

**‘The life of crime does not pay; stop and think!’: The process of co-constructing a prototype pedagogical model of sport for working with youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds**

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## **‘The life of crime does not pay; stop and think!’: The process of co-constructing a prototype pedagogical model of sport for working with youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds**

*Purpose:* This study discusses the process of co-constructing a prototype pedagogical model for working with youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds.

*Participants and settings:* This six month activist research project was conducted in a soccer program in a socially vulnerable area of Brazil in 2013. The study included 17 youths, four coaches, a pedagogic coordinator and a social worker. An expert in student-centered pedagogy and inquiry-based activism assisted as a debriefer helping in the progressive data analysis and the planning of the work sessions.

*Data collection/analysis:* Multiple sources of data were collected, including 38 field journal/observation and audio records of: 18 youth work sessions, 16 coaches’ work sessions, 3 combined coaches and youth work sessions, and 37 meetings between the researcher and the expert.

*Findings:* The process of co-construction of this prototype pedagogical model was divided into three phases. The first phase involved the youth and coaches identifying barriers to sport opportunities in their community. In the second phase, the youth, coaches, and researchers imagined alternative possibilities to the barriers identified. In the final phase we worked collaboratively to create realistic opportunities for the youth to begin to negotiate some of the barriers they identified. In this phase, the coaches and youth designed an action plan to implement (involving a Leadership Program) aimed at addressing the youths’ needs in the sport program. Five critical elements of a prototype pedagogical model were co-created through the first two processes and four learning aspirations emerged in the last phase of the project.

*Implications:* We suggest an activist approach of co-creating a pedagogical model of sport for working with youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds is beneficial. That is, creating opportunities for youth to learn to name, critique and negotiate barriers to their engagement in sport in order to create empowering possibilities.

**Keywords:** Models-based practice; Student-centered pedagogy; Activist research; Social vulnerability; Pedagogical models;

### **Introduction and Theoretical Perspectives**

What causes a little boy to choose a life of crime; Lack of choice, a great illusion?  
But the one thing I have to say; Never give up because  
I'm the winner in the fucking thing; I am a funkeiro<sup>2</sup> and I'm proud of it.  
The life of crime does not pay, stop and think!

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<sup>2</sup> Funkeiro means someone who likes and composes funk music songs

(Funk music created by the youth to represent the problems they faced in their community)

There is a growing interest in developing sport and other physical activity interventions to diminish problems young people have as a result of living in socially vulnerable areas (Luguetti et al. 2015, 2016; Lawson 2005; Spaaij and Jeanes 2012; Haudenhuyse, Theeboom, and Coalter 2012). Many children and youth live in socially vulnerable conditions in which they are exposed to concrete negative influences such as drug trafficking, violence, family breakdown, poor health, and poverty (Misztal 2011). Living in an environment of social vulnerability is often a factor in the negative behavior of youth. Negative behavior may happen because there is a lack of motivation and opportunity for youth; they are missing valuable social contacts and look for compensation in their peer group (Abramovay et al. 2002).

Over the past 35 years a variety of scholars (Hellison 1978; Hellison 2010; Holt 2008; Holt, Sehn, Spence, Newton, et al. 2012; Walsh, Ozaeta, and Wright 2010) have worked in sport and physical activity contexts to help young people develop positive attitudes and behaviors that fortify them against many of the challenges and risk factors they encounter. Don Hellison was the pioneering scholar who used physical activity and sport to design approaches to teach youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds life skills (Hellison 1978). In the 1970s, he developed a humanistic approach based on his practical experience in low income neighborhoods in Portland (Hellison 1978) that was the precursor to his personal-social responsibility model (Hellison and Walsh 2002).

In the last 15 years we have seen a variety of curriculum, instructional and pedagogical models (Lund and Tannehill, 2014; Metzler, 2011; Casey 2014) in physical education and sport that can be effective in promoting positive attitudes in youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds. For example, Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) (Hellison 2010; Walsh, Ozaeta, and Wright 2010) uses various forms of physical activity and sport to teach participants personal and social responsibility for their behaviors (Hellison 2010). Several researchers have found that this model improved participants' self-control, effort, helping others, teamwork, leadership, and responsibility (Walsh, Ozaeta, and Wright 2010). TPSR was also influential in initiating Positive Youth Development (PYD) ideas in physical education (Ward and Parker 2013). PYD seeks to teach young people the 5Cs framework, which are competence, confidence, character, caring/compassion, and connection (Ward and Parker 2013; Armour, Sandford, and Duncombe 2013; Holt 2008;

Holt, Sehn, Spence, Newton, et al. 2012). Both TPSR and PYD are recognized pedagogical models that focus on the promotion of ‘life skills’ for youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, and Deakin 2005; Holt, Sehn, Spence, Amanda, et al. 2012; Walsh, Ozaeta, and Wright 2010; Ward and Parker 2013; Wright and Li 2009). There are also several other pedagogical models in addition to those created specifically to improve youth behaviors and attitudes such as Sport Education, Sport Empowerment, Sport For Peace and others (Metzler 2011; Casey 2014; Hastie and Casey 2014).

