants throughout athlete development. This rapport involved being well liked and popular within the team. Weese and Nicholls (1986), in their study of high school captains, stipulated that athletes who were frequently identified as leaders enjoyed popularity among their teammates. Kim (1992) and Rees (1982) provide further support for the notion that leader-athletes are well liked. Their research identified group maintenance or one’s ability to contribute to team harmony as a primary component of leadership identification. It was apparent from the interviews in this study that athletes felt that it was important to be well liked and have the companionship and trust of their teammates.

Roles in play activities. During stage one and two participants spent a great deal of time engaged in play activities. Their involvement allowed them to play a number of organizing roles and to build sport skills in a non-threatening environment. Some leader-athletes articulated that they were instrumental in organizing games, selecting teams, providing motivation, and constructing and monitoring rules. These findings concur with developmental research conducted in sport expertise. Having a peer group in the early stages of development that was always available to play sports during free time was shown to be a potential factor in sport
expertise development (Abernethy, Côte, & Baker, 1999). In developing leadership it may also be important for athletes to be involved in play activities from a young age. These activities likely provide the forum to practice roles that may contribute to leadership.

**Roles in organized sport**

Participants reported that their peers recognized that leader-athletes play three primary roles while engaged in sport. First, peers acknowledged leader-athletes for their leadership by voting them into formal leader positions (captains) or for their ability to play pivotal roles in high-pressure (clutch) situations. This acknowledgment may have provided leader-athletes with a forum to practice making team decisions, as well as instilling confidence in the participant’s self-acknowledgement of leadership abilities. To this end, early (stage 1) leader acknowledgement may have prompted athletes to explore further leadership roles, thereby becoming self-perpetuating.

Second, leader-athletes said that during their later years (stage 3) they were involved with assisting in on-court/ice skill instruction, motivating teammates to play to their potential, and directing team objectives. Skill instruction required participants to have advanced technical knowledge. Motivating and directing teams required the participants to take an active role in knowing their teammates and being engaged in team affairs.

Finally, the results indicated that leader-athletes played a role in ensuring that players were in their proper positions and that team strategy was orchestrated during practice and competition. Exhibiting some or all of these roles may be important to developing leadership skills in that they contribute to improved communication, tactical and technical knowledge, organization skills, as well as one’s ability to make team decisions.
Previous research has highlighted the importance of having good communication skills, setting a positive example for fellow players and taking part in the planning, disciplining and organizing of the team (Mosher, 1979; Mosher & Roberts, 1981). Consistent with these previous studies, participants in the current work preformed similar roles and functions within the teams with which they have been involved throughout their development. These findings also lend further support for the notion that leader-athletes play a contributing role to a team’s functioning.

**Teachers and Coaches**

Previous research has identified teachers and coaches as pivotal socializing influences on children’s involvement and development in physical activities (Horn, 1987; Smith & Smoll, 1990). Further work has examined the role of teachers/coaches in encouraging participation, building confidence and developing talent in youth (Bloom, 1985; Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Kalinowki, 1985; Monsaas, 1985; Smoll & Smith, 1989). This section will discuss how teachers/coaches contributed to developing leadership qualities in athletes.

**Are nice people.** All the participants spoke of their teachers/coaches as being friendly people who were genuinely interested in their lives and took time to talk with them even about topics unrelated to the teacher/coach’s specialty. Research on athlete talent development in swimming and tennis found that coaches of young athletes demonstrated similar friendly behavior and support to their pupils (Kalinowksi, 1985; Monsaas, 1985). Friendly, interested teachers/coaches may be important in motivating and inspiring athletes to increase their participation and interest in sport. In addition, being able to communicate comfortably with teachers/coaches may contribute to athletes engaging in mature conversations on the advance cognitive sport issues in the later stages of development. This will be discussed later in this
section. To this end, it is likely to be important to leadership development for athletes to continually be exposed to teachers/coaches with who they can trust and communicate.

Provide special attention. Many of the leader-athletes articulated that throughout their development they were exposed to teachers/coaches who provided special attention. Teachers/coaches changed practice to make it more interesting and individually challenging. To this end, leader-athletes were continually challenged and prodded to excel in their abilities. This special treatment was important as it served to stimulate leader-athlete’s motivation to push and challenge themselves. Monsaas (1985) found that coaches of talented tennis players similarly provided special attention and that “in turn provided additional motivation for the child to work hard and practice” (p. 226). In addition, Csikszentmihalyi and colleagues (1993) found that teachers of talented students challenged their pupils to expect more from learning than simple understanding of the material. Providing special attention may be important in stimulating the desire to excel and engage in all that sport has to offer. This enriched engagement may prompt athletes to stretch themselves from just skill development to other aspects of sport such as understanding strategy or team motivation – important components to leadership development.

Develop skills. Perhaps the most obvious role of the teacher/coach is skill development. This particular role was referred to by each athlete at least once throughout the interview and was important at each stage of development. Participants spoke of the merit of having coaches who really understood the technical and mechanical underpinnings of skills to assist in their individual talent development. Côté et al (1995) identify training as one of the central components to effective coach leadership. The training element is described as the coach’s ability to apply his/her knowledge to helping athletes acquire needed skills to perform. Duncan (1997), in her study of young elite performers, identified helping athletes develop proper
technique as an important role that coaches play. Having proper technique and refined skills are important to being designated a leader by peers and coaches. Furthermore, this factor likely plays a pivotal role in many other areas of leadership development such as receiving special attention and engaging in the cognitive aspects of sport.

