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The Impact of Coaches' Character on Youth Basketball Players

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Health, Sport, and Exercise Science

by

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ABSTRACT

If utilized effectively, recreation and sports can serve as major tools for developing youth, improving the educational environment, and increasing the number of productive adults that are healthier physically and mentally to positively impact society. Most research targeting recreation and sports developing youth has the perspective primarily of parents and youth. Evaluating the character strengths of coaches and youth athletes who actively participate in team basketball is vital.

An exploration of the value of basketball and character strengths of *(n* = 64*)* youth athletes, between the ages of 12 to 16 years, and the impact of their involvement with coaches that exhibit high and low character levels, drives this study. Surveys were sent electronically to 20 coaches and 13 completed the survey to determine their character strengths. The instrument consisted of a 96-item survey and 5pt Likert scale. Based on interview responses, character survey results, and voluntary consent of the coaches, nine coaches and ten teams (5 boys and 5 girls) were identified as participants for the study. *Values In Action* (VIA) Institute designed the adult and youth surveys. Tabulation of the coaches' survey results revealed the highest and lowest character strength levels. Triangulation of sources were used to acquire diverse information. Observations of teams and interviewing of coaches provided additional data.

At the end of the basketball season, athlete participants from the ten teams completed a 96-item youth survey of character strengths. To disaggregate survey data, an independent *t-test* was conducted. The coach interview responses were transcribed verbatim using Revo software and subjected to a categorical aggregation analysis procedure.

Thematic analysis and open coding were used to determine seven themes and 10 to 21 codes from interviews. All coaches indicated discipline and respect were high priorities and had

four common character strengths: love of learning, leadership, fairness, and teamwork. The *t-test* revealed no significant (.145) impact of individual character strengths of youth athletes based on the coach character level. The study also recognizes that other factors outside of the sport of basketball, such as community-based organizations and faith-based organizations, may help increase youth character strengths and positive youth development.

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I extend my gratitude to my family who supports me beyond measures and created the village of love and guidance I needed in the absence of my parents. To the teachers and professors who have impacted my educational career and inspired me to learn something new in all that I do, thank you. For my students who I encountered throughout my teaching journey, I'm appreciative of your inspiration, blessings to fulfilling your own dreams, and never give up. In recognition of my godparents, John and Carolyne Adkins, from childhood to womanhood, you have always encouraged me to pursue my dreams, work hard, and achieve my level of greatness, I am grateful to have you as my cheerleaders for life.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my research & dissertation journey to my beloved grandmothers, the late Mary K. Chaney and Orzia Mae Garrett, who at 91 years young is continuing to bless me with her wisdom; both of you nurtured my spiritual growth and the belief that all things are possible and that I must always believe. To my husband, Jonathan, a supportive friend and loving partner who encouraged me toward the end of this journey by relentlessly helping as much as you could and in spite of the obstacles we endured. My children, DeMauriyun and Princeton, the two of you teach me to love at the highest magnitude and create strength and perseverance in me to work harder and place others before me. In memory of my sister, Tammy Sherrell, and my mother, Rosemary Chaney Carr, "A Rose is Still a Rose" and I definitely feel that I am an offspring of you who grew into a beautiful flower.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION 1
- A. Problem Statement 2
- B. Theoretical Framework 3
- C. Purpose 7
- D. Hypothesis 7
- E. Research Questions 7
- F. Significance of Study 7
- G. Theoretical Sensitivity 8
- H. Definition of Terms 10
- I. Delimitations 10
- J. Organization of Dissertation 11

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE 12
- A. Character Strengths and Positive Youth Development 12
- B. Character Development in Adolescence 15
- C. Sport-Based Youth Development 16
- D. Positive Youth Development 18
- E. The Role of the Coach 20
- F. Coaches Building PYD through Sport 22
- G. Character Development & Coach Education 24
- H. Building Strengths of Character 26
- I. Summary 29

III. METHODOLOGY 31
- A. Research Design & Data Collection 32
- B. Adult/Coaching Participants 33
- C. Sample Selection of Interview Questions 34
- D. Game Observation Checklist 38
- E. Youth Participants 38
- F. VIA Institute On Character 39
- G. Sample Survey Questions 40
- H. Trustworthiness 41
- I. Summary 43

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS 44
- A. Summary of Research Design 44
- B. Coach Survey Findings 45
- C. Transcribed Interviews 47
- D. Findings and Major Themes for Group 1 48
- E. Findings and Major Themes for Group 2 55
- F. Summary of Themes for All Coaches 60
- G. Findings of Codes 64
- H. Summary of Codes 65

I. Game Observations 66
J. Quantitative Findings for Youth Surveys 70
K. Summary of Results 70

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 71
A. Introduction 71
B. Research Questions Analysis 71
C. Research Sub-Question 1 71
D. Research Sub-Question 2 73
E. Discussion of Social Capital Theory 75
F. Discussion of TPSR Model 77
G. Discussion of PYD 78
H. Summary of Findings 80
I. Recommendations to the Field 81
J. Recommendations for Future Research 83
K. Considerations for Training and Support Organizations 84
L. Contributions and Conclusions 84

VI. REFERENCES 88

VII. APPENDICES 99
A. IRB Approval Letter 99
B. Adult Informed Consent 100
C. Coach Demographic Form 102
D. VIA Adult Survey/Questionnaire Sample 103
E. Youth Informed Consent 104
F. Youth Demographic Form 106
G. VIA Youth Survey/Questionnaire Sample 107
H. Adult/Coach Interview Questions 108
I. Team/Game Observation Checklist 109
J. VIA Institute Approval Letter 110

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 *Coach Demographics* 45

Table 4.2 *Coaches Character Strength Report* 47

Table 4.3 *Character Strength Levels of Group 1 Coaches* 64

Table 4.4 *Character Strength Levels of Group 2 and Group 3 Coaches* 64

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 *Self-Determination Theory* 6

Figure 3.1 *Descriptions of Character Virtues and Strengths* 37

Figure 4.1 *Word Cloud of VIA 24 Strengths of Character* 63

Figure 4.2 *Map Location of Basketball Teams* 69

Figure 5.1 *TPSR Model* 77

Figure 5.2 *Summary of Findings* 80

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

On a yearly basis in the United States, 30 to 40 million children play some form of organized team sport (Atkinson, 2014). Others play pickup games with friends and neighbors or brothers and sisters (Lareau, 2003). Sports and recreational activities are enjoyable for many individuals for several reasons. Children, teens, young adults, middle-aged adults, and the elderly can engage in sports and recreational activities at different stages in their life. None the less, youth may exhibit the most energy and physical flexibility among the groups. One inner-city youth study indicated that youth who demonstrate enjoyment in sports, recreation, and program activities at boys and girls' clubs relate to enhanced self-esteem and better emotional and behavioral problems (Roffman, Pagano, & Hirsch, 2001). In contrast, a study by researchers Anderson-Butcher's, Newsome, and Ferrari (2003) found that overall participation in sport and recreational activities at clubs had significant, yet small impact on reducing high risk factors among youth.

Holt, Sehn, Spence, Newton, & Ball (2012) explored the possibilities for positive youth development (PYD) and determined differences in contextual factors across PE/sport programs in inner city schools helped promote or impede PYD. These factors can include environmental, classroom, or student factors such as students living in a high crime area with limited access or resources to certain sport programs in and outside of school. Their study examined school staff members, but only eight teachers were interviewed, and no parents were included in the study. In an extensive survey of previous research, Christopher Stevenson (1975) concluded that "there is no valid evidence that participation in sport causes any verifiable socialization effects"

(p.287). In America, increased interest in the character development of youth has become of high importance to parents, teachers, and society. Years prior to Stevenson, researchers Bruce Ogilvie and Thomas Tutko (1971) announced from *Psychology Today* forum there is "no empirical support for the tradition that sport builds character" (p. 61).

In 2003, the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports believed that physical activity and fitness offered important health benefits. Just as important, the council recognized that sports and participating in sport activities help individuals develop character, discipline, confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of well-being. Some of the more recent research on sports and character development targets psychological, philosophical, and educational literatures, but are generally directed towards the needs of sport practitioners (Yeager, Buxton, Baltzell, & Bzdell, 2001; Beedy, 1997; Thompson, 1993). Toward the end of the 19th century, many proponents of organized youth sports argued that adult-supervised sports could save children from the dangers of the streets and teach children the virtues of discipline and teamwork, which are vital to success in the workplace (Chudacoff, 2007). Later, researchers Power and Sheehan (2014) advocate that the primary justification for organized youth sports in the United States has been and remains to this day, the development of children's character.

Problem Statement

The social and emotional stability of youth allows them to maintain what society deems a sense of normal. Families, religious groups, educational entities, and the community-at-large all pride themselves in developing youth who can become productive members of society. Acquiring experience with youth in the field of education can provide first hand observations of how the process of learning, showing, and maintaining character develops early in life for many

individuals. The premier group for teaching character strengths to and examining effects of character development, are youth.

If society upholds positive character as one of the most important traits for an individual to possess, measuring its impact is a vital part of establishing character importance. Sports has a way of unifying others and reducing the divide between race, gender, and other disparities. The engagement of youth in sports at the secondary and collegiate level has triggered a movement that has inspired exceptionally high levels of participation in amateurism in athletics all over America (Miller, 2011).

The combination of sports and youth, coaches' impact, and character strengths, in communities, should be researched and examined continuously. If increasing character strengths is given greater responsibility to adult leaders such as coaches, sports will have an even larger impact on youth in society and may become the main avenue for improving the character of youth. This study examines the relationship between sports and youth and re-establishes the significance the sport of basketball and coaches have on developing character in athletes.

Theoretical Frameworks

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a motivational framework that's been highly utilized to better understand coaches' roles in athlete motivation (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007; Vansteenkiste, Sierens, Soenens, Luyckx, & Lens, 2009; Matosic & Cox, 2014). SDT identifies three psychological needs, which if me, contribute to self-determined motivation: autonomy (feeling one has influence over what happens or a feeling of freedom), competence (feeling one has the skills necessary to be successful at a given endeavor), and relatedness (feeling connection with other people) (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). The theory also maintains that

engaging in an activity through higher levels of self-determination creates physical, emotional, and psychological benefits to those participating (Ward, Wilkinson, Graser, & Prusak, 2008).

The benefits from higher self-determination include, a greater interest in the chosen activity, increased intent to remain physically active in the future, increased excitement and confidence, less pressure and tension while participating, more creativity, better conceptual learning, a more positive emotional tone, a higher level of persistence, enhanced performance, increased periods of moderate to vigorous physical activity, and fewer periods of sedentary activity (Ryan & Deci, 2000a; Fenton, Duda, Quested, & Barrett, 2014).

Lastly, Ryan & Deci (2000b) indicates that SDT proposes that when immersed in environments meeting three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, people tend to act in more self-determined ways. Youth athletes involved in sports are in environments that allow the three basic needs of the SDT to be met. Autonomy is expressed when youth freely make their own decision to participate in basketball or other sports. Coaches help provide and promote competence by teaching skills, fundamentals, or character strengths to allow youth athletes to feel they have the foundation they need to be successful. The team concept for sports encourages youth to interact with others and feel connections with other people. The figure below describes the SDT in connection to youth sports:

SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY (SDT)

(Ryan & Deci, 2000b)

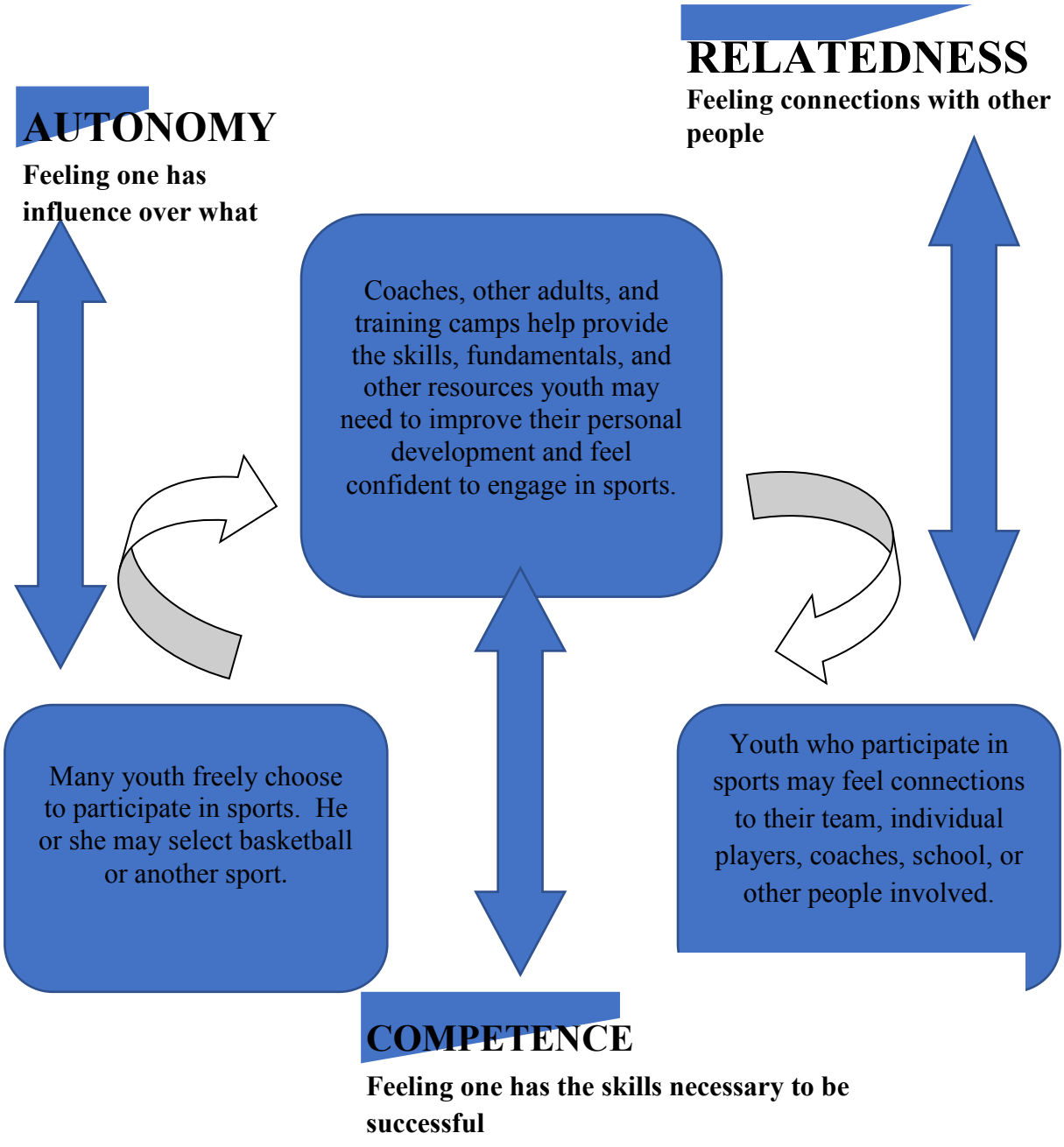

Figure 1.1
Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000b)

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact that character-based initiatives and programs have on youth who engage in sports, primarily basketball. This study seeks to discover additional connections between actions coaches take to build positive character and youth performance, and their overall development.

Hypothesis

Youth athletes who are directly involved with basketball coaches who exhibit high levels of character strength will also have higher character strengths versus athletes under the leadership of coaches with low character strengths.

Research Questions

1. Do coaches with high character strengths have a greater effect on youth character than coaches with low character strengths?
2. Does the character of the coach effect the coaching style and thus the character development of youth?

Significance of Study

Sports can provide a more powerful teaching tool for student/athletes who are not marginalized by economics, race, or ability (Holt, Sehn, Spence, Newton, & Ball, 2012). Since sports can serve as an avenue to teach and reach youth, efforts should be made to connect sports with curriculum that promotes youth character development. Holt et. al. (2012) further implies that those teachable moments need to be recognized and addressed by the coaches and athletes that are consistent and congruent with the overall "learning culture" of the school. If one of the main goals of the school and community is to nurture youth to think and behave more positively, the selection of leaders to guide them in that direction is a major part for establishing this type of school and community culture.

The study provides information on the impact leaders in sports can have on youth character development which, ultimately leads to positive youth development for schools and communities. Furthermore, educational entities, communities, and parents can formulate training and specific criteria for their requirements of leaders who directly interact with youth through sports and other activities.

Theoretical Sensitivity

This study incorporates a mixed methods research approach for interpretation of data. Theoretical sensitivity is the ability to generate concepts from data and to relate them according to normal models of theory in general (Glaser, 1978). For qualitative research, theoretical sensitivity is needed to help maintain analytic distance, tolerate confusion and regression while remaining open and trusting to preconscious processing and abstract connections (Glaser, 1978). Since this study includes interviews, observations, and other personal encounters for the qualitative research methodology, theoretical sensitivity for the researcher is imperative in maintaining consistency and trustworthiness in this method of research.