Generically, curriculum, instructional and pedagogical models provide ‘design specifications’ for teaching and learning, which can lead to the development of specific programs at local levels for local purposes (Casey 2014; Kirk 2013). A key theme, critical elements, and learning outcomes are some of the most important components of a pedagogical model. The key theme refers to the overarching idea on which the model is based (Metzler 2011). Next, the model prescribes specific ‘benchmarks’ (Metzler 2011) or critical elements that make it distinctive in terms of what teachers and learners must do in order to faithfully implement the model (Kirk 2013). Finally, learning outcomes are the educational intentions of a program, written in specific terms. They describe what a student might know, understand, or be able to do at the end of that program (Metzler 2011).

Paralleling the pedagogical model literature in physical education and sport pedagogy was a line of research from feminist activist scholars who were committed to working with youth in different ways (Fisette 2013; Enright and O’Sullivan 2010; Oliver 2001; Oliver and Kirk 2014; Oliver, Hamzeh, and McCaughtry 2009). Activist approaches rest on the political premise that marginalized people may transform their realities through education, research, reflection, and action (Fine 2007; Freire 1996; Freire 1987). It breaks the false consensus of complicity by interrogating and denaturalizing the conditions of oppression (hegemony) by working through issues of power and difference (Freire 1987). This theoretical perspective is based on the notion that merely showing the inequality of ‘what is,’ while necessary is insufficient. Activists assert we must act in some way with our participants by imagining and exploring that which might be. As such, activist approaches work from the belief that transformation starts at the micro level in localized contexts (Enright and O’Sullivan 2010; Oliver, Hamzeh, and McCaughtry 2009; Oliver and Kirk 2015).

We think there is potential for merging pedagogical models with activist approaches for working with youth in sport contexts. We believe there is particular potential in doing so when working with youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds. We argue that young people have the agency and capacity to analyze their social context and to challenge, resist, and

negotiate the forces that impede their choice of possibilities (Cammarota and Fine 2008; Freire 1987). We think there is value in developing pedagogical models that start from young people's concrete needs and life situations and create places for youth to see other possibilities and to take action.

This project was designed to co-construct a prototype pedagogical model *with* the youth and coaches through an activist approach. To do this, we used a Student-Centered Inquiry *as* Curriculum (Oliver and Oesterreich 2013) approach as a way of working with the youth and their coaches. Our intent was to co-construct a prototype pedagogical model that would create empowering possibilities by assisting youth in learning to name, critique and negotiate barriers to their engagement in their sport context. A 'prototype' pedagogical model is a model under development but where further implementation and trialing is required in order to adapt and refine the model. This paper describes the process we used to co-construct the prototype model for working with youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds. It involved the youth and coaches identifying barriers to sport opportunities in their community (first part of the process), the boys, coaches, and researchers imagined alternative possibilities to the barriers identified (second part of the process), and we worked collaboratively to create realistic opportunities for the youth to begin to negotiate some of the barriers they identified (final part of the process). We conclude with how a co-constructed prototype pedagogical model that is based on an activist approach will look different from other researcher-designed pedagogical models.

## **Methodology**

### ***Setting and participants***

This research project took place in a soccer program in a socially and economically disadvantaged neighborhood in Santos, Brazil (SEADE 2010). This project is run by a non-governmental organization and serves approximately 250 boys and girls ages 6 to 15. Approximately 90% are boys and 10% girls. The study included 17 boys between the ages of 13 and 15 years. The reason the participants were all boys was that the group we were working with only had boys. While it was not intended to be a study on boys only there were no girls playing soccer who were within the age group we were targeting.

