

Exploring the '5Cs' of Positive Youth Development in Sport

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The emerging field of youth development has been associated with indicators of Positive Youth Development (PYD) known as the 5Cs (competence, confidence, connection, character and caring). The 5Cs model (Lerner et al., 2005) describes PYD as the culmination of the Cs, whereby higher scores on each of the Cs contributes to a resultant higher score for PYD. Researchers have suggested sport is a salient context for developing the 5Cs. However, there is no specific evidence for the existence of the 5Cs among young people who play sport. The purpose of this study was to examine the latent dimensionality of PYD in sport. Two hundred and fifty eight youth sport participants (59 males, 199 females; Mean age = 13.77 years, SD = 1.23; range 12-16 years) attending summer sport camps at a Canadian university completed a 30-item instrument that was adapted from Phelps et al.'s (2009) 78-item measure of the 5Cs of PYD. Confirmatory factor analyses failed to provide support for the 5Cs model identified in previous research (i.e., Lerner et al. and Phelps et al.). Instead, exploratory factor analyses indicated that PYD in sport might be comprised of two factors that reflect pro-social values and confidence/competence. It is proposed that the 5Cs did not emerge in this study because (a) each C may not be uniquely identified by the current sample due to their stage of ontogeny, and (b) some of the Cs are so similar in nature (i.e., so highly correlated) that they are perceived as similar constructs. Implications of this study suggest that, in a sporting context, PYD might best be represented by pro-social values and confidence/competence rather than the 5Cs.

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Sport may provide a context in which youth have opportunities to learn life skills and other positive attributes that help them thrive away from the field of play (Danish & Nellen, 1997; Jones & Lavallee, 2009). The acquisition of such competencies, assets, values, and life skills is the essence of *Positive Youth Development* (PYD). PYD is a strength-based conception of development that can be defined as "the engagement in pro-social behaviors and avoidance of health compromising behaviors and future jeopardizing behaviors" (Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster, 1998, p. 426). There is a belief that through playing sport youth can learn competencies, assets, values, and life skills that will have a positive influence on their overall development. However, whereas sport psychologists have written quite extensively about the potential for PYD through sport (see Holt, 2008, for a review), to advance the literature in this area research is needed to examine the empirical validity of PYD within sport contexts.

One of the most prominent conceptualizations of PYD is Lerner et al.'s (2005) '5Cs' model (whereby the Cs represent the constructs of competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion). Little (1993) originally proposed a 4Cs model of PYD, with the four constructs being *competence, confidence, (positive social) connection, and character*. Following Little's original work, other developmental psychologists proposed the fifth 'C' – *caring* (or *compassion*: Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Lerner, 2004; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). The 5Cs is the most prominent model in the emerging vocabulary of PYD (King et al., 2005) and has been recognized as a useful framework for assessing PYD in sport (see Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2005).

Fraser-Thomas and Côté (2005) put forward an integrated model of PYD for sport and suggested that future research is required to examine which features of youth sport settings are "most consistently associated with successful sport programs that foster the 5Cs" (p. 34). It could be argued that such a statement assumes the existence of the 5Cs in sport settings. However, to date, no empirical evidence supporting this existence of the 5Cs in sport has actually been provided in the extant literature. By establishing the empirical validity of the 5Cs in sport, researchers will be better able to examine correlates, determinants, and contextual factors that influence PYD in sport settings. The current study addresses this gap in the literature.

Lerner et al.'s (2005) 5Cs model describes PYD as the culmination of *competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion*. According to Lerner et al., competence represents a positive view of one's actions in domain specific areas. Confidence is an internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy and one's global self-regard, as opposed to domain specific beliefs. Connection refers to positive bonds with people and institutions. Character reflects an individual's respect for societal and cultural rules. Finally,