Are stimulating figures. Participants often described teachers/coaches as those who stimulated their learning. Creating competitive environments, providing accolades and creating opportunities emerged from the data as the three primary methods employed to stimulate participant development. Teachers/coaches would often create environments involving competition with other peers or against themselves in terms of performing difficult tasks consistently or with limited time. This competitive atmosphere was prevalent throughout development and became increasingly important as the leader-athletes entered their older years (stage 3). Research on the development of tennis players revealed that coaches of world-class tennis players also provide competitive environments for athletes that begins at an early age and increases greatly over the years (Monsaas, 1985).

Participants also reported that teachers/coaches often provided them with a number of accolades including positive reinforcement and more specifically material awards such as MVP or MIP awards. Again these findings were supported by Monsaas’ (1985) research with tennis players which reported that athletes received a great deal of acknowledgement, praise and frequent rewards such as money for good performances.

Finally, participants articulated that their teachers/coaches stimulated them by providing special opportunities such as introducing athletes to people who could help their development (e.g. scouts), exposure to specialty or elite competition, or selecting them for ‘provincial’ or ‘select’ teams. Special instructional opportunities were also created for leader-athletes.
Participants with advanced skills were provided with the opportunity to help in leading the instruction of skills during practice. This opportunity promoted skill refinement while also developing improved communication and rapport with teammates. Research on the development of talented students revealed that teachers often stimulated advanced students with assignments that challenged them to work at accelerated levels. These challenges would result in high levels of concentration, self-esteem and self-satisfaction (Csikszentmihalyi et al, 1993). Competitive environments, providing accolades and creating opportunities are likely to provide the challenges and reinforcement to stimulate the growth of advanced skill, communication, knowledge of strategy while at the same time providing the motivation and interest for further development. Exposing athletes to opportunities with advanced challenges or highly skilled opposition is likely to be an important component of leader development.

**Designate leader roles.** During stage one or two all athletes said the had been designated a leader by their teacher/coach. Further they described being appointed to these positions because of their high skill level or strong work ethic. Glenn and Horn’s (1986) interviews with youth soccer coaches revealed that high skill level was the principle reason for selecting individuals for leadership positions. Although no literature support was found to identify the importance of work ethic, the majority of participants from this study described work ethic as being equally important in leader designation. Further, athletes stated that they often assumed additional responsibilities after being designated captain by a coach. This included a liaison role with athletes and coaching staff, as well as speaking with officials during competition and being involved in team strategy development. Being designated a leader may be important to development in that it provides opportunity to be involved with other necessary leadership components.
Engage in mature conversations. Participants engaged in three types of mature conversations. Teachers/coaches encouraged leader-athletes to: 1) act as a player liaison to the coaching staff, 2) be involved with coaches in player positioning and strategy planning, 3) represent coaches and teammates to the officials during competition. Participants took on a liaison role beginning in stage two which involved keeping coaches abreast of important team information and ensuring that the team understood coaching objectives. Previous research on the role of a captain found similar results in that a captain should act as a liaison promoting active communication between teammates and coaches (Mosher & Roberts, 1981). This role often exposed leader-athletes to privileged information on coaching decisions and strategy. Further, teachers/coaches used leader-athletes as instruments to reinforce the merit of their decisions, thus participants gained cognitive knowledge.

During stage three athletes were involved with team planning and strategy providing participants with a forum to question coaching decisions. Questioning was conducted in a positive manner with the objective being to try to obtain greater insight into the coaching staff's objectives and strategy. Coaches accepted and encouraged questions because they served to clarify objectives for all team members, acted as a teaching tool, provided an opportunity to correct mistakes, and ensured that athletes were thinking about the team strategy. Research conducted on creating intellectual learning environments in physical education revealed that teachers who encourage students to question learning could stimulate a challenging learning atmosphere (Siedentop, 1991). Siedentop (1991) argued that questions promote discussion on topics related to the principle topic and provide the teacher with the opportunity to challenge more advanced students by giving them detailed responses to their questions. Further, research conducted into expertise attainment in sport indicates that increased tactical knowledge and
having the ability to apply that knowledge could increase performance (McPherson, 1994). Coaches may be sublimating leader-athlete’s tactical knowledge by engaging them in discussions. This concept will be explored further in the parents section.

Finally, participants discussed the merit of teachers/coaches encouraging them to represent their team with the officiating staff during competition. Leader-athletes were responsible for clarifying questionable calls and acting as a liaison between the coaching staff and officials. Mosher (1979) and Mosher and Roberts (1981) stipulated that interacting with officials is one of the principle roles of a captain within a team. Having an opportunity to interact with officials may be important to leader-athlete development because it forces the athlete to have a detailed knowledge of the rules and it demands good communication and decision making skills. Further, mature conversations subject athletes to decision-making skills, strategy development, critical thinking while increasing their communication skills. Thus, teachers/coaches engaging athletes in mature conversations may represent a valuable component to leadership development.