Sixty-five percent of the boys came from households that had between one and two minimum wage incomes and 35% from homes with a one minimum wage income. In addition, four coaches, a pedagogic coordinator, a social worker, and two researchers were

part of the study. Whereas the youths and coaches were insiders in this study, as the primary researcher Carla (lead author), was an in-betweener/outsider (Anzaldúa 2007; Collins 2000). Although Carla's gender, race, age, and social class positioned her as an outsider, her experience in soccer and understanding of the socially vulnerable context positioned her as an in-betweener (Anzaldúa 2007). The second author (Kim) - an expert in student-centered pedagogy and inquiry-based education centered *in action*- had multiple roles in the study: a) peer debriefer; b) assisted with progressive data analysis; and c) helped in facilitating a collaborative construction of the youth and coaches work sessions that were built on the idea of inquiry oriented and student-centered ways of working. The third and fourth authors were involved with the conceptual work and the general design of the study.

### ***Data collection sources***

Carla met with the youth for 40 minutes every Wednesday prior to their training sessions from July-December 2013 for a total of 18 work sessions. Following the youth work session Carla skyped for approximately 90 minutes with Kim during which time Carla debriefed and planned for the upcoming coaches work session. On Fridays Carla worked with the coaches, the pedagogical coordinator and the social worker for 1 hour for a total of 16 sessions. This was followed by another 90-minute Skype session with Kim whereby they debriefed and planned for the upcoming youth work session. We also planned and held 3 coaches/youth work sessions together.

A Student-Centered Inquiry *as Curriculum* (Oliver and Oesterreich 2013) approach was used both as a process of working with the boys as well as serving as a framework for data collection. This process includes *Building the Foundation* followed by a four-phase cyclical process of *Planning, Responding to Students, Listening to Respond, and Analyzing Responses* as the basis of all content and pedagogical decisions (Figure 1). Below is the description of how we use the SCIC approach to collect data.

[Insert Figure 1]

*Building of Foundation* happened once and aimed to understand the youth as well as their perceptions about the training sessions, and their barriers and facilitators for engaging in sport. The other cyclical phases (*Planning, Responding to students, Listening to responses, and Analyzing responses*) sought to identify what we were learning from the youth, and we looked for things that could be different in their sports experience - things that would better suit the youth's needs. *Planning* involved the creation of the work sessions between the youth and Carla as well as the work sessions between the coaches and Carla. *Listening to Respond*

involved the debriefing and analysis of data between Kim and Carla. This took place the day after the work sessions with the youth. *Responding to Students* involved the creation of work sessions that bridged what Carla was learning from the youth, with what Carla was learning about using an activist approach with youth, and what Carla was doing with the coaches.

*Analyzing the Responses* involved the debriefing and analysis of data between Kim and Carla following the coaches work sessions. The curriculum used in this process is part of the findings given our paper is about the process of co-creating a prototype pedagogical model.

We collected data from multiple sources, including 38 field journal/observations of the training sessions and audio records of youths' work sessions (18), coaches' work sessions (16), combined coach and youth work sessions (3), and meetings between Carla and Kim (37). In all, we analyzed 69 audiotapes (368 pages of transcriptions), 25 pages of field notes and youth generated artifacts (e.g. funk music lyrics songs that represents their community and a poster about why the youth love soccer and what they believed an ideal coach would resemble).

### ***Data analyses***

The data were organized chronologically and filed by session date. Kim and Carla read all transcripts of their Skype meetings. Carla transcribed the work sessions (youth, coaches and youth /coaches work sessions) from Portuguese to English and we used these transcripts in our debriefing meetings to discuss what we were learning, and what we thought we needed to learn more about. Data analysis was ongoing throughout the project and the sessions with the youth, the coaches, and with the youth/coaches were based on what we were learning as we were going through the process. That is, after each session we reviewed all data looking for themes across the work sessions and used that analysis to help us plan the next work session. We followed this process throughout the entire study. In addition to these 37 debriefing/data analysis meetings (Skype), Kim and Carla met twice (14 days total) face-to-face for more in-depth data analysis. The first meeting (September 2013) occurred in the middle of data collection with our main objective to verify the emergence of the key theme and critical elements (*Building the Foundation*). Their next meeting (February 2014) aimed to identify the learning aspirations (activist piece - Leadership Program).

### **Findings**

By using an activist approach that embedded student-centered pedagogy with inquiry-based education centered *in action* (Oliver and Oesterreich 2013) we co-created a prototype pedagogical model of sport with youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds. In this paper, we will describe how we worked with the youth and their coaches to co-construct this prototype pedagogical model. Key aspects of the ‘design specification’ of the model (critical elements and learning outcomes) emerged in the process of working collaboratively with the youth and coaches. The first part of the process for developing the prototype pedagogical model involved the youth and coaches identifying barriers to sport opportunities in their community. In the second part of the process, the boys, coaches, and researchers imagined alternative possibilities to the barriers identified. Through the first two processes the key theme and critical elements were co-created. In the final part of the process we worked collaboratively to create realistic opportunities for the youth to begin to negotiate some of the barriers they identified. As such, we developed and implemented a Leadership Program with and for the youth to take place in the soccer program. It was through the Leadership Program that the learning ‘aspirations’ for the prototype pedagogical model emerged.

