EXPLORING THE CULTURE OF COACHING

IN NORTH VANCOUVER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Master's Dissertation in Health, Outdoor Education and Physical Literacy

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DECLARATION FORM

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1. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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3. This dissertation is the result of my own independent work / investigation, except where otherwise stated.

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Abstract

Public school athletics programs in Canada rely almost entirely on unpaid volunteers. In the context of rising living costs and the increasing demands of modern life, this study examines what motivates individuals to dedicate substantial time to volunteer coaching and how schools can better recruit and retain them. This qualitative study explores the lived experiences of secondary school volunteer coaches in the public school district of North Vancouver, British Columbia. Using semi-structured interviews, it explores both the motivations that drive these volunteers and the challenges they encounter while sustaining athletic programs without financial compensation. Fifteen participants were interviewed, with coaching experience in the district ranging from three seasons to more than fifty seasons. Through qualitative data analysis, several key themes emerged: motivations for volunteering, the changing nature of coaching and its associated challenges, and issues of retention and sustainability. Findings indicate that volunteer coaches are primarily motivated by a love of sport and the rewarding relationships they form with student-athletes. Although time pressures and other stressors influence their experiences, the critical factor driving volunteers to step away is ineffective leadership support—particularly a lack of trust and respect. The study findings suggest that volunteers should be more highly valued and supported, with emphasis placed on trusting their judgment and expertise. Doing so is essential to sustaining school sport programs and ensuring positive experiences for both coaches and student-athletes.

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Glossary

Administrator/administration: The vice-principal(s) and/or principal of the school who manages overall school operations, including academic programs, staff supervision, student welfare, and extracurricular activities. NVSD secondary schools generally have one principal and 1-2 vice-principals.

Athletic Director (AD): A certified teacher who has the additional responsibility of overseeing all aspects of a school's athletic program. This includes scheduling, budgeting, managing equipment, and finding coaches and sponsors for each team.

Community-Coach: A non-parent volunteer from the community who assists or leads coaching of school sports teams, usually with a background in the sport but not employed by the school.

North Vancouver School District (NVSD): The public school district in North Vancouver, British Columbia, which manages the local secondary and elementary schools, including their academic and athletic programs.

Parent-Coach: A parent of a student-athlete who volunteers to coach a school sports team, often without formal training in coaching or education.

Secondary School: In British Columbia, Canada, secondary school refers to grades 8-12. The term is used interchangeably with *high school* in Canada.

Sponsor: A school district staff member who volunteers to help support a team if the coach is not employed by the district. The sponsor does not need to be a teacher and can be any district staff including administrative or educational assistants.

Teacher-Coach: A certified teacher who also volunteers or is assigned to coach school sports teams, combining teaching responsibilities with coaching duties.

Chapter One: Introduction

This dissertation explores the culture of volunteer coaching within secondary schools in the North Vancouver School District (NVSD). In this chapter, I outline the research background and context, the rationale for the study, as well as its aim, objectives, and research question. I also share my motivation for undertaking this research and include a positionality statement to acknowledge my active role and perspective within the research process.

1.1 Background and Context

The province of British Columbia (BC) is located on the West Coast of Canada. It is home to a variety of beautiful landscapes, including Pacific Ocean beaches, mountains and forests, farmland and inland deserts. The people of BC are known for their active lifestyles and take advantage of activities such as skiing, snowboarding, mountain biking, fishing, and hiking, all in their own backyard. It is no surprise that organized sport also plays a significant role in the lives of British Columbians. Last year, BC School Sports, the organization that governs sport in public and non-public secondary schools in BC, celebrated 2023-24 as a record high year of sports participation amongst high school athletes in the province. In an August 2024 news release, Jordan Ebney, BCSS Executive Director, boasted 7,742 teams in the province, with 123,313 student-athlete registrations and 14,827 coaches (BCSS, 2024). Out of 369 school districts in Canada, the province of British Columbia has 60. North Vancouver makes up one of sixty school districts in the province. School districts are responsible for administering publicly funded education from kindergarten through Grade 12. The North Vancouver School District (NVSD) is home to six public secondary schools, all of which have teams that participate in fall, winter, and spring seasons of sport. The North Shore Secondary School Athletic Association organizes nineteen leagues throughout the school year, including sports such as basketball, soccer, track and field, and skiing. Secondary school sports are practiced outside of regular class hours and consist of organized practices and games that usually culminate in end-of-season playoffs and championships. These could be local or require travel, meaning additional organization and time commitments for the coaches and sponsors. To run, each team must have a coach and a staff

sponsor (someone who is employed by the NVSD). Throughout BC, coaching and sponsoring teams are volunteer positions, and no monetary or other compensation is received for this work.