Parents

Parents have been identified as a key socializing influence to children’s involvement and development in physical activity. Most research completed on parental influence has focused on parenting roles in encouraging participation or developing talented youth (e.g. Bloom, 1985; Côté, 1999; Colley, Eglington & Elliott, 1992 Greendorfer & Lewko, 1978; Greendorfer, 1977; Power & Woolger, 1994). The section illustrates that parents may also have an important role in developing leadership qualities in athletes.

Introduction to Sports. Parents played the following two roles in introducing the participants to sport: 1) encouraging active living and getting involved and 2) actually exposing
and introducing children to organized sport. Four participants stated that their parents encouraged being active or involved in physical activities from a young age (stage 1). During these early years parents would be active with their children and very supportive of athletes having fun and experimenting in various activities such as hide and seek with friends or being part of Boy Scouts. Athletes described their parents involvement as light hearted with the focus being on them maximizing their fun and enjoyment. Côté (1999) examined the role of family influence in talent development of young athletes. He identified that parents during the sampling years (ages 6-13) encouraged children to focus on play and enjoyment. Furthermore, research conducted on parental influences has illustrated that positive parental behavior during childhood (ages 5-12), may be more influential than parental behavior in adolescence in determining sport dispositions in children (Greendorfer, 1977).

During the early years (stage 1) parents played an integral part in exposing and introducing sport activities to participants. Parents took participants to see various sporting events, enrolled them in organized leagues and watched sporting events on television with the participants. Participants were encouraged to sample a variety of sports with little or no pressure to perform or continue a particular sport. Again the primary objective of parental influence was to encourage fun. Participants were allowed to drop sports without punishment or criticism in favor of others that looked more appealing. The importance of parents introducing and exposing children to sport is supported in Côté’s (1999) talent development study. Côté stipulated that in the childhood years parents generate sport interest by providing opportunities to sample various fun activities emphasizing participation rather than specific training.

If sport participation is a potential forum for leadership development in young athletes then early encouragement in active living is important. It seems that exposure to many fun
activities may be important for athletes to continue in sport. Further, developing simple motor skills such as running, jumping, kicking, catching and throwing at a young age in fun, non-threatening sport environments may provide the foundation for advanced skills at later stages in development – a characteristic that may be relevant to leadership development.

Support. Support was one of the primary contributions that parents made in their child’s sporting life. Parents provided the following three distinct forms of support: 1) they provided financial backing and transportation, 2) they attended and were fans at sport events, and 3) they provided needed encouragement. Participants described parents providing monetary assistance to pay league fees, equipment and traveling costs throughout their development. Further, with the exception of one participant in stage one, all parents provided transportation for their children to get to weekly practices, games, and tournaments. Studies of family influence on talent development reveal similar findings in that parents invested considerable amounts of money and time into their child’s sport participation (Côté, 1999, Kalinowski, 1985; Monsaas, 1985).

Each athlete indicated that having his parents attending and cheering for him at his games was important. Athletes enjoyed having parents present to see them perform because it encouraged them to do their best. Power and Woolger (1994) found similar results with swimmers. In their study, parental attendance and support was positively associated with increased enthusiasm among athletes. Previous studies of talent development in sport also support the current findings in that parents of committed athletes enjoy attending their child’s competitions (Côté, 1999; Kalinowski, 1985; Monsaas, 1985). Further, Brustad (1993) found that higher parental encouragement is linked to increased perceived competence for their children. Thus, parents who express more encouragement will be more likely to provide increased sporting opportunities.
Leader-athletes identify encouragement from parents as another important component that parents provide throughout their development. Encouragement was most prevalent at times that athletes seemed down or uninspired such as failing to qualify for a 'provincial' team, not being selected as captain, or losing an important game. Howe (1990), in examining the origin of exceptional abilities in young people, found that parents play an important role in helping their children overcome obstacles. Côté (1999) found that in later stages of development (ages 15 and older) parents have a part in helping athletes fight setbacks that hinder training progression.

Support in its various forms may be an essential component to leadership development. Parents attending games and investing their money sends a clear message to the athletes that sport is important enough to consume their time and assets. Watching participants perform also provides parents with the knowledge to comment on various facets of the game and provide cognitive engagement and constructive criticism. Further, time spent transporting athletes before and after participation may provide an opportunity to engage the participant in discussions about his performance and the sport.

Coaching role. Throughout leader-athlete's development parents often take on a coaching role by: 1) cognitively engaging the participant, 2) providing the participant with a play partner, and 3) acting as a role model to the participant. Beginning at an early age (stages 1 and 2), parents began stimulating their child's cognitive development. Participants articulated the importance of parents questioning them on issues of fair play, teammate positioning, as well as minor strategy issues and error correction. These discussions could happen anywhere but were frequently conducted in the car on the way to and from sport involvement. The content of the discussion was very broad in nature and was often conducted in an informal positive manner. Participants treated discussions as a forum to become better and never described feeling
challenged or pressured after the engagement. Research conducted on the development of sport expertise has examined athlete’s awareness of tactical knowledge and his/her ability to apply that knowledge (McPherson, 1994). This knowledge includes such things as athletes: “monitoring strategies (e.g. what type of information is important), planning strategies (e.g. how do they view a situation), and self regulatory strategies (e.g. how do they monitor their performances successes and failures)” (McPherson, 1994, p. 226). Parents, through early cognitive engagement, may stimulate or promote the growth of participant’s sport knowledge. In turn, increased sport knowledge and awareness may play an important role in developing leadership.