### ***Identifying barriers to sport in the community***

To begin the process of co-creating a prototype pedagogical model, we engaged the youth in inquiry in order to help them better understand what facilitates and hinders their learning opportunities in sport. We started by inquiring into what the youth liked/disliked, their perceptions of school and family, their opinions about the soccer training sessions, and barriers to sport participation they encountered in both the program and their community as a whole. Eight coaches’ work sessions, seven youth work sessions, and 15 debriefing and planning sessions between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> author comprised this phase of model construction (total of 3 months). Below is a description of how the co-constructive process developed and how some of the key aspects of the ‘design specification’ were determined (see Table 1).

[Insert Table 1]

Three processes were critical to this aspect of model co-construction. These included: helping the youth to name their experiences, allowing time for relationships between researchers, youth and coaches to develop, and working back and forth between the youth and coaches to be able to better identify barriers to sport in the community.

*Naming experiences – ‘What do you think if I use funk songs in the next youth work session?’*

It became very clear early on that we would need to find creative ways to help the youth articulate their experiences if we were going to understand barriers to their sport opportunities. One way we tried to help the youth articulate their experiences was to bring a picture of what we observed in a training session and ask them to talk about what each number illustrated (Figure 2).

[Insert Figure 2]

Carla - I brought a picture of the last training session...I marked several things I saw and you commented on during the last work session. I would like to understand your perceptions. What do you think number 1 illustrates?

Peter - The dirt on the soccer field.

Kaio- The soccer field has a lot of wood.

Henri - On the weekend, the older guys play games and throw cans on the field. Our training is on Mondays, so there will be always garbage on the soccer field.

Peter - They throw plastic, glass, empty cans of coke

Carla - And number 2, can anyone guess?

Leon - I took a bump. We played violently.

Carla - You talked about this last week: how your behavior is bad during the training sessions, remember?

Henri - Like Mortal Combat (video game)

Carla - and 3, does anyone know what it is?

Leon - Someone swearing

Peter - That is Tim

Carla - This is someone drunk asking to finish the workout.

Kaio - Yeah I remember. He was whistling.

Noel - It didn't bother me.

Carla - and 4 and 5?

Henry - The guys on drugs.

Peter - They were high. It's always like that.

Carla - and 6?

Noel - Someone scratching. It's the 'bicho geográfico'. I've seen sores all over people's bodies.

Carla - Aren't you guys afraid about this?

Noel - I am.

Carla - What is number 7?

David - It is our bad soccer field. There are a lot of holes.

Carla - What is number 8?

Henri - It is our coach. (Youth work session 5)

About five weeks into the process, we noticed that the youth enjoyed listening to funk songs before their training sessions. Up to this point we had learned very little about the barriers they experienced in their communities.

Carla - It was interesting because in the beginning of the work session when I invited the boys to come [get started] Eric sang a funk song in the Dictaphone. I Google this song and it is so interesting. The song's name is 'I am the man of the moment'... That specific song talks about money, earning money to be rich in order to change their lives....My question is, what do you think if I use funk songs in the next youth work session? We will discuss the problems in their community and maybe this kind of song can help us.

Kim - How about if you ask them to think about a funk music song that best represents the ways they see their community. Pick one or two songs and the lyrics of the songs...that are about how you feel about living in your community. You are not putting the value on it. It is not a bad thing or a good thing; it just represents their own point of view (Kim/Carla meeting 10).

The funk songs helped the youth put language to experience and in particular, some of the problems they face in their communities (Luguetti et al. 2015, 2016).

I had no bathroom  
I had nothing to eat  
My house had wooden walls  
I'm preparing for the worst  
I may be arrested or may be killed (Funk songs created by the boys)

The lyrics they selected communicated far more than what they had previously told us about the barriers they experience that impact their abilities to play sport.

*Developing relationships – ‘We don’t know each other’ (Noel age 14).*

A second key feature in helping the youth identify barriers to sport in the community was allowing time for relationships to develop. This was important because so many of the barriers these kids face on a day to day basis are not things they will easily discuss with strangers. In order to gain the type of understanding necessary to co-create a model for youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds we had to get to a point where they would talk to us.

Carla – Like you suggested, I asked them about this. I said I am not good at talking to people your age. How should I talk to you? Suggest something to me. They said, ‘You should talk about things that we like.’ Leon, a kind of leader, said, ‘It takes time.’ Noel said, ‘We don’t know each other.’

Kim – Perfect!

Carla – Because I thought they knew each other, I asked, ‘What is the problem? Maybe I am the problem because you don’t know me, but you know each other.’ Noel said, ‘We don’t know each other.’ Maybe that is a good point.

Kim – Yes, it is a very good point. What you could do to show them that you have paid attention to what they said is to go back next time and you say ...These are the things you told me. It is going to take time. So, I will back off and give you time. You told me that you want to know each other better. So, I have a game we are going to play. You told me that some of you are more comfortable in a small group and some of you like big groups better. So, we will do both, and if you are more comfortable in a small group, then you can talk in small groups. If you are more comfortable in a big group, you talk in the big group. It shows you are listening to what they said and you changed your plan to respond to their needs (Kim/Carla meeting 4).

In addition to helping the youth get to know each other and me (1<sup>st</sup> author) better, I started to watch some of their soccer games, walked home with them, played with them, and

talked to them before their training sessions. Within a few weeks, I started to identify that the communication in the youth work sessions improved.

Carla - It was really, really, really nice yesterday. I think it was so much better. I think they started to talk to me.

Kim – Why do you think that happened?

Carla - Why? Maybe it is because the time. I am spending more time with them (Kim/Carla meeting 6).

Simultaneously with trying to find ways to help the youth name their experiences, we had to allow the time for us to collectively develop relationships so that we felt comfortable working together. The youth needed time to know me and know each other before they were actually willing to talk about the barriers they faced.

*Working back and forth: ‘This back and forth can help them to better understand each other’*

Kim - You do a back and forth process. ‘The coaches said you like freedom, you like to play without rules. Tell me what do you think about what they think?’ So, you are not only bringing what the youth said to the coaches, but you are going to bring to the coaches what the youth said. This back and forth can help them to better understand each other. It cannot be just one way because the coaches can be wrong, and the kids will tell you.

Carla - That is interesting; I didn’t realize that. I thought I would just bring information to the coaches and not the other way.

Kim – Part of what it does is show that you value [the boys]; you are asking their opinion about the adult perspective. That’s how we show that we value the youth (Kim/Carla meeting 1).

The last element in the process of identifying barriers was in the back and forth process between the coaches and the youth. This back and forth process involved working with the youth on Wednesdays, debriefing and planning (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> authors) on Thursdays, working with the coaches on Fridays, and debriefing and planning (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> authors) on Tuesdays. This back and forth process allowed us to take what we were learning from either the boys or the coaches, make sense of that learning in relation to the co-construction of the model, and then share that learning amongst the groups. This became increasingly more important as we began to understand just how valuable all parties’ knowledge was to the creation of the model.

As part of the back and forth process of working we also used the coaches’ work sessions as a way to discuss what we as researchers were seeing as critical elements in a program for working youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds.

Carla - I started to talk about the critical elements that should be in programs to address youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds. They gave me examples of each

critical element. I told them about student-centered pedagogy. I gave some examples and they gave some examples as well.

Kim - Do you think they totally agree with these critical elements?

Carla - I think so. For example, Rian said that it would be wrong to develop a program that doesn't consider student-centered pedagogy and inquiry-based education centered in action (an activist approach). He said that it would not have relation with the environment where these kids live. We talked about the importance of action - small changes versus huge changes.

Kim - It is a form of debriefing with them and a member check with them about the critical elements. That day (day 11) is important to identify. You came back to the coaches to see if these critical elements actually hold up. It sounded like they do.

Carla - I talked about the community of sport and Neo started to talk about how Pedro's father helped a lot in the last game, the families that bought a t-shirt and rent a bus to go to the competition. He gave to me a lot of examples. We talked about ethic of care and attentiveness to the community. They gave me a lot of examples (Kim/Carla meeting 21).

Helping the youth to name their experiences, allowing time for relationships to develop, and working back and forth between the youth and coaches allowed some of the critical elements to emerge in the process of co-constructing a prototype pedagogical model. As part of the co-construction we started with two critical elements that were central to an activist approach. Student-centered pedagogy and inquiry-based education centered in action. By working with the youth and the coaches in these ways, three other critical elements emerged. These included an ethic of care, an attentiveness to the community and community of sport. For a more elaborate explanation of how these emerged please see Luguetti et al. (2015).

### ***Imagining alternative possibilities to barriers***

Our first step in co-constructing the prototype pedagogical model involved working with the youth and coaches to identify the barriers they experienced in their sport context. These barriers revolved around issues of safety, sanitation and opportunities to play sport (Luguetti et al. 2015). The second step involved working to imagine alternative possibilities to the various barriers that were identified.