The theoretical sensitivity of a researcher is derived from their ability to acquire meaning from the data. More specifically, this sensitivity can include personal experiences, the researcher's background knowledge and experiences, professional relationships and experiences, awareness and knowledge of the literature, and his/her statistical analytic ability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016.

This researcher's experiences are comprised of hands on experiences as a middle school and high school basketball player, multi-year basketball camp participant, an active member of the youth church group, and leadership positions among school student councils and other organizations where emphasis was placed on individual morale, positive character, and self-

confidence. As an adult, the researcher has participated in numerous organizations and community development projects and events to continue practicing those same characteristics.

Professionally, the researcher has work experience as a teacher, middle and high school assistant basketball coach, and as a youth leader and sport assistant for the NCAA Women's Final Four tournament, National Football League Superbowl Fan Experience, and the National Basketball Association All-Star fan and community activities committees.

To that extent, she clearly understands the student athlete roles, team concept, coach impact, the training process, youth engagement, and various outcomes for implementation of strategic plans for increased youth development. As a coach, the researcher assisted the head coach with his plan to design character-based concepts, including inspirational messages within the locker room setting, selected athlete captains to increase player leadership, and game day chats to promote team support, cohesion, and open communication. The researcher acquired these experiences primarily in the United States southeast region states of Arkansas and Louisiana.

To increase her theoretical sensitivity in other related areas, the researcher has broadened her educational attainment in sports, recreation, positive youth development, community and social development, theoretical frameworks, and character-based programming literature. The review of literature yields a combination of scholarship in those areas as support for the correlations between sports, basketball, youth, and character.

For the quantitative component of this study, the researcher has completed advanced courses in statistical methodology to support the mixed methods approach utilized for this study. In addition, the researcher finished doctoral level coursework and research in program evaluation and qualitative methods.

Definition of Terms

Character education is a form or moral education designed to teach students certain traditional moral virtues such as respect, compassion, responsibility, self-control, and loyalty (Park, 2004). A program that consists of character education can be considered character programming for its interpretation in this study.

Character strengths are viewed as positive personality in that they are the core capacities for thinking, feeling, and behaving in ways that can bring benefit to us and others (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

It is important to look at character strength in youth as a component of positive youth development. PYD can be described as the following for this study:

> While the positive youth development (PYD) approach recognizes the existence of adversities and developmental challenges that may affect children in various ways, it resists conceiving of the developmental process mainly as an effort to overcome deficits and risk. Instead, it begins with a vision of a fully able child eager to explore the world, gain competence, and acquire the capacity to contribute importantly to the world. The positive youth development approach aims at understanding, educating, and engaging children in productive activities rather than at correcting, curing, or treating them for maladaptive tendencies or so-called disabilities (Damon, 2004, p.15).

Delimitations

This study was completed entirely with participants from the state of Arkansas who were affiliated with a public school. Arkansas was chosen due to the location of the researcher and rural setting of some schools that are more likely to be located in areas with a decreased number of sports and recreational activities outside of school. Schools were chosen as a point of contact due to consent to participate and the connection between coaches and players and their mission to increase the character and morale of youth who attend in hopes of helping build more productive citizens of the community and the United States of America.

Organization of the Dissertation

The first chapter, one, presents an introduction to the dissertation. This introduction includes background knowledge for sports and recreation, youth development, character development, and the self-determination theory. Additionally, chapter one details the significance of the study, research questions, theoretical frameworks and sensitivity, and delimitations of the study. A thorough definition of key terms discussed in the study is also described in chapter one.

To provide a basis for the study, a review of literature in chapter two focuses on the following: Character strengths and development, adolescence and character development, sport-based youth development, implementation of character-based models, coaches' role and impact on youth development, and positive youth development. Chapter three features the research design to include the methodology and more specifically, sampling technique, survey distribution, interviews, data collection and analysis, and interpretation of the overall study results. The presentation of data is provided in chapter four, including demographics, observations, interview interpretations, participants character strengths, several themes, and codes. Chapter five provides a discussion of the results as well as contributions, conclusions and recommendations. This chapter also includes a summary of findings, analysis of research questions, and connections to theoretical frameworks.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature helps provide background knowledge, evaluations, and new information that directly and indirectly supports this research study. Webster and Watson (2002) defined an effective literature review as one that "creates a firm foundation for advancing knowledge" (p. 13). Another interpretation from a few years prior, connects with this literature review purpose and it indicates it is "the use of ideas in the literature to justify the particular approach to the topic, the selection of methods, and demonstration that this research contributes to something new (Hart, 1998, p.211).

Character Strengths and Positive Youth Development

Based on an article review of character, dating back to the 18th century, character was given significance in society. Character strengths are a family of positive traits reflected in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; they promote well-being (Park, 2004). Maudsley (1898) highlighted character strengths in definition, origin, and through evaluation. Park (2004) further discusses the value in good parenting, close relationships with peer and family, positive role models, positive institutions, and youth development programs having an important role in developing character strengths. The measurement of character is used in the psychology community as a strategy to assess youth and their well-being. Using the influence of positive psychology, Seligman (2002) proposes that the good life can be encouraged by identifying the individual strengths of character that foster it. In addition, the emerging field of positive psychology focuses on building strengths and encouraging wellness as much as on remedying weaknesses and repairing deficits (Park, 2004).

Park (2004) also believes in the concept that research and practice efforts should include the three domains identified by positive psychology as comprising the psychological good life:

positive subjective experiences (happiness, life satisfaction), positive individual traits (character, values), and positive institutions (families, schools, communities) that facilitate the first two. The literature further reveals that certain character strengths like hope, kindness, social intelligence, self-control, and perspective can buffer against the negative effects of stress and trauma, preventing or mitigating disorders and even if the disorders occur, character strengths often coexist with symptoms of disorder and provide a sturdy foundation to base therapeutic interventions (Saleebey, 1992b). According to Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003a), 81 percent of the forty-eight programs they reviewed indicated character building was the second most frequently cited goal of their youth development program.

Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003b) discusses the empirical studies that have indicated reasons for the development of individual components of character. The prosocial behaviors of sharing, helping, and being a good teammate can be facilitated by modeling and strengthened by appropriate reinforcement (Radke-Yarrow, Zahn-Wkaxler, & Chapman, 1983). Another reason for development of character strengths is described in Dewey's (1916) interpretation that the purpose of character education is not simply teaching youth to obey authority figures such as parents or teachers or to follow conventional rules; but helping them to develop free and self-directed character strengths, including how to disagree responsibly, if that is necessary and appropriate.

Park, Peterson, & Seligman (2004) includes an ongoing analysis by this group of the *Values In Action* (VIA) classification of strengths as a measurement tool for determining good character. The main conclusion of the classification is that as a family of traits, character needs to be measured with an appropriately broad strategy (Park, 2004). One way, the article reveals, is to ask about a range of behaviors and look for common threads and have consideration for

culturally diverse societies, like the United States, and widely valued positive traits that may be more prevalent in other cultures.

A study with high school students using the VIA-Youth character survey discusses Park (2004) in the article. The major findings include:

- Developmental differences in character development (the ages of youth)
- Girls tend to score higher than boys in certain strengths (appreciation of beauty, fairness, kindness, love, & etc.)
- No meaningful ethnic differences except one strength
- Spirituality is the only strength with ethnic differences (African Americans scored higher than White students)
- Strengths of temperance predicted school grades

Overall the findings suggested a strong association between various strengths of character and life satisfaction (Park, 2004).

Park (2004) insists that as a society, we should provide more opportunities for youth to engage in moral, prosocial, virtuous acts while exposing the youth to exemplary characters in their communities. Although, Park (2004) suggests there is consistent evidence that character strengths play roles in positive youth development and psychopathology, the author still implies that more research is needed to determine positive outcome measures, the ecological systems that build good character, mechanisms in which certain strengths have effects on specific outcomes in youth, and empirical research in areas of study closely related to the effects of character strengths and positive youth development.

Lastly, Park (2004) supports the alignment of institutions, character strengths, and subjective experiences for positive youth development, but realizes that the process of building good character among youth and ultimately their subjective well-being, is complex.

Purpose and Character Development in Early Adolescence

Examining the "kids in the middle," a commonly used phrase for adolescent teens, can be a challenging task. Teaching, monitoring, coaching, mentoring, or establishing any type of relationship with this age group requires unique strategies and gestures.

Establishing character development in adolescents is of high interest to some researchers, practitioners, educators, policymakers, and many others in society. This study examined the developmental relations between purpose and three other character strengths that emerge during early adolescence: gratitude, compassion, and grit (Malin, Liauw, & Damon, 2017). Over 1000 youth were surveyed and 98 interviewed from middle schools throughout the United States (Malin et al., 2017).

Peterson and Seligman (2004) discusses the classification of character strengths model as a multiplicity of distinct character strengths that developed independently of one another and determined an individual's most developed strengths as "signature strengths" (Malin et al., 2017). The reason for the classification model was to examine the early adolescent years using a valid measuring instrument. To effectively research how character strengths emerged and developed during the adolescent years, the study involved the assistance of the University of Pennsylvania in a longitudinal study of character development in adolescence (Malin et al., 2017).

As identity formation takes center stage during early and mid-adolescence, youth build on nascent purposes by looking to the future and exploring roles they might take in society that will strengthen their commitment and extend the scope of their contribution (Malin et al., 2017). In order to engage in purposeful activity to measure three aspects of character strengths, gratitude, grit, and compassion, the Malin et al. (2017) utilizes different paths to accommodate

the adolescent group. Since youth are creative in finding ways to act on their prosocial interactions, access to technology, writing, and extracurricular youth programs were determined to be notable paths for connecting to and accessing youth development (Malin, Liauw, & Damon, 2017). Interview results revealed youth were most likely to find purpose in family, community, and future career goals (Malin, Liauw, & Damon, 2017). The case studies conducted during the study found young adolescents were driven by love, respect, and worry for their families; by concern for people suffering at their schools and communities, by outrage at injustice; and by problems in the environment and society that they wanted to fix (Malin, Liauw, & Damon, 2017).

The data analyses of all evaluation methods showed small, but significant correlations between purpose and each of the three character strengths with interview data revealing patterns in ways that adolescents acted on their purposeful aspirations and expressions of gratitude and compassion (Malin, Liauw, & Damon, 2017). In addition, the study results targeted the effects of character strengths in the earlier stages of development. The study of early character development is emerging, but more research is needed to learn not only how individual character strengths develop and which factors contribute to their development, but also how distinct character strengths develop in relationship to one another in the broader picture of an individual's whole character development (Bowers Li, Kiely, Brittian, Lerner, J., & Lerner, R., 2010).

Origin of Sport Based Youth Development

Schools are the ultimate haven for youth participation in organized sports. The past ten years have witnessed the growth of a new approach to using sports for positive development in children (Holt et.al, 2012). Due to the emergence and connection of out-of-school and youth sport development field areas, in 2006, several entities joined together including Harvard

University's program in Education, Sport PLUS, The PEAR Institute, and Vail Leadership Institute to organize a conference. The conference was titled, *Active Youth: A National Leadership Summit to connect Sports, Health, and Learning in Out-of-School Time*. Sport PLUS (Positive Learning Using Sports) increases awareness globally about sports and its usage as a natural, accessible, and inexpensive platform to change people lives positively through partnerships with communities, schools, and organizations (Sport PLUS, 2017).

The Partnerships in Education and Resilience (PEAR), founded in 1999 by Dr. Gil Noam as a collaboration between Harvard Graduate School of Education and Harvard Medical School; is a nonprofit organization created to promote innovation in education (PEAR, 2017). PEAR incorporates educational, health, public policy, and psychological perspectives and builds projects and programs for schools and afterschool programs across the United States and internationally (Holt et. al., 2012). According to the PEAR Institute (2017), their mission and vision is to make meaningful theoretical and practical contributions to youth development, educational innovation, and mental health while increasing the number of young people that can learn, dream, and thrive to ultimately promote positive youth development in school and afterschool settings. Vail Leadership Institute is a Colorado based non-profit personal growth and leadership development organization that convenes individuals and groups with the goal of inspiring them to lead purposeful lives. The conference assembled national leaders representing the fields of youth sports research, evaluation, policy, philanthropy, and direct service. Specific sports were selected as focus areas, they included tennis, baseball, golf, basketball, soccer, skiing, snowboarding, rowing, squash, and boxing.

The communication amongst these youth sport leaders led to the proposed development of a *National Sport-Based Youth Development Association* (SBYDA) to focus on the following:

- Defining measurement standards in the field of sports-based youth development;
- Assessing tools to evaluate members' compliance with standards and to evaluate areas where training is needed;
- Establishing task forces to oversee research, training advocacy and knowledge-sharing and fund-raising functions for the organization;
- Surveying existing research and overseeing new studies focused on the impact of sports on youth development;
- Increasing public support and federal funding for membership programs;
- Establishing a website that includes online resources on programs, advocacy, and research;
- Creating ad campaigns to bring national awareness to the issue of sports-based youth development (Holt et. al., 2012).

A leader in the new field of sport-based youth development, Sports PLUS, conducted groundbreaking research on the impact of after-school programming on five outcome goals (character, community, intrinsic motivation, physical health, and moral themes comprehension) in five Chicago pilot sites, as well as in New Hampshire (Holt et. al., 2012).

This research study resulted in the comprehensive Sports PLUS Method: The New Science of Sport-Based Youth Development (Beedy, 1997), to continue bridging the gap between youth development research and sport-based youth programs. These new sport-based youth development programs are based on relevant research and connect proven methodologies in conflict resolution, character development, and community building to sport for specific ends (Holt et. al., 2012).

Sport-Based Life Skills Programs for Positive-Youth Development

When youth exhibit good character, the outcome can lead to positive youth development in various forms. Life skills programs are closely tied to positive youth development (Weiss,

Bolter, & Kipp, 2014). In addition, life skills comprise a repertoire of psychological, physical, cognitive, and behavioral competencies a person needs to cope with everyday challenges and demands (Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish, & Theodorakis, 2005; World Health Organization, 1999). Although there is emerging literature documenting the effects of sports-based life skills curriculum on positive youth development, some scholars still call for increased examination of the efficacy and effectiveness of such youth sports programs (Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008).

There have been numerous debates on the positive and negative effects of sports. Sport itself does not inherently promote positive youth development, however, sport-based life skills programs seek to cultivate positive youth development by teaching and promoting life skills in a sport context (Hodge, Kanters, Forneris, Bocarro, & Sayre-McCord, 2017). Furthermore, with this concept in mind, the same group of researchers believed positive youth outcomes associated with youth sport participation are more likely to be achieved when intentionally designed and structured programs are implemented. Petitpas, Cornelius, Raalte, & Jones (2005) distinguished between (a) general sport programs designed to develop sport skills; (b) programs that are structured to use sport as a vehicle to prevent health-compromising behaviors; and (c) programs that use sport as a vehicle to teach life skills in an intentional and systematic manner.

Effective sport-based life skills programs use clearly defined goals and strategies to develop life skills such as goal setting, problem solving, and positive thinking, and they enhance the transferability of life skills to other life domains (Gould & Carson, 2008). A recent study with the *Hockey is For Everyone* (HIFE) program, the official youth development program of the National Hockey League (NHL), revealed significant findings between hockey, families, life skills programming, and positive youth development (Hodge et al., 2017).

The main goal of the HIFE initiative is to teach youth of all backgrounds the core values of hockey, which include commitment, perseverance, and teamwork (Hodge et al., 2017). The HIFE study was integrated with an adapted version of the SUPER program. Sports United to Promote Education and Research (SUPER) is a well-developed life skills curriculum. Participants for the study were recruited from the local Boys & Girls Club as participants of HIFE, 36 youth participated in the study and completed the online survey at the beginning of the program. The participants in this study were comprised of an underserved population from minority groups to low-income households who experienced constraints to their access to recreation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on some youth and parents.

The results of this study suggested influential relationships between the sport-based life skills program and participants' families (Hodge et al., 2017). The findings indicated that family members and family contexts were an active part in the acquisition and application of life skills in addition; parents and youth perceived changes in behaviors, specifically increased competencies, related to the life skills taught in the programs (Hodge et al., 2017). Long term positive effects indicated the changes in behaviors by youth persisted after the HIFE program ended.

The Role of the Coach

When youth are engaged in organized team sports, they are normally under the leadership of an adult; the adult is usually a coach. Research strongly emphasizes that coaches have a critical role in conducting developmentally appropriate programs that focus on the enhancement of strengths and personal resources (Cote & Gilbert, 2009; Fraser-Thomas, Cote, & Deakin, 2005). Coaching effectiveness, described by Cote and Gilbert (2009) as "the consistent application of integrated professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge to improve

athlete's competence, confidence, connection, and character" (p. 316). Various studies in support of this conceptualization of the coach's role have shown that providing training and support to youth sport coaches can result in the enhanced likelihood of positive youth development (Smoll, Smith, Barnett, & Everett, 1993).

In contrast, literature argues that an inherent and unbridgeable gap that exists between the goals that motivate coaches to act and their capacity to achieve these goals in practice; making the coaching process disputable in what everyone is trying to do, why they are trying to do it, and whether they can achieve it (Jones & Wallace, 2005). Many researchers further express that the resultant picture of coaching practice is one of an uncertain, improvised and messy reality where positive youth development may be a utopian and unattainable goal (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2006; Jones & Wallace, 2005).

To change the perception of a coaches' job being challenging and impossible for youth development, other studies began an empirical foundation that suggests development of positive traits in adolescent athletes, such as character and life skills, is an attainable goal for successful and adequately trained coaches (Brunelle, Danish, & Forneris, 2007; Gould, Collins, Lauer, & Chung, 2007). Adding significance for this study, researchers investigated coaching practitioners, as a direct result of their coaching, desire outcomes for their adolescent athletes that reach beyond on-field success (Vella, Oades, & Crowe, 2011). Qualitative methodologies beginning with semi-structured interviews were used to explore coaching practitioners understanding of their leadership roles and the outcomes they desire for their athletes as a result of their coaching (Vella et al., 2011).

The participants for this study included twenty-two teams of male and female youth athletes in the sport of soccer, netball, softball, cricket, and basketball between ages 11 to 19

years from middle to high socio-economic status in Sydney, Australia (Vella et al., 2011). The responses to the interview questions by 22 coaches, 11 males and 11 females, were transcribed and interpreted using thematic analysis and coding that revealed eight themes that are consistent with positive youth development literature; competence, confidence, connection, character, life skills, climate, positive affect, and positive psychological capacities (Vella et al., 2011). The character theme was the most easily recognized and most often articulated outcome with many coaches seeing it within their range of influences and as a construct that lends itself to purposeful development (Vella et al., 2011).

The overall results of this study explored whether or not youth coaches of sports view themselves as responsible for positive youth development and thankfully; the interpretation of the results suggests coaches do view themselves as responsible for positive youth development (Vella et al., 2011). The results also suggested the coaching process is an endeavor that is molded by social pressures and constraints, and is not, independent of the social world (Potrac, Brewer, Jones, Armour, & Hoff, 2000; Schempp, 1998). Although, coaches viewed themselves as a key part to youth development, training is needed to assist them in effectively providing skills and services to understand and build character and other attributes of PYD.

Coaches Building Positive Youth Development through Sport

Many coaches become family to players and are parent figures to several athletes they come into contact with on a continuous basis. Hilgers (2006) informs that an estimated 41 million youth around the United States participate in athletics each year, and average team sizes would suggest millions of coaches interact with these athletes on a daily basis. Previous research has indicated a coach's style or approach to coaching can significantly predict athletes' level of perceived autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007). These

same researchers further indicated that coaches who implement autonomy supportive methods help produce more self-determined motives and higher performance in athletes.

To better develop the ideal coach who could have the greatest impact on youth, Mageau and Vallerand (2003) developed an autonomy-supportive coaching style to add structure and support by outlining seven coaching behaviors intended to meet all three psychological needs rather than focusing primarily on autonomy. In addition, Mageau and Vallerand (2003) suggests a sport applied version of the authoritative parenting style in Baumrind's Parenting Typology would provide both the structure and support necessary to meet all three psychological needs in athletes. More specifically in this typology, the authoritative parent enacts rules and regulations in a supportive manner, provides rationale for decisions, and encourages verbal give and take which values both structure, support, and autonomy (Baumrind, 1966). The continuity between parent and coach for this typology indicates that an authoritative coach may provide athletes freedom to take ownership for their behavior, the structure necessary to effectively learn a sport and gain competence, and the support to help athletes connect with other (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003).

To measure the effects of authoritative coaching styles, a study was completed from student volunteers enrolled at a major western United States university. The sample consisted of 177 participants being used in the data analysis who completed at least part of the survey with one to fourteen years of interaction with a coach (Ward, Wilkinson, Graser, & Prusak, 2008). The study utilized *The Basic Needs Satisfaction in Sport Scale* to measure study participants' perceived autonomy, competence, and relatedness levels; for coaches, an adapted version of the *Parental Authority Questionnaire* (PAQ) was used to measure coaches' permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative coaching styles (Ng, Lonsdale, & Hodge, 2011; Buri, 1991). The

results of this study supported Mageau and Vallerand's sport applied version of Baumrind's authoritative parenting style. A significant positive relationship existed between authoritative coaching styles and athletes' perceived autonomy levels. Therefore, a coaching style implementing rules and regulations while also supporting the needs of athletes was a positive predictor of athletes' perceived need of autonomy (Ward et. al., 2008).

Promoting Character Development through Coach Education

Before answering the question, "Can youth sports build character?" one must respond to the following questions: (1) can youth sport coaches be effectively prepared to become character educators, and (2) can character education take place in today's competitive youth sport environment (Bredemeier & Shields, 2006; Power & Sheehan, 2014). This study involved 19 coaches and 341 players from randomly selected seventh and eight grade boys and girls public school basketball teams in an urban and highly competitive sports environment (Power & Seroczynski, 2015). The coaches participated in a 3-hour clinic that focused on character education and agree to lead weekly discussions with their players on moral decision making (Power & Seroczynski, 2015).

In addition, coaches and players were divided into control and experimental groups and administered pre and post tests assessing the moral environment of their team, the coach's moral attitudes and behavior, and the athlete's personal moral reasoning and behavior (Power & Seroczynski, 2015). For this study, Lickona and Davidson (2005) interpretation of "moral character" is used as character marked by other oriented virtues, such as justice and respect for the rights and welfare of others.

Coaches play a critical role in the way in which young athletes participate in sports and many coaches have special relationships with their players due to the time shared together and

the intensity of their experiences (Power & Seroczynski, 2015). The articles further highlight that the degree to which coaches cultivate moral virtues may depend on the kind of sports organization in which they coach. For example, community-based service organization like community centers and the YMCA may focus on serving all children and promoting health and character development while other organizations like Pop Warner Football and Little League Baseball compete to win and focus on developing the most talented players (Coakley, 2015). Lastly, public school sports straddle between the two orientations with some coaches getting caught up in the play to win culture instead of the importance of character development (Coakley, 2015).

To prepare coaches to be character educators, the researchers indicated going beyond simply instructing them to emphasize values, maintain discipline, or control player's behavior; coaches must address moral issues, engage in exhortation to motivate athletes to act on what they already know to be right (Power & Seroczynski, 2015). Directing team meetings and leading moral discussions require special training over and above that provided even in standard teacher education programs, in addition, it is just as difficult to train teachers in character education responsibly (Lemming, 1993).

Next, Power and Seroczynski (2015) discusses training programs like the *Coach Effectiveness Training and Play Like a Champion Today* (PLC) because it is evident through their experiences that coaches need more than a three hour clinic for training to master moral and character development. The difference in moral education in sports and moral education in the classroom is the coach's added responsibility. It is one thing to teach coaches how to lead moral discussions in off-court meetings and another thing to teach coaches in today's professionalized youth sport culture how to behave as a moral educator while interacting with their players,

referees, opponents, and screaming parents of fans (Power & Seroczynski, 2015). The educational model used in this study is similar to one proposed by researchers Conroy and Coatesworth (2006) which notes coach education should have "a direct effect on coach behaviors, which in turn should alter youth perceptions of coach behavior" (p. 134).

A mixed methods approach was used for selection of instruments for the study. The PLC clinic helped coaches provide their athletes with a sports experience conducive to their character development and the experimental coaches also accepted their role as moral educators by making efforts to foster their player's character development (Power & Seroczynski, 2015). The results of this indicated that the trained coaches established a more positive moral environment than coaches in the control condition who had limited impact on player moral development outcomes (Power & Seroczynski, 2015). The article indicates that more research is needs to prove playing organized youth sports builds character and that character has a moral dimension.

Research strongly emphasizes that coaches have a critical role in conducting developmentally appropriate programs that focus on the enhancement of strengths and personal resources (Cote & Gilbert, 2009; Fraser-Thomas, Cote, & Deakin, 2005). Coaching effectiveness, described by Cote and Gilbert (2009) as "the consistent application of integrated professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge to improve an athlete's competence, confidence, connection, and character" (p. 316). Various studies in support of this conceptualization of the coach's role have shown that providing training and support to youth sport coaches can result in the enhanced likelihood of positive youth development (Smoll, Smith, Barnett, & Everett, 1993).

Building Strengths of Character

Good character is not simply the absence of deficits, problems, and pathology, but rather a well-developed family of positive traits (Park, 2009). A lot research has focused on character

development, but this article highlights ways to build character strengths in order to engage in development. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) indicates that positive psychology has focused scientific attention on character, identifying it as one of the pillars of this new field and central to the understanding of the psychological good life.

In this article, Park directly addresses building character strengths and many advantages of it. The VIA *Inventory of Strengths for Youth* is described as a valuable self-report survey that is a comprehensive assessment to help youth ages 10-17 and those who are 18 or older determine their "signature strengths" (Park, 2009). To help youth identify their strengths and use them in their everyday lives may provide a route to a psychologically fulfilling life (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). As evidenced by much of their research, individuals need to consistently cultivate gratitude, hope, zest, curiosity, and most importantly, love; as the five strengths of character needed for a good life (Park & Peterson, 2006b; Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004).

The article suggests that these findings are of great significance to those who may have the greatest impact on positive youth development, educators, parents, mental health professionals, and policy makers (Park, 2009). In contrast, the author indicates that schools, youth programs, and society rarely monitor positive development and outcomes, despite their concentration on character education programs. Furthermore, the article contradicts society's message that it values good character among youth, because all the focus is on the student's academic abilities and learning progress. Park (2009) notes researchers should start assessing character and pay attention to its development while society should take into serious consideration what they find. There is consistent research that shows strengths of the "heart" that connect people together, like love and gratitude are more strongly associated with well-being

than are strengths of the "head" that are individual in nature, like creativity, critical thinking, and aesthetic appreciation (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004).

Another concentration of the article recognizes the VIA Classification of Strengths as a valid and reliable measurement of character. VIA measures not only allow comparison of character strengths across individuals, but also within individuals which allows this strength-based approach to be used with children and youth at any level (Park, 2009). The final argument in support of the importance of building character strengths is the cultivating of them. Since a variety of influences can contribute to developing good character in youth, more research is required in this area. According to Aristotle, virtues, reflections of an individual's character, can be taught and acquired only by practicing them (Park, 2009). In addition, another scholar emphasized that character must be developed by action and not merely by thinking or talking about it (Maudsley, 1898). According to Park (2009) these notions and other interpretations about virtues suggest that character can be cultivated by good parenting, schooling, and socialization and that it becomes more evident through habitual action.

In closing, the article advocates that character development programs should teach specific activities of strengths and encourage youth to keep using them in their daily lives (Park & Peterson, 2008). Simply chanting slogans, putting up banners, or holding monthly school assemblies will not be as effective creating an individualized program for each child that encourages him or her to behave in different ways (Park, 2009). Lastly, importance is given to adults, Park (2009), who serve as character mentors who can model character through their own actions and help youth recognize and celebrate their own good character strengths.

Summary

The review of literature targets key concepts that detail the importance of this study. Beginning with a description of character and the VIA classification of strengths, the first article validates an evaluation tool to measure character. Then, the significance of researching adolescents to examine character strengths at earlier stages of development follows. Next, literature on the origin of sport-based youth development introduces the concept of sport development and connections to character development to utilize something that most youth eagerly decide to participate within themselves, sports. Next, models of character development strategies and programs being implemented with youth and the impact of coaches in sports while developing youth is examined. Sports allows the opportunity to reach youth where they are rather than coercing them into activities or tasks they may rebel in participating within to analyze the effect it has on them and society. An urgency in the need to know the type of effects sports has on the development of youth is of equal importance to sport itself. If sports is used to improve character, coaches must know their role and players must understand it. Then coaches can build positive relationships and promote positive youth development, because the relationship of both the coach and player is established.

The literature review also provides an example of a sport-based life skills program being implemented in a community with clearly defined goals, character elements, and strategies resulting in helping youth and their families develop more positively. Further study results focus on character education for coaches to have a greater effect teaching youth and players character. If coaches are not trained to implement character programming, the chances of youth recognizing their character strengths for the overall development of themselves, may be limited. Concluding, the literature highlights "the coach" a vital component in building character and developing

youth. The study suggests the importance of having the ideal coach with coaching behaviors that mirror those with parenting styles who have been researched and proven to have the greatest positive impact on youth. Since coaches are sometimes individuals who spend countless hours with youth besides parents, this concept is worth examining further. Lastly, to reinforce the importance of character strengths, building and utilizing them, and having measurement systems like VIA to determine and categorize strengths is vital for continuous growth of character and positive youth development.

Although models were utilized to determine the use of character education and character development programming with different groups, a model that directly acknowledges the connections between character, coaches, and youth in specific sports, is still needed to add to the body of literature for character implementation. More research is needed to examine the correlations between sports impacting character development in youth. The review of literature provides a foundation for the study as well as areas of need and improvement in research scholarship.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

If something is of importance, one will measure it, and because it is important, the individual will value it (Park, 2004). Sport programs that incorporate character-based development strategies can provide opportunities for youth to excel individually and collectively. In addition, these type of development strategies serve as interventions for improvement of youth behaviors, school environments, communities at large, and as a guideline for hiring practices by practitioners to use as criteria for coaching selections. Amidst all the opportunities for growth and positivity from utilizing character-based youth development strategies, coaches and other leaders can still encounter challenges from programs of this magnitude. There may be those who oppose any type of programming in sports and others who determine more complex guidelines are needed to determine if adequate programming existed or if other factors like parenting, family, or religious interactions affect the overall character development of youth.

Due to the complexity of combining character development and sports, this study incorporated a qualitative and quantitative research design to obtain valuable data from different constituents. The use of character development programming by basketball coaches within the state of Arkansas, in cities located in the southeastern and central areas of the state, is the primary focus of this study.

To obtain a clear and focused approach to the effects of character development programming on youth who participate in basketball programs, this study provides insight into the adult leadership and youth participant experiences, character levels, and opinions. The quantitative design of this study provided statistical analysis to compare character survey results

of the youth players involved. Additionally, the qualitative methodology gives detailed accounts of character education programs and approaches that may serve as interventions for coaches to use as player development and data that provides recommendations for school officials to include as extracurricular guidelines as the hiring criteria of coaches.

Research Questions

1. Do coaches with high character strengths have a greater effect on youth character than coaches with low character strengths?
2. Does the character of the coach effect the coaching style and thus the character development of youth?

Research Design

Mixed-methods research designs, which strategically combine aspects of qualitative and quantitative methods, can be an additional way to seek qualitative rigor and validity, depending on the research questions, goals, and arguments being made (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A mixed methods research approach was applied to conduct this study. Data triangulation was applied to include multiple data sources and to enhance the validity and trustworthiness of the study. Triangulation involves seeking "convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). Researching sequentially, the first part of the quantitative method with adult participants was conducted first, then, the qualitative methodology proceeds. The second phase of the quantitative analysis with youth participants concluded the study. To select the schools and sports programs involved in the study, a collaborative effort involving personal discussions and communication with school staff members took place. After communicating with school administration, athletic directors, or coaches via email, phone, or in person contact, selection of the first 20 coaches that agreed to participate in the study and complete the VIA character adult

survey was completed. Many coaches referred other coaches they thought would participate in the study for the initial 20. Once contact information was established for all coaching participants, an email containing a consent form, the survey link, and a summary of the research study and participant requirements was sent out. One coach, due to preference, was provided a hard copy of the survey to complete.

Upon completion of the survey by all coaches that included the VIA character scale and classification of character strengths; an assistant to the researcher tabulated and discretely color coded, in ranking order, the results based on the lowest to highest levels of character strengths by coaches, as categorized by the VIA measurement system. A report of the coaching participants with the five highest and five lowest levels of targeted character strengths was provided to the researcher with no prior knowledge of the character percent levels of any participants. This was the first phase of the researcher being able to determine the schools, coaches, and teams that met the sampling criteria.

