Identifying Coaching Abuses in Youth Sport:

A Human Rights Approach for Policy Development

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Science

in

Kinesiology and Health Sciences

By

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Regina, Saskatchewan

August, 2013

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Elaine Cook, candidate for the degree of Master of Science in Kinesiology & Health Studies, has presented a thesis titled, *Identifying Coaching Abuses in Youth Sport: A Human Rights Approach for Policy Development*, in an oral examination held on August 19, 2013. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the opportunity to publicly express my deep respect, admiration and thanks to my advisor Dr. Kim Dorsch. It has been a privilege to work along side of her these past years, and I am a better thinker, researcher, and person, because of her guidance. At the same time, I have been mentored and inspired by Dr. Daniel Rhind, one of my thesis committee members. His kind and gentle approach is both instructive and reflective. Dr. Dave Malloy, also a committee member, challenged my perspectives, and as a result my research philosophies are stronger and more rooted (ontologically speaking). This project would not have been possible without the courageous sport associations, who elected to use the Justplay Behaviour Management Program simply because they saw its value. And to those academic and professional colleagues who encouraged my work and development of the Justplay Behaviour Management Program, I am especially grateful. Finally, I am blessed with nurturing, supportive, family and friends whose presence enrich my life and make it worth living.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to a number of influential people, without whom this project wouldn’t exist, because Justplay would not have existed. First of all there is George Black, senior advisor at the Canadian Football League, and the source of my original inspiration. Then there is Karen Martin, my first business partner, and beautiful friend. Finally, there is the late Ken Jansen, a father, a husband, an artist, a musician, and the computer programmer who designed the original Justplay database and website - he was one of a kind.
Abstract

Research indicates that the culture of sport tends to promote an idealized, or mythologized perception of the benefits of participation for youth (Brackenridge, 2006; Forster, 2006; Houlihan et al., 2011). The belief that sport is a moral oasis (Brackenridge, 2006) has had a serious negative impact on our understanding of the harm caused by abuse in youth sports. In particular, there is a lack of data, monitoring, evaluation, and universal definitions of abusive coaching behaviours, despite the general acknowledgement that coaches wield considerable power and influence that extends beyond the playing field. Without such information it is extremely difficult to develop and enforce policies that protect the rights of children who engage in sport. Therefore, it is the purpose of this study to classify observations made about unacceptable coaching behaviors, in order to identify behaviours that violate the rights of children, which in turn will provide the information necessary to develop policy statements intended to guide the conduct of coaches. Comments (164) from 4 different sports (ice hockey, baseball, basketball, and football) – collected by the Justplay Behaviour Management Program - will be deductively analyzed and categorized into the Typology of Coaching Transgressions (TOCT) model. Measures of construct and content validity provide evidence of the content and construct adequacy of the TOCT model. Results indicate that
across all sports, indirect coaching abuses outnumber direct coaching abuses, $\chi^2 (3, 255) = .18.52, p = .000$, the two contact sports, hockey and football, contain the greatest number of direct abuses, $\chi^2 (1, 255) = 10.79, p = .001$, and they also contain the greatest number of neglect behaviours, $\chi^2 (3, 255) = 9.27, p = .026$ (two cells had less than 5 behaviours). Finally, psychological and modeling behaviours are the greatest percentage of all behaviours across all sports (43.5% and 44.7% respectively).
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Research indicates that a tension exists between the positive (e.g., Barnett, 1992; Gibbons, Ebbeck, & Weiss, 1995; Gould & Carson, 2008) and negative outcomes (Bolter, 2010; Brackenridge, 2007; David, 2005) for children who participate in youth sports. As a result, there has been increasing pressure from researchers on sport governing bodies to respond with policies and tools that safeguard child and youth participants, as well as, protect their human rights (Brackenridge, 2012; Malkin, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2000; Turner & McCrory, 2004). There is also a general consensus amongst researchers that not enough research is being done with regard to the study of violence and abuse in youth sports (Brackenridge, Kay, & Rhind, 2012; David, 2005; UNICEF, 2010), particularly abusive coaching behaviours (Stirling & Kerr, 2007; Telfer, 2012).

To the extent that sport has been recognized by agencies such as the United Nations as a tool to promote development and peace, due in part, to its unique ability to foster ideals that embrace inclusion, citizenship, tolerance, non-violence, and equality (Forster, 2006; Giulianotti, 2004; UNICEF, 2010); the natural assumption would be that sport is more, rather than less, beneficial for our children. As researchers and
administrators we need to mitigate the negative effects in order for children to experience the positive effects. However, a very clear understanding of the process of abuse and negative coaching behaviour must be understood before effective policy can be developed and implemented (Stirling & Kerr, 2007).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the nature and scope of coaching abuses in the youth team sport environment using the Typology of Coaching Transgressions (TOCT; Raakman, Dorsch, & Rhind, 2010a) as a framework to categorize inappropriate coaching behaviours from ice hockey, baseball, basketball, and football.

**Delimitations**

It should be noted that the TOCT model only represents abusing coaching behaviours identified from team sport environments. Additionally, the model only captures behaviours during competitive settings. As such, coaching behaviours exhibited during practice settings, as well as, pre and post game may not be adequately represented.
Definition of Abuse

The concept of abuse is a messy one, especially within youth sport. However, because this paper, and the development of the TOCT (Raakman et al, 2010a), was based on a human rights definitional framework the definition used within this paper is based on the definition of violence used in article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which states, “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s), or any other person who has the care of the child,” (UNICEF, 2010, pg. 3). Importantly, this definition is supported by the definition provided by the World Health Organization’s 2002 report on violence and health (UNICEF, 2010, pg.3): “The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.” It may be true however, that to a certain extent, the definition of abuse has been overly complicated by epistemological frameworks because in its most simple dictionary definition (Abuse, n.d.) it is defined as, “to use improperly or incorrectly; misuse; maltreatment of a person, to speak insultingly or cruelly to or about.”
All of the behaviours identified in the TOCT model violate a right of children as articulated in the UNCRC, and as such, are assumed to be harmful to children and for the purposes of this study are referred to as coaching abuses. For example David (2005) suggests that any coaching behaviour that involves a misuse of power violates Article 12 of the Convention; if children do not receive sound and appropriate training, guidance and direction from competent coaches then their rights associated with Articles 5 and 42 violated; and if sport is not practiced in a culture of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality, friendship and fairplay, their rights are violated according to Article 29. A complete list of TOCT themes and the corresponding articles of the Convention which they violate (Raakman, Dorsch, & Rhind, 2011) can be found in Appendix B.

Inappropriate, improper, or incorrect behaviours, by definition are abusive and considered herein to be interchangeable with the term abuse. Furthermore, notable researchers suggest that violence and abuse are functionally and conceptually interrelated (Brackenridge & Rhind, 2010)

To further this discussion on abuse and negative coaching behaviours in youth sport, a background is presented in the following areas to provide context and a frame of reference: (a) children’s rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), (b) the relationship between sport culture and policy development.
regarding coaching duties and obligations, (c) the usefulness of typologies as a
framework for understanding behaviours, and (d) a description of the TOCT model.
Chapter 2

Literature Review


Notable researchers suggest that a human rights approach could help to resolve issues and concerns regarding abuse and violence in youth sport (David, 2005; Giulianotti, 2007). However, a universal understanding of which rights need to be protected and supported within youth sport environments, as well as, a general understanding and agreement on what constitutes abuse in youth sport, would not only facilitate research but provide a structure for youth sport that could be supported globally, at many different delivery levels. It is believed that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC; United Nations, 1989) provides a universal understanding, as well as, a universal standard, of children’s rights. As such, Article 19 of the Convention states that children are to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, and violence - without exception. As a result, this study refers to our obligation to protect children from abuse within youth sport.

Using the term child (any individual under the age 18, unless domestic law sets a lower age, David, 2005, pg.19.), as opposed to athlete (a child who participates in organized sport competitively, or otherwise), reminds adults that children are not
commodities, regardless of skill (Brackenridge, 2006; David, 2005; Weber, 2009).

Furthermore, we do not distinguish between children playing sports at an elite or non-
elite level. All children regardless of skill level deserve to have their rights protected in
youth sport environments (UNICEF, 2010). Abuse violates their rights and is, however,
a form of violence, as defined by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the UNCRC on November 20, 1989. It is the most ratified human rights treaty in the world. With only two exceptions
(U.S. and Somalia), 191 nations have become signees, indicating their commitment to
recognize children’s dignity and healthy development as a fundamental right (Canadian
Coalition on the Rights of the Child [CCRC], 2002). As mentioned, the UNCRC defines
a child as any person under the age of 18, unless age of majority, as defined in law, is
earlier (CCRC, 2002). A human rights approach acknowledges that there are certain
rights that are essential for a life of dignity, and that these rights are universal and
inalienable (UN, 1989).