Primarily in stage one of development parents often acted as play partners to the participants. Playing with leader-athletes provided parents with an opportunity to teach technique and physical skills in a fun, non-competitive environment. This engagement likely allows athletes to develop the necessary skills to participate and perform well among peer groups in play and organized sport. The skills to perform well among peers, is important to attaining leadership.

Parents who were involved in sport at some time in their lives acted as role models for participants. Parents told stories about their sporting experiences or brought the participants to watch them play in adult sport leagues. Thus, parents acted as role models to the participants again emphasizing the importance of sport involvement. Monsaas (1985) found similar evidence of parental role modeling in her study of world-class tennis players. The study sampled 26 tennis players and found that 80% of those sampled had at least one parent who was a tennis player. If sport participation is a potential forum for leadership development in young athletes then role-modeling may help ensure involvement.
Mentoring roles. Parents in the third stage of development became more of a mentor to participants. They engaged participants in rich discussions of game strategy and helped with difficult choices. Discussions would involve speaking about complex strategy, player positioning and decision-making problems; as well parents would provide specific feedback about the participants' performance. Discussions could occur before and after competition and be specific to the participant's team or take place while watching professional games on the television. These discussions may serve to further stimulate the participant's game knowledge (e.g. McPherson, 1994).

Leader-athletes further said that parents were very helpful when difficult decisions had to be made. Parents and participants would discuss the meaning and outcome of difficult choices such as changing clubs or entering the draft. Support for these findings is garnered from talent development research. Côté (1999) found that parents provide advice to their children regarding their future in sport. Learning various elements that require consideration when faced with difficult choices may play a key role in acquiring leader abilities.

Personal Involvement

Researchers have recognized that sampling a number of activities at a young age may be important to enjoying sport and staying physically active (Bloom, 1985; Baker, Côté, & Abernethy, 2001; Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2001, Côté & Hay, 2002; Monsaas, 1985). These activities could be organized or unorganized and could have a number of foci including: skill development, fun, competition, and meeting new people. This section will discuss the types of activities that participants were engaged in from an early age and how they likely contributed to leadership development.
**Play activities.** This category involved any activity in which participants were involved that was not organized in nature. Most of the activity involved playing pick-up sports with friends. All athletes engaged in this type of activity throughout their development with the greatest quantity of time spent in stage one of their development and decreasing during stage two and three. Participants reported engaging in sports for all sorts of reasons including having fun, trying different activities, being outside, staying busy, and being competitive with friends. Also, all leader-athletes professed that they enjoyed becoming increasingly more competitive with age and appreciated more intense and game-like pick-up games as they matured. Côté (1999) suggested that the type of play activities changes as a function of age. Further, Côté and Hay (2002) argued that playing games with rules in early development may be more competitive and represent more organized game-like activity. Frequently engaging in play activities that progress from being fun and relatively non-competitive to being fun and highly competitive may be important to becoming a leader. As indicated in previous sections participants play organizing roles in play activities and to this end, engaging in competitive game-like play requires more organization to select teams, monitor rules, strategy development and motivate peers.

**Organized sport activities.** This category included participant involvement in organized sport leagues. There are two prevalent issues to address about organized activity. One is the quantity and quality of participant involvement in organized sport. The second is the effect of player positioning to developing leadership.

All leader-athletes became progressively more involved in organized sport as they matured through stages one, two, and three. This change occurred primarily because of the increased opportunities provided by sport structures such as school involvement. As well, organized city and provincial leagues were more available for adolescent children. Organized
sport participation during stage one and two focused primarily on fun and involvement. In the third stage participation began to take on a more serious tone emphasizing skill development, competition, and winning rather than simply participation. This development pattern is similar to research conducted in talent development in that involvement in sport moves from an emphasis on fun and participation to a more competitive, skill-based involvement (Bloom, 1985; Côté, et al., 2001a; Côté, et al., 2001b; Côté & Hay, 2002; Kalinowski, 1985; Monsaas, 1985).

The current findings suggest that athletes during the high school years are competing in many sports rather than specializing in only one or two. This is contrary to some of the findings of talent development in and around ages 13-15 when athletes begin to specialize in one or two sports and progress to focusing all efforts into one sport around age 16 and beyond (Côté, 1999). This difference in involvement patterns may be an important element to becoming a leader in team sports. The majority of participants were exposed to numerous leadership roles on a variety of different team sports during stage three. Being part of many sport teams rather than specializing in just one or two likely provides young athletes with the opportunity to practice elements of leadership in a plethora of different situations.

The role of player positioning in identifying and developing future leaders was negligible from these results. Two perspectives have been taken when examining the role that position plays in contributing to leadership identification and development. The first notion stipulates that positions that are central in nature increase the frequency of player interaction, encourage players to engage in high levels of propinquity, and contribute to group task accomplishment (Grusky, 1963; Leonard, Ostrosky, & Huchendorf, 1990; Loy, Curtis, & Hillen, 1987; Melnick & Loy, 1996). These characteristics encourage athletes who occupy those positions to develop
higher skill levels, game knowledge, communication skills, and other useful leadership characteristics.

As stated earlier, the results of this study did not illustrate any support for this hypothesis. Specific questions on player positioning were posed to each participant during the second stage of the interview process and little consistency was found in players being placed in central positions. All participants have said that having experience in numerous sports playing a variety of different positions and none of the athletes ever indicated that their playing a certain position contributed to their leadership development.

It is plausible that this study produced different results as a function of the type of team sports from which participants were drawn. Research to date (Grusky, 1963; Leonard, Ostrosky, & Huchendorf, 1990; Loy, Curtis, & Hillen, 1987; Melnick & Loy, 1996; Tropp & Landers, 1979) has been conducted with team sports that use large playing surfaces and require 9 or more players participating at the same time (e.g. rugby). Within that format a players' central positioning may be an important component of leadership. However, the team sports selected for this study involved smaller playing surfaces and 6 or fewer athletes participating at one time. These conditions encourage frequent interaction between players to accomplish goals and high propinquity exists naturally. Thus, all players are equally involved with the play, limiting the importance of central positions.

Tropp and Landers (1979) provided an opposing perspective to the central positioning theory. In their study, players who performed in positions that were unique, independent in nature and could greatly impact the results of the competition (e.g. goal-tender) were found to be the leaders of the team. Again, the current study selected participants from teams that have less players participating and a smaller playing surface. Despite the difference in participant
selection, the current study garners no evidence to support Tropp and Landers' (1979) unique positioning hypothesis. Each of the sports selected for this study do have a position that is special, (point guard in basketball; setter in volleyball; goal-tender in hockey). These positions are unique. In basketball and volleyball they are play-making positions and in hockey, as in the Tropp and Landers study, the goaltender is a position that can have direct impact on the outcome of the game. In this study only one participant held a special position and therefore little support is garnered for previous research on player positioning.
Conclusions

Summarizing Findings From a Leadership Theory Perspective

The major components that participants consistently discussed during the interviews can be categorized into four main areas. Leader-athletes emphasize the importance of having 1) high levels of skill, 2) strong work ethic, 3) advanced tactical sport knowledge, and 4) good rapport with teammates. This study reinforces previous research in sport leadership that recognized the importance of having high skill and good rapport with teammates (Mosher, 1979; Mosher & Roberts; Kim 1992; Rees, 1982; Weese & Nicholls, 1986). However, strong work ethic and advanced tactical sport knowledge components represent new findings and may have important implications to becoming a leader in sport.

The transformational leadership approach is one of the most recent and more popular leadership approaches in business today (Bass, 1989). The basic tenants of transformational leadership provide some support for our findings. Transformational leadership occurs when leaders are able to get peers to contribute to and accept a particular mission. It occurs when the group is interested in moving forward together. This has real implications for team sports where functioning well together is the only way that optimal performance will be reached.

Transformational leaders demonstrate leadership in primarily four ways; 1) charisma, 2) inspiration, 3) intellectual stimulation, and 4) individualized consideration (Bass, 1989). Charisma can be explained by a leader’s ability to provide a sense of mission, instill pride and gain respect and trust. Being inspirational consists of setting high expectations and using symbols to focus efforts. Intellectual stimulation addresses a leaders’ ability to help promote intelligence and problem solving. Finally, individualized consideration examines the way in which a leader gives personal attention and treats peoples’ personal needs (Bass, 1989).
Many similarities are revealed when one compares the four tenets of the transformational approach to the leadership behaviors demonstrated by the leader-athletes in this study. Leader-athletes were charismatic in that they helped set team objectives in practice and in competition. Further, leader-athletes said that they were trusted and well respected by their teammates throughout their development. H2 demonstrates charisma well in the following meaning unit:

That year I was really proud of myself at the end of the year because I thought I had everybody’s respect on the team. I could say anything to anybody and they knew that it was going to stay there. Like we were a younger team that year too, so that probably helped a little bit with that. Like I just felt really good at the end of the year and I knew everybody liked me and I liked everybody kind of thing.

Leader-athletes provided inspiration to their peers within the sporting context. Participants set high expectations for their own performance and constantly reported trying to inspire teammates by raising the intensity of practice and competition through the demonstration of strong work ethic. V2 uses increasing intensity to focus the efforts of his teammates:

Like I’d just go and practice like everyone else. I was captain so I tried to give extra effort,… especially at that age with guys on the team being older – like I didn’t want to say anything. I’d just pick up the level of practice – the general intensity,… it made other people work hard to.