These nine coaches agreed to participate in the rest of the study. Seven coaches were male and 2 were female. One coach was of Hispanic ethnicity and all others were Black/African American. Every coach, but one, was also a teacher in the subject of Science, Health, Physical Education, and Social Studies. One male coach was a Choir/Music teacher and assistant football coach. All coaches reported they were once youth athletes in middle and high school, playing several different sports. Six of nine coaches earned an athletic scholarship to play collegiate basketball and one female coach received a scholarship for cross country as well. All coaches had acquired a Bachelors' degree, four earned a Masters' degree, and two were in the process of obtaining a Masters. For coaching experience, two coaches had 30 or more years of experience and two coaches had one to two years.

All other coaches ranged in coaching experience from four to ten years. The players on their team were also part of the study. Consent forms were provided to all teams for individual player consent. A total of 64 players successfully completed the VIA Youth character survey, 33 electronically and 31 completed a hard copy format. The majority of players were between the ages of 12 to 15 and two players were sixteen years old. There were 36 female athletes and 28 male athlete participants. The largest percentage of participants were Black/African American (86%), then White (8%), and Mixed Race (1%).

The study had several phases: selection of the coaches, interviews of the coaches to obtain their coaching and discipline philosophies, experience, and educational background. There were observations of the coaches during two games, followed by surveys to the players at the end of the season to assess their character strengths levels in comparison to that of the coaches to determine if the character of the coaches affected the players.

Personal interviews with the coaches and the researcher were completed via phone communication. The interview format involved demographics for participant selection of school district, gender, and race, and eight questions which took coaches a minimum of 13 minutes and a maximum of 28 minutes for completion of all questions.

The personal interviews with coaches allowed the researcher to gain information on personal philosophies and perceptions of character development programs, further verifying each team fit the sampling criteria for the study. The interview question (Appendix H) data collaboration with the character strength levels, determined which nine coaches were considered the high or low character group. Sample coach interview questions include the following:

1. What is your coaching philosophy?

2. How long have you been with this team? (provide details of team progress, winning percentages, & accomplishments)

3. Have you ever been trained to use other strategies in addition to coaching techniques as a coach?
   If Yes, Where? & What type?

4. Based on your interaction with other students who do not participate in sports, "Do your players show more, less, or about the same levels of positive character traits versus non-sports students?"

The semi-structured coaching interviews took place during individually scheduled time periods that were scheduled by the researcher and convenient for the coaching participant. This structured was determined to be most adequate since the researcher used an instrument to guide and organize the interview while including follow-up questions when needed. The interview questions were more experience and behavior based to acquire information on what the coaches had done or were doing with his or her basketball program.

A pilot of the interview instrument was previously conducted to ensure clarity of questions and estimated time of completion. No changes were made after the pilot. Piloting is commonly associated with the testing of data collection instruments in order to develop and refine them (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Before the official interview process began, the researcher engaged in dialogue to build positive rapport with coaches. The quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer (Patton, 2015, p. 427). To begin the interview, coaching participants were informed the interview was being recorded for accuracy and reliability of responses, provided a brief introduction of the researcher, the dissertation title, and informed the study was for research purposes and voluntary. After demographic information was recorded, the researcher began asking questions from an approved interview question format. At the end of the interview, participants had the opportunity to

provide additional comments voluntarily. Some coaches had comments and other coaches had no further comments to add.

The researcher recorded the interview responses in audio and after interviews were transcribed, interpreted the results. The researcher sought to be as nonjudgmental of coaches' responses by providing verbal comments as needed to clarify or answer questions by the coaches or to imply the researcher was thoroughly listening and engaged. The interview transcriptions were completed using Revo software application source and transcribed verbatim. The interview responses provided qualitative information to be interpreted for determining specific character development strategies utilized to support players individually and the team as a whole. Ravitch and Carl (2016) makes it clear that much research advocates that transcripts are not only important to data collection, they are the way that interviews produce real-time data.

In addition, the transcriptions allowed thematic analysis and inductive coding of character strengths outlined by VIA Classification of 24 strengths of character. Before coding transcriptions, the researcher engaged in the precoding process by reading through the interviews, revisiting notes taken during the interview, thoroughly checking responses to all questions existed, and listened to interview audio recordings. Precoding is a process of reading, questioning, and engaging in your data before you formally begin the process of coding the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Thematic analysis involved, rereading transcriptions and character strength descriptions and checking them for interpretations; in addition to member checks by two assistants, seven themes were found among the nine coaching participants. In order to refine and revise themes, rereading data sets and constantly going back over all information to be sure themes accurately reflect the data is vital (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A description of VIA Classification of 24 strengths of character used in the coding process follows in Figure 3.1:

Figure 3.1 *Descriptions of Character Virtues and Strengths*
(Permission to use figure granted by VIA in October 2016)

Peterson and Seligman (2004) informs that each of the 24 strengths of character is thoroughly reviewed in terms of what is known.

Observations

To further examine coach and player interactions and perceived character development program strategies, the researcher observed two basketball games for each of the ten teams involved in the study. For the majority of observations, the researcher jotted fieldnotes to describe what was taking place while watching the coach, players, and the game in general. Observation and fieldnotes is an important qualitative method because it allows the researcher to see and record firsthand, the activities in which research participants are engaged and the context in which these activities happen (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The games chosen for observation were randomly selected by the researcher without prior awareness to the coach. Each game will be recorded to allow the researcher additional time to examine all interactions thoroughly via video using the checklist another time. The basketball game checklist (Appendix I) will include the researcher doing the following:

1. Describe interactions of players to coaching directions, other team members, and referees
2. Examine the reaction of coaches to calls by referees
3. Direct Observations from the beginning to the ending of games to tally the number of times players show good sportsmanship to the opposing team players in any form (shaking their hand, helping them get up off the court after a fall, encouraging after a mistake)
4. Report the reaction of players to calls by referees
5. Document player and coach reactions toward fans

Youth Participants/Questionnaires

For the second phase of quantitative analysis, a total of ten basketball teams were selected for the study, five teams with head coaches who have high character levels and five

teams with coaches of low character levels. The sample size included 64 participants. Participants were required to be a member of an accredited Arkansas school basketball team and under the team supervision of the selected coach.

At the end of the basketball season, each player received a packet containing a consent form, demographic form, the survey web address, and a coded name that included their team mascot name and a number from one to twelve to be placed after his or her last name when registering to complete the survey online. The researcher used the mascot symbol to differentiate between teams. After returning consent forms to coaches, several teams completed the survey at school in a computer lab while some youth athletes completed their survey at home. Some youth athletes completed a hard copy of the survey during a meeting with their coach at school.

The VIA Institute on Character Youth survey (96 questions) was utilized. Based on the company's website, VIA Institute on Character, established in 2001, is a non-profit organization based in Cincinnati, Ohio whose mission is to bring the science of character strengths to the world through research, creation of valid surveys on character, and development of practical tools for use by individuals and practitioners (VIA, 2017). The design of this institute began in 1998 with the collaboration of clinical psychologist Dr. Neal Mayerson and researcher, scholar, and author of *Exploring the Field of Positive Psychology*, Dr Martin Seligman (VIA, 2017). Another researcher, Dr. C. Peterson, also assists in ongoing research involving VIA Classification of strengths of character (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The adult and youth survey utilized for this study is available in 20 different languages and VIA reports that their surveys have been taken in 196 countries across the globe (VIA, 2017).

More than 6 million people have taken the VIA survey on character strengths; the survey itself is a psychometrically validated personality test that measures an individual's character (VIA, 2017). In viewing character strengths as a positive personality with core capacities for thinking, feeling, and behaving in ways that can bring benefit to others; VIA constantly collaborates with researchers across the globe (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The response options for the survey questions include a 5 point Likert scale with response options ranging from 1= not like me at all to 5= very much like me. Participants must select only one option for each question. Sample questions include the following:

1. I am less than honest if it will keep me out of trouble.
2. I am viewed as the leader when I'm playing with others.
3. I respect the opinions of my teammates, even when I disagree.
4. My temper often gets the best of me.
5. I am cautious not to do something that I will regret later (VIA, 2017).

The estimated time length for the survey to be completed by individual players is between 30 and 40 minutes. Questions in the survey pertain directly to an individual's character and were developed primarily for youth under the age of 18 (VIA, 2017). VIA Institute utilizes this instrument specifically to assess the individual character levels and strengths of participants who complete the survey. The researcher received all consent forms upon completion by the participants.

Data from the youth survey responses will be interpreted using an independent T-Test to measure differences within ten teams' character strength levels. Group one includes the participant survey results of basketball teams under the leadership of coaches with high character strengths. Group two includes the participant survey results of basketball teams under the

leadership of coaches whose character scores were low. To comply with VIA guidelines, all survey results were sent to them utilizing the company's personally created data spreadsheet. All data were collected between January 2018 and May 2018.

Trustworthiness

Taking steps to ensure this study was valid, trustworthy, and credible was extremely important. Since the researcher resides in the southeast Arkansas, the location of seven teams involved in the study, the researcher is considered a potential threat in trustworthiness due to bias. To eliminate as much bias as possible, other schools from central Arkansas were included in the study and multiple data sources were included in the research design. Adults, youth, other researchers, observations, video recordings, audio recording, assistants to the researcher, and Revo transcription software were all sources for obtaining data.

Using triangulation of data was another process to ensure trustworthiness and eliminate researcher bias. In qualitative and quantitative research, data serves as evidence for the argument being made (Holliday, 2007). Therefore, triangulation of the data which involves examining data sources collected at different times, places, and/or with different people (Denzin, 1970/2009). The data used for the study included interviews, surveys, game observations in different locations, coaches, players, a data analysis plan, theoretical frameworks, and a system for maintaining records by the researcher. In addition, the research design of the study utilized mixed methodology to explore qualitative and quantitative analysis.

The positionality of the researcher for the study may impose cultural bias since the race or ethnicity for the majority of the participants is the same as the researcher. Positionality refers to the researcher's role and social location or identity in relationship to the context and setting of the research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To reduce chances of bias, the study includes diversity in

gender, age, location of cities for teams, and interview questions that are directly geared toward the research question and involve no specific questions about race.

For open coding and thematic analysis, the researcher used the transcribed responses and the VIA Classification of 24 strengths of character to define codes for the data collected. VIA is an entity with proven research on the individual advantages of character strengths that focuses solely on character development and implementation. To further eliminate bias, multiple coding or interrater reliability was used for coding and theme verification. After the researcher coded and determined themes found from participant transcribed interview responses, an assistant to the researcher coded interview transcriptions and checked thematic organization of transcribed interview responses. The researcher and assistant discussed all differences in codes and after agreement, finalized the new code. A second assistant checked all themes and codes for consistency.

A method used to promote trustworthiness involved interview transcriptions, member checking by adult participants, and researcher checking of transcriptions details. Member checks are often discussed as a validity measure to establish credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All interviews were recorded for accuracy and clarity of information, then transcribed using Revo software application. The transcriptions and recordings were checked for congruency and consistency by the researcher. Then participants were allowed to check their interview transcriptions to verify their responses. All these methods combined enabled accurate representation of words, phrases, comments, opinions, perceptions, and overall responses to the questions from the interviews and insured descriptive validity of data collected.

All records, documents, data, and any other information related to the study will be kept confidential and placed in a secure location by the researcher.

Summary

The research design for this study included qualitative and quantitative methodology and a triangulation of sources. To guide the study, research questions and sub questions were used. For participant selection of adults and youth, purposive sampling provided the 77 participants for the study. Observations, surveying, and interviewing methods were used to collect data. To provide a detailed explanation of the study, data analysis and descriptions of trustworthiness concluded the methodology for the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter emphasizes the purpose of the study, details the data collected, provides meaning to the survey results in a quantitative analysis, and interprets the qualitative information for an overall explanation of the study results. Chapter 4 explores the following in chronological order: demographics of coaches, coaching survey scores and responses, coaching participants transcribed interviews, themes and codes discovered, observation analysis, youth athlete survey data, and a summarization. This chapter also includes subject analysis that includes demographic information for participants and an interpretation of Hellison's (2003) *Teaching Social and Responsibility Model* (TSRM) using character strengths.

Summary of Research Design

An explanatory sequential mixed methods approach conducted this study. The breadth of the design involved qualitative methodology.

> Qualitative inquiry seeks to discover and to describe in narrative reporting what particular people do in their everyday lives and what their actions mean to them. It identifies meaning-relevant kinds of things in the world—kinds of people, kinds of actions, kinds of beliefs and interests—focusing on differences in forms of things that make a difference for meaning (Erickson, 2011 p. 43).

The qualitative design included observations of each coach and team participating in the study, interviews of coaches to further collect and code data, and thematic analysis. The qualitative data sources provided a thorough mix of descriptive information. The quantitative design to acquire data comprised surveying of basketball coaches and youth athletes in public schools throughout the southeastern and central regions of Arkansas. The quantitative analysis consisted of a *t-test* of character strengths for youth athlete participants under the supervision of coaches

with high strengths of character versus coaches with lower strengths of character, determined by their character survey results.

Demographic information on the coaching participants is provided first, then an analysis of coaching survey scores and responses, next, findings of themes and codes are explained, a word cloud of character strengths, the interview coding results of character strengths most expressed during open coding will follow, and last, a summarization of all qualitative methods and quantitative findings in the study.

Table 4.1
Coach Demographics

Coach	Gender	Group Number	Age	Race	Education	Experience
Coach BB	F	1	31	H	Bachelor	10 years
Coach CC	M	2	56	B	Post-College	30 years
Coach FF	M	1	29	B	Post-College	4 years
Coach GT	F	1	26	B	Master	4 years
Coach GG	M	2	26	B	Post-College	1 year
Coach LL	M	1	25	B	Bachelor	1 year
Coach MM	M	2	29	B	Bachelor	8 years
Coach RR	M	2	33	B	Post-College	3 years
Coach SS	M	1	60	B	Master	30 years

There were two female coaches and seven male coaches who participated in the study. The majority ranged in age from 25 to 33, with two coaches 55 and older, and one to thirty years of coaching experience. All coaches had Bachelor degrees and more than half of them acquired graduate training. All coaches, except one, were African American.

Quantitative Analysis - Coaches Character Survey Report

Following contact with administrators, staff, and coaches from 11 public school districts and direct communication with coaches as a researcher, a total of 20 coaching participants

received a consent form (Appendix B) and a request to complete the adult character survey. The 96-question adult survey developed by VIA Institute on Character determines character strengths of individuals who successfully complete the survey by responding to all statements. Thirty-three areas of character strengths are indicated based on participant responses and the scores range from 1 to 5 with five representing higher strengths and 1 representing the lowest. The VIA analysis also ranked each strength for each coaching participant in chronological order based on the score. From the 20 participants who received the request, 13 completed the survey electronically.

Based on survey and interview responses, 10 teams and nine head basketball coaches continued to participate in the study. The coaches were ranked from highest to lowest based on their average character strength score. Using the VIA Adult character survey reports, an assistant to the researcher calculated all scores and averages, then ranked all coaches sequentially based on their average. One coach, who coached four teams at a selected school, had two teams involved in the study. In addition to the survey report rankings from one to nine of the coaches' overall character strength scores, the highest ranked character strength for each coach based on their survey responses, and the number of strengths of character out of the 24, documented by the researcher from coach interview responses and themes are represented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2
Coaches Character Strength Report

Coach	Survey Rank	#1Strength	Number of Interview Strengths	Group#
Coach GT	1	Love of Learning	21	1
Coach LL	2	Love of Learning	14	1
Coach FF	3	Love of Learning	19	1
Coach SS	4	Honesty	19	1
Coach BB	5	Spirituality	19	1
Coach MM	6	Honesty	10	2
Coach CC	7	Kindness	15	2
Coach GG	8	Creativity	13	2
Coach RR	9	Curiosity	18	2

Using the coaching survey results and interviews, two groups were created. Group one includes coaches with the highest survey scores and high numbers of character strengths indicated through coding of the interviews. Group two coaches scored lower on the survey, yet two of them had only two or three less strengths evidenced by interview responses. In addition, two coaches in group two demonstrated their training, structured programs, and overall expectations for players were more aligned with group one coaches than group two. Group two B coaches ranked low in survey of character strengths and exhibited the two lowest numbers of character strengths among all coaches, based on interview responses. The three coaches who ranked the highest in overall character survey of strengths had the same number one ranked character strength, love of learning. Honesty was ranked as the number one character strength for one coach in each group. Coach BB's spirituality character strength ranked first in survey reports and was the only coach that demonstrated evidence of spirituality for coding of interviews responses. The coaching surveys provided the first analysis of coaches to be selected for the study.

Qualitative Analysis - Findings, Themes, and Codes for Coaches – Group One

Transcribing the interviews from an oral to a written mode structures the interview conversations in a form amenable to closer analysis, and is in itself an initial analysis… The amount and form of transcribing depends on such factors as the nature of the material and the purpose of the investigation, the time and money available, and—not to be forgotten—the availability of a reliable and patient typist (Kvale, 2007, p. 94).