As an international public law treaty, signees of the UNCRC agreed to
incorporate the provisions into national law, as well as, provide that institutions and
mechanisms are in place to ensure children’s rights are met and protected (CCRC, 2002;
David, 2005). Additionally, states that have ratified the treaty are obliged to report on their progress and efforts to implement the provisions and principles of the convention every five years. Although there is no direct reference to sport within the UNCRC, 37 of the 42 substantive provisions have a direct relevance to sport (David, 2005). Therefore, under domestic and international law, sport-governing bodies are obligated to protect the rights of child athletes (i.e., children participating in organized youth sport). The United Nations Education and Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognized sport as a “fundamental right for all” in 1978 (UNESCO, 1978). Although the principle of the best interests of the child is considered to be one of the overarching themes of all provisions of the UNCRC (David, 2005; Weber 2009), experts suggest that not enough is being done to ensure that children are protected from violence and abuse in youth sports (Brackenridge, 2007; David, 2005; Gervis, 2010; Kerr, 2010; UNICEF, 2010).

Unfortunately to date, there are no accountability measures in place to ensure that signees comply with their implementation obligations, and countries like Canada, for instance, have yet to incorporate the provisions and principles into national law (CCRC, 2011; Farstad, 2007; Weber, 2009), and as a result sport bodies are not legally obligated to enforce its provisions (Mazzucco, 2012). This is a serious problem because without some accountability the UNCRC’s effectiveness as a policy framework is greatly
diminished (Weber, 2009). Additionally, without measures of accountability, or measureable policy, there is little impetus to monitor and evaluate violence and abuse in youth sport. As evidence, the *World Report on Violence against Children*, published in 2006, contains very little information about violence against children in sport, despite being an extremely comprehensive document (UNICEF, 2006). Similarly, the recent UNICEF publication (2010), *Protecting children from violence in sport: A review with a focus on industrialized countries*, speculates on the apologia for lack of data regarding the prevalence of violence against children in youth sport. It appears that most research regarding coaching behaviours of violence and abuse toward children in youth sport has focused almost exclusively on sexual abuse (Brackenridge, 2006, 2007; Stirling, 2008), or it has been approached from a coaching efficacy perspective (Baker, Yardley, & Côté, 2003; Fung, 2003; Mallett & Côté, 2006; Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2007), without any recognition that the studied behaviours are in fact, abusive. Some researchers speculate that many of the negative coaching behaviours have become normalized in the youth sport environment (e.g., Bolter, 2010; Gervis, 2010; Gervis & Dunn, 2004; Stirling, 2008; Walters, Schluter, Thomson, & Payne, 2011), such that potentially abusive acts have become legitimized. In addition, there is an intense focus on the outcomes associated with elite child athletes (Brackenridge & Rhind, 2010; Fasting, Brackenridge,
& Sundgot-Borgen, 2004; Weber, 2009), representing but a minute percentage of those who participate in youth sports.

**Sport Culture and Policy Development for Coaches**

Well accepted is the notion that coaches are the most influential person with respect to children’s experiences in youth sport (Gervis, 2012; McCallister, Binde, & Weiss, 2000; Steelman, 1995; Telfer, 2012). At the same time, evidence suggests that (a) the coach’s philosophy is often inconsistent with their behaviour (Dorsch, Riemer, Zimmer, & Karreman, 2009; McCallister et al., 2000); (b) that poor coach behaviour is correlated with anti-social behaviour of participants (Rutten et al., 2007); and (c) current coach education models do little to provide coaches with an understanding of the impact their behaviours have on the experiences and outcomes of children and youth (Abraham, Collins, & Martindale, 2006; Telfer, 2012). Couple this knowledge with recent research indicating abusive coaching behaviours are normalized and legitimized by sport culture (Bolter, 2010; Gervis, 2010; Gervis & Dunn, 2004; Stirling, 2008; Stirling & Kerr, 2007; Walters et al., 2011), which subsequently provides a context for coach learning (Abraham et al., 2006), as well as, indications that close to 40% of all youth sport games contained reports of poor and very poor behaviours [potentially abusive behaviours;
Raakman, Dorsch, & Rhind (2010b) and it becomes evident that a legally enforceable policy framework that guides positive coaching behaviour is extremely important.

Although there is, now, a recognition amongst researchers and experts of a need for an internationally recognized code of conduct/policy framework to help govern and direct coaching behaviour (Brackenridge, 2007; David, 2005; Duffy, 2010; ICCE, 2010), for the most part we have bought into carefully crafted beliefs that shape the culture of sport, and dissuade critical assessment. To our detriment (as far as policy development is concerned) sport is often excluded from normative social and legal standards due to its perceived exceptionalism (Giulianotti, 2004), its inspirational role (Houlihan, Bloyce, & Smith, 2011), and its portrayal as a moral oasis (Brackenridge, 2006). There has been a historical and systematic failure to hold sport-governing bodies accountable due, in part, to these cultural myths (Forster, 2006). Some experts suggest that these myths perpetuate the power and autonomy of global sport organizations, which in turn, contributes to the lack of policy development and incentive to adopt a culture of rights (Coalter, 2007; Forster, 2006; Giulianotti, 2004). It has been suggested that truths about a particular culture are shaped and influenced by the actors and agencies that control the messages received by the public and that these biases and storylines control policy development because they influence what is measured (or not), and how (McGee &
Brock, 2001). In other words, it is difficult to separate policy from power and politics (Coleman, 1991), and this may be particularly true for sport.

Although policy is considered to be a rather ambiguous concept (Smoke, 1994; Torjman, 2005), its fundamental purpose is to effectuate a goal that serves the best interest of all members of society (Torjman). For example, clean air, clean water, positive educational experiences, low crime rates, civil society, healthy society, low poverty rates, are all broad societal goals. With the exception of clean air and clean water, many believe that sport positively influences all of these policy domains (Green, 2007), and as such sport is seen to have instrumental value (Houlihan, 2005). Another function of policy, (particularly important to the youth sport context) is that it provides essential guidelines for conduct and positively influences morality (Jonson, 2011; Michael, 2006). Michael suggests that in situations or conditions where there are differing perceptions of what is ethical, and values are personal and/or ambiguous (such as sporting contexts) that rules further the principle. Therefore, when both the instrumental value of sport (that is how sport helps us achieve those broad societal goals) and its moral ambiguity (the differing perceptions of what is or is not considered appropriate behaviour) are considered equally, the absolute necessity of coaching behaviour policies to further the principle of the best interests of the child (a human
rights approach) becomes evident. In other words, without a legally enforceable policy framework that guides positive coaching behaviour it is extremely difficult, if not near impossible, to support and adhere to defined principles, since coaches have been deemed, “the gatekeepers to the world of sport, and its moral implications” (Bailey, 2010, pg. 9).

Fortunately, there is a call of an international nature, as mentioned previously, to elevate the practice of sport policy by de-mythologizing sport (Brackenridge, 2006; Forster, 2006; Houlihan et al., 2011). Yet research suggests that as long as governments and global sport organizations control information and the storylines associated with sport, sport policy and sport development will continue to be a means for the personal agendas of those organizations, not the greater good of the public (Green, 2007; Houlihan, 2005, 2009; Sam & Jackson, 2004). As such, it is generally accepted that a *multiplistic approach*, (i.e., drawing from multiple methodologies, expertise, and stakeholder expertise), provides policy-makers with a richer source of data and information on which to base their solutions (Dunn, 2008; Green, 2007; Houlihan, 2005).

Considering the benefits of a multiplistic approach, some researchers recommend that more academic social scientists become involved in the sport policy process (Houlihan et al., 2011), and at the very least, that research provide the foundation for the development
and implementation of abuse prevention policies (Brackenridge, 2007). Others have
gone so far as to conclude that sport organizations have a responsibility to provide
programs that contribute to personal development, not simply athletically skilled
individuals, and that these efforts depend on, in part, policy-makers (Fraser-Thomas,
Côté, & Deakin, 2007). Specifically, to ensure success of these programs, they must
include more extensive coach training (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2007). Indeed, Duffy
(2010) vice president of the International Council of Coach Education (ICCE) suggests,
“(it) may then be necessary to formulate specific codes of conduct that make explicit the
behaviours which are and are not acceptable in given coaching roles” (pg. 14).