1.2 Research Problem

The specific problem addressed in this study is the global decline in volunteerism, which is also evident in Canada, where fewer individuals are stepping forward to volunteer. This trend has direct implications for school sport, where the sustainability of coaching programs relies heavily on volunteers (Sulz, Gleddie, and Humbert, 2021). Secondary school sports in British Columbia, and more specifically North Vancouver, rely entirely on volunteers to coach and sponsor teams (North Vancouver School District, n.d.). In addition to coaching, volunteers often assume roles such as league chair or tournament organizer—responsibilities that require significant time and effort but are essential to keeping school sports programs running smoothly. When an entire system depends on the generosity of volunteers, it is essential to understand and value the factors that motivate them to dedicate so much of their time to the cause. Given current economic pressures, it is uncertain whether new teachers can continue to dedicate significant unpaid time to coaching. Many individuals are already struggling to meet basic living costs, and the hours spent coaching could instead be used for paid employment if financial need requires it. This reality highlights the importance of district leaders recognizing the challenges of sustaining volunteer coaching in the present climate.

The value of maintaining secondary school sports programs for adolescents cannot be overstated. Unlike non-school programs, school-based athletics foster a sense of connection to the school community, which in turn strengthens school culture, enhances student engagement and attendance, supports the development of positive friendships, promotes learning, and provides access to meaningful role models.

1.3 Research Rationale

This study aims to amalgamate and address several research gaps. Kim, Zhang, and Connaughton (2010b) examined why individuals volunteer in various youth sport organizations and suggested that future research should focus specifically on volunteer motivation within high school sport programs. Similarly, O'Connor and Bennie (2006) emphasize the urgent need for research on coach retention across different levels, noting the lack of attention given to issues such as burnout and withdrawal. They highlight the importance of identifying effective interventions to support coaches experiencing burnout, as well as understanding what aspects of coaching they find most rewarding, to inform future policy and practice. Building on this, Westmoreland (2024) finds that most studies on role theory in relation to teacher-coaches overlook how they can be better supported. Further, Turgeon et al. (2019) suggest that comparing teacher-coaches with non-teacher coaches (such as community members and parents) could reveal whether their different roles in schools are linked to aspects of students' personal and social development. Together, these gaps underscore the need to examine the culture of secondary school coaching, with particular attention to the motivations, challenges, and retention of volunteer coaches.

1.4 Research Aim, Objectives, and Questions

This study explores the culture of coaching in public secondary schools within the NVSD. The purpose is to gain insight into the current state of coaching by drawing on the perspectives of current and former volunteer coaches.

Aim

- To examine the culture and lived experiences of secondary school coaches in North Vancouver.

Objectives

- To understand the perspectives of current and former volunteer coaches.

- To identify the motivations that drive individuals to volunteer as coaches, as well as the factors that influence their decisions to step away.
- To explore the perceived challenges and rewards of school-based coaching.
- To consider strategies that may support the retention of volunteer coaches and the sustainability of school-based athletic programs.

Research Question

- What rewards and challenges shape the experiences of volunteer coaches in North Vancouver secondary schools, and how do these factors influence their decisions to continue or step away from coaching?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses specifically on secondary schools in the NVSD. Due to time and access constraints, I limited the scope of this study to a single school district with participation further limited to volunteer secondary school coaches. Although parents and student-athletes could have offered valuable insights into the operation of secondary school sports and their experiences, the study remained focused by limiting both the participant group and geographic area. At my request, 15 volunteer coaches, identifying as teachers, community members, or parents, offered their time to participate in this study. At the time of the one-on-one interviews, each participant maintained some connection to the NVSD, whether through ongoing volunteer coaching, classroom teaching, or substitute teaching.

1.6 Researcher Motivation

In my position as a teacher and coach for the past decade, I have seen a shift in the landscape of coaching in the secondary school system. Many longtime coaches are either quitting altogether or taking time off due to unsustainable schedules, disrespect from athletes and parents, and a perceived lack of appreciation from the school and district administrators. Despite this, there are

still hundreds of coaches who volunteer, and I was interested in exploring their perspectives relating to why they coach, their experiences, and the future of coaching in North Vancouver public secondary schools. As a volunteer teacher-coach in the NVSD, I have firsthand experience with the challenges, rewards, and significant time commitments involved in coaching. This study was motivated by a desire to understand why volunteer coaches dedicate substantial amounts of time—sometimes exceeding 200 hours in a single school year—without financial compensation. Over time, I began to question the sustainability of this commitment, particularly given the minimal protections for coaches who encounter critical feedback from parents or face other pressures.

I have worked alongside coaches who demonstrate unwavering dedication to their sport and their athletes, despite encountering stressors and limited institutional support. This research aims to explore the factors that drive coaches to volunteer, the challenges they face, and the ways in which support could be enhanced to sustain their engagement. There are gaps in understanding volunteer motivations, role challenges, and the differences between teacher-coaches and community/parent coaches that I am interested in addressing to contribute to theory and practice.

1.7 Positionality Statement

One of the central tenets of Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) is that the researcher is not a detached observer but an active participant in the research process. For this reason, it is important to clