

Coaches' Experiences Learning and Applying the Content of a Humanistic Coaching Workshop in Youth Sport Settings

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The purpose of this study was to develop and deliver a humanistic coaching workshop, as well as investigate coaches' perceptions of this workshop and their experiences using humanistic coaching. Participants were 12 coaches of grade 7–11 basketball teams from schools in low socioeconomic communities in a major Canadian city. Data were collected using semistructured interviews and personal journals. An inductive thematic analysis revealed coaches perceived the workshop to be effective in teaching the humanistic principles and how to apply them in youth sport settings. The perceived strengths of the workshop included the group discussions, use of videos, practical coaching examples, and learning about the findings from empirical studies. The participants applied the humanistic principles with their teams by asking questions that guided athlete learning and by requesting feedback about various individual and team matters. Despite facing challenges such as increased time and effort to implement humanistic coaching principles, the participants reported positive outcomes in their athletes related to autonomy, communication, motivation, and willingness to help teammates. These results are discussed using literature on youth sport coaching, knowledge translation, and youth development through sport. Findings from this study can be used to enhance youth sport coach training protocols.

Keywords: coach education, knowledge translation, youth development through sport, coach learning

Effective youth sport coaches promote a mastery-orientated climate, foster fun and play, encourage social interactions, and promote positive growth opportunities (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). Moreover, youth sport coaches also act as mentors, role models, friends, and community leaders who promote the personal development of their participants (Camiré & Trudel, 2013; Falcão, Bloom, & Gilbert, 2012; Schwebel, Smith, & Smoll, 2016; Stein, Bloom, & Sabiston, 2012). Studies investigating youth development through sport found coaches' behaviours

positively influenced participants' outcomes (Gould & Carson, 2008; Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2009). More specifically, Camiré and Trudel (2013) interviewed 18 high school football players and nine of their coaches, and found those coaches' efforts to teach life-skills through sport fostered leadership and engagement inside and outside of the sport setting. Similarly, White and Bennie (2015) interviewed 22 youth gymnasts and seven of their coaches, and found positive interpersonal relationships and effective coach behaviours helped athletes cope with

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the challenges and stress of sport, developed athletes' resilience, life skills, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. These coaching behaviours have been associated with humanistic coaching, which is proposed to promote development of young participants (Lyle, 2002).

Humanistic Coaching

Humanistic coaching focuses on promoting athletes' personal growth and development by empowering athletes and fostering positive interpersonal coach-athlete relationships (Lombardo, 1987; Lyle, 2002). The principles of humanistic coaching can be traced to humanistic psychology. Humanistic psychology adopts a strength-based stance, proposing individuals are inherently motivated to grow and improve, while also having the potential to avoid external influences through their cognitive capacity and personal autonomy (Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1969; Shaffer, 1978). This theory emphasizes the personal and subjective interpretation of human experience, and takes an antireductionist holistic view of individuals. It places human freedom and autonomy as central concepts, and can be used to highlight the importance of decision-making and reject the notion that people react passively to stimuli (Maslow, 1954; Shaffer, 1978; Rogers, 1969). In sum, humanistic psychology has an optimistic view of humanity that emphasizes individuality and holistic interpretation while also highlighting one's autonomy to make decisions and take control of their lives.

Similar to humanistic psychology, humanistic coaching also emerged in response to coaching methods characterized by lack of personal empathy, coach-centred decision making, and one-way teaching behaviours where knowledge was transmitted only from coach to athlete (Lombardo, 1987; Lyle, 2002). Instead, early views on humanistic coaching advocated for an athlete-centred approach that promoted autonomy, were oriented toward athletes' growth and development, and created positive interpersonal relationships (Lombardo, 1987; Lyle, 2002). Thus, humanistic coaching entailed a change of attitude by coaches from making decisions to sharing responsibility, from information-giver to a facilitator of a learning process, from setting rules and standards to agreeing on them (Lombardo, 1987). More specifically, Lyle (2002) described humanistic coaching as: (a) responsive to change, (b) providing opportunities to foster autonomy, (c) setting clear goals, (d) gradually relinquishing control, (e) providing problem-solving opportunities, and (f) individualizing the coaching process.

Despite efforts to describe and define humanistic coaching (Cassidy, 2010; Nelson, Cushion, Potrac, & Groom, 2014), very few studies have investigated coaches' perceptions and application of humanistic coaching principles. Even less evident are empirical research of humanistic coaching within youth sport settings. One study by Preston, Kerr, and Stirling (2015) was conducted to assess Olympic athletes' perceptions

of their coaches' humanistic behaviours. They found that while coaches followed some humanistic principles (i.e., fostering confidence and independence, engaging in open communication), they overlooked others such as using a democratic or facilitative coaching style, sharing decision making, and promoting personal growth and development. Furthermore, this inconsistent application of humanistic coaching may have led to negative athlete experiences, such as the perception of being over-coached or that coaches showed favouritism to some athletes (Preston et al., 2015).

This absence of research investigating the links between humanistic theory and coaching practices has led to a wide range of interpretations of humanistic coaching, inconsistent practices, and an unclear understanding of what it is and how it can be applied to sport (Cassidy, 2010; Nelson et al., 2014). To address this gap, Nelson et al. (2014) suggested that humanistic coaching principles and its theoretical backgrounds should be included in coach training protocols. This is important for the present research because a clearly articulated relationship between humanistic theory and coaching practices can avoid "cherry picking convenient ... concepts and ideas from humanistic psychology" (Nelson et al., 2014, p. 3). In addition, research evidence can be used to evaluate humanistic coach training programs and better inform future practice.

Coach Training

According to Nelson, Cushion, and Potrac (2006), coaches acquire knowledge through three types of learning: formal, informal, and nonformal. Formal learning entails courses and certifications developed and implemented by sport associations or national governing bodies. Informal learning involves personal experiences and social interactions that take place in situations where learning is not the main purpose. Lastly, nonformal learning refers to organized educational activities outside of the formal setting that provide specific knowledge to a particular group (Nelson et al., 2006). Most relevant to the current study, nonformal learning opportunities have been described as workshops, seminars, conferences, and clinics developed and delivered by coaches or researchers, that are brief in duration (i.e., 60–120 minutes), and take place in controlled environments offering learning experiences in contextualized situations (Mallett, Trudel, Lyle, & Rynne, 2009; Trudel, Gilbert, & Werthner, 2010). A review on the effectiveness of coach education indicated that while formal coach education programs contributed to standardizing knowledge, they had limited impact on coaches' abilities to foster life skills in their athletes (Trudel et al., 2010). On the other hand, nonformal learning methods such as workshops and seminars addressed specific topics that are more authentic, meaningful, and contextualized to a coach (Mallett et al., 2009). This statement is supported by empirical studies that found

youth sport coaches who participated in nonformal coach training programs enhanced their ability to improve their team's environment, build positive coach-athlete relationships, and foster positive outcomes in their athletes (Koh, Ong, & Camiré, 2014; Smith et al., 2009). For example, Koh et al. (2014) developed and delivered a coach training program designed to teach strategies that promoted values related to personal growth and development. They found that primary school coaches acquired knowledge and athletes learned values such as integrity, respect, commitment, and resilience that impacted them both inside and outside of sport. Further, Koh, Camiré, Regina, and Soon (2016) conducted a follow-up investigation and found those same coaches continued to apply the strategies two years after the training program. These findings suggest that nonformal coach learning programs can have a long-term impact on coaches' behaviours that foster youth development through sport.

Despite research on the effectiveness of nonformal coach training programs, little is known about how knowledge is incorporated and transmitted in these programs (Trudel et al., 2010). Knowledge translation (KT) is a process that aims at bridging the gap between scientific knowledge and practice (Straus, Tetroe, & Graham, 2013), and could be helpful in developing evidence-based workshops in sport coaching (Caron, Bloom, Falcão, & Sweet, 2015). Graham et al. (2006) developed a two-phase framework called Knowledge-to-Action cycle to describe how KT could be used in nonformal training programs for health professionals. First, knowledge creation consisted of inquiry, synthesis, and creation of knowledge and tools that were useful for practitioners (Graham et al., 2006). Next, the action cycle was used to apply and evaluate the knowledge and tools by (a) adapting and tailoring knowledge to the context, and assessing its barriers, (b) monitoring the use of knowledge, and (c) evaluating outcomes (Graham et al., 2006). While knowledge translation has been widely used in health science settings, the few studies that have applied its structure in sport research have generally used it to develop and disseminate knowledge about sport-safety (Caron et al., 2015; Richmond, McKay, & Emery, 2014).

In sum, literature has shown that KT is useful to bridge the gap between theory and practice. More specifically, coach education literature has suggested nonformal coach training programs are effective for teaching coaches to foster development through sport. Despite this, youth sport coach training programs have yet to specifically address humanistic principles using KT strategies. Thus, the purpose of the current study was to develop and deliver a humanistic coaching workshop, as well as investigate coaches' perceptions of this workshop and their experiences using humanistic coaching. The present study was guided by two research questions: (a) How can humanistic principles be incorporated into a coach training workshop to translate knowledge on youth development through sport? (b) What are youth sport coaches' experiences using humanistic coaching?

Methods

The present study used transcendental phenomenology (cf. Husserl, 1931), a research methodology that describes the common meaning of the lived experiences of several individuals. This methodology is inspired by existential philosophy, which views humans as engaged beings capable of building personal meaning for their own experiences (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell (2013), phenomenological studies have seven features: (a) present the philosophical background of phenomenology, (b) explore the lived experiences of a group of individuals, (c) emphasize the phenomenon, (d) collect data using interviews, (e) analyse data with an inductive systematic procedure, (f) use bracketing, and (g) describe the essence of participants' experiences. This study addressed all features of this methodology by exploring the lived experiences of a group of youth sport coaches with emphasis on their perceptions of a workshop as well as their use of humanistic coaching. The features of this methodology are addressed throughout the paper.

Participants

The participants of the current study were 12 youth sport basketball head coaches (10 male and 2 female) with an average age of 25.16 years ($SD = 3.18$, $R = 21-30$) and 3.92 years of coaching experience ($SD = 3.30$, $R = 1-11$). Six participants had certification in the Canadian national coaching certification program, while two had sport-specific provincial accreditation. Eight participants had a university degree (five in physical education), and four had a high school degree. Participants coached grade 7-11 (12-17 year olds) basketball teams from schools in low socioeconomic communities in a major Canadian city. All coaches played multiple sports as youth athletes, and most specialized in basketball. Three participants played at the university level, while the others stopped playing earlier due to injury or deselection. The participants started coaching after they stopped playing organized sports, motivated by the desire to give back to their community and positively impact the lives of children.

All the coaches in this study were part of a local non-profit organization called Pour 3 Points (pour3points.ca), who uses sport as a tool to improve the personal development of youth living in low-socioeconomic settings. The coaches understood that the mission of the organization was to train beginner youth sport coaches on effective strategies designed to promote development through sport. After being selected and trained by the organization, they were assigned a high school team to coach for a whole season as part of the partnership between Pour 3 Points and local schools. The organization contacted our research team with a request to collaborate in developing and delivering the training protocol for their newly selected youth sport coaches. The primary investigator delivered a humanistic coaching workshop to the Pour 3 Points coaches and also led the examination of their

experiences learning from the workshop and applying humanistic coaching in their practices.

Procedures

After institutional ethics approval was obtained, one 2-hr humanistic coaching workshop was delivered before the start of the basketball season at a location chosen by the nonprofit organization. The lead author delivered the workshop, which followed the two phases of the Knowledge-to-Action cycle: knowledge creation and action (Graham et al., 2006). Knowledge creation consisted of inquiry, synthesis, and creation of relevant knowledge and tools (Graham et al., 2006). The inquiry started when the organization invited our research team to collaborate in training coaches on strategies to foster youth development through sport. As a result, our research team examined the theoretical and philosophical background of humanistic coaching to identify knowledge and tools that met the needs of the organization. This information was synthesized in a PowerPoint presentation that included psychological and educational theory related to humanism (cf. Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1969) as well as humanistic coaching principles (cf. Lombardo, 1987; Lyle, 2002). This theoretical content was augmented with empirical research findings supporting the use of humanistic theories in education as well as the impact of positive coaching behaviours on youth development through sport. Finally, videos of high profile coaches'

behaviours were used to illustrate humanistic behaviours and the lead author provided additional anecdotal practical coaching examples during the presentation. A summary of the content and activities from the workshop are presented in Table 1.

The action cycle consisted of applying and evaluating the knowledge of humanistic principles by adapting it to the context, assessing the barriers to applying it, and evaluating its outcomes (Graham et al., 2006). First, the lead author presented the information and facilitated discussions between the coaches on how to adapt humanistic coaching practices to the youth sport context during the workshop. Discussions during the workshop also covered some of the possible barriers coaches may encounter using humanistic coaching and how to overcome them. After the workshop, the use of humanistic coaching was monitored through journaling, and the outcomes of their practices were evaluated using qualitative interviews.

Instruments

Coaches participated in individual semistructured interviews and completed biweekly journals throughout the season. The semistructured interviews took place at a time and location of coaches' convenience between four and six weeks after the workshop. This time allowed them to gain experience and form impressions of humanistic coaching. Coaches were asked to start their biweekly journal entries two weeks after the workshop.

Table 1 Phases and Content of the Humanistic Coaching Workshop

Phase	Content
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined and explained Humanistic Coaching using two videos of well-known basketball coaches. One clip was sourced from a postgame interview with an NBA coach that emphasized an athlete-centred coaching style. The other clip contained a halftime speech given by a University basketball coach demonstrating a coach-centred approach. • Provided rationale for the workshop
Humanistic Theories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connected coaching and humanistic theories from psychology and education. • Humanistic Psychology: briefly described as a strength-based approach that emphasizes decision-making, freedom, and autonomy. • Humanistic Education: briefly described the application of humanistic theory in education and the role of the teacher. Exemplified humanistic education practices with a video of third grade educators teaching math using student-centered and problem-solving strategies. Presented empirical research findings supporting positive learning outcomes. • Discussed the relationship between teaching and coaching, as well as the use of humanistic strategies in coaching.
Humanistic Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded on the description and use of humanistic coaching. • Small group activity whereby the coaches co-created, presented, and discussed humanistic coaching strategies to teach drills, set team goals, or determine team values. • Presented empirical research findings describing the connection between humanistic coaches' behaviours and positive youth athlete outcomes.
Conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed the potential challenges implementing humanistic coaching and identified strategies to overcome the addressed barriers. • Described the requirements and highlighted the importance of completing the reflective journals and participating in the interviews to evaluate the program.

Individual Semistructured Interviews. According to Creswell (2013), data collection in phenomenological studies usually involves interviewing individuals. As such, an 11-question individual semistructured interview was conducted with each participant (see Appendix for interview guide). Semistructured interviews have been described as a guided conversation where the researcher introduces a discussion topic using open-ended questions, thereby allowing the participants to answer freely (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Semistructured interviews also allow for interpretations of participants' discourse, and aim at understanding the meaning of respondents' experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In line with another feature of phenomenological studies (Creswell, 2013), the interview questions examined the lived experiences of coaches regarding the phenomenon being studied, that is their participation in the workshop and use of humanistic coaching principles in youth sport settings. The interviews averaged approximately 90 minutes ($R = 50\text{--}134$ minutes) and the data collected during the interviews were the primary source of information for most of the results section.

Biweekly Journals. The coaches also completed a personal journal every two weeks, which allowed them to reflect and communicate their thoughts and experiences throughout the research process (Janesick, 1999). Journal entries were filled-out and submitted online using a survey website that was only accessible to the lead author. The journal was composed of three open-ended questions: (a) What happened to your team since the last journal entry? (b) Provide examples of how you used humanistic coaching in the past two weeks. (c) Share any relevant coaching experience you had in the past two weeks and your overall impressions. Coaches submitted between 13 and 15 journals throughout the season. These data were used as a secondary source of information to contextualize the responses gathered in the interviews.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using an inductive systematic procedure, described as one of the features of transcendental phenomenology (Creswell, 2013). More specifically, an inductive thematic analysis was used to identify, analyse, and report thematic meanings in our qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2013) described seven stages to performing thematic analysis: (a) transcription, (b) familiarization with the data, (c) coding, (d) searching for themes, (e) reviewing themes, (f) defining and naming themes, and (g) writing.

First, the 1085 minutes of audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim with minor changes to ensure clarity and anonymity of the content. This resulted in 240 pages of single-spaced interview transcription. The lead author became familiar with the data by listening to the audio recordings and reviewing the transcripts and journals before starting the analysis. The third stage entailed

inductively coding the transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2013), which resulted in 871 data features that were labelled using 34 codes. For example, the transcript extract "The kids don't learn the lessons when we go through the steps too quickly. Humanistic coaching is about trying to get as much feedback as we can from them so you know how fast you can go" was coded as *listening to athlete input*. In the fourth stage, the authors combined codes to identify themes. For example, the aforementioned code was combined with other similar codes, such as *guiding athletes* and *athlete decision making*. In total, the authors identified six themes, which were then combined into three overarching themes. Next, the first two authors reviewed the themes and overarching themes by going over the transcriptions and ensuring they represented the information portrayed by the participants. The sixth stage entailed defining themes and overarching themes by identifying their nature, writing a detailed description that summarized its essence, and constructing a concise name for each one. The three overarching themes are listed next, with the themes that comprised each one in parenthesis: (a) *humanistic coaching workshop* (themes: *perceptions of the workshop* and *lessons learned in the workshop*), (b) *experiences using humanistic coaching* (themes: *description of humanistic coaching* and *examples of humanistic coaching*) and (c) *outcomes of humanistic coaching* (themes: *perceptions of humanistic coaching* and *impact of humanistic coaching*). Finally, the writing involved combining the participants' accounts to tell a story about their experiences, which is presented in the results section.

Quality Standards

Qualitative sport coaching researchers have proposed criteria to ensure research quality (Smith, Sparkes, & Caddick, 2014). Based on Smith et al. (2014), the following strategies were used: (a) width, (b) aesthetic merit, (c) worthy topic, (d) rich rigor, and (e) transparency. To achieve width (i.e., comprehensiveness and quality of evidence), the lead author delivered the workshop and collected data from all coaches of the nonprofit organization, provided a detailed description of the data analysis, and reported direct quotes of the participants to allow the reader to judge the quality of the data. Aesthetic merit (i.e., creative analytical practices) was addressed by using an inductive thematic analytical process, which opened up the text for explanatory interpretation of information. The study itself is deemed a worthy topic given it originated from a request of the community and was relevant, timely, and significant to their needs. The study showed rich rigor (i.e., use of theoretical constructs, abundant data, and time in the field) by using humanistic coaching as a central theoretical framework, collecting 1085 minutes of interviews, and having the lead author spend time with the P3P board members and coaches before and after the workshop. Transparency was attained through regular discussions between the lead author and the second author, where the latter scrutinized the process of data

collection and analysis in a way that encouraged reflection and exploration of alternative interpretations of the data.

Finally, bracketing was also used as a quality standard criterion. This is a feature in transcendental phenomenology that allows the investigator to focus on the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2013). Bracketing promotes self-reflection and raises awareness to how one's personal experiences may impact the collection and interpretation of data (Creswell, 2013). To meet this quality standard, the lead author—who was responsible for all of the data collection and the initial phases of data analysis—kept a reflective journal throughout the entire study. In this journal he reflected on his interactions with the various stakeholders in the project, on the process of the interviews, and on the various stages of analysis.

Results

This section presents participants' perceptions of the humanistic coaching workshop, their experiences using humanistic coaching in youth sport, and their observations of its impact on their athletes. This section is framed using the overarching themes identified in the analysis of the data: *humanistic coaching workshop, experiences using humanistic coaching*, and *outcomes of humanistic coaching*. The definition of each theme is presented along with quotes to illustrate coaches' experiences. Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity.

Humanistic Coaching Workshop

This overarching theme included what and how coaches learned, as well as suggestions to improve the workshop. Coaches' reported the workshop taught them to allow athletes to make decisions about the team, how to build positive relationships with athletes, and how to focus on athletes' needs. Participants said the workshop highlighted the importance of including athletes in team related decisions as a way to promote independence, autonomy, critical thinking, and problem solving. For example, Kyle said: "The workshop taught me we must involve athletes in decisions about the team. They like to feel involved and it enables them to assimilate things more easily. They love to help when we don't give them orders." In turn, Adam stated:

I learned the goal is for athletes to become independent, make their own decisions, and be responsible. Humanistic coaching focuses on them learning how to behave towards each other and in society. We are not forming professional players; we are forming future men.

Participants also reported learning to establish open communications with the players instead of giving orders. More specifically, Chris mentioned: "The workshop taught me how to improve communication by asking questions that make them think and allowing them to find the answer themselves. You have to know why you

do something otherwise what is the point of doing it?" Other coaches said:

I love the way that the workshop puts the horizontal relationship between the players and the coaches. ... The workshop taught me that it is important to open-up to the players and consider their feedback. Having a discussion, asking them questions, and guiding them through answers is a lot more powerful than preaching to them. (Ben)

The workshop taught me to communicate with the players. Before I spoke as a dictator because that's what I knew. Now, I ask questions that make them think and help them find solutions. (Evan)

Coaches also used language that raised awareness to teamwork and collaborating with others as a way to foster an engaging and supportive environment. For example:

The workshop taught me to think of *us* instead of *me*. When someone makes a mistake I don't tell them 'you made a mistake' or else my players will also blame each other during games. Instead I tell them this is *our* mistake. If someone is not able to do something, we work together to encourage them. (Ian)

Finally, one coach addressed the importance of focusing on athletes' needs by building their practices considering players' athletic and emotional characteristics:

I learned that as coaches we must focus on the players and see how they feel instead of just taking things where we want it to go. We must start from what is happening to them, from where they are emotionally, and bring them where we want. (Lindsay)

Coaches also discussed how the workshop helped them learn about humanistic coaching. More specifically, coaches said videos, empirical studies, group discussions, and practical coaching examples were the elements of the workshop that helped them stay engaged and learn:

I am big on everything that is visual. The videos of the coaches' speeches were great. Both the good and bad examples were great. ... Everything in the workshop was research based and there were reasons to believe humanistic coaching can be good. ... You gave us actual examples and we discussed how we would react in certain situations. (Adam)

I liked the story about how the coach dealt with the player who shot a buzzer beater during a blowout. The coach knew he shouldn't walk on the court and yell at the player. Instead he had a conversation with her to explain why she shouldn't have done it. The girl understood and apologized. Other coaches would make the girl do push-ups on the court. ... Just hearing those examples made me think. (Dylan)

Finally, suggestions to improve the workshop included making the workshop more interactive, asking more questions and applying activities where coaches would watch or run practices. For example, Fred said: “The workshop could have been better if it had been more interactive. Instead of focusing so much on theory, show more practices.” Another coach added:

The workshop started by showing many studies. Instead, my suggestion would be to first explain and discuss the approach to later show the research. Start with: Why are we doing this? What can it bring? Then you tell us about the research. You must have the theory, I agree. Just reverse it. (George)

Experiences Using Humanistic Coaching

During the interviews and journal entries, coaches provided examples of how they applied humanistic coaching. Coaches described humanistic coaching behaviours as guiding athletes through problem solving, building collaborative coach-athlete relationships, seeking athletes’ input and allowing them to make decision about the team, and fostering development through sport. First, coaches guided athletes by asking thought-provoking questions instead of telling them what to do. The coach acted as a facilitator that enabled athletes to come up with their own solutions when creating team rules, in practice, and choosing team strategy:

The coach is a guide in the humanistic coaching. I don’t talk that much.... I try teaching through games where players have fun while learning. I propose a problem and they work on finding a solution. If their solution does not solve the problem, that’s OK, they’ll keep trying until they get it. I keep asking questions until they find an answer. (George)

It is important for coaches to understand the person is not *your* player, they are kids who will soon be adults and will have to make their own choices. We are here to guide them and at the end of the day it’s their life. Asking questions is good because they have to think and they have to find the solution. By knowing your mistakes, you are able to fix them yourself. (John)

Data from the journal entries described how coaches encouraged athletes to identify problems and find solutions by themselves. For example, Heather mentioned:

We were doing a drill and the girls were very unfocused. Instead of screaming and getting mad, I called for a water break. When they got back I addressed the situation and they understood there was a problem. I went to the other side of the court and let them talk among themselves to identify the cause of the problem and propose solutions. After that, the environment changed completely and they practiced with much more intensity. (October 11-24)

A player’s parents took her out of the team because she lied to them. To avoid that from happening again I spoke to the girls. I asked them to come up with a way to avoid losing other girls. They debated the issue together, calmly, and respectfully. Most importantly, they ALL contributed to creating new team rules so it wouldn’t happen again. (November 22-December 5)

Participants also described the coach-athlete relationship in humanistic coaching as one where coaches collaborated with athletes in building the team environment, trust, and friendships. Coaches developed the coach-athlete relationship by having frequent discussions with their athletes about subjects outside of sports while maintaining a positive and understanding approach to coaching:

I always start practice with a little discussion. I ask them about their week, about school. At the end of the practice I stay longer and the girls come chat with me. I am a friend at the beginning and at end of practices, but when the practice starts they know I am the coach. That shows two sides of coaching. (Heather)

Third, participants highlighted that humanistic coaching entailed including athletes in decisions about the team and welcomed athletes’ input. More specifically, coaches allowed athletes to create the team rules and implemented sport-specific strategies that encouraged decision making on the playing field:

At the beginning of the year there was a lot of dribbling and shooting while I was talking. I brought up that issue and asked: ‘How can we fix this?’ They decided the player who disturbed practice should run, but I told them everyone had to run – they are a team. So they proposed if that player didn’t finish first he would run another lap. It was something I would have never thought, and I accepted their suggestion. Now the running is more competitive and fun. (Ben)

I teach my players to run 5-out because this is an offensive system where players need to make decisions and react to what the defence is doing. I can teach them all motions and skills, but they must decide what to do. I don’t want my players to think like robots where I say: ‘Here’s a play. Run it.’ I want them to think and understand basketball. (Evan)

Coaches also asked for athletes’ feedback about practices and adjusted drills to meet their preference and needs. This allowed coaches to gain insight on athletes’ perceptions about the team. For example, Lindsay said: “In practice, we often gather before and after each drill. We ask for their feedback on what worked, and what they saw. By doing that we know what they understand from the drill.” In turn, Ian suggested:

I started to listen to my players. That's something I didn't do before. For example, I won't say no if they want to change a drill. I must agree because that's what they want, and if they like the drill they will do it better.

Lastly, participants mentioned humanistic coaches promoted development outcomes through sport by connecting the lessons learned in sport to other life situations. Coaches mentioned they taught their players to work hard and stay positive in sport, and spent time with them outside of sport holding team study hours:

The purpose of the humanistic coaching is not to win games, championships, or trophies. The goal is the long-term development of the player and the person in the academic, professional, and in everyday life. The player and the person are both important. (Kyle)

Participants reported facing a number of challenges when implementing humanistic coaching. Most challenges related to the time and effort it took to continuously challenge athletes, ask thought provoking questions, and wait for athletes to find solutions. In addition, even though no coaches experienced this, a couple were concerned with athletes possibly abusing the autonomy granted in humanistic coaching:

When coaching, you need to think a lot. When I do my drills, I really have to think about what I'm doing and what I'm asking. The practices take more time when you are constantly asking athletes to think and discuss. It would go faster if the coach simply tells players what to do. (Dylan)

I think humanistic coaching works depending on what type of players you have. It may be difficult to use with players with big egos. They may abuse the freedom you give them and they won't really respect you. (Chris)

Outcomes of Humanistic Coaching

This overarching theme addressed coaches' perceptions regarding the impact of humanistic coaching on youth sport athletes. The coaches noticed increased autonomy, communication skills, and motivation amongst their athletes. First, coaches stated that youth athletes showed more autonomy by starting practice and drills without coaches' instruction:

I notice my players are more independent. One day I was late for practice and they didn't wait for me to get started. When I arrived they had already done the warm-up, layups, and were practicing, whereas in the first practice of the year they did nothing, and just sat there until I arrived. (Kyle)