Interestingly, another piece of the policy development puzzle, intimately related
to concerns of the utility of the UNCRC as a policy framework, is monitoring and
evaluation (Weber, 2009). As mentioned earlier, the effectiveness of the UNCRC as a
legal, effective, policy framework is inherent in the obligations associated with
ratification, yet many signees have not incorporated the principles into national law
(CRC, 2002). Without a legal framework to guide policy development, and
accountability there is certainly no sense of urgency for sport governing bodies to
implement tools for monitoring and evaluation. This, while many experts (Brackenridge,
2007; David, 2005; UNICEF, 2010) have said that the pervasive lack of data with regard
to violence and abuse in the youth sport environment is a direct result of inadequate
monitoring and evaluation. Yet, both monitoring and evaluation are interdependent
components of policy analysis (Dunn, 2008). These policy analysis methods help to
create relevant policy information components such as: policy problems, expected policy
outcomes, preferred policies, observed policy outcomes, and policy performance (Dunn,
2008). Without this information variables that contribute to problems, and problems
themselves cannot be properly identified, and there is an increased risk of Type III errors
– solving the wrong problem (Dunn, 2008). In a nutshell, monitoring and evaluation
contribute to what Houlihan (2005) refers to as policy learning (long-term changes in
beliefs that are the result of experience and new information; Green, 2007), and are part
of the policy change process. To the extent that monitoring and evaluation are notably
absent from the youth sport domain, we should perhaps ask ourselves once again, if our
idealization and mythologizing of sport deemed them unnecessary?

In his seminal book, Human Rights in Youth Sport, A Critical Review of
Children’s Rights in Competitive Sports, Paulo David (2005) notes that the historical and
current lack of monitoring within the youth sport environment has created a “black hole
of data” (p. 9), which must be addressed to ensure that children’s rights are protected.
Through his identification of four primary forms of abuse in sport (i.e., physical, sexual,
psychological, and neglect) and his extensive review of the implications of these actions, he goes on to provide a table of 20 key obligations for stakeholders in youth sport (see Appendix A) and the corresponding provisions of the UNCRC that provide evidence for the necessity of the identified obligation. He suggests that these obligations are for coaches, volunteers, and professionals involved in youth sport. As an expert of children’s rights and application of the UNCRC, David has demonstrated the pertinence and value of using the UNCRC provisions as a legal framework for policy development with regard to coaching behaviours by showing the relationship between the relevant provision and the required action.

**Typology of Coaching Transgressions**

Based upon David’s (2005) identification of abuses present in youth sport and his human rights approach, the Typology of Coaching Transgressions model (TOCT) was developed by Raakman, Dorsch, and Rhind (2010a). Through an examination of comments provided by officials within the sports of ice hockey and soccer, Raakman et al. (2010a) discovered that David’s definition of abuse was too narrow. The subsequent TOCT model identifies two general categories of abuse: direct, and indirect. *Direct abuse* is defined as, any behaviour of the coach aimed directly at or involving a player(s) that violates the child in the following categories: physical, sexual, psychological,
neglectful, or inappropriate modeling. Excepting the addition of the final category, these actions are similar to those identified and explored in detail by David. The second category, *indirect abuse*, is defined as, any behaviour of the coach directed at any participant within the context of the event, that takes place in the presence of the player(s), and may violate their rights in the following categories: physical, sexual, psychological, neglect, or inappropriate modeling. This category was deemed important to add based on the knowledge about the effects of *background anger* (Omli & Lavoi, 2009) upon the psychological and physiological responses of children. Omli and Lavioi explain that background anger, defined as the presence of verbal, nonverbal, or physical conflict between two or more individuals that children witness as bystanders, is a concept that pervades family studies and was originally constructed by Cummings (1987). Because research indicates that much of the reported abuse in youth sport takes place between adults and is, naturally, witnessed by children (Shields, Bredemeier, Lavoi, & Power, 2005; Shields, Lavoi, Bredemeier, & Power, 2007), it is thought that youth sport events are a prime source of exposure to background anger. This concept provides a framework to help researchers investigate and predict the outcomes associated with short and long term exposure to these types of behaviours.
The modeling behaviour category is deemed important based on research which suggests that observational learning, or vicarious experience have powerful effects on an individual’s learning and perceptions of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1971, Wilson, 2010). Observational learning, vicarious experience and modeling are used interchangeably by Bandura (1971) and described as, learning that is acquired through the observations of the behaviours and an interpretation of what those consequences might mean personally. As such, is what children are observing or experiencing vicariously in their youth sport environment beneficial, or harmful; which leads to the question of what exactly is being modeled?

The concept of indirect abuse is also conceptually related to observational learning. As mentioned previously, indirect abuses are behaviours that are not experienced by children directly, but are behaviours that they observe, or are witness to on a persistent basis.

Five themes fall under both the direct and indirect categories: physical, sexual, psychological, neglect, and modeling. Identified coaching transgressions, or abuses, are classified under each of the ten categories according to how well they fit the definitions described in detail below.
**Direct physical.** This category is comprised of behaviours that include any use, encouragement, or reinforcement of inappropriate physical force or power, that is directed at/toward the player(s), that results in or may result in injury, death, harm, mal-development or deprivation, and/or loss of dignity.

**Direct sexual.** This category includes any form of sexual behaviour or verbal comments, directed at a player, whether intentional or not, which may be regarded by the person experiencing it, as undesired or forced.

**Direct psychological.** This category includes any action, directed at a player(s) that threatens or harms their physical, emotional, spiritual, moral, or social development and/or dignity.

**Direct neglect.** This category includes those behaviours of the coach that fail to provide reasonable care, discipline, protection, and attention that meets the player(s) physical and emotional developmental needs and preserves their dignity.

**Direct modeling.** This category includes those behaviours of the coach that involves, encourages, or reinforces unsportsmanship-like behaviour of the player(s).

**Indirect physical.** Behaviours within this category include the exposure of player(s) to behaviours of the coach that include use, encouragement, or reinforcement of inappropriate physical force or power.
Indirect sexual. Behaviours within this category include the exposure of player(s) to any behaviours by the coach, physical or verbal, that could be perceived as having a sexual connotation.

Indirect psychological. Behaviours within this category include the exposure of player(s) to any verbal or behavioral action by the coach that is or may be psychologically, emotionally, morally, spiritually, or socially harmful to any participant.

Indirect neglect. Behaviours within this category include the exposure of player(s) to behaviours by the coach that demonstrate a failure to provide reasonable care, discipline, protection, and attention to meet the needs of other players and other participants.

Indirect modeling. Behaviours within this category include the exposure of player(s) to behaviours of the coach that involve, encourage, or reinforce poor sportsmanship.

This typology provides a framework within which coaching abuses can be classified, thusly providing a system of monitoring and data capture sorely missing in the literature. By classifying coaching abuses one can identify which corresponding UNCRC articles the abuse violates, providing researchers and administrators with a better understanding of systemic weaknesses, which in turn, enables more strategic and
effective responses to identified problems. Additionally the model assists our understanding of the types of abuse to which children are exposed, as well as, conditions that may contribute to violence and abuse.

**The Practical Application of Behavioural Typologies**

A particular position or approach to problem solving, or problem structuring, as part of the policy analysis process, requires information (Dunn, 2008). For example, the position presented in this paper suggests that by using the framework of the UNCRC to guide policy and program development (using a human rights approach), as well as, provide a context for evaluation and monitoring for youth sport, we can maintain a sporting environment that not only protects the rights of children (their physical, emotional, and psychological safety), but essentially guides the behaviours of the adults who design, implement, and manage these environments. However, in order to make recommendations such as these, an in-depth analysis and evaluation of behaviours, culture, and situational data are essential. According to Iriti and Dickel (2005) a typology assists in providing this information. In fact, Torr (2008) submits that there are differing approaches to understanding the nature or culture of the social world, and to affect social transformation and create politically engaged knowledge to facilitate that transformation, it is important to discern the implications of particular interventions.
Similar to Iriti and Dickle, Torr recognizes that a typology is a tool that allows researchers to measure empirically the reality of group behaviours, or identify systems of beliefs. Although some argue that typologies are “merely heuristic devices” (Mozak, 1979, p. 192) which aid to stimulate further research and investigation, those of us concerned with the conceptualization of behavioural themes that are present in the youth sport culture find them to be practical devices that help to develop general knowledge and core themes. Through the analysis of content, which helps to construct typologies, the storylines of the culture are identified (Smith & Sparkes, 2005).

Recognizing that the storylines of youth sport are not all of an exceptional or inspirational nature is an important first step toward acknowledging that there are coaching behaviour problems in youth sport, and as a result children’s rights may not be protected, nor are their experiences as positive as they should be. The second step is to identify, quantify, and classify the behaviours that detract from the positive storyline, for the purpose of developing prevention strategies, as well as, interventions designed to educate and support leadership development. Brackenridge and Fasting (2009), assert that typologies have educational value because they alert us to behaviours that might otherwise escape our attention, and “as yet, however, we know relatively little about the characteristics of the harassing coach” (p. 22). Therefore, the typology can be used, as
Brackenridge and Fasting suggest, as a pedagogic tool, especially with regard to human
rights for athletes, in that it facilitates the investigation of abusive coaching behaviours,
and allows the re-scripting of inappropriate behaviours.

**Purpose**

To summarize, the purpose of this project is to investigate the nature and scope of
coaching abuses in the youth team sport environment using the Typology of Coaching
Transgressions (TOCT) as a framework to categorize inappropriate coaching behaviours
from a multi-sport perspective.
Chapter 3

Method

The methodology of this study is consistent with a basic, classical ethnographic approach (Whitehead, 2005), and as such, is interpretive, reflexive, and constructivist with regards to the epistemological and ontological orientations. It must be noted that a key principle of ethnography is methodological flexibility (Whitehead, 2002).

Specifically this study uses Whitehead’s (2005) *cultural systems paradigm* (CSP), which promotes a holistic study of the culture in question, based on five principles:

1. The Principle of Universal Human Cultural Categories - there are nine categories of phenomena (Appendix E) that are universally relevant to human communities, but that these communities (cultures) can express these phenomena differently.

2. The Principle of Interindividual and Intergroup Variations in Expression - referring simply to the fact that these nine categories are often expressed differently cross-culturally.

3. The Principle of Paradigmatic Flexibility - this principle affirms the necessity of a flexible conceptual framework.

4. The Principle of the Interrelationship between Socio-cultural Contexts,
Processes, and Meaning Systems - this principle suggests that, the socio-cultural contexts, processes, and meanings are a necessary component to understanding particular behaviours.

5. The Principle of “Holism” in Meaning Systems - poses that social systems can contribute to the expression of behaviours through socialization and feedback which then reinforces those behaviours.

In particular, the CSP examines individual and shared behaviour patterns, as well as idea systems (knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and values) held by individuals and groups. This methodological approach allows for the investigation of patterns of coaching behaviours across various sports (cultures), as well as, those patterns that emerge across all sports, while allowing for flexibility of the conceptual model (TOCT model). Finally, it encourages a greater understanding of the social and cultural contexts under investigation; which in turn can better inform knowledge claims (Sandberg, 2005). Principles one and two helped to shape the framework of this project. While principle one states that a cultural system includes individual and normative behaviour patterns, principle two states that the researcher must understand the different ways in which these behaviours contribute to the expression of culture across groups and individuals in the group under investigation.
In 2001 Raakman (2006), designed a tool to monitor the behaviours of coaches, players, spectators, and officials in team sport environments. This tool, the Justplay Behaviour Management Program (JPBMP), involves the sport official as an observer to provide data about the game environment, on a game-by-game basis. As such, the official is seen as part of the ethnographic team, imbedded in the field as participant, observer, and contextual expert. Involving the officials as the source of our qualitative observations increases the *emic validity* (i.e., the opportunity for repetitive, iterative, and situational observations that are culturally and intrinsically distinct and meaningful to the members of a given society; Whitehead, 2002) of the data, since only the members of a given culture can provide emically valid descriptions (Lett, 2012; Whitehead, 2005). The emic validity is further enhanced by the repetitive, iterative observations that are collected from the officials throughout the season, on a game-by-game basis. Although Raakman developed the instrument to collect the officials’ observations, the observations themselves are completely subjective and independent, unique to each sport organization, thus meeting the parameters of principles three and four of the CSP, which state that it is important to understand the social and cultural context in order to understand the behaviours associated with that context and it is important to maintain a flexible framework.
Voluntary users of the JPBM, typically sport organizations, paid a nominal fee for JP services, enabling the administrators to access a library of graphs and reports that allows the identification of behavioural trends (positive and negative), and variables that contribute to those trends, within their unique sport culture. This information enables administrators to make data-driven staffing and policy decisions regarding any action or inaction necessary to respond to, anticipate, or avoid problematic behaviour within their environments.

Alongside this applied purpose, the data can also be used for research to examine and explore the culture of the youth sport environment. Consequently, the method used for this study was a secondary analysis of data collected by Justplay from 2005 to 2008. A secondary data analysis uses quantitative or qualitative data that already exists, for some other purpose (Andrews, Higgins, Waring Andrews, & Lalor, 2012). Despite some skeptics who site ethical and epistemological concerns of secondary analysis, there are also many supporters, and reasons for conducting secondary analyses (Mason, 2007). Advantages include: analyzing data with the perspective of achieving new insights (Fielding, 2004), the ability to verify original research and increase transparency (Andrews et al., 2012), the increased ability to help identify knowledge gaps in particular research topics (Whitehead, 2005), and the reduced cost associated with data collection.
(Corti, 2008). Limitations to the use of secondary data analysis might include concerns about the ethics and epistemological practicality of re-using qualitative data (Mason, 2007). For this study in particular, the age of the data (between 5 and 8 years) may also be considered a limitation. The remainder of this section will describe the JPBMP in more detail, as well as, the procedures associated with data analysis.

**Instrumentation**

As stated previously, the JPBMP collects and assesses data input from the game official. Due to the unique contribution and legally required presence of game officials, they are considered the most appropriate and reliable source of data for many reasons. In particular: (a) their role is to ensure that the game is played as fairly as possible; (b) they are the only participant group with no stake in the outcome of the game; (c) they are the only participant group that is systematically accountable for their level of expertise; (d) they are paid for their impartiality and independent services; and (e) their presence contributes to the safety of the participants. For these reasons the JPBMP enlists the officials to independently monitor the conduct/behaviour of participant groups.

Upon registration in the JPBMP system, officials are made aware that the data they provide are the property of the JPBMP and may be used for research purposes. Following every game, each participating official, regardless of their role (linesman,
head referee, etc.) independently fills out a Justplay Conduct Report Card (JPRC). At
the beginning of the season officials receive their JPRC in a pad format. Depending on
the sport, there can be as few as one card per game, or as many as represented by the
total number of officials involved in the game (e.g., one to three officials per ice hockey
game). Game schedules are uploaded into the system and cards are attached to each
game, corresponding with the number of officials required for each game. Official

_compliance rates_ (the percentage of officials reporting) are then computed based on the
number of cards submitted as compared to the number of cards available in the system.
All ratings are cross-tabulated against the official’s age, years of experience, and level of
certification, as well as the role they played within the game.

The official uses the JPRC to keep track of ratings for the overall behaviour of
coaches, players, and spectators of the home team and visiting team on a 1 _Very Good_ to
5 _Very Poor_ Likert scale. Officials can then enter the ratings on their card into the
Justplay database, via a password protected website, at a time that is convenient to them.
Officials are also provided with a space to write comments that help to elucidate their
observations. Ratings of 4 _Poor_ and 5 _Very Poor_, are identified as _critical incidents_.
These ratings are identified as critical incidents within the JBMP because they are the
behaviours that the officials perceive to exceed the normative expectations within the
sport and thus, potentially, have a negative (or critical) impact on the sport environment.

The officials are not aware of the critical incident classification; they simply provide a rating based on their subjective experience. For the purposes of this study only cards containing comments that identify poor or very poor coaching conduct were considered because at this time it is only the negative and potentially abusive behaviours that are of interest in terms of classification.

**Sample**

For the purposes of this study, a purposive sample of football, baseball, basketball, and ice hockey data were extracted from the JPBMP database. The development of the TOCT model described in the introductory section (Raakman et al., 2010a) categorized comments from two ice hockey organizations and one soccer organization, therefore the opportunity to select different sports to further investigate the nature of poor coaching behaviours through the use of the TOCT model was perceived to be a logical next step, consistent with the advantages of secondary data analyses, and the principles of the CSP. At the same time a third ice hockey association was included because the opportunity to expand and explore our understanding of coach behaviour in this youth sport environment is available and pertinent. In the previous study associations were selected with specific considerations regarding representativeness of
age (divisions), and skill (leagues). Similarly, organizations selected for this study have comparable age divisions and skill levels (leagues). Additionally, each of the selected organizations represents centers of varying demographic size, and geography. For example, baseball is from a small town (<20,000), football is from a large urban center (700,000), as is basketball (>1,000,000), and ice hockey heralds from a moderately sized center (<200,000). The baseball, football, and ice hockey associations are from central Canada, while the basketball association is located in western Canada. Although each of the currently selected sports has multiple years of data, their relative small size, compared to hockey and soccer (within the JPBMP system) make them manageable for a study of this nature. Each of the selected organizations includes participants from 8 year olds to 16 and 17 year olds. For privacy reasons JPBMP does not collect any personal data regarding coaches.

The utility of the JBMP depends upon the compliance of the officials in completing the cards. Compliance is calculated by dividing the total number of cards available to officials by the actual number of cards filled out by officials. Every game has a number of cards associated with it. The number of cards per game is equal to the number of officials participating in the game, regardless of the role they play within the game. Once the data are entered into the system the role of the official is correlated with
their data points, which is to say that we investigate official ratings with respect to the role they play within the context of the game. For example, is the official a referee, or a linesman, and does that make a difference?

**Fieldwork Team**

As mentioned earlier, the sport official is the trained observer, or contextual expert, and is considered part of our ethnographic team. Details about the officials providing comments for the study are provided in Table 1. Responses by gender, while interesting, will not be conducted in this study due to the low number of female participants in the fieldwork team.

Table 1

*Demographic description of Officials in the Fieldwork Team*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Number of Officials</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
<th>Average Experience</th>
<th>Number of Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data

Data for this study were extracted from the JPBMP database for two ice hockey associations (hockey association A, and hockey association B), one basketball association, one baseball association, and one youth football association. Hockey association A had 46 comments from 2005 to 2007, with a general compliance rate of 100%, while hockey association B had 42 comments from the 2005 season, with a general compliance rate of 40%. The basketball association had 57 comments from seasons 2005 (18% compliance rate) and 2006 (9% compliance rate). The football association had 20 comments from seasons 2005 (86% compliance rate), 2006 (19% compliance rate), and 2007 (86% compliance rate). Finally the baseball association had just 8 comments from seasons 2005 (86% compliance rate), and 2007 (86% compliance rate). A total of 164 comments from these four sports were examined.

Procedure

Following approval (Appendix C) for a secondary analysis of data by the University of Regina’s Research Ethics Board, the researcher deductively analyzed the 164 official comments concerning inappropriate coaching behaviours using the discreet higher and lower order categories of the Typology of Coaching Transgressions (TOCT) model (Raakman et al., 2010a). In addition, two independent raters were asked to
identify and classify all behaviours, in order to enhance credibility and validity of the TOCT model. Elliot (1999) suggests that it is valuable to provide credibility checks when performing qualitative studies by using multiple qualitative analysts, as well as, triangulating results with quantitative data. At the same time, involving other researchers helps to establish what is known as communicative validity. By discussing research findings with other research partners, an intersubjectivity is introduced which helps to affirm the claims of the original researcher (Sandberg, 2005).

It may seem, at first glance, that the structural analysis approach of deductively classifying behaviours extracted from the officials’ comments into the pre-existing categories (Côté, Salmela, & Baria, 1993) of the TOCT model is inconsistent with an ethnographic approach; however, it has been argued that ethnography is not strictly an inductive process (Herbert, 2000), nor must researchers gather data without a conceptual framework (Burowoy, 1991). In fact emic knowledge (i.e., examining culture through the examination of routinized patterns of behaviour identified by participants of said culture; Whitehead, 2005), can be informed by etic knowledge (i.e., the extrinsic categories given meaning by researchers; Lett, 2012). Lett also asserts that etic knowledge, provided by the framework of the TOCT model, is essential for cross-cultural comparisons, which is of course, an inherent purpose of this thesis – to investigate whether negative behaviour
patterns of coaches in different sport environments (cultures) are universal across sports or particular to each sport.

The two independent raters were sent instructions (Appendix D) and an Excel spreadsheet containing five pages, each page representing a different sport. The raters were not informed about which comments came from which sports. Each page contained four columns. The first column contained the comments made by sport officials about coaches from those games identified as having critical incidents. The second column titled Behaviours, the third column titled Direct/Indirect, and the fourth column titled Phys/Sex/Psych/Neg/Mod, were blank. The researcher met each rater via Skype to confirm receipt of the instructions and answer any initial questions. Raters were asked to carefully read and understand the behaviour definitions (see Appendix C) before attempting to identify and classify the behaviours. First, the raters were asked to extract the behaviours from each comment and place them in column two. Identifying the specific behaviours within each comment was an important first step as each comment could identify more than one behaviour. Each behaviour was then classified as either Direct or Indirect. The same behaviour was then classified into one of the following categories: physical, sexual, psychological, neglect, modeling. Table 2 provides the higher and lower order themes of the TOCT model as they were presented.
to the raters for definition purposes. An example was provided. Raters were asked to identify and classify about 10% of the comments on each page, at which point a Skype meeting was scheduled to review instructions, discuss problems, and provide clarifications. At this point the instructions were amended to provide further detail and one further example. Once the classifications were completed the researcher reviewed them in detail, making notes where discrepancies were found. The classifications were then returned to each rater and they were free to amend their classification choices or not. At the end of the process each rater was asked for feedback and suggestions regarding: (a) whether or not the higher order themes (Direct/Indirect) and the lower order themes (physical, psychological, neglect and modeling) were representative of the behaviours; (b) any necessary edits to definitions; and (c) general observations.
Table 2

Typology of Coaching Transgressions: Higher and Lower Order Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Coaching Transgression</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Direct physical abuse        | • justification of player’s behaviour  
|                               | • reinforcing injurious behaviour  
|                               | • encouraging fighting or physical behaviour |
| Direct psychological abuse   | • yelling/swearing at players  
|                               | • demoralization  
|                               | • running up the score  
|                               | • justifying racial slurs  
|                               | • taunting fans  
|                               | • threatening own player |
| Direct neglect                | • lack of discipline/control  
|                               | • lack of care |
| Direct modeling behaviours    | • deliberate breaking of rules using players |
| Indirect physical abuse      | • involvement in physical behaviours  
|                               | • throwing objects at officials  
|                               | • threatening behaviour |
| Indirect psychological abuse | • harassment of officials  
|                               | • yelling at others  
|                               | • challenging calls  
|                               | • abusive behaviour  
|                               | • foul language/emotional displays  
|                               | • removal from game  
|                               | • intimidation |
| Indirect Neglect              | • insinuating a player is not injured |
| Indirect modeling behaviours  | • penalization of coach  
|                               | • disrespect of officials, game, and opponents  
|                               | • general negative behaviour/poor sportsmanship  
|                               | • lack of rule knowledge |
Chapter 4

Results

Interrater Reliability

To help determine the reliability of the TOCT model as a means of identifying abusive coaching behaviours a number of inter rater reliability (IRR) tests were performed. Reliability is generally established when repeated measurements of an objective reality produce results that are similar (Sandberg, 2005). Often times agreement between raters is given as a percentage, although this is not currently considered best practice, as it fails to control for chance agreement (Ostrav & Hart, 2012). As such it was deemed more appropriate to provide a more accurate value with regard to rater agreement, since it is important to establish that raters can independently reach similar conclusions about the data (Hallgren, 2012). The IRR is a manner of quantifying the level of agreement between independent raters or coders (Hallgren, 2012). For this study an IRR assessment was done to determine the degree of agreement between the three coders [one coder was the original researcher, one coder was a university professor, and one coder was a masters student] with regard to the higher order themes of direct and indirect. However, for the first and third tasks assigned to the raters (identifying behaviours and classifying them into the lower order themes) an
intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) was computed because behaviours could not be formatted in a manner required to tabulate a Kappa coefficient, which is most commonly used for categorical data (Ostrov & Hart, 2012).

An IRR was assessed using a mixed, agreement, average-measures ICC (Hallgren, 2012) to assess the degree to which raters had absolute agreement with respect to the identification of behaviours according to the definitions provided. The resulting ICC was in the excellent range, ICC = 1.00, indicating that coders had a very high degree of agreement and identified behaviours in all sports similarly. The high ICC also suggests, that a minimal amount of measurement error was introduced by the independent coders, and therefore statistical power for subsequent analysis is not substantially reduced (Hallgren, 2012). The definitions are therefore deemed to be suitable for the identification of coaching abuses.

An IRR analysis was also performed to assess the degree that the coders agreed absolutely on the categorical ratings of each behaviour as direct or indirect. Kappa was computed for each rater pair then averaged to provide a single index of IRR (Light, 1971). The resulting kappa, κ = .965, indicates excellent agreement between raters with regard to the categorization of behaviours into the higher order themes, direct and indirect.
Finally, as mentioned, an interclass correlation was also performed to assess the degree of agreement between the raters for the categorization of behaviours into the lower order themes: psychological, physical, neglect, modeling, and sexual. The IRR was assessed as a mixed, agreement, average measures ICC. The resulting ICC was also in the excellent range, ICC = .989, indicating the raters had a very high degree of agreement and categorized behaviours similarly into the lower order themes. This suggests that the lower order themes, with their corresponding definitions, fully capture identified coaching behaviours.

**Prevalence of Negative Coaching Behaviours (TOCT classifications)**

Results of the percentage of behaviours classified into each of the lower order themes (psychological, physical, modeling, neglect, and sexual) can be seen in Figure 1. For comparison purposes Figure 1 provides the results of the initial TOCT classification (Raakman et al., 2010a), as well as the results for the current classification.
Figure 1. Prevalence of Negative Coaching Behaviours from Two Analyses

Note: A = Cook, Dorsch & Rhind, 2013; B = Cook, Dorsch & Rhind, 2010
Table 3 presents a summary of the classification of behaviours by sports examined in this study. A number of relevant observations are important to highlight. First, across all sports, indirect coaching abuses outnumber direct coaching abuses, $\chi^2 (3, 255) = .18.52, p = .000$. Secondly, the two contact sports, hockey and football, contain a greater number of direct abuses as compared to the non-contact sports of baseball and basketball, $\chi^2 (1, 255) = 10.79, p = .001$, and although the numbers are relatively small they also contain a greater number of neglect behaviours, $\chi^2 (3, 255) = 9.27, p = .026$ (two cells had less than 5 behaviours). Finally, negative psychological and modeling behaviours are the greatest percentage of all behaviours across all sports (43.5% and 44.7% respectively).
Table 3

*Total Averaged Number of Abusive Behaviours by Sport*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hockey</th>
<th>Basketball</th>
<th>Football</th>
<th>Baseball</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviours</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>57 (43%)</td>
<td>38 (48%)</td>
<td>13 (39%)</td>
<td>2 (22%)</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling</td>
<td>57 (43%)</td>
<td>36 (45%)</td>
<td>14 (42%)</td>
<td>6 (42%)</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>17 (13%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>6 (18%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>2 (.01%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>.3 (&lt;1%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5

Discussion

That there is a gap in our understanding of the culture of abuse in youth sport is understood and supported by research (Bissell, 2012; Brackenridge, Kay, & Rhind, 2012). As knowledge gaps support, in particular, the use of secondary analyses (Whitehead, 2005), the aim of this study included a secondary analysis of data across multiple sports (ice hockey, basketball, football, and baseball) in order to determine the extent of abusive coaching behaviours that occur in sports. Second to this primary purpose was the investigation of the reliability of the TOCT model as a means of identifying abusive coaching behaviours in these sports. The framework of the CSP permits us to identify the results of the TOCT classification as a cultural system since it assumes that the individual (the coach) is part of a larger social system (sport; Whitehead, 2002). The results help us to define the cultural system of sport by identifying what these behaviours are, how they are carried out, where they occur, who is responsible, and whether or not they are normalized or routinized (Whitehead, 2002).

During this classification process an average of 255 behaviours were identified from 164 comments across four different sports, with an average of 198 indirect behaviours (77%) and 58 (23%) direct behaviours. Although the numbers vary
somewhat from the first classification using the TOCT model (Raakman et al., 2010a), the distribution pattern of behaviours found in this study is very similar. The most notable difference perhaps is the similarity between indirect psychological and indirect modeling in this classification. Although consistent with the previous classification in that these are the categories with the highest prevalence; in the previous classification a greater number of behaviours were classified as indirect psychological (approximately 53%, compared with 38% in the current classification). Similarly, the indirect modeling category contained 37% of behaviours previously, while it contains 27% of behaviours in this classification. Despite the difference, these statistics indicate that children are exposed to harmful behaviours within youth sport at a rate far greater than previously thought. Perhaps a more important observation that is of value to the youth sport environment is the type of negative coaching behaviours implied by these categories. These categories identify the types of harmful behaviours which are commonly normalized within the youth sport environment and as such are not recognized as harmful (i.e., harassing officials, yelling at officials, challenging calls, abusive behaviour, foul language/emotional displays, removal from game, intimidation) but have been identified as such by the TOCT model (Raakman et al., 2010a) and the UNCRC. Within the framework of the CSP, these types of behaviours can be considered to be part
of the youth sport culture, culturally reinforced, and expressed in similar ways across numerous sports. According to the results of this study, the behaviours are not unique to a particular sport.

In a previous study, Raakman and colleagues (2010b) reported that close to 40% of youth sport games contained reports of poor (4 on the JBMP Likert scale) and very poor coaching behaviours (5 on the JBMP Likert scale). These ratings are identified as critical incidents within the JBMP because they are the behaviours that have a critical (negative, as perceived by the official) impact on the sport environment. They also suggested that perhaps previous estimates suggesting that approximately 10% of games contain abusive behaviours (David, 2005) were low because they failed to include indirect abuses. In fact, when research investigating violence and abuse in youth sport is examined using the perspectives of direct and indirect abuse, it is evident that most are an investigation of direct abuse, that is, abuse that was directed at and experienced directly by the child, rather than abuses the children unwittingly experience as witnesses, or observers.

Indirect abuses were a concept identified by Raakman et al., (2010a) during the development of the TOCT model when it became apparent that a large majority of problematic behaviours could not be classified into commonly established categories.
Instead of negative coaching behaviours being directed at the children, children experienced these behaviours as unwitting witnesses, iteratively, over the course of their season. Similar to the concept of background anger introduced into the sport world by Omli and Lavoi (2009), indirect abuse can have serious long-term negative consequences on the psyche of children. Omli and Lavoi (2009) used the concept of background anger (Cummings, 1987), a familiar concept in family studies, to introduce the idea that children are witnessing conflict in youth sport. However, there are other research programs that extol the harmful effects of observational learning of violence. For example, Bushman and Huesmann (2006) suggest that persistent observation of violence can bias children’s world-view toward hostility and increases the likelihood that they will adopt more hostile behaviours. Additionally, they suggest that the more the child’s attention is focused on the observed behaviour, fewer repetitions are required to have a negative impact.

With this in mind, the significance of the results of this study becomes apparent. The suggestion that 10% of children are exposed to violence and abuse within youth sport (David, 2005) is based on estimates of direct abuse, although this is, of course not specified within studies. However, 10% is less than half of the direct abuses identified in this study (21%), and far less than the 18% of direct abuses identified in the first TOCT
classification, suggesting that abusive coaching behaviours are far more prevalent than previously estimated. This concern is sadly magnified once indirect abuses are factored into the equation.

**Implications**

**For research.** The implications of this study for research could be profound, illustrated perhaps by a contextually similar situation that involves the defining of emotional abuse. For example, when emotional abuse is measured by the harm standard (the child must have suffered demonstrable harm), the rates of abuse were approximately 3.0 per 1,000; however, when the endangerment standard (children not yet harmed, but in danger of harm as a result of maltreatment) is used, there was an increase of 183% in rates of emotional abuse (Loue, 2005). Similarly, when indirect abuse is measured in the youth sport environment, it is safe to suggest that close to 100% of children are exposed since these behaviours are generally public. For researchers then it becomes a question of expanding our narrow definitions based more on ‘the best interests of the child’ rather than research rhetoric.

**The cultural systems paradigm.** With respect to research, the CSP framework (Whitehead, 2002) aids in our deciphering and understanding of the cultural system in sports and which aspects of that system are sport specific and which aspects are
generalizable to sport. The limited number of comments from this study prohibit any real generalization at this point in time, although, combined with data and observations from the original TOCT classification some pertinent observations regarding the culture of youth sport can be seen as emerging.

According to the first principle of the CSP (Whitehead, 2002), a cultural system includes individual and normative behaviour patterns. The TOCT model describes what these behaviours and behaviour patterns are (content). The officials’ comments provide details regarding the identified behaviours that describe how these behaviours are carried out (method), where these behaviours take place (within the particular sport environment), when the behaviours occur (before, during, or immediately following the game), and we can begin to see through our quantitative interpretation of the data whether or not these behaviours are routinized. How behaviours are interpreted helps to frame the shared value system of the social system, and importantly, social systems deemed important (like sport) generate or produce culture by reinforcing behaviour patterns by their responses to particular behaviours.

The second principle of the CSP suggests that it is the role of the researcher to discern the different ways in which the culture is expressed across various groups and/or individuals within the group/community under investigation. Importantly, the data
discovered by the present research suggest that the types of harmful behaviours are those that are commonly normalized within the youth sport environment and as such are not recognized as harmful (i.e., harassing officials, yelling at officials, challenging calls, abusive behaviour, foul language/emotional displays, removal from game, intimidation). Unfortunately, they are strikingly similar between sports. It needs to be emphasized as well, that the behaviours examined in this study were those identified by contextual experts within the field of play (i.e., the official) as unacceptable. While this research project was described as a classic ethnographic approach, it was somewhat innovative in that our trained observers were already embedded in the culture, and are completely independent from both the researcher and the sport participant groups. So, while the officials are privy to the cultural norms surrounding behaviours within each of the sport subcultures, even they deemed these behaviours as “over the top”. Although there are distinct advantages to using the sport official as our observer, it should be noted that as an intimate element of the sport environment they may also be conditioned to negative coaching behaviours, and as a result, could be under reporting. However, research by Walters et al. (2011) indicated that referees were better at identifying inappropriate behaviours, identifying significantly more, within the youth sport environment than coaches.
Within the framework of the CSP then, these types of behaviours are considered to be part of the youth sport culture and expressed in similar ways across numerous sports. While the pattern of negative coaching behaviours was not unique to a particular sport, it was found that coaches in contact sports (i.e., ice hockey and football) were attributed with more direct coaching transgressions than coaches in non-contact sports. Since the CSP framework suggests that behaviours are reinforced and supported by the particular culture, it could be that the increased physicality of contact sports legitimizes this type of direct negative coaching behaviour (see Table 2 for examples of individual behaviours). More research into this area is most certainly necessary and warranted in order to “expose what is normal” (Walters et al., 2011), for research suggests that children to do not perceive these coaching behaviours as ‘abuse’, but consider them to be normal (John & Johns, 2000).

**For practitioners.**

*The human rights perspective, and policy development.* According to Article 19 of the UNCRC (UN, 1989), which states in part: ‘… Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measure to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence…” all forms of violence must include direct, as
well as, indirect abuses. Mental violence has been interpreted to mean psychological and emotional abuse (David, 2005; Gervis, 2010, 2012). As our understanding of the types, scope, culture, and outcomes of abuse of child sport participants continues to grow, evidence suggests that in particular, psychological and emotional abuse (Gervis, 2012; Stirling & Kerr, 2012) as well as, the influence of modeling behaviours (Walters et al., 2011; Ciairano et al., 2007) can have quite profound negative implications for these children. Evidence also suggests that psychological abuse is less likely to be included in policy for safeguarding children (Mazzucco, 2012). Nonetheless, in response to our increasing understanding of abuse within youth sport, there has been an increase in efforts to address child welfare and protection concerns (UNICEF, 2012). Recently, the Beyond Sport Summit (Davey & Tiivas, 2012) produced a set of international standards for protecting children in sport, that will be piloted across the United Kingdom in 2013, and these standards reflect the rights of children as outlined in the UNCRC. Child protection is simply a best practice (Boocok, 2012), and the UNCRC serves as a universal and unique tool that can provide a moral and legal framework for effective child protection policy.

However, applied implications of this research is still puerile, due in part to the resistance of sport governing bodies, and sport culture, to recognize the problem
(Mazzucco, 2012). As such, it is imperative that the normative behaviour patterns that violate children’s rights, and are culturally significant to sport, be much better understood. This understanding can then inform a policy development model that includes monitoring and evaluation, at provincial, national, and international levels of governance.

**Future Research**

As is often the case, or even the objective of qualitative research, this study provides hypotheses for future research (Gilgun, 2005). The following is not an exhaustive list, but represents areas of interest to the author and colleagues:

1. Coaching behaviours identified as *poor* or *very poor* by the officials from team sports not represented in the TOCT model will further support the model.

2. Coaching behaviours identified as *poor* or *very poor* by officials in other countries will further support the TOCT model, and be similar.

3. Indirect abuse has been culturally normalized in youth sport contexts here, and globally.

4. International standards designed to protect the rights of children (safeguard) will have nominal effect without monitoring and evaluation.
Future research should also examine the operational definitions of the TOCT model categories, especially with respect to the rights of children. The effect of any education and awareness programs should also be investigated with respect to their impact on coaching behaviours, the culture of sport, and participant outcomes.

**Limitations**

The first limitation of this study would be the age of the data, which is between eight and five years old. It has been suggested that perhaps, in the intervening years educational and awareness programs have positively influenced coaching behaviours and as a result, the data are not representative of these sports today. While the legitimacy of this limitation is true, given the number of reports in the recent media of abuses perpetrated by coaches and others within the sport world, it is believed that these improvements have, sadly, not occurred.

Secondly, the categories of the TOCT model are not mutually exclusive. For example all behaviour could be considered indirect abuse within the youth sport environment because it occurs publicly. However, the IRR results suggest that the definitions of the model, and examples provided an excellent framework for the raters. It may be helpful however, to further test the model with a greater number of raters. The
strength of the TOCT model lies in its ability to identify coaching behaviours. The effect of these behaviours on the children is an area of future study.

Thirdly, the researcher made the assumption that behaviours identified by the officials as poor and very poor, were abusive, using definitions of abuse described in detail earlier in the paper. There may be a better term that would be more helpful with regard to practical applications and working with youth sport stakeholders.

Finally, as discussed previously, the low number of comments for some of the sports, combined with low compliance rates in some years, is a limitation that restricts any generalization at this time. It would benefit future research to expand the scope of this investigation to more sports including those in which participation (e.g., gymnastics, wrestling) is on an individual basis.

Summary

The original development of the TOCT model was both an inductive and deductive process (Raakman et al., 2010a), while the process for this study was completely deductive – the raters were asked to identify behaviours according to predefined categories, and then place those behaviours into pre-defined categories. In keeping with a flexible, ethnographic methodology the researcher was prepared to redefine, add, or eliminate categories as deemed necessary by the raters. It was
determined, unanimously, through conversations and reflection that, a particular
behaviour identified as *complaining*, needed to be categorized more definitively. There
was some discussion as to whether the behaviour should be categorized as psychological
or modeling. As a result, the researcher added the category ‘complaining’ to the indirect
modeling category.

In conclusion, excellent inter rater reliability statistics, combined with inherent
emic validity, have helped to confirm the TOCT model as a valuable tool for identifying
and understanding the extent of abusive behaviours and behaviour patterns of coaches in
youth sport. This type of descriptive study is a necessary first step when our
understanding of particular phenomena and concepts within complex socio-cultural
environments is weak or uninformed. The innovative data collection process involving
contextual experts has helped to elucidate patterns of behaviour, and inform new
concepts of abuse within youth sport. In conclusion, we now understand that negative
(and abusive) coaching behaviours occur at an alarming and consistent rate across
numerous sports. It is now time to do something about it.
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**Appendix A**

**Key obligations and relevant Convention provisions (David, 2005, pp. 226)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Convention provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that the sport system, including programmes, rules and regulations are child-sensitive</td>
<td>Articles 3, 12 and 31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss and respect the objectives of young athletes, even if, for them, fun is considered more important than winning. Seek their opinion in all decision-making processes, and take them duly into account</td>
<td>Articles 3, 12 and 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect the physical, sexual and psychological integrity of the child</td>
<td>Article 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never discriminate against an athlete</td>
<td>Article 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect the dignity of the child; do not abuse power</td>
<td>Articles 3 and 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a healthy environment conducive to the holistic development of the child</td>
<td>Articles 3 and 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that athletes receive sound and appropriate training, advice and guidance from competent individuals</td>
<td>Articles 5 and 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect the child’s right to participate in training programmes and competitions adapted to his or her capacities. Never force a child to train or compete.</td>
<td>Articles 3, 6, 12 and 31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always first consider the child and his or her human rights before looking at the champion</td>
<td>Article 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect the right to health of athletes, including with regard to doping</td>
<td>Article 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect the right of young athletes to education; encourage young athletes to gain positive educational achievements</td>
<td>Article 28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Respect the right to rest of the child  

Do not impose commercial commitments on young athlete, except when proven to be in their best interests  

Ensure that sport is practiced in a culture of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, friendship and fair play among all people  

Accept that sport programmes are periodically and independently monitored and that athletes are given access to an appropriate complaint mechanism  

Keep the concept of the child’s holistic development as the core objective of any sporting activity, rather than valuing only victory  

Always provide athletes with access to adequate information, including with regard to their own health  

Respect athlete’s decisions regarding transfer between two sport associations  

Respect the child’s interests and activities other than sports  

Respect the right to privacy of young athletes  

Article 31  

Articles 3 and 32  

Article 29  

Articles 3, 4 and 25  

Articles 3, 6 and 12  

Articles 17 and 24  

Articles 12 and 15  

Article 12  

Article 16
## Appendix B

### TOCT Model Themes and Corresponding UNCRC Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaching Transgressions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>UN Provisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Physical Abuse</td>
<td>• justification of player’s behaviour</td>
<td>Articles 19, 3, 12, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• reinforcing injurious behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• encouraging fighting/physical behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Psychological Abuse</td>
<td>• yelling/swearing</td>
<td>Articles 19, 3, 12, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• demoralization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• running up score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• justifying racial slurs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• threatening own player</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Neglect</td>
<td>• lack of discipline/control</td>
<td>Articles 19, 3, 12, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• lack of care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Modeling</td>
<td>• deliberate breaking of rules</td>
<td>Articles, 19, 3, 12, 6, 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Physical Abuse</td>
<td>• involvement in physical behaviours</td>
<td>Articles 19, 2, 12, 6, 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• throwing objects at officials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• threatening behaviours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Psychological Abuse</td>
<td>• harassment of officials</td>
<td>Articles 19, 2, 12, 6, 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• yelling at others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• challenging calls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• abusive behaviour

• foul language/emotional displays
• removal from game
• intimidation

Indirect Neglect

• insinuating a player not hurt

Articles, 19, 3, 6, 12, 29

Indirect Modeling

• penalization of the coach
• disrespect of officials, game, opponents
• general negative behaviour/poor sportsmanship
• lack of rule knowledge

Articles, 19, 3, 6, 12, 29
Appendix C

Ethics Approval

DATE: July 24, 2012

TO: Elaine Cook
254 Walden Drive
Burlington, ON L7N 2A6

FROM: Dr. Larena Hoeber
Chair, Research Ethics Board

Re: Identifying Negative Coaching Behaviours in Youth Sport: A Human Rights Approach for Policy Development (File #9351213)

Please be advised that the University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed your proposal and found it to be:

☐ 1. APPROVED AS SUBMITTED. Only applicants with this designation have ethical approval to proceed with their research as described in their applications. For research lasting more than one year (Section 1F). ETHICAL APPROVAL MUST BE RENEWED BY SUBMITTING A BRIEF STATUS REPORT EVERY TWELVE MONTHS. Approval will be revoked unless a satisfactory status report is received. Any substantive changes in methodology or instrumentation must also be approved prior to their implementation.

☐ 2. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB.** Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 3. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB.** Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 4. UNACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED. The proposal requires substantial additions or redesign. Please contact the Chair of the REB for advice on how the project proposal might be revised.

Dr. Larena Hoeber

cc: Dr. Kim Dorsch – Kinesiology and Health Studies

** supplementary memo should be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at the Office of Research Services (Research and Innovation Centre, Room 106) or by e-mail to research.ethics@uregina.ca

Phone: (306) 585-4775
Fax: (306) 585-4993
Appendix D

Instruction for TOCT Raters

Classification of coaching behaviours into the Typology of Coaching Transgressions model.

173 comments

Please read the definitions for columns three and four before beginning the classification process. It is important that you have a very good understanding of the definitions. Please direct any questions you might have about the definitions to the researcher (information provided below) before beginning the classification process.

Each behaviour must be classified as either Direct or Indirect. The same behaviour will then be classified into one of the following categories: physical, sexual, psychological, neglect, modeling. It is important to note that by their very nature all behaviours classified as Direct have a corresponding indirect impact, however, a behaviour must be classified as Direct or Indirect according to the definitions provided.

Each rater will receive an Excel spreadsheet with five pages. Each page contains four columns. In the first column are a number of comments made by sport officials about coaches. The second column titled Behaviours, the third column titled Direct/Indirect, and the fourth column titled Phys/Sex/Psych/Neg/Mod, are blank. Read comments one at a time. Identify the different behaviours in each comment. Many comments contain more than one behaviour.

Using the first comment on Sheet 1 as an example:

“Very poor attitude demonstrated by head coach which many of the players followed. First and last penalties unsportsmanlike. Despite a number of very talented players, the leadership reflects in the team play and attitude on the ice.”

Although the comment specifically describes a poor attitude of the coach (behaviour one) it also mentions that the behaviour of the players reflected that of the coaches and the players were assessed unsportsmanlike penalties, therefore the second behaviour is
unsportsmanlike behaviour (behaviour two). Both behaviours would be classified as Indirect since they are not directed at or toward a player, they are behaviours that the players are witnessing. Finally both behaviours would be classified as Modeling Behaviours according to the examples provided: *general negative behaviour/poor sportsmanship*. Modeling Behaviours is also a catch all category for behaviours that are not described in detail, but we know have a modeling impact. For example:

“The coaches are HORRIBLE”

The horrible behaviour is not described in this example, but we know what the official saw, or heard, or experienced was horrible. The officials are only reporting behaviours, they are not reporting thoughts, so every comment is about a behaviour. As a result, we know that whatever the behaviour it was modeled for the participants and should go under the category general negative behaviour.

Copy, paste and number each behaviour into the corresponding cell in the Behaviours column, following the examples provided. In the fourth column categorize each behaviour as either: physical, sexual, psychological, neglect or modeling using the examples provided. Please copy and paste all behaviours that you are unable to classify in the last column.

We will try to connect before beginning the classification process, to clarify all instructions. At that point you will be asked to please classify about 10% of each page. At this point we will meet once again, via Skype, to discuss any problems, suggestions, clarifications you might have or need.

The following is a list of TOCT categories, their definitions and lower order behaviourial themes:

**Direct Physical:**
any use, encouragement or reinforcement of inappropriate physical force or power, that is directed at/toward the player(s), that results in or may result in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation, or loss of dignity.

- justification of player’s behaviours
- reinforcing injurious behaviours
• encouraging fighting or physical behaviour

**Direct Sexual:**
any form of sexual behaviors or verbal comments, directed at a player, whether intentional or not, which may be regarded by the person experiencing it, as undesired or forced.

**Direct Psychological:**
any action, directed at a player(s) that threatens or harms their physical, emotional, spiritual, moral or social development and/or dignity

- yelling/swearing at players
- demoralization
- running up the score
- Justifying racial slurs
- taunting fans
- verbally threatening players

**Direct Neglect:**
the failure of coaches to provide reasonable care, discipline, protection and attention that meets the player(s) physical and emotional developmental needs and preserves their dignity.

- lack of discipline/control
- lack of care

**Direct Modeling:**
Any coaching conduct that involves, encourages, or reinforces unsportsmanship like behavior of the player(s).

- deliberate breaking of rules using players

**Indirect Physical:**
exposing a player(s) to behaviors of the coach that include use, encouragement or reinforcement of inappropriate physical force or power

- Involvement in physical behaviour with other adults
- throwing objects at other adults
- threatening behaviour
Indirect Sexual:
exposing a player(s) to any behaviours of the coach that could be perceived as having a sexual connotation.

Indirect Psychological:
exposure to any verbal or behavioral action by the coach that is or may be psychologically, emotionally, morally, spiritually or socially harmful to any participant.
  • harassing officials
  • yelling at officials
  • challenging calls
  • abusive behaviour
  • foul language/emotional displays
  • removal from game
  • intimidation

Indirect Neglect:
exposing players to behaviours of the coach that demonstrate a failure to provide reasonable care, discipline, protection and attention to meet the needs of other players and other participants
  • insinuating players are not injured

Indirect Modeling:
exposing player(s) to behaviours of the coach that involve, encourage or reinforce poor sportsmanship.
  • penalization of coach
  • disrespect of official/game/opponents
  • general negative behaviour/poor sportsmanship
  • lack of rule knowledge
Appendix E

The major categories of the CSP are:

(1) **The individual human organism** and its biological status, psychological makeup, personality and idiosyncratic tendencies (including agency), “intelligence,” skill levels, etc.

(2) **The social systems** or units of social relationships which individuals interact within, are influenced by, and have an influence on (residential units, extra-residential networks and dyads, and community or societal organizations and agencies).

(3) Individual and shared (with others in select social systems) **behavioral patterns**.

(4) The significant “idea” **systems** (knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, values, and symbolisms or “units of meaning”) held by individuals and social systems.

(5) **Expressive Culture** as represented in such forms as language, music, art, etc.

(6) Technologies and human made material objects, or **material culture**.

(7) The **physical environments** in which humans interact.

(8) **Needs** that humans must meet in order to achieve the level of physical functioning necessary to the survival of the individual and group.

(9) The human group’s **shared history** of significant events and processes.

*Note*: Reprinted from, Basic Classical Ethnographic Research Methods, Secondary Data Analysis, Fieldwork, Observation/Participant Observation, and Informal and Semi-