When examining the transcribed interview question responses for coaches who demonstrated high character strengths and use of character programs and initiatives with their basketball teams, seven themes emerged. The themes include the following: coach training and educational background; structured programs; leadership and mentorship; support and engagement; growth and personal development; honest, truth, and consistency; and actions beyond the court. Each of the five coaches in group one showcased examples of each theme based on the descriptions they provided about his or her basketball program.

Theme: Coach Training, Teaching Skills, & Educational Background

The theme involving training of coaches and their educational background emerged with similarities among all four coaches. Four coaches referred to a psychology, sociology, or theory course that focused on awareness of individual personalities and their interactions. Three coaches discussed their experience as an athlete and encounters with other coaches which helped them develop their unique approach to coaching to directly cater to the needs of their players. The following statements describe their experiences:

Once I got to college, I majored in Social Work. I just got my Masters in that, so a lot of- of different strategies and things like that, I learned with Social Work, just dealing with people. It's things that I use with my team, especially like dealing with diverse populations (Coach GT, personal communication, March 31, 2018)

I'm going to go to clinics, or talk to other people, or going to maybe watch different films and different things like that. So, it's a constant learning process (Coach SS, personal communication, April 2, 2018)

Well besides like, the interne, some of the great coaches that you know, you can catch good

write-ups of on the internet. And you know, I learned from an NBA Champion and 6th Man of the Year, Corliss Williamson. So, I learn my stuff and well, a lot of things that I do now, I learned from him (Coach LL, personal communication, April 15, 2018)

At school I played basketball, track, softball, cross-country, and I actually went to college. Then I went on to college and my college scene wasn't that great, but I mean, it taught me a lot (Coach LL, personal communication, April 15, 2018)

I've just received advice or seen other styles and coached and mixed it with my own style. I take a lot of different ideas and put them together, see how to make the kids get better (Coach FF, personal communication, March 30, 2018)

Theme: Structured Programming

The theme of structured programming emerged to describe the strategies the coaches used directly with their players. A question asking about their philosophy revealed these coaches used models and strategies for skill and social development, discipline, teaching, and activity. There was one coach, Coach LL, from this group whose statement focused specifically on individual and team skill development more than anything else. The statements below describe many of those programs:

We did team bonding things, for one thing we did, I matched them up with somebody who they pretty much knew nothing about. And so, you had to go with that person, you had to eat dinner with them (Coach GT, personal communication, March 30, 2018)

I thought I knew what my coaching philosophy was, but I guess I was kind of… Over the years, I kind of realized that I basically want to not only teach the game to these girls, but also within the game, teach them life. Life lessons and things that they can use when they graduate. I believe that these kids should graduate and be respectful young men and women (Coach BT, personal communication, April 15, 2018)

Well I think, you know, overall you really want to take a young person when they come to you. You want to try to impart the values of working hard, working together. You know being unselfish. (Coach SS, personal communication, April 2, 2018)

I've got a little system where if you, like get in trouble in class, or in the school; one time, you get your warning, because we know everybody messes up at least once. After that you know we'll have a little conference with you and your parent. Third time, you're suspended from a game, fourth time, you'd be removed for a week, fifth time, you'd be removed from the team (Coach FF, personal communication, March 30, 2018)

My coaching relies on more of like a team oriented person. So, I'm big on sharing the ball. My guys, they know that if I score 16 points a night, it's the team, I want everybody involved you know. I like that were a balanced team all around (Coach LL, personal communication, April 15, 2018)

Theme: Leadership & Mentorship

For the theme of leadership and mentorship, the coaches indicated that it was very important for them to be adult leaders, set expectations, and mentor their players as much as possible. Many stated they focus on respect a lot, because their players are a reflection of them as their leader. The coaches also expressed the need for them to show respect and demand respect from their players by encouraging them to respect themselves as well. Leading by setting the example and always keeping in mind that their players are watching and observing their behaviors allowed the theme of leadership and mentorship to develop. These coaches take the task of leading youth and guiding them in a path that best serves them as a serious responsibility. Coaches were asked if they had a discipline philosophy and all implied, "Yes," and explained. Their comments below reflect some of those principles:

I even treat my students with a lot of respect. And I'm just as fine with you know, you have to give respect to get it (Coach LL, personal communication, April 15, 2018).

A lot of people think that kids don't like structure, but that's not true. I think they show more and it teaches them so many different things and if other kids see kids responding well to structure, and to, you know, showing respect and they see that they're having fun at the same time. (Coach GT, personal communication, March 31, 2018).

Now, you know ... you get upset, but I mean, what you find is when you lose your cool, then the kids lose theirs. So, it's one way to get a point across that way and also to make sure your kids don't start blaming officials because that's a crutch for them. If they see that, and they say "Ah, well we're losing because the officials," then that does it. In the end you're not good and you're not going to change the officials (Coach SS, personal communication, April 2, 2018).

And they should learn through the game that you can't give up for everything. You know, whenever things are going bad I always tell….What if something goes wrong at your job? Are you just gonna quit? So, I want them to push through, push through those bad

> times because it's gonna happen in life. I always tell them (Coach BT, personal communication, April 15, 2018).

> They watch all that, so I try to, you know, do what I tell them to do. I try to keep that in alignment with, you know, the things that I'm telling them. You know, attitude reflects leadership (Coach GT, personal communication, March 31, 2018).

Theme: Support & Engagement

Coaches indicated the strategies they used to engage players in skill play, have support for one another, and to accommodate the diversity of the team. Supporting players and ensuring the players realized they supported them as an athlete, student, and ultimately, as an individual, was vital in establishing and maintaining relationships between player to player and coach to player. The statements below provide evidence of the support and encouragement provided by the coaches:

> If you're playing for somebody who just imbues that belief system within you, unless you know that they believe in you, no matter the mistakes, no matter how good you are, no matter how, you know, poor you may play. I mean, you'll run through a brick wall for them. I mean, for me, my college basketball coach, he saved my life (Coach GT, personal communication, March 31, 2018).

> Sometimes you have to reach them in different ways. I mean, they're different and sometimes you have to kind of reach back and use different things. Because for one reason, what worked for one group of kids, it might not do the job for the next group, so you just have to find out what reaches or what works for what kids, particularly (Coach SS, personal communication, April 2, 2018).

> I'm pretty blessed to have a good group of girls that I really don't have to enforce those discipline rules with girls, because usually they're not gonna do anything like that. Where as a boy, it might be a little bit more (Coach BT, personal communication, April 15, 2018).

> Well, I guess with me, personally, I usually ask the students… start seeing what you plan to gain out of this; and what do you plan to bring to the table, and they give an answer. Most of them way they want a championship. And I say, Oh well, this is what it takes to get a championship, and this is how it's going to be from this day forward (Coach FF, personal communication, March 30, 2018)

Theme: Growth and Personal Development of Players

Ensuring players grow and development personally emerged as a theme these coaches believed was extremely important. The concept of developing the "whole child" and not just an athlete or basketball player is of great significance to this group. The growth and personal development were not only for basketball, but a key goal of coaches for the athletes' life. It was not enough for only the basketball skill level of players to improve, these coaches collectively indicated that their main focus is development of the individual. Each coach reported that their teams improved winning percentages from the previous year; but reported improvement in the maturity and attitude of the players were more important. The following statements provide evidence of player and team development:

> Before I got here the team had only won one game in the past three years. My Jr. team finished 13-4. This is bigger than winning the game of basketball. It's about winning the game of life (Coach GT, personal communication, March 31, 2018).

> I had a number of kids that were involved in football, involved in choir, you know, academically it was a strong group. So, it was a pretty well-rounded group and often times you find that the groups that are well rounded, they have a number of parental participations. They tend to be kids that are successful whether it's on the court or in the classroom, or other activities (Coach SS, personal communication, April 2, 2018).

> Some successes, as far as basketball, the team has made it to the semi-final two years in a row. This year the team won the conference and city championships. I noticed some athletes had some low grades and spoke with them and gave them their options as far as you know, what would happen or what are consequences rather. Those grades pretty much came up within a week. Seen that multiple times this year (Coach FF, personal communication, March 30, 2018).

> Out of my 16 players, I actually had 7 or half of them, well, I say just about half of them on A B and all A honor roll, because we are big on grades. No grades and you can't play (Coach LL, personal communication, April 15, 2018).

> I had a young lady, she came here during her 7th grade year and she had a very bad attitude. Didn't like, you know, anyone telling her what to do. And by the end of her senior year, this was a yes ma'am, no ma'am child. If there was anything that I needed her to do, her attitude was just completely different. I feel like that's an accomplishment for her (Coach BT, personal communication, April 15, 2018)

Theme: Honesty, Fairness, & Consistency

Being firm, fair, and consistent with athletes while instilling discipline and the importance of taking care of responsibilities on and off the court. In addition, holding their players accountable for their actions and allowing them to understand consequences. Keeping open communication that allows players to understand the many connections of basketball team concepts and life which operates well when honesty, fairness, and consistency exist amongst individuals, including themselves. There was one opposing viewpoint from this group, Coach LL truthfully indicated that because of his young age and lack of coaching experience, he still needed more time to develop as a person and to improve as a mentor. The following statements provide examples of coaches using this theme with their team.

> I'm such a competitive person. So that, you know, I'm young, so if it's like a bad call, I just, I react. You know which, which I shouldn't. I should be able to talk to the ref, but it's just that competitive in me that I really can't stop sometimes (Coach LL, personal communication, April 15, 2018).

> I just try to establish some non-negotiables that are across the board. That it doesn't matter who you were, where you live, where you come from, you got to do these things (Coach SS, personal communication, April 2, 2018).

> Whether it's my side or the other side. You know, I used to tell the ref, when they say before the game. Hey, we coach we're not going to call all this and that. I'm like, Naw, if that's what the rules say, that's what we're going to do. So, we're not going to favor one team over the other. If my girls do it, you call it, if their girls do it, you call it (Coach FF, personal communication, March 30, 2018).

> So, I just feel like, and you know, sometimes kids think, Well, that's not fair. You get on me and you don't get on her. I say, I get on her, just not the way that I'm getting on you (Coach BT, personal communication, April 15, 2018).

> That's mainly because, basketball teaches you so many lessons about life. Working with other people and learning how to become a leader. It's hard to play with somebody who you barely even know (Coach GT, personal communication, March 31, 2018).

Theme: Impacting Actions Beyond the Court

For the theme that identifies the overall goal of coaches as adults, leaders, teachers, mentors, parent figures, athletic trainers, and a combination of other titles, all of these coaches indicate they are willing to maintain those duties if it helps impact the lives of the individual. "What youth become and do outside of basketball?" is the ultimate goal these coaches work toward accomplishing. It is their hope that something said or done during their interactions with them from basketball practices, games, or other activities will impact a positive change in their lives at home, school, or in the community they live.

Winning multiple games, tournaments, and championships are all extra rewards, because knowing they were able to help a youth athlete win in life and strive for success is the ultimate achievement. The actions of new and old players of these coaches, matter to them, one coach indicated he wish he could have more players, to have the opportunity to impact more. In regards, to the actual interview, these were additional comments some of the coaches volunteered to add after the initial questions were completed. The following statements bring reality to the actual reasons these coaches do what they do, coach:

> Getting to a point where when you leave, that you are a better player and a better person than when you came into the program. And you hope that the values that you try to teach will be something that they'll be able to carry with them into other areas of their life. Because, you know, most of them are not going to be high level players. But you hope what they learn will help them become good citizens and productive people as they move forward (Coach SS, personal communication, April 2, 2018).

> So that's gonna reflect all of us, not just you. So, everything you do reflects the community, it reflects what you're a part of. It's nothing negative attached to it. It's just me pushing them to not just be better basketball players, but to be better people (Coach GT, personal communication, March 31, 2018).

> I try, I try to interact with all of my students. Even if it's just in the hall, you know. just joking. If I see somebody down, if they don't want to talk I try to make their day better (Coach LL, personal communication, April 15, 2018)

It's a big thing so I take it seriously. I realize the impact it has on a lot of kids and you wish, almost wish you could have more kids, but, you know it's just the logistics of it. You just can't have everybody, but you wish you could sometimes (Coach SS, personal communication, April 2, 2018)

When you don't show up to practice, you know there's gonna be consequences, just like when you don't show up to work. So, my philosophy is that, I begin to teach these kids that everything that I teach them in basketball, they can always carry into the real world (Coach BT, personal communication, April 15, 2018).

I believe that all students and all athletes that put in the work and see what they are able to bring to the sport will get more out of the sport. Those that are only seeing what they can gain from the sport, usually don't receive as much out of it (Coach FF, personal communication, March 30, 2018)

Findings of Themes for Coaches – Group Two

There were two coaches whose goals, views, and background were similar to group one coaches, but their character strength scores were in the lower range. When coding their interview responses based on the VIA Classification of character strengths Coach CC exhibited 15 out of 24 strengths and Coach RR demonstrated 18 out of 24 strengths. Both coaches scored among the lower percentile range for their overall character strength level based on the VIA adult survey on character strengths. However, they were in mid-range for the number of character strengths evidenced through coding of themes. The following comments by each coach demonstrates their common concepts and experiences with group one coaches in connection to training, programming, leadership, engagement, development, consistency, and expectations of player actions beyond the basketball court.

Theme: Coach Training & Educational Background

I just think basically, just the basic part of college in Psychology one on one, I think was good just to understand people and what and how people operate. Just teaching in the classroom itself and being a classroom teacher prepares you for a coach and vice versa. I think you know, you have to prepare every day. So, I am accustomed to preparing to reach kids at the level of where they are (Coach CC, personal communication, April 8, 2018).

Taking a class on coaching theory in coaching basketball and we talked about a lot of different systems, coaching systems and coaching styles (Coach RR, personal communication, March 9, 2018).

Theme: Structured Programming (philosophy & discipline)

We have an actual model that we kind of do. I got it from Tony Dungy. Do what we do. So, whatever it takes, no excuses, no explanation (Coach RR, personal communication, March 9, 2018).

My philosophy I think is basically within teaching. These kids go through the skills of the game where they can go to whatever levels that they want to go to. My philosophy is centered around kids first. Some want to go to college, some don't want to go to college (Coach CC, personal communication, April 8, 2018).

Because I believe in creating a disciplined athlete and a respectful athlete before anything (Coach RR, personal communication, March 9, 2018).

Theme: Leadership & Mentorship

In general, I let my kids know what is expected of them. Then you won't have a lot of discipline problems. But always in all locations I always try to express myself in a manner that's appropriate in front of my kids (Coach CC, personal communication, April 8, 2018).

So, I mean, their attitude is gonna reflect me. You got to have a good attitude, because it takes you wherever you want to go. I don't deal with disrespect or, you know, things like that. Because I tell them, once you get in the real world, you can't walk around with an attitude or with a chip on your shoulder. (Coach RR, personal communication, March 9, 2018).

Theme: Support & Engagement

I don't try to get them to do anything special, other than be a student. I don't treat them like, cause you're an athlete you have to go in and really really be extra good or extra bad or expect anything totally different because you're an athlete. They have to expect to be a student first (Coach CC, personal communication, April 8, 2018).

Theme: Growth and Personal Development of Players

As the year went on, they became a lot more disciplined. As the year went on they kind of realized what it takes to actually win, they had to work a little bit harder (Coach RR, personal communication, March 9, 2018).

Theme: Honesty, Truth, & Consistency

I do have a sort of calm one actually. It's just to treat people the way you want to be treated. So,

that tells me, I think, that I am being pretty fair with most students (Coach CC, personal communication, April 8, 2018).

Theme: Impacting Actions Beyond the Court

Like all around, starting at home, all the way to the classroom and on the game field and on the court or whatever. So, I kind of count it as the same thing (Coach RR, personal communication, March 9, 2018).

Findings of Themes for Coaches – Group Two B

The coaches for this group were similar in their responses to interview questions, strengths of character levels, based on the survey, and the number of codes represented by one of VIA 24 strengths of character. Coach MM and Coach GG scored in the lower percentile for their cumulative survey strengths, ranking 6th and 8th among all coaches. In addition, Coach MM represented 10 of 24 strengths and Coach GG, 13 of 24 strengths of character. The main focus of both coaches was increasing the skill level of youth athletes, preparing athletes for senior level basketball, and promoting the team working as a unit toward progress. Their statements for each of the seven themes follows:

Theme: Coach Training & Educational Background

Although, Coach MM indicated that his staff attend coaching clinics at times, both coaches implied the majority of their training derived from interaction with veteran coaches and their personal experiences as athletes.

Well, in the spring, like this week, on Friday, the whole coaching staff here at E basketball is going to Kansas City for a Nike clinic (Coach MM, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

We lean on experience. You know, a lot of us played, so, we lean on that experience from us being athletes and playing the game (Coach MM, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

Theme: Structured Programming (philosophy & discipline)

The theme of structured programming emerged primarily in descriptions of teamwork and preparing athletes for the senior level of their basketball program. The coaches also mentioned building determination within individual players and holding them accountable for their actions. The statements below support those descriptions:

> I usually have a list of things as far as my philosophy, first off, play as a team, a team player. And then, I mean, next would be, to have determination within yourself to be able to sacrifice something to help the whole team (Coach GG, personal communication, April 6, 2018).

> For middle school, we want to get them ready for senior high. That's mainly the main objective, to get them ready for the next level of basketball. I think on both levels we try to, well, what we preach here is doing things the right way. You know, being accountable for your actions and, uh, just getting them ready for, for the next level, senior high (Coach MM, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

Theme: Leadership & Mentorship

Evidence of the theme of leadership focused more on encouraging the players to be leaders than the coach leading. The concept of working hard in athletics, regardless of the sport, was also a focus.

> If were walking in the halls, you know, they see us. They try to do stuff the right way when we're around. I would like to say the same. (Coach MM, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

> We set the tone in football. I mean, we had a good off season, and these same guys got out there and won district in football. So, pretty much it was the same mentality of just transitioning the sport over, football over to basketball, with the same mentality of everybody doing their job. Work hard and we' be successful (Coach GG, personal communication, April 6, 2018).

Theme: Support & Engagement

The emerging theme of support and engagement was best indicated in Coach GG statement below:

> Having the understanding of more of my players, okay, I might can say this to this player or, you

know, this player might get down if I say something to him. So, just having that balance and the team chemistry with my players. Them having the team chemistry too and performing when needed. So, I mean, we ended up pretty successful, district and conference champs (Coach GG, personal communication, April 6, 2018).

Theme: Growth and Personal Development of Players

The coaches' perception of growth and development for their players was more on individual skill, team success, or basketball strategies that could be adjusted for improvement in performance on the court. The statements below best describe the development these coaches admired the most.

Our junior high team was ... I don't have a specific record, but we, we won more than we lost, I think 12 and 6. (Coach MM, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

We were able to fix things that I felt like we needed to work on and I mean, each game, there was like adjustments and getting everybody on board. Those willing to play their role and I mean, give their best and be able to adjust whatever the team had planned. We would be able to adjust and just go through the game and I mean, even have confidence (Coach GG, personal communication, April 6, 2018).

Theme: Honesty, Truth, & Consistency

In regards, to the question asking, "Are there procedures in place to guide your players in dealing with bad calls by the referees or negative comments from the fans?" Coach GG provided his procedure and Coach M truthfully replied the following:

Mmm… That's a good question. We might need to implement something like that, but there is nothing in place, per se (Coach MM, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

My policy kind of cancels out, like as far as confusion with other players. So, you won't run into, he did this and he did that. (Coach GG, personal communication, April 6, 2018).

Theme: Impacting Actions Beyond the Court

The theme of impacting actions of youth beyond the court emerged when one coach described the community programs established for some of his players to make efforts to guide them in service projects to help others and their team. The other coach indicated the actions of

his team, outside of basketball, involved group meetings to discuss other topics besides basketball. Their statements below detail those experiences:

> So, we'll cover the same stuff. We're doing fundraisers. You know, we're going over and reading to elementary kids and stuff like that (Coach MM, personal communication, April 9, 2018).
>
> I would say, far as coping, just as a team, like outside of basketball. Not just basketball, but just doing things that involved us, like as far as conversations, meetings, and us just talking about things outside of basketball (Coach GG, personal communication, April 6, 2018).

Summary of Themes for All Coaches

The seven themes of coach training and educational background, structured programming, leadership and mentorship, support and engagement, growth and personal development, honesty, truth, and consistency, and impacting actions beyond the court emerged from the coaching interview responses. The overall goal of the character programming coaches indicated their behaviors focus on taking youth athletes to a productive "life beyond the game of basketball." These coaches realized that investing in the youth, invests in the community and society as a whole. Two coaches whose survey scores and character strength codes indicate lower levels of character, had the same beliefs and goals as the character programming coaches in group one, with consistent high levels of character for all measurements. This group of coaches, except for one, constantly advocated for improving the individual, not just the player, and for long-term progress. The one coach from this group who indicated something different, Coach LL, also exhibited 14 out of 24 strengths of character when coding his interview responses; the lowest score among group one coaches.

Increasing the foundational skills of the athlete, instilling a team focused perception, and preparing athletes for the next level of basketball, such as the senior level, sums up the ultimate goal of the coaches who were engaged in little to no character programming concepts. In

addition, these coaches, group three, fostered community and collaboration, however, their ultimate goal was focused more on short-term progress for players.

All coaches realized they could utilize basketball to reach youth for different reasons all focused around developing the individual in a specific area. Collectively, all coaches strongly suggested, from their coaching and discipline philosophies and responses to questions on coaching experience and active game play, that they work to uplift and improve the student athlete. Some targeted the athlete while other coaches targeted the student, athlete, and the individual as a whole person. The ages of the coaches varied and did not appear to be a factor in differences of responses. In contrast, two out of four non-character programming coaches were experiencing their first year with the current basketball team as head coach and two out of four were coaching an organized middle school basketball team for the first time.

In regards, to the character programming coaches, all of them, but one coach, had four or more years of coaching experience. For the response to the questions that asked, "How do you respond to bad call by the referee?" eight out of nine coaches provided a similar response. They truthfully admitted that in the beginning of their coaching career or due to them recently playing as an athlete, they behaved with high energy and astonishment to the call, raising their voice or making smart comments back to the referees. As evidence of growth and development on their part, their behavior has change or improved when currently faced with a call they disagree with by the referees. Several coaches responded that they accepted the referees were human and that they make mistakes in addition to the fact that hardly any referee will change their call.

Coach LL, the first year coach of any school sport, informed that he was still working on improving his reactions to referees, because of his competitive nature and young age. Additionally, some of his structural programming, leadership goals, and expectations were

similar to the coaches in group three due his concentration on building the skill level of the youth athlete more than the individual developing as a whole, like other group one coaches. This coach was also the only coach that demonstrated humor as a character strength in the coding of themes from interviews.

When asked the question, "Do your players show more, less, or about the same level of respect versus non-sport students?" All character coaches, but one, responded that they felt their players showed more respect. Possibly, because they all made it clear that respect was a huge part of their program and establishing it with youth athletes. Three out of four non-character programming coaches responded their players showed about the same level of respect as non-sport students. Lastly, when asked for additional comments at the end of the interview, three of five character coaches, voluntarily responded and three out of four non-character coaches did not respond with additional comments about coaching, the interview questions, or the study in general.

Findings of Codes

Figure 4.1
Word Cloud of VIA 24 Strengths of Character
(Permission to use figure granted by VIA)

Coding is a process of assigning meaning to data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To code the themes developed from the coaching interviews, VIA Classification of 24 strengths of character were used. Since the codes are derived from the data, inductive coding best describes this approach. The descriptions of each character strength were used as a guide to determine if coaches, through the responses they provided about his or her basketball program, showed evidence of any of the 24 strengths of character. Two coaching groups developed based on the number of character strengths found in the theme evidence. The following tables include the most frequently expressed character strengths consistent across all coaches for each group. The highest points earned for each strength is five. The actual score of each coach, from the survey results is also included.

Table 4.3
Character Strength Levels of Group 1 Coaches

Character Strengths (8)	Coach BB	Coach FF	Coach GT	Coach LL	Coach SS
Bravery	4.75	4.75	5	5	4.25
Fairness	5	3.75	5	4.75	4
Honesty	4.5	5	4.75	3.75	5
Kindness	4.75	4.75	4.5	4.5	4.75
Leadership	3.25	4.75	5	4.75	5
Love of Learning	4.5	5	5	5	4.75
Social Intelligence	3.75	3.75	4.75	4.5	4
Teamwork	3.25	4.25	5	5	3
Total					

Table 4.4
Character Strength Levels of Group 2 Coaches

Character Strengths (6)	Coach CC	Coach GG	Coach MM	Coach RR
Fairness	4	3.75	4	3.75
Leadership	4	4	4.25	4
Love of Learning	4	4.75	4.75	4.25
Perspective	4	4.25	4	3.5
Self-Regulation	3.75	3.75	3.25	3.75
Teamwork	3.5	3	4	4
Total				

Summary of Codes

The 24 strengths of character designed by VIA Institute on Character detail specific characteristics that define an individual's character. This system measured the strengths of each character word indicated after completion of a 96 question adult survey by coaches. The VIA survey also describes one of the six virtues each character strengths represents. The VIA Classification system is a classification of positive traits exhibited by individuals (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Each coach response indicated by one of the seven emerging themes was also coded by character strengths. A range of (14-21) of twenty-four of the character strengths for the character programming coaches were evidenced within interview responses versus a range of (10-18) out of twenty-four for the non-character programming coaches. The eight most expressed character strengths for character programming coaches are shown in Table 4.3 and the six most expressed character strengths for non-character programming coaches are shown in Table 4.4. Group one coaches had more character strengths in common among all coaches than groups two and three with six. From the six-character strengths the groups had that were the same, Coach MM had the highest cumulative score of all coaches for groups two and three, but he identified with just 10 strengths of character for coding of interview responses. Group one coaches all score a 4 or higher in four strengths, bravery, kindness, and love of learning. Coaches from groups two and three each scored four or higher in leadership and love of learning character strengths. All coaches shared four-character strengths from the coding of interview responses, regardless of the group they were categorized in. Those four-character strengths are fairness, leadership, love of learning, and teamwork.

Game Observations

Each of the 10 teams selected for the study were observed twice in active game play. Video recordings of the basketball games were also completed so that the researcher could examine the games thoroughly. To look for consistent behaviors by coaches and players, a checklist was used while observing. Many of the coaches exhibited similar behaviors throughout the majority of the games observed. Players actively took part in the game and interacted with one another well. They also demonstrated good sportsmanship against other teams and the referees. There were no technical fouls given to coaches for inappropriate behavior.

Players or the team received technical infractions for actions such as holding the ball past the designated time or not stepping behind the line to take the ball out. The games between the boy teams were more fast paced while the majority of the girls' game were at a slower tempo. No players were observed to have responded negatively to the referees. Some players were reminded by their coaches to hustle on and off the floor during time-outs or at the end of quarters. When directly observing the coaches during the game, regardless of character or character programming or non-character programming, there was evidence of the following:

- Standing during the game on the sideline near the bench
- Sitting by players or assistants during the game
- Talking to players during game play while they were on the court
- Encouraging players to hustle on and off the court
- Discussing calls with the referee periodically throughout the game
- Walking back and forth down the side lines during game play
- Calling time-outs at high intensity time periods

- Going over to the table to talk with clock monitors or record book keepers
- Communicating with other coaches within team and other players while on the bench
- Substituted players in and out throughout the game
- Encouraged players throughout the game, especially is their team was not winning

Quantitative Findings – Youth Character Survey Report

To determine the quantitative analysis for the character survey data collected, using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), an independent *t-test* was conducted between two groups. This statistical test was selected because of its ability to compare two sample means to determine any differences that exist among the two. The final phase of the methodological process for the study examined the character strengths of youth athletes as a variable for determining the impact of coaches with or without character development implementation on youth under their team leadership.

Youth Character Survey Administration

A survey instrument was used to acquire youth character strengths scores**.** The electronic survey for youth athletes was administered in adherence to the expectations established by VIA Character Institute and the University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board. A survey information form with the web link and instructions (Appendix G), a parent/athlete consent form (Appendix E), and demographic from (Appendix F) were given to 108 student athletes in 8 different public schools. Coaches were very helpful in assisting with distribution of survey materials to the players on his or her team. To provide an alternate option for completing the survey, the researcher prepared 22 survey copies and distributed to three coaches for players who chose to complete their survey via hard copy. These surveys were completed by players and returned to his or her coach, then given to the researcher for manual recording of scores. The

period of time for players completing the 96-question survey was four weeks. VIA indicates that the average time for completing this survey ranges from 30 to 40 minutes and most players completed their survey within the estimated time range, based on coaches' feedback.

Profile of Youth Subjects

A total of $N = 69$ student athletes responded to the survey, but $n = 64$ survey reports were analyzed and included in the study. There were 5 reports invalid for the study. Three students completed the wrong electronic survey and two students completed their survey after the final survey data report was collected. From the 64 student participants, 28 were male and 36 were female youth athletes. In addition, 86% of students were Black/African Americans, 13% White, and 1% of Mixed race. The majority of youth athletes were between the ages of 12 to 15 and in grades seventh through ninth. Two youth athletes were sixteen years old. Based on the locations of the schools involved in the survey, seven teams were in rural areas in southeast Arkansas and three teams were in urban areas in central Arkansas. The figure below marks the locations:

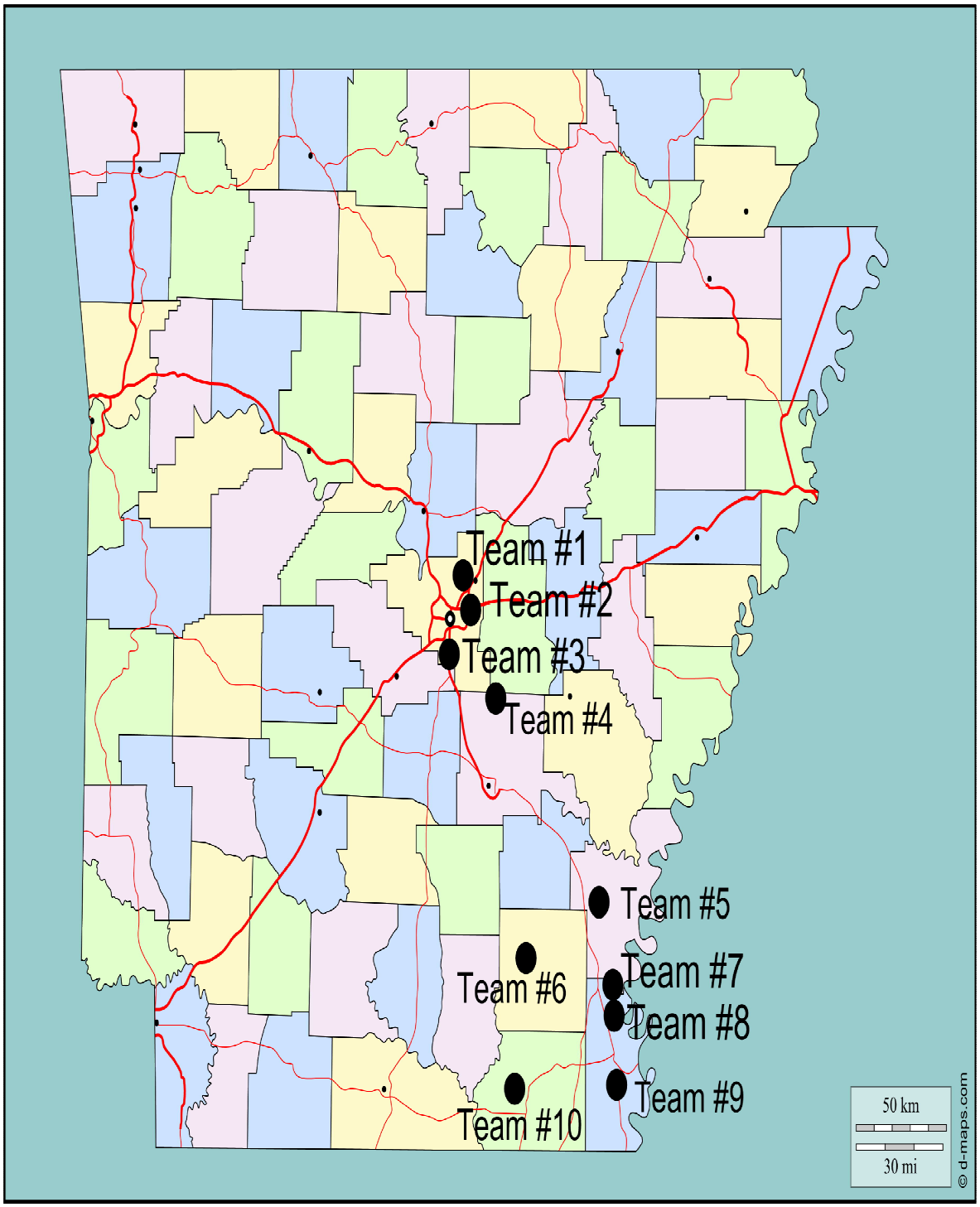

Figure 4.2
Location of Basketball Teams
(Permission to use map granted by d-maps.com as a free map)

T-Test Results

For the independent *t-test*, the first group represented players of coaches with higher character strength levels and the higher number of strengths of character evidenced from the coding of interview transcriptions. This first group were under the leadership of the five coaches identified in group one (Table 4.2). The second group consisted of players lead by four coaches with the 4 lowest character strength levels from the cumulative tabulations of survey scores and the lowest number of strengths of character from interview transcription coding. The survey score report used to acquire the data for the *t-test* included 24 strengths of character with individual player scores and ranks for each character strength. The mean differences for groups one (3.718) and two (3.698) were slightly different. Yet, the *t-test* revealed there was no significance *($p = .145$)* in character strength levels between the two groups. Therefore, regardless of the coach exhibiting high or low levels of character or the specific type of character programming, the youth athletes' character strength levels were similar based on their reported responses on the VIA Youth Survey of character strengths.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"Good character is what people look for in leaders and in work colleagues, what parents look for in their children, what siblings look for in their brothers and sisters, and what friends look for in each other" (Park, 2004, p.42).