Intellectual stimulation is perhaps the greatest leadership contribution that participants made to their teams. Leader-athlete’s advanced knowledge of the rules, player positioning and strategy, helped them to assist their teammates make intelligent game decisions. For example, participants could quickly identify oppositional strategy and help initiate counter maneuvers. The following meaning unit illustrates how B1 intellectually stimulated his teammates:

..., just by playing I think I was able to gain respect from everybody. I was the guy they would ask questions to. I was like that because I was able to help. I wasn’t going to go force myself on somebody that I didn’t really know. If someone came up to me and said (Participant’s name), what can I do for you to get me the ball? What can I do to make it easier for you or something? I would always have something to say. I think I was pretty knowledgeable compared
to everybody else, ..., I watched a lot of sports with my dad and we talked, ...
for sports that I was playing I knew even more about them and it allowed me
questions to become the kind of knows what to do.

Participants' provision of personal attention to teammates was an important element to
building good rapport. Leader-athletes often reported that they made efforts to talk to all their
teammates. They often reported treating athletes differently based on their individual needs. V1
provides an excellent example of treating teammates differently:

I always got along well with the guys that I played with. Some guys weren't
as committed as the rest of us but they enjoyed playing and would just encourage
them to practice hard and just enjoyed their company instead of getting mad at
them like the other guys – they started picking up.

The Developmental Perspective

Bass (1990) suggested that those who use a transformational approach are more likely to
be seen by colleagues as satisfying and effective leaders. Although peer satisfaction was not
directly measured in this study, peers did originally select the leader-athletes for participation,
which indicate some support. Demonstrating transformational leadership in sport is also
important from a developmental perspective. First the nature of the transformational approach
assumes that both positional (captain) and non-positional (any player) team members can
demonstrate leadership. Further, teams could have many non-positional leaders and this
increased team leadership may lead to increased performance. Second, the tenets of the
transformational approach can be nurtured, taught, and developed in all team members.

The results of this study indicate that each participant had a very similar pattern of
development. These commonalities may provide insight into how athletes developed high skill,
strong work ethic, advanced tactical knowledge, and good rapport with teammates. Being
exposed to a lot of fun non-threatening sport environments, having helpful parents who provide
various forms of support and act as play partners as well as early participation with older peers
may result in early skill development. Furthermore, early recognition and encouragement of skill development spawns the motivation to develop further skills.

A work ethic can be developed and encouraged in young players in a variety of ways. Having parents and coaches who instruct children about the virtues of hard work and recognize hard workers with awards, positive reinforcement, or positional leadership opportunities may contribute to that development. Playing and competing with older peers may help increase the work ethic in that participants have to work hard to simply ‘keep up’ or be involved and accepted by older children. Finally being involved with competitive teams may encourage hard work. The coaches and players from these teams pride themselves on remaining competitive and thus hard work is important to reaching that objective.

Participants were exposed to numerous instances where advances in tactical knowledge could be learned. Playing with older peers exposed participants to advanced knowledge in player positioning, strategy, and creative play-making. Discussing with parents about personal performance, team performance and sports they watched on television exposed participants to cognitive knowledge that was different or more advanced than their own. As well, coaches cognitively engaged participants in terms of team and oppositional strategy, player positioning, decisions making and representing their teammates with coaches and officials.

Finally, all participants reported having experienced teachers and coaches who were interested and nice to them. Further, they received a lot of support, encouragement, and special recognition from coaches and parents. This attention likely had a role modeling effect, leading participants to treat others as they were being treated. Having high skill and advanced cognitive knowledge qualified leader-athletes as resource people to their peers. Demonstrating a strong
work ethic helped earn the respect of peers. All of these components likely developed the participant's ability to form a good rapport with their peers.

**Contextualizing the Findings**

As stipulated in the leadership theory (Bass, 1981) the role of context is an important factor to the developmental process. In this study all participants grew up in Canada, and had very similar cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Further, all participants were male and experienced similar school levels, had similar peer groups, family lives and sport opportunities. This context provides an environment that was relatively uniform for all participants. Within this context participants weighted the importance of each of the four elements in their development (skill, work ethic, tactical knowledge and rapport) fairly evenly. Equal consistency was shown in speaking about the influence of their peers, teachers/coaches, and parents.

Research in youth sport has illustrated that the role of contextual factors such as gender, race, and economic status may create differences in the type and number of opportunities that children of these respective groups receive (Wankel & Mummery, 1996). Therefore, one might assume that the pattern of development found in this study may not be applicable in other contexts. However, because the findings from this study examine generally broad areas of development, it is speculated that similar results may be found in different contexts (race, gender, socio-economic status). It is hypothesized that within the different contexts the primary elements of leadership (skill, work ethic, tactical knowledge, and rapport) will still be important; however, the way in which they are developed or reported may vary. Athletes of a different gender, economic status, and race will still be exposed to the influencing roles of peers, teachers/coaches, and parents/guardians however, the weight of these influences may be different and other factors may emerge. For example, Wankel and Mummery (1996) reported that
females in sport often receive less encouragement from parents/teachers and other significant adults. In this example young females may weight good rapport with peers as the most important component to leadership because receiving encouragement from peers may be necessary to compensate for the lack of adult encouragement.

Future Directions

The influence of context on development of leader-athlete provides an important avenue to explore in the future. To test the accuracy of the findings of this study it will be important to repeat the interview protocol in follow up studies with sport participants who grew up in different contexts. Teams that are primarily composed of individual competitors, such as swimming and athletics, represent yet another context that could be examined to see if differences exist in how leader-athletes develop.