I find my athletes gained more autonomy. For example, although I am present, they immediately begin doing the drills they have to do. They don't

ask, 'Coach what do we do next?' like they used to. It would have taken two months before they stopped asking me: with humanistic coaching it was settled in two weeks. (Fred)

Second, coaches noticed their athletes showed improved communication skills. In particular, their athletes became more comfortable expressing their opinions and respecting others, and more proactive in helping their teammates. As a result, coaches noticed improved trust between teammates as well as between athletes and coaches:

Last year the communication was not open and they were afraid of me. Now they are increasingly opening up. I'm building trust. They tell me about their problems. One player told me and the team his cousin had passed away. The whole team supported him. Youth players won't talk to you about personal issues if they don't trust you. (Evan)

Humanistic coaching helped change my best player. I always ask my players their thoughts on drills and skills they are executing. In the beginning he was very shy and unable to share his opinion. Still, I continued to ask him for his thoughts. Now he answers questions and communicates with his teammates. (George)

Finally, coaches noticed increased athlete motivation to improve their sport knowledge and skills. Coaches attributed this high motivation to the fun and interactive nature of their practices. For example, Chris said: "I realized that one of the outcomes of humanistic coaching was the players working harder. They wanted to learn. They were excited." In turn, Dylan said:

I think my players feel very comfortable at practice. They enjoy it because we have good harmony, as opposed to feeling forced to be there. They want to come because they know they will have a good time. Practices are meant to be as interactive as possible.

The personal journals also supported the coaches' perceptions of their athletes' improved engagement, effort, and motivation. For example, Ian described how his athletes stayed positive and continued working hard despite losing games in the beginning of the season.

It impresses me how my girls criticize each other in an encouraging and positive way. One of them called the others for a practice between them because they needed to improve. They all came even if I wasn't there. (November 8-21)

We lost our 4th game, but girls are more motivated and want to learn more in practice. I did a practice on a holiday and they were happy. It was great. The girls are not making the same mistakes as they used to, and are more serious about practice. (November 22-December 5)

All participants reported their intention to continue using humanistic coaching because it allowed them to have a greater impact on the lives of youth athletes, inside and outside of sport:

Humanistic coaching leads to more engaged players that can give their opinions instead of just following the path of others. This approach creates individuals that are more conscious about the world around them. It will bring great changes into society. (Ben)

Through humanistic coaching the kids will be able to make choices when they are older and when we are not there. You will mean something to them. Some parents are not really there and in sport they have an adult taking care of them and helping them be successful. That's one of the things I think is most beautiful. (John)

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to develop and deliver a humanistic coaching workshop, to investigate coaches' perceptions of this workshop, and to explore their experiences using humanistic coaching. The results indicated this workshop successfully taught coaches about humanistic coaching and provided them with tools to apply their knowledge in youth sport settings. Overall, coaches had positive experiences and observed developmental outcomes in their athletes despite facing challenges such as increased time and effort required to use humanistic coaching.

Researchers have acknowledged that while the combination of humanism and sport is not new, the knowledge and application of these principles remains limited and superficial in the sport context (Cassidy, 2010; Nelson, Potrac, & Marshall, 2010). Indeed, the interpretations and practice of humanistic coaching have been inconsistent (Cassidy, 2010; Lyle, 2002; Nelson et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2010; Preston et al., 2015). Our study attempted to address this gap by implementing a coach education program underpinned by the Knowledge-to-Action cycle (cf. Graham et al., 2006). Nonformal sport coach training programs have not typically used KT, instead using frameworks based on previous experience (Koh et al., 2014) or protocols from other research (Falcão et al., 2012; Newin, Bloom, & Loughhead, 2008). By using the Knowledge-to-Action cycle, we were able to plan training based on theoretically derived humanistic principles, as well as use qualitative methods to investigate the participants' experiences learning and applying knowledge. Our findings demonstrate that the Knowledge-to-Action cycle (Graham et al., 2006) was valuable for building collaborations between researchers and community partners, assessing participant's needs, collaboratively creating knowledge, evaluating participant's learning, and examining the applicability of the knowledge and tools developed. Thus, this can be an effective mecha-

nism to incorporate humanistic coaching in nonformal coach training.

Coaches in the current study described humanistic coaching in a similar manner as previous literature (cf. Lombardo, 1987; Lyle, 2002), suggesting the workshop effectively taught them the key principles of humanistic coaching. Another unique aspect of our study is that it demonstrated how coaches applied humanistic coaching principles in their practices. For example, the coaches asked questions to their athletes as opposed to giving them answers, frequently talked to their athletes about matters related and unrelated to sport to improve the coach-athlete relationship, and requested athletes' feedback about various team matters. These coaching behaviours share similarities with other coaching approaches (cf. Vella & Perlman, 2014). For example, transformational leadership promotes development by intellectually stimulating athletes and individualizing the coaching process (Callow, Smith, Hardy, Arthur, & Hardy, 2009; Turnidge & Côté, 2016; Vallée & Bloom, 2005), the mastery approach fosters positive experiences by setting clear goals and using positive reinforcements (Smith et al., 2009), while autonomy-supportive coaching gives athletes choices and a sense of control (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). The resemblance between humanistic coaching and the aforementioned coaching approaches suggests humanistic coaching may be the common philosophy underlying the guiding principles of these coaching approaches. This understanding can shed light into the similarities between the approaches and help coaches implement them together in a complementary way.