Introduction

This research study examined the character strengths of youth athletes who were engaged in the team sport of basketball under the leadership of coaches with high and low character strengths. Qualitative analysis revealed seven themes and 10 to 21 character codes were identified from the results. The quantitative analysis yielded small mean differences between character levels for the two youth athlete groups, but no significant difference. Chapter 5 examines the data in connection to the research questions introduced at the beginning of the study and in the methodology. This chapter will also revisit theoretical connections, summarize the findings, provide recommendations to the field, give considerations for training, implications for future research, and discuss contributions and concluding arguments.

Research Questions 1

The research questions for this study follows:

Do basketball coaches with high character strengths have a greater effect on youth character than coaches with low character strengths?

Two coaches from the two groups analyzed indicated that most of the time there were minimum behavior issues in school sports, because athletes choose to be in basketball or play sports, and they want to be there, not necessarily an English or Math class. The independent *t-test* analysis performed using scores from an accredited character survey constructed by VIA and completed by the two groups of youth athletes can directly respond to this question. Since the

two groups of athletes involved in the study had been under the leadership of their coach for at least one season, comparison of the two groups demonstrated differences in character survey scores. One group consisted of coaches with high character strengths and character concepts that reflected developing the individual and not just the athlete, as evidenced in open coding of interview responses; versus, the other group who was led by coaches with lower character strengths and less evidence of character development strategies as a group. The *t-test* revealed there was no significant difference between the two groups of youth athletes' character strength scores.

A combination of the coaching participant interview responses and the youth survey results effectively addressed this question as well. Since the sport in the study was basketball, an examination was needed to explore character strength levels and the types of character programs and concepts implemented by each coach. The thematic analysis provided details on specific character development strategies utilized by the coaches. Based on this analysis, all coaches used some form of character strategies, although, a few coaches utilized more character strategies than others. Leadership, love of learning, fairness, and teamwork were all key strengths each of the coaches exhibited.

VIA youth character survey provided the score reports of youth athletes character strengths based on their survey responses. The strategies used by the coaches in this study determined that youth athletes who engaged in the sport of basketball while at the same time receiving guidance from a coach with high character levels, maintained their overall character strengths collectively. Their mean differences were slightly higher than the opposing group of youth athletes. In contrast, the group of youth lead by basketball coaches who implemented fewer character strategies and had lower levels of character exhibited similar levels of character

strengths as group two youth athletes. Therefore, as a whole group, collectively, youth who played the sport of basketball and engaged in some aspect of character development, whether from a coach with high or low character strengths, the coaches still had an effect on youth athlete character.

Research Question 2

Does the character of the coach effect the coaching style and thus the character development of youth?

The research design for this study was created to directly respond to the research questions. The variety of data collected also addressed the research question. The participant responses provided during personal interviews allowed them to show evidence of their coaching style and any concepts or program initiatives they utilized with youth athletes. Analyzing the character strengths of the coaches helped determine their areas of strength and weakness regarding character. A cross reference with the coaches' character survey scores and the character codes provided a basis for identifying strengths of character important to the coaches and the type of strategies and programs held by the coaches with their basketball teams. As evidenced by the coaches with higher character strengths and two other coaches from group two with increased strengths of character demonstrated through open coding of responses; developing youth was extremely important to theses coaches.

For the coaches who implemented character education and development concepts with their teams, six out of nine coaches determined their main objective as a coach was to prepare youth athletes for life beyond basketball by implementing different programs, strategies, policies, and other life skills. Four of those six coaches demonstrated high character strengths based on their survey scores. Additionally, the same six coaches mentioned their increased responsibility to be positive role models who show and promote positive interactions amongst youth, because

of the impact they have on youth. These coaches identified with 15 out of 24 character strengths, with five coaches in the higher range, 18 to 22 strengths. The coaches with higher character strengths appeared more committed to developing the "whole athlete." These coaches were concerned about their athletes' overall well-being. They communicated with teachers, parents, and other individuals involved with developing and supporting the youth. Four out of five of the higher character coaches indicated that the best training and courses they received were those that involved social and psychological content, because they acquired information to help them know their athletes better as individuals and techniques to deal with diverse personalities and backgrounds of people.

Discipline and respect were also targets of this group of coaches, many indicated they wanted to prepare "disciplined and respectful young men and women." Teaching their athletes about time management, giving them responsibilities, and issuing consequences for their actions were management styles these coaches focused on maintaining consistently. Mageau & Vallerand (2003) indicate that an authoritative coach may provide athletes freedom to take ownership of their behavior, structure to learn and gain competence in a sport, and support to connect with others, which in return, can help foster their overall well-being. The style of group one coaches resembles that of an authoritative coach.

Furthermore, the high character coaches all demonstrated connections to bravery, fairness, honesty, kindness, leadership, love of learning, social intelligence, and teamwork as character strengths based on coding of transcribed interview responses. Overall, these coaching strategies and coaching style aligned with Power & Seroczynski (2015), by addressing moral issues, motivation, and encouragement of youth athletes to take responsibility and act on what they already know, thus doing the right thing.

Since coaches with lower character strengths and the lowest number of character codes had coaching styles that mainly involved more fundamental skill development for basketball and preparing of athletes for senior level basketball, their style differed from higher character strength coaches. Although, the lower strength coaches also discussed discipline and respect as a priority of their programs, the coaching style that appeared to impact youth character development the most, were the higher character strength coaches. Yet, with the *t-test* results, coaches of lower character strength levels had the same effect on their players as coaches with higher character levels. This may be due to the fact that the division between the two coaching groups were not significant. Perhaps, the middle group of character strength coaches could have been omitted to help increase the character differences between the two groups.

Discussion of Social Capital Theory

To examine the impact of character strengths and development on participants, a multilevel social capital framework is applied. Strong social capital networks, according to Glover and Hemingway (2005), permits group members to utilize each other's resources through their assistance or the aid of another's connections. Additional research has shown that the strength of an individual's social network has a significant effect on educational and professional trajectories (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001).

Glover and Hemingway (2005) indicates that strong social capital networks permit group members to utilize each other's resources, through their assistance or the aid of another's connection. Social capital, developed amongst six other capitals and defined together as seven distinct assets or capitals that provide communities with resources they need to thrive and survive (Green and Haines, 2012). Lin (1999) emphasized social capital as an investment in social relations with expected returns. There are several character strengths from the VIA

Classification of 24 strengths of character that can be connected to social capital. The character strengths are social intelligence, love of learning, kindness, honesty, love, forgiveness, leadership, fairness, and teamwork. Based on the character strengths identified, the virtues of humanity and justice are both related to social capital concepts.

Research has also shown that the strength of an individual's social network has a significant effect on educational and professional trajectories (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001). Additionally, while positive social capital ventures are often associated with individuals, communities can also be the beneficiaries (Putnam, 1995). Building character strengths within youth can not only benefit youth athletes, but our communities can benefit from it as well. This study offered adult and youth participants the opportunity to not only complete a character survey, but to become aware of his or her character strengths. Some of the questions geared toward identifying character strengths correlations to social capital from the youth survey are below:

- There is someone who will listen to me when I have a problem
- Everyone's opinion is equally important to me
- I am less than honest if it will keep me out of trouble
- People look up to me as a leader and they give me their trust

One concept of social capital that strongly correlates with sports and youth was described in 1988. For social capital to be utilized, three components must exist: trust, norms, and information channels (Coleman, 1988). Sport allows individuals to benefit from being socially accepted and encourages them to be connected of the team and community. Skinner, Zakus, & Cowell (2008) found that sport aided the fostering of a sense of community that was lacking in those whom initially felt socially neglected.

Discussion of Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility Model (TPSR)

Figure 5.1
TPSR Model

The *Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility Model* (T,PSR) provides a picturesque view of how character development programming, youth, sports, mentors or coaches, and settings outside of sports can coincide together. Hellison's TPSR Model emphasizes the need to teach, through sports and physical activity, values and behaviors that can contribute to the positive development of student's lives (1985, 1995, & 2003). The model also associates with two values for well-being and personal development, effort and self-management, and two values for social integration and development, respect for other people's feelings and rights and

caring (Hellison, 1995). Several components of the study can be described within the TPSR Model.

The goal of the group one coaches in the study, were to positively impact youth athlete's lives outside of sports or the gym. Transferring to the TPSR Model above, character development programming can be used to teach a character strength, such as social intelligence or respect. Then a sport, such as basketball, which was used in the study, can provide the physical activity engagement of youth and connect the character strengths to encourage the importance of effort in sport and life. Next, coaches can function as mentors to direct youth and hold them accountable throughout the process. Afterwards, youth athletes can be observed playing basketball and interacting with others to learn how to be responsive to other's needs. Last, the transfer of character strengths and responsibilities to other settings. Seven out of ten coaches in the study wanted their athletes to take responsibility and transfer the life skills and character strengths they acquired and learned to a setting outside of sports. All coaches mentioned respect as a key component of their program and other character strengths as vital components of youth athlete personal development.

Discussion of Positive Youth Development

When character development is implemented to effect youth positively and assist them in discovering their character strengths, positive youth development (PYD) is likely to take place. An interconnected network of biology, education, health, recreation, faith, family, and other factors contributing to the overall development of young people best describes PYD (Henderson, Powell, and Scanlin, 2005).

The remarks and responses shared by coaching participants that detailed the strategies, concepts, programs, activities, and other processes they followed and engaged youth athletes in,

reflected multiple acts toward positive youth development. Coaches advocated education, sport activities, skill development, team support like a family, mentorship, and other factors that were all for developing youth. This study and the data collected supports the PYD theory.

Summary of Findings

The diagram below details the findings of the study:

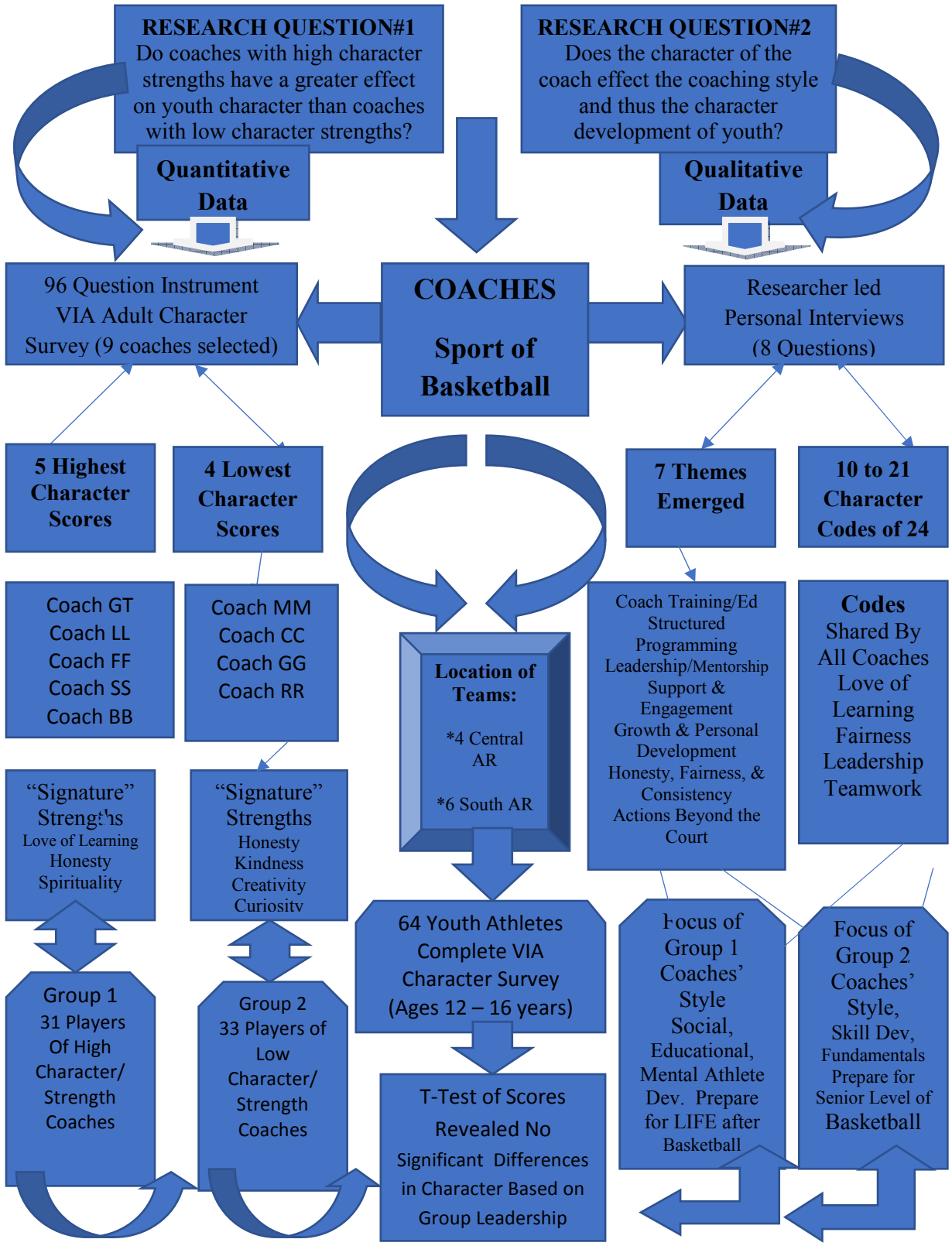

Figure 5.2
Summary of Findings

Recommendations to the Field

The academic field of Recreation and Sport Management is closely tied to education, health, policy, scientific inquiry, community development, and other areas. The study targets several key concepts for youth leaders and practitioners: the value of research in the sport of basketball, the importance of character-based programming, the necessity in preparing youth socially, and the need to increase character strengths in everyone.

The study of sports and its effect are valuable in helping establish new phenomena. This study researched a popular sport in America, basketball. In all its glory and recognition, there is still a need to utilize something many love, especially youth, to champion a greater cause, youth development. Examining the demographics of the study shows that 86% of youth athletes who participated in the study were Black. One coach from group one of the study indicated in an interview response that he believes basketball is a cultural thing for Black kids, it is of significance to them, just like music. There is a need to re-establish more positive interactions with Black youth in urban and rural areas. Why not use a popular sport to do it? Engaging in Amateur Athletics promotes several things such as physical activity, player interaction, and skill development. Yet, preparing youth by incorporating life skills, such as character, into a sport they love, basketball, can yield one of the greatest rewards, positive development in youth to guide them in other areas of their life. Researching sports can help meet certain needs and areas of concern for youth and society.

The qualitative findings in the study suggest that coaches use character programing strategies and concepts with their teams. It also indicates that coaches see character-based programming as important. Although some coaches focused more on skill development, all coaches advocated for developing the youth athlete to promote growth of the individual. Many

youth have difficulty coping with day to day life situations. Effective character programming can help increase many strengths to better prepare youth to deal with challenging situations. Researchers must continue evaluating various programs and youth to assess their development over time and with different youth leaders.

Acknowledging character strengths and building on strengths to increase character helps promote social responsibility. The study includes theoretical interpretations connecting social capital and character development. It is important for practitioners to continue imposing the need to prepare youth to develop social networks to help them sustain in society and in other areas of their life. Three of ten coaches in the study did not focus on preparing youth for society or life outside of the game of basketball. An increasing concern for rising mental health issues in our society, warrants immediate attention and practitioners must realize the importance of directing youth to utilize social networks as support.

Next, the quantitative findings provided adults and youth in the study with a report identifying strengths of character. In addition, their personal scores indicated signature strengths or character strengths where they rate high and low strength levels that may need improving. Collectively, the report generated was a resource for all to use to recognize behaviors about themselves. Regardless of age, race, and other disparities, knowing oneself better should be considered a positive thing. Before increasing character strengths, and individual must be aware they exist. The VIA Institute on Character provides a free survey for youth and adults to assess character strengths. It vital that practitioners continue supporting character building, implementation, and evaluation by continuing to promote character development and making it accessible for others.

Finally, we must be reminded of valuable insight from other researchers who have examined and analyzed a plethora of information for the field on character. There works are the cornerstone for exploring character. Just as one coach indicates that we must pay attention to sports and coaches' impact, Park (2009) suggest we pay attention to character, its development, and the findings.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are numerous opportunities for further research dealing with character strength, character development programming, character education, youth, and sports. The first recommendation is to examine school teams in different locations including, other geographical areas in the state of Arkansas and other states within the United States. Considering other sports or multiple sports that include a diverse group of participants, in addition, to a more diverse group of coaches.

Examining team sports in private school settings could also offer valid examination of character programming effects on a different population of athletes that may also include differences in socioeconomic status. A paired *t-test* can be conducted to examine pre and post examination of youth character strengths at the beginning and end of a sport season or from one year to the next under the same coach to determine any significant differences. Research on other character development approaches and character-based strategies should also be evaluated to compare their findings on the effectiveness of sports on youth. Another quantitative instrument that measures multiple groups, specific character strengths, and other areas would continue to add to the body of research on the impact of coaches and character strength development on our youth.

Considerations for Training and Support Organizations

No coach during the study indicated they had ever received training specifically connected to any type of character development approaches or strategies to utilize with youth athletes. Consequently, acquiring training in moral and character education and character development has been noted by many authors to be advantageous for the coach, player, and society. More specifically, Power & Seroczynski (2015) mention that coaches must be trained to master moral and character development and organizations like the Coach Effectiveness Training and Play Like a Champion Today (PLC) programs would be ideal organizations to provide training to public school coaches on specific character development strategies or character education they can use with their players.

Additionally, the programs also serve as reliable sources for character education implementation within schools versus community-based settings. The duration of the training is not long or extensive and can provide coaches with the content information, skills, and training they need to effectively implement character education and development programs to continue building youth character strengths. Additionally, VIA Institute has multiple tools to help coach build their own strengths and support material for increasing character strengths in others.

Contributions and Conclusions

> Yes. I think that this is something that everybody needs to pay attention to. Because basketball saved my life, I mean-Literally, like, I grew up in a single parent home of five. And it just taught me so many different things that I wasn't getting in- at home, with my mom. And I mean, it paid my way through college (Coach GT, personal communication, March 31, 2018).

Listening to the comment by Coach GT brought inspiration and more insight to the significance of this study. This coach, like many others, was once a youth athlete who needed additional guidance and direction. Then a coach came along and instilled character development principles

through programming, life skills and other concepts. Ultimately, increasing the character strength level of this coach and impacting the life of a young athlete far beyond the game of basketball and the court. The impact made a difference in several lives, because the coach graduated college and began working as a coach to mentor and guide other youth athletes in the process. Sports can provide the environment to cause a domino effect, just as this situation. One coach can impact youth, who in return, can become a coach or another type of mentor, and impact the lives of other youth; initiating contagious positive youth development that has the potential to influence a multitude of individuals for the better.

This study contributes to the body of literature by providing insight to the connection of sports, character, and youth development. Character strengths are beneficial for many reasons and to many individuals, however, measuring a sport's effect on character is challenging, even when the character of the coach is included in the equation. There are other resources that can contribute to the development of youth such as: faith-based organization, teachers or the field of education in general, community-based program, health advisors, counselors, law enforcement, and other entities. Establishing and maintaining character development programming through the sport of basketball is one component linked to several others that collectively do the same things, establish and increase character strengths in youth. It would be a difficult and ongoing task to determine which one affects youth's character the most.

Based on (Cote & Gilbert, 2009; Fraser-Thomas, Cote, & Deakin, 2005), there is still strong evidence from consistent and valid research that emphasizes the critical role coaches have in conducting developmentally appropriate programs that focus on enhancement of strengths and personal resources for athletes. Furthermore, Smoll et al., 1993, confirms that adding training

and support to youth coaches can result in the enhanced likelihood of positive youth development.

The descriptive analysis of the youth survey data was not significant enough to support the hypothesis. Yet, that does not mean the coaches impact was not relevant. All coaches demonstrated the character strengths of fairness, love of learning, teamwork, and leadership, therefore, all of them could have influenced players level of character. It was evident during the transcription coding that each coach implemented some form of character development to guide players. This analysis is consistent with reasoning for the small mean differences between the two groups. Studies also show that coaches who support an athlete's competence, confidence, connection, and character can have a positive effect on the athlete (Cote & Gilbert, 2009).

The study also demonstrated a strong connection between six of nine coaches. These coaches consistently showed similarities in character development programming, strategies, and concepts. Their prime goal was creating a respectful young man or young woman and preparing them to be productive members of society, outside of basketball skill development. Winning games was important, but more importantly was preparing individuals to feel they were equipped to win in life.

The data collected provided a triangulation of opportunities to acquire rich and fulfilling information. However, there still remains areas to be researched and opportunities for growth in this area of study. Considering more youth athletes and coaches to diversify the participant group is a start while other adjustments can be made in location of schools and the type of institution. The VIA survey instrument is still a good and reliable measurement of character strengths, so, it can be used for further group comparisons and evaluation.

An analysis by Coakley (2015) may best interpret the overall results of this study in that the degree to which coaches cultivate moral virtues, like character, may depend on the kind of sports organization in which the coach. In connection to this study, the coaches were worked in public school environment and Coakley (2015) believes sports coached in this setting tend to straddle between serving all children and promoting health and character development or they may focus more heavily on winning or on the most talented player, but lack concentration on character development.

There were no findings in this study that supported sports does not build character. Allowing youth to participate in something they choose to personally do, like the sport of basketball, is still a viable way to measure sports effect on youth character. Coping with the multitude of hardships, trials, injustices, and other disparities that happen throughout an individual's lifetime can be overwhelming to many adults and youth. Societal influences are invasive and tend not to discriminate toward anyone, it can get the best of all of us. Community outreach programs sometimes provide safe havens to help shelter many individuals from the negative pressures of our world.

Ultimately, acquiring and maintaining character strengths such as hope, perseverance, love, forgiveness, social intelligence, and spirituality may be the difference maker in how a situation is handled or most importantly, the character strength that is used to save a life that may be your own. "What is your signature character strength?" Encouraging youth and adults to determine their character strengths, just as the VIA Institute advocates, to continually build upon strengths in childhood and adulthood will help promote happier, healthier, and socially adaptive individuals who are better able to manage life and become more productive members of society, who may, in return, influence someone else.

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Appendix A

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

To:	NaTasha LaShay Hill
From:	Douglas James Adams, Chair IRB Committee
Date:	01/30/2018
Action:	**Expedited Approval**
Action Date:	01/30/2018
Protocol #:	1712088856
Study Title:	Sports for the Development of Youth: exploring the value of character development programming on youth athletes who participate in the school sport of basketball
Expiration Date:	01/16/2019
Last Approval Date:	

The above-referenced protocol has been approved following expedited review by the IRB Committee that oversees research with human subjects.

If the research involves collaboration with another institution then the research cannot commence until the Committee receives written notification of approval from the collaborating institution's IRB.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without Committee approval. Please submit continuation requests early enough to allow sufficient time for review. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol. Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study closure.

Adverse Events: Any serious or unexpected adverse event must be reported to the IRB Committee within 48 hours. All other adverse events should be reported within 10 working days.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, study personnel, or number of participants, please submit an amendment to the IRB. All changes must be approved by the IRB Committee before they can be initiated.

You must maintain a research file for at least 3 years after completion of the study. This file should include all correspondence with the IRB Committee, original signed consent forms, and study data.

cc: Merry Lynn Moiseichik, Key Personnel
Steve Langsner, Key Personnel
Valerie H Hunt, Key Personnel
Dean Richard Gorman, Key Personnel

Appendix B
Coach Survey Consent Form

Informed Consent

The Impact of Coaches' Character on Youth Basketball Players

Adult Participants:

You are being asked to take part in a research study regarding the impact of sports on youth athlete character development. We are asking that you take part in this study because you are the coach of male or female youth between the ages of 12 to 15 years who play basketball for the organized team sport of basketball. These teams are in public school environments. **Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.**

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to examine the character of youth athletes who actively engage in the team sport of basketball with character development programming. In comparison, further examination of the character of youth who are participants of basketball teams with little to no character development programming will be conducted.

What will be done:

If you agree to participate in the study, a survey will be provided to you electronically or as a hard copy that includes statements about your demographic profile and other general questions. If you are selected to continue in the study, after the survey, an interview will be conducted. The survey should take approximately 30 to 40 minutes to complete and the interview may take 20 to 30 minutes. In addition, observations will take place during one practice session and 2 basketball games.

Benefits:

As a participant, you will be contributing to the knowledge and understanding of determining if recreation and sports have a significant effect on youth and communities in the area where you live. After all data has been collected, the results will be shared with participants to reveal the impact of the study.

Confidentiality & Risks:

The records of this study will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. At any point, you can skip any question that you do not want to answer. Refusing to participate will not affect any current or future relationship with the University of Arkansas or the researchers.

If you have any questions: The researchers conducting this study NH and Dr. M, advisor. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have any questions later, after the survey, you may contact the researcher or advisor. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Research Compliance Office at irb@uark.edu or 479-575-2208.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and have received answers to my questions; therefore, I give my consent to take part in this study.

Print Name_____ Date_____ Signature_____

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study.

The Impact of Coaches' Character on Youth Basketball Players

Appendix C
Coach Survey Demographics Form

NHILL
University of Arkansas

The Impact of Coaches' Character on Youth Basketball Players

The information used in this survey is for research purposes only and your participation in this survey is voluntary, no information obtained will be used against you for any purposes.

Please select from the following by placing a check on the line provided:

School District: ___Dermott ___Dumas ___Crossett
___Hamburg ___Little Rock ___McGehee
___Monticello ___Lake Village ___Warren

Race: ___ Black or African Am. ___ White or Caucasian Am. ___ Hispanic Origin
___ Asian ___ Mixed Race ___ Other

THIS SURVEY CAN BE COMPLETED ONLINE USING THE LINK BELOW:

http://www.viacharacter.org/survey/pro/RSHR08/account/register

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TO COMPLETE HARD COPY SURVEY VERSION: Mark your selection at the end of each statement, by writing the number of the scale below that best represents your response.

Likert Scale:
1- Very Much Unlike Me
2- Unlike Me
3- Neutral
4- Like Me
5- Very Much Like Me

RESEARCHER ONLY:
____Character Development Program Participant ___Non-Character Program Participant

Appendix D
VIA IS-M Adult Survey Sample Questions

1 Beauty in the world is not that important to me.
2 I am always humble about the good things that have happened to me.
3 I never quit a task before it is done.
4 I am always coming up with new ways to do things.
5 I have many interests.

Appendix E
Youth Survey Consent Form

Informed Consent

The Impact of Coaches' Character on Youth Basketball Players

Participants:

Your child is being asked to take part in a research study regarding the impact of sports on youth athlete character development. We are asking that you take part in this study by giving them permission, because you are the parent or guardian of a male or female youth between the ages of 12 to 15 years who play basketball for the organized team sport of basketball. These teams are in public school environments. **Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.**

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to examine if the character of youth athletes who actively engage in the team sport of basketball with character development programming show improvements in their character compared to youth who are participants of basketball teams with little to no character development programming.

What will be done:

If you agree to participate in the study, a questionnaire will be provided to your child electronically or as a hard copy that includes statements about their demographic profile and specific questions dealing with character development. This survey should take approximately 30 to 40 minutes. In addition, your child will be observed engaging in basketball activities during practice and games.

Benefits:

As a participant, you will be contributing to the knowledge and understanding of determining if recreation and sports have a significant effect on youth and communities in the area where you live. After all data has been collected, the results will be shared with participants to reveal the impact of the study.

Confidentiality & Risks:

The records of this study will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy." Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. At any point, you can skip any question that you do not want to answer. Refusing to participate will not affect any current or future relationship with the University of Arkansas or the researchers.

If you have any questions: The researchers conducting this study are NH and Dr. M, advisor. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Research Compliance Office at irb@uark.edu or 479-575-2208.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and have received answers to my questions; therefore, I give my consent for participation in this study.

Print Child Name_____ Date_____ Parent Signature_____

"I have discussed this study with my parent/guardian, and I agree to participate. I understand that even if they agree, it's okay if I choose not to participate or change my mind about participating later."

Student Athlete Signature _____

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study.

The Impact of Coaches' Character on Youth Basketball Players

Appendix F
Youth Survey Demographic Questions

The information used in this survey is for research purposes only and your participation in this survey is voluntary, no information obtained will be used against you for any purposes.

Please select from the following by placing a check on the line provided:

Age: _____ 12 years _____ 13 years _____ 14 years _____ 15 years

Race: ___ Black or African Am. ___ White or Caucasian Am. ___ Hispanic Origin
___ Asian ___ Mixed Race ___ Other

Mark your selection by checking one box for each statement of your response.

Likert Scale:
5- Very Much Like Me
4- Mostly Like Me
3-Somewhat Like Me
2-A Little Like Me
1-Not Like Me At All

***Survey questions will begin after the above list of scale options**. (SAMPLE QUESTIONS)

I am less than honest if it will keep me out of trouble.
I am viewed as the leader when I'm playing with others.
I respect the opinions of my teammates, even when I disagree.
My temper often gets the best of me.
I am cautious not to do something that I will regret later.

RESEARCHER USE ONLY:

___Character Development Program Participant ___Non-Character Program Participant

Appendix G
VIA Institute on Character Youth Survey Sample Questions (2016)

1 There is someone who will listen to me when I have a problem.
2 When I learn about people who are suffering (e.g., those who are poor or sick), I worry about them
3 Everyone's opinion is equally important to me.
4 I respect the opinions of my teammates, even when I disagree.
5 I am less than honest if it will keep me out of trouble.

Appendix H
Coach Interview Questions

NHill
University of Arkansas

The Impact of Coaches' Character on Youth Basketball Players

The information used in this survey is for research purposes only and your participation in this survey is voluntary, no information obtained will be used against you for any purposes.

Please select from the following by placing a check on the line provided:

School District:

Race: ___ Black or African Am. ___ White or Caucasian Am. ___ Hispanic Origin
___ Asian ___ Mixed Race ___ Other

Questions: Respond to the following questions

What is your coaching philosophy?

How long have you been with this team? (provide details of team progress, winning percentage, & accomplishments)

Have you ever been trained to use other strategies in addition to coaching techniques as a coach?
If Yes, Where? & What type?

What does your coaching experience include?

Do you have a discipline philosophy? (Yes or No) Explain

How do you react to bad calls by referees?

Are there procedures in place to guide your players in dealing with bad calls by the referees or negative comments from fans?

Based on your interaction with other students who do not participate in sports, "Do your players show more, less, or about the same level of Respect versus non-sport students?"

Additional Comments:
RESEARCHER ONLY:
____Character Development Program Participant ___Non-Character Program Participant

Appendix I
Checklist for Coach and Team Observations during Game Play

NHILL
University of Arkansas

The Impact of Coaches' Character on Youth Basketball Players

The basketball game checklist will include the researcher doing the following:

- Describe interactions of players to coaching directions, other team members, and referees
- Examine the reaction of coaches to bad calls by referees
- Direct Observations from the beginning to the ending of games to tally the number of times players show good sportsmanship to the opposing team players in any form (shaking their hand, helping them get up off the court after a fall, encouraging after a mistake)
- Report the reaction of players to bad calls by referees
- Document player and coach reactions toward fans

Appendix J
VIA Institute Survey Approval

We are very pleased to provide permission to use the VIA Surveys in your research project, thereby expanding the knowledge base on the VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues.

We very much want to retain the scientific integrity and reputation of the VIA Survey of Character, and so request that you limit your application and interpretation of results to that which is provided by VIA and otherwise is scientifically based. Please note the term VIA is no longer an acronym for Values in Action. In any written communications please avoid the latter term except as a historical reference. In your documents, the model of 24 strengths and 6 virtues that underlies the VIA Inventory of Strengths and VIA Youth Inventory is officially called the VIA Classification of Strengths and Virtues. Please use this phrase when referring to the model.

The VIA Survey, in its entirety, should not be published with your research analysis/dissertation.

Finally, in exchange for providing this free service, VIA requests that you share your research results with us. Please do so by e-mailing me a report, which I shall share with the VIA staff.

Again, thank you for your interest in expanding the body of scientific knowledge on character strengths and for including the VIA Survey on Character in your work. We look forward to learning of your results and wish you good luck in conducting your study. Don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions or concerns.

Warmest regards,

VIA Institute on Character