Carla - I asked the boys what they would change in the training sessions. Eric said 'I would change the grass, like to artificial grass and build another field where the canal is'. There is a canal next to the field, and he wants to build another field. They said that they want to build an expensive dressing room, too. I think they cannot see small important things. For example, I know and they know that there is a disease that they can get because of the dirty grass on the field, a kind of itch. I think that is a huge issue. The boys should consider that disease before suggesting huge changes like an expensive dressing room.

Kim - When you say that they cannot see small change, I don't read it that way. What they want to change are things that allow them to not get sick. When they say, 'We want a changing room: we want expensive changing rooms because there are showers and water.' It is cleaner. They want artificial grass to protect their health.

I see some of these things as focused around changes that allowed them to be healthier...Kids are going to be big before they are going to be small. So, they might talk about wanting a really beautiful expensive place because what is embedded in a beautiful expensive place is nice grass or a nice facility to change or warm water in the shower, water to drink. It incorporates the small things (Kim/Carla meeting 4).

While the youth were only able to imagine major change, what their changes allowed us to understand were the significance of the barriers they faced. The act of imagining something different created a better opportunity for the youth to more elaborately articulate the barriers they currently experience. That is, in their description of the ideal training facility they more clearly identified the sanitation problems that existed. The ability to more clearly elaborate on barriers by imagining something different is consistent in other activist research studies (Enright and O'Sullivan 2010; Oliver, Hamzeh, and McCaughtry 2009; Oliver and Lalik, 2000; Oliver and Kirk 2015).

Kim - This is an activist project. You have to make changes, small changes. What is realistic to change in that context? You, now, are starting to get a really good understanding of the context. What's possible? Is it possible to work with the coaches to change the way they teach the kids? Maybe they don't work with the kids like the police work with the kids. You said the police are violent. What they will experience from the coaches is somebody who respects them. This goes back to affection. So, work with the coaches to make the training session the most positive experience possible - not just somebody saying this is a better place to be but for the boys to feel a part of something that is pleasant rather than violent.

Carla - A moment to forget the environment where they live. The problem is: on the field we have an environment that is dangerous; at least, it feels dangerous to me.

Kim - I think another of the critical elements is going to be the activist component. How do you work with the coaches to help them become activists with the kids? You are working through the logistics now to change the way the coaches come to the training sessions, a way to better facilitate the kid's needs. The activist piece could be anything. It could be how we work with the drug dealers to make the environment safer or how we work with the community to make a more sanitary and healthier environment. I think there has to be an activist piece as a critical element. We are inquiring about how we should center our action. In this model, together you have to find the places that can be changed. That change will be different in all the different contexts, but there will be change of some sort (Kim/Carla meeting 11).

In the co-construction of the model, the processes of identifying barriers and then imagining something different were the precursors for taking action—action directed at improving the sport context for these youth in some meaningful and realistic way. Imagining something different also allowed us as researchers and coaches to feel more confident in the critical elements that we brought to the model and that emerged through the processes of identifying barriers to sport.

### *Working collaboratively to create alternatives*

Kim - We have to now use these critical elements simultaneously in order to identify the learning outcomes. You will figure them out in the process of trying to develop the Leadership Program. That is where you are going to see what is possible to learn. These learning outcomes are going to come as long as you are working with the coaches and the youth to not only develop the Leadership Program but to implement it, and the development and implementation have to happen at the same time. It is not 'plan the program and do the program'. It is doing and learning by doing and re-doing and re-doing (Kim/Carla meeting 20).

The final step in co-constructing the model started from things that the youth saw as important if they were going to develop strategies for negotiating the barriers they identified. Despite all the barriers, the youth identified sport as a constructive activity in their lives and they believed that sport was an opportunity for not only them, but also younger children, in order to avoid a life of crime. As such, we worked to create additional sport opportunities with the youth that would allow them to be in a sporting context more days out of their week. The idea of creating a Leadership Program where the older boys would work to assist the coaches during the younger children's training sessions was one of the options put forth as a possible change project.

The Leadership Program became the site for change in the co-construction of the model. It was through this last step that we worked with the youth and coaches to combine the 5 critical elements as we developed and implemented this Program. We worked with boys and coaches for 4 sessions to plan the Leadership Program. As part of their planning they decided that in order to serve as role models for the younger children the youth would need to alter their behavior. They also decided that each week two boys would work at each training session for the younger children. After the program was loosely organized, the youth started working with the coaches to serve as leaders. During this time we held not only the work sessions with the youth and with the coaches, but we also held joint work sessions with the youth and coaches together in order to discuss the specifics of how the Leadership Program was unfolding. Below is a description of how the co-constructive process developed and how some of the key aspects of the 'design specification' emerged (see Table 2).