Finally, exploring other organizations and disciplines using a similar protocol may also yield new and interesting findings. Use of a similar phenomenological qualitative interview approach to examine business, medical or educational leaders may yield results similar to these findings or they may identify different patterns that are important to leadership development in these domains. Identifying methods to develop leadership represents an important addition to leadership research. Leaders (positional and non-positional) play a critical role in the shaping of western society. Determining methods to facilitate their development would be an important contribution to leadership research in particular and society in general.
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S. Bond (personal communication, November 25, 2000)


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Letter of Information

From March to July 2001 a study entitled "A Retrospective Analysis of Leadership Development Through Sport" is being conducted at Queen's University. The principle researcher is Andrew Wright, a master's student in the School of Physical and Health Education. The purpose is to examine the impact of social and contextual variables in athlete leader development. Specifically it will explore the various activities that athlete leaders are engaged in at a young age, their roles within those activities and the role that parents, coaches, teachers, peers, and other significant figures have played within the activities. The information will be used to identify common themes and factors that may facilitate future leadership development.

Requirements of the Participant
Participants will be required to attend two team meetings with the researcher each lasting 15 minutes in length. During the first meeting participants will be asked to answer a two-item questionnaire focused on identifying the roles and characteristics of leader-athletes in their sport. The second meeting will consist of reading a leadership definition and rating three athletes that best fit this definition. The definition is composed based on the feedback from the two-item questionnaire. The two meetings will be scheduled to meet with the availability of the participants.

Risks
There are no known physical, psychological, economic, or social risks associated with participation in this study. Participants may withdraw from the study or refuse to answer any questions that they find objectionable.

Confidentiality/Anonymity
The data obtained from the two-item questionnaire and from the voting process will be stored in a secure location that will be accessible to only the principle researcher. Further, participants will be asked not to write their name on either of their written submissions. Data will be used to select participants for phase two of the research.

Remuneration
All participants in this study will be provided with a summary of the study's results upon request.

If you have any further questions, comments or complaints regarding this study, please contact the researchers or the General Research Ethics Board at the address below.

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Chair, General Ethics Research Board
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Appendix B
INFORMED CONSENT

"A Retrospective Analysis of Leadership Development Through Sport"

I, ________________________________, have read the accompanying letter of information and understand the propose study.

I understand the procedures and expectations of the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am aware that I will be requested to complete a two-item questionnaire, the purpose of which is to gain insight into the impact that social and contextual variables play in leadership development in athletes. I am aware that I may be selected by my teammates to take part in a four-hour interview, and if selected I can decide whether or not I wish to take part in the interview. I am aware that I may contact the researcher (Andrew Wright) or the General Research Ethics Board of Queen’s University if I have questions, concerns or complaints. I reserve the right to not answer any questions that I do not feel comfortable with or withdraw from the study entirely at any time without recourse. I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary. Also, I am aware that any information that I provide in this study will be stored in a secure location and remain confidential. I am aware that any printed data will be coded for anonymity and the information will not be associated with my name.

Signed: ________________________________ Date: ________________________________
Witness: ________________________________ Date: ________________________________

If you have any further questions, comments, or complaints regarding this study, please contact the researchers or the General Research Ethics Board at the address below.

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Thank you for your participation in this study

Andrew Wright
Appendix C
Leadership Definition for Each of the Respective Teams

Leadership – Volleyball Team

A leader is defined as someone who is a role model and leads by example both on and off the court. He is respected and shows respect to other players and coaches. He is someone is approachable, open-minded, confident, vocal, determined, hardworking, and good at motivating his teammates. He is someone who demonstrates good game knowledge, skill, problem solving skills and calmness in clutch situations. He acts as a liaison between players and coaches, players and other players, as well as coach and referees. Finally a leader is enthusiastic, passionate about his sport and supporting and encouraging of his teammates.

Leadership – Basketball Team

A leader is defined as someone who demonstrates good communication skills on and off the basketball court. He acts as a liaison between players and coaches, players and other players, as well as coach and referees. He is able to motivate and shows respect for his fellow teammates. A leader demonstrates determination, perseverance, and a high work ethic in both practice and in games. He possesses good game knowledge, can be called on in clutch situations and demonstrates average to above average skill. Finally, he is recognized as being responsible within the team.

Leadership – Hockey Team

A leader is defined as someone who is a role model within the team leading by example on and off the ice. He acts as a liaison between coaches and players and functions as the team spokesperson to referees and the public. He is able to motivate, encourage, respect, and inspire his fellow teammates. A leader demonstrates confidence, dedication, approachability, high work ethic, skill, and vision. He is well respected, fair and provides direction in difficult situations. Finally, he exudes a positive yet resilient disposition in hockey.
Appendix D
INFORMED CONSENT

"A Retrospective Analysis of Leadership Development Through Sport"

I, ________________________________, have read the accompanying letter of information and understand the propose study.

I understand the procedures and expectations of the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am aware that I will be requested to complete a four-hour interview, the purpose of which is to gain insight into the impact that social and contextual variables play in leadership development in athletes. I am aware that the interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. I am aware that I may contact the researcher (Andrew Wright) or the General Research Ethics Board of Queen’s University if I have questions, concerns or complaints. I reserve the right to not answer any questions that I do not feel comfortable with or withdraw from the study entirely at any time without recourse. I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary. Also, I am aware that any information that I provide in this study will be stored in a secure location and remain confidential. I am aware that any printed data will be coded for anonymity and the information will not be associated with my name.

Signed: ________________________________ Date: ________________________________
Witness: ________________________________ Date: ________________________________

If you have any further questions, comments, or complaints regarding this study, please contact the researchers or the General Research Ethics Board at the address below.

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Thank you for your participation in this study

Andrew Wright
Appendix E
Introduction

The purpose of this study is to observe your development as a leader and analyze how your experiences in various activities from an early age up until the present has helped you to become a leader among your varsity sport teammates. The goal is to examine the types of activities that you were engaged in to gain insight into the role that your peers, your parents, your siblings and significant authority figures (coaches/instructors/teachers) played in your development.

Part 1 – Structured Interview Guide

This part of the methodology (chart 1) was selected to elicit responses that identify the significant activities that you were involved in and the quantity of time devoted to those activities. To begin, I would like you list all of the extracurricular activities that you were engaged in beginning at age 6 and continuing to the present day. I would like you to state the age that you started and stopped each of the activities. A number of activity categories are provided to assist your recall.

A. Teams/Clubs/Organizations: This category includes organized activities that you are involved with on a daily or weekly basis. Some examples of these activities are: involvement in a soccer league, a member of a chess team, a participant in a stamp club or part of an organization such as Boy Scouts of Canada, the 4H club, church organizations, or the Toronto Youth Choir.

B. Extracurricular Activities at School: This category includes activities that are organized by the school administration but were not directly related to academic learning. Please include activities that you were involved with on a daily or weekly basis. Some examples of these activities are: intramural or varsity sports teams, members of clubs such as the debating society or sailing club, or part of the student administration or council.

C. Activities with Friends: This category includes activities that are organized by only you and your friends during your free time. Please include activities that you were involved with on a daily or weekly basis. Some examples of these activities are: playing street hockey after school, playing strategy games such as dungeons and dragons, hanging out at the mall or playing video games.

D. Activities Alone: This category includes activities that are organized by only you during free time. Please include activities that you were involved with on a daily or weekly basis. Some examples of these activities are: practicing a musical instrument, watching T.V., playing video games or surfing the net, reading books, studying for school, volunteering or working at a job, drawing pictures, or practicing sport skills such as shooting baskets.

E. Activities with Siblings: This category includes activities that are organized by you and your siblings during your free time. Include activities that you were involved with on a daily or weekly basis. Some examples of these activities are: playing catch at the park,
playing video games, going for hikes, swimming in the pool, or playing board games such as chess.

F. Activities with Parents: This category includes activities that are organized by you and your parents during free time. Include activities that you were involved with on a daily or weekly basis. Some examples of these activities are: going skating at the park, playing video games, watching movies, playing hockey on the street, playing music together, or going hiking.

Part 2 – Structured Interview Guide

To follow-up part one of the structured interview guide I would like you to provide some demographic information about each of the activities that you listed (chart 2). The demographic information includes the amount of time (hours per week/months of year) spent participating in the activity, your height, if you possessed a formal leadership role (captain), the position you played, and your age relative to the other participants. Following is a brief description of each of the demographic categories.

A. Hours of Participation: Please recall the number of hours that you spent per week and the number of months a year you were engaged in the listed activity.

B. Height for Age: Can you recall your height in comparison to your same aged peer group and your height compared to your peers in each of the listed activities.

C. Captain: Were you in a formal leadership position (ex. Captain or First violin) in each activity. If you were in a formal leadership position how were you selected for that position (ex. Chosen by your teammates).

D. Position Played: Please recall the position that you played or were designated within the activity (ex. Point guard or Treasurer).

E. Aged Compared to Peers: Please recall your age compared to your peers within each activity (ex. Older, younger or same age).

Life Span Periodization

I would like to take a moment to examine the charts that we have developed together. If possible I would like you to regroup activities into years that identify major periods in your development. A possible method of regrouping would mirror major school transitions – primary school, middle school, high school, and university. These periods will be used as a frame of reference for the rest of the interview.
Part 3 – General Interview Guide

This section of the methodology is designed to elicit responses that paint a full picture of each activity including your behaviours, social influences, and relationships. This will entail you answering questions for each activity that you listed involvement in, in part one of the interview. We will begin with your early involvement and speak about all the activities in your first major development stage (ex. primary school years) before proceeding to the next development stage. For each activity the same three open-ended questions will be addressed with the researcher having an opportunity to probe for further information based on participant responses.

1. I would like you to describe with as much depth as you can remember your involvement in activity X

2. Could you describe the behaviour of your parents relating to your involvement in activity X (repeat question with coaches, peers, siblings and significant others in place of parents)?

3. Could you describe as comprehensively as you can remember your involvement in a typical week of activity X?
Appendix F
**ACTIVITIES AND AGES**

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