Our findings also revealed a number of athlete developmental outcomes (autonomy, communication, motivation, and willingness to help teammates) that the coaches felt occurred because of the training they received in our workshop. This highlights the potential of humanistic coaching to foster personal development, which has been conceptualized using the life skills model (Gould & Carson, 2008) or the positive youth development in sport framework (Côté, Bruner, Erickson, Strachan, & Fraser-Thomas, 2010). The life skills model suggested youth athletes can learn and transfer skills such as respect for others, perseverance, teamwork, and leadership from sport to nonsport contexts (Camiré & Trudel, 2013; Gould & Carson, 2008). Relatedly, the positive youth development in sport framework identified four desirable athlete outcomes: competence, confidence, connection, and character (4C's: Côté et al., 2010). Findings from our study demonstrated that coaches observed outcomes associated to both of these conceptual frameworks. First, coaches connected lessons learned in sport to other life domains, such as communication skills and respect for others. Second, coaches observed athlete outcomes that mirrored the 4C's by deepening athlete learning in their sport (competence), improving autonomy and motivation (confidence), building positive relationships and communication skills (connection), and fostering respect for others (character). Hence, humanistic coaching may be

another beneficial way to foster positive athlete outcomes through sport participation.

According to the coaches in the current study, the application of humanistic coaching principles was not without challenges. Their main concern was the increased time and effort required to apply humanistic coaching to their practice compared with other coaching approaches. More specifically, the coaches felt they spent more time planning their training sessions to include games and problem-solving activities, and they also felt they invested more time with their athletes outside of sport (e.g., study hours and community work). This is an important lesson for future implementation of humanistic coaching, as these strategies went beyond the expected norms of many youth sport coaching practices (Kidman & Lombardo, 2010; Nelson et al., 2014). Because of these challenges, it may be beneficial to present coaches with research findings and an evidence-based rationale that underpins the value of building relationships with athletes off the training field and how using questions can stimulate learning during practice. For instance, researchers have shown that collaborative interactions with athletes and using questions fostered decision making, improved prosocial behaviours, and developed life skills (Camiré & Trudel, 2013; Kidman & Lombardo, 2010; White & Bennie, 2015). In addition, Kidman and Lombardo (2010) suggested that questioning could foster autonomy, critical thinking, and decision making, while simply telling athletes what to do provided lower rates of learning and retention. Our evaluation of the coaches' perceptions suggested this evidence-based rationale led them to become strong advocates of using humanistic coaching. Ultimately, this encouraged them to continue using humanistic principles because the perceived benefits outweighed the challenges.

The current study was used to examine the experiences of youth sport coaches using humanistic coaching. It would be equally beneficial to assess the athlete's perspective using psychometric instruments and qualitative methodologies. Psychometric evaluations of youth sport participants' personal development can provide tangible assessments of whether humanistic coaching is an effective way for promoting developmental outcomes. Moreover, qualitative methodologies can examine athletes' individual experiences and perceptions of humanistic coaching, which is particularly relevant given its principles advocate the inclusion of athlete input in all team matters. In addition, the strategies described in the current study could be combined with behaviour observation instruments to further investigate why, how, and when coaches implement these behaviours, without strictly relying on participants' self-reported behaviours. Finally, coaches were part of an organization that aimed to promote youth development through sport, which meant their values and beliefs were likely aligned with the content discussed in the workshop. It would be valuable for future research to investigate coaches' perceptions from those who are not affiliated with this type of organization,

as well as coaches from different sports, cultures, and levels of competition. This would build the knowledge base about the applicability of humanistic coaching to other settings.

Conclusions

According to Creswell (2013), phenomenological studies must describe the 'what' and 'how' of participants' experiences—this is called the *essence* and is the last feature of phenomenology. In the current study, the coaches' experiences can be summarized as learning to guide athletes and foster positive experiences through youth sport (what). Importantly, coaches asked questions and sought athlete input (how) to develop autonomy, critical thinking skills, as well as respect for others. Participants faced challenges throughout the application strategies, but maintained positive attitudes toward humanistic coaching principles and intended to continue using them in the future. In sum, our findings suggest that incorporating humanistic theory in nonformal coach training protocols may increase youth sport coaches' understanding and ability to apply the key principles of humanistic coaching, as well as help them foster sport environments that promote positive youth psychosocial outcomes.

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