[Insert Table 2]

It was through the simultaneous development and implementation of the Leadership Program that we combined the 5 critical elements in our work with the youth. It was through this action that the 'learning aspirations' emerged. To be able to co-construct this prototype pedagogical model we had to trust that what was possible to learn would emerge when we

implemented the critical elements and worked to create change. Creating change required that the researchers and coaches be willing to take risks around the unknown and the uncomfortable so that we would understand what was possible for the youth to learn.

Carla - Some of the coaches said that we should teach the boys how they should behave. For example, if you are an irresponsible youth, you cannot be a leader.

Kim - I actually think that might be a mistake, and I will tell you why. They [the boys] are the ones who want the Leadership Program. The ones that are committed are going to be the ones who participate, just the ones who come to you and are committed to be there. So, I think if you go back to the kids and say, 'You have to get your behavior in order first and then we will do the Leadership Program,' I don't think they will see any reason to have good behavior. I think that it has to happen at the same time, because they are the ones that identified behavior as a problem, not you. They did it. They are the ones who said, to us, 'To be role models, we have to clean up our behaviors.' Not you, not the coaches, they said it. So, they are motivated to alter their behavior because they want to work with younger kids. I think if you go with this top down approach, like what your coaches are talking about, 'We have to teach you how to behave before we have you work with kids,' I think it assumes that they are bad; it is expecting the worst from the kids. You lose their empowerment.

Carla - I agree (Kim/Carla meeting 17).

Instead of deciding how the youth should behave and outlining the behavior that was expected of the youth, the coaches and I took the risk of assuming that the youth would act as responsible role models in their work with the younger kids and we moved forward with implement the Leadership Program. By inviting the youth to act as role models through a Leadership Program we positioned them as capable, responsible young people in whom we trusted. As part of the program planning we discussed with the boys how they believed an ideal leader would act.

Carla - How do you think an ideal leader should be?

David- He should be responsible and he must know how to control his emotions

Peter - The ideal leader should be disciplined. For example, he doesn't miss the training sessions

Noel - If he says he wants to be a leader, he must show up or call the coach if he can't come

Kleiton- An ideal leader should be an example for everyone, including the younger kids. He cannot mess up the training session. He should teach the less skilled kids

Peter - An ideal leader does not say bad words.

Kleiton- If the coach is talking and someone is talking at the same time, this leader should ask for silence.

David- I also think, as leaders, we should help advise the younger kids about drugs, like Coach Anthony advised us last week. Remember when he told us that he lost his best friend to drug trafficking?

Henri - We could help younger kids not to make the same mistake Anthony's friend did

Carla- What do you think you can do in your training sessions so the coaches will believe that you can be leaders? Remember that they are unsure.

Noel - We must avoid using bad language, especially cursing each other!

David- We should be less critical when someone makes mistakes. We need to support each other

Peter - We must maintain the peace in our training sessions

Henri - We can think about moments to come together like when we prayed together last week (youths working session 9).

In the process of working collaboratively to create realistic opportunities for the youth to negotiate some of the barriers they identified (action), the learning aspirations emerged. Our willingness to risk trusting the youth in the Leadership Program allowed them to learn about the importance of being responsible and committed, to learn from mistakes, to value each other's knowledge, and to communicate effectively. For a more elaborate explanation of these learning aspirations please see Luguetti et al. (2016).

## **Discussion and conclusion**

Teaching is possibility in dark and constraining times. It is a matter of awakening and empowering today's young people to name, to reflect, to imagine, and to act with more and more concrete responsibility in an increasingly multifarious world... The light may be uncertain and flickering; but teachers in their lives and work have the remarkable capacity to make it shine in all sorts of corners and, perhaps, to move newcomers to join with others and transform (Greene, 1997, pp. 72-73).

Maxine Greene (1997) wrote on the possibilities of teaching based on the capacity to 'join with others and transform'. By using an activist approach (Oliver and Oesterreich 2013) for co-constructing a prototype pedagogical model of sport for working with youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds we joined efforts to create opportunities for transformation (Figure 3). We believe that young people, when given the opportunity, have the agency to analyze their social contexts and to negotiate the forces that impede their choice of possibilities (Cammarota and Fine 2008; Freire 1987; Fine 2007). We think there is value in developing pedagogical models that start from young people's concrete needs and life situations (*what is*) and work to co-construct places for youth to see other possibilities and to take action (*what might be*) (Luguetti et al. 2015, 2016).

Historically pedagogical models have been primarily created by the researcher (researcher-led) with some modification in practice by practitioners. In researcher-designed approaches the endpoint/outcomes of the models may be defined based on pro-social behavior (Haudenhuyse, Theeboom, and Nols 2012; Haudenhuyse, Theeboom, and Coalter 2012; Haudenhuyse, Theeboom and Skille, 2014). We believe there is a need for co-creating models with researchers, youth, and coaches. We understand that concrete challenges, such as poor

housing, poor health, unemployment, low income and a high crime environment are complex and cannot be changed through a sports program (Lawson 2005). However, by co-constructing the model, we could help youth to become critical analysts of their communities and assist them in developing strategies to manage risk situations by looking for alternatives to, and opportunities beyond, their current situations (Luguetti et al. 2015, 2016).

[Insert Figure 3]

In this paper we described the process of co-constructing a prototype pedagogical model for working with youth from socially vulnerable based in an activist approach. The first part of the process for co-constructing the prototype pedagogical model involved the youth and coaches identifying barriers to learning opportunities through sport in their community. In the second part of the process, the youth, coaches, and researchers imagined alternative possibilities to the barriers identified. Through the first two processes the key theme and critical elements were co-created. The five critical elements (student-centered pedagogy, inquiry-based education centered in action, ethic of care, attentiveness to the community, and a community of sport) formed a patchwork of practice that formed the basis of the prototype model (Luguetti et al. 2015). When working with youth, these five critical elements should be considered ‘non-negotiable’ when attempting to *co-construct empowering learning possibilities through sport for youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds (key theme)*.

It is important to highlight that while these critical elements must be present in order to faithfully implement the model, depending on the context, the critical elements will take different substantive forms in different settings. For example, the problems youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds face in Brazil (e.g. safety, sanitation, opportunity to play) might be different in other countries, but teachers/coaches must consider the critical element “attentiveness to the community” to implement this model. What they have to attend to specifically, however, will depend on the specific features of their own local context. We suggest future research aims at trialing this model in a variety of settings, and starts by creating specific local programs in the work with youth based on the five critical elements. Through the Building the Foundation phase, researchers/teachers will seek to understand the form each of the critical elements takes in their specific context. In the present study we spent three months learning what the critical elements would be because this project was about co-creating a prototype model. We believe in future studies, researchers will not need to spend three months in the Building the Foundation phase. Rather, they can focus their attention specifically to developing substantive forms of an ethic of care, having an attentiveness to the

community, understanding the culture of sport, working in student-centered ways, and using inquiry based approaches centered in action that best fit their local contexts.

In the final part of the process we worked collaboratively to create realistic opportunities for the boys to begin to negotiate some of the barriers they identified in Building the Foundation phase. It was through the Leadership Program that the learning ‘aspirations’ (becoming responsible/committed, learning from mistakes, valuing each other’s knowledge and communicating with others) for the prototype pedagogical model emerged (Lugueti et al. 2016). We believe that pedagogical models developed through activist approaches will always have learning aspirations that are context specific rather than pre-determined. This is in contrast to the pre-determined learning outcomes that currently dominate pedagogical models. Although learning aspirations that will emerge when implementing this prototype pedagogical model in the future will always be context specific, we suspect they will always also center on the affective domain. This will happen because our key theme is to *co-construct empowering learning possibilities through sport for youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds*. Thus, by creating empowering possibilities we believe the terminology of learning *aspirations* is more appropriate to work within the affective domain (e.g. responsibility, communication, etc.).

We consider this prototype model to be a first step in the development of a pedagogical model of sport for working with youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds. We are learning how this model might look through the co-construction with the coaches and the youth. We wish others to develop this prototype pedagogical model in the future, but we want to make clear that this is a model under development where the initial architecture of key theme, critical elements and learning outcomes or aspirations have been tentatively identified, but where further implementation and trialing is required in order to adapt and refine the model. We need to be sure that our key theme and critical elements are robust enough to be useful in other settings of social vulnerability and that substantive local programs based on this design specification are likely to be empowering for youth. Areas for future study include applying this prototype pedagogical model again in the same context to see if the critical elements hold up and how the learning aspirations might be different. Further studies could be done in other contexts of social vulnerability in different sports projects, to see if the key theme and the critical elements hold up. Once we have a good understanding of the critical elements, we would like to begin working with coaches to help them to implement these techniques for working with youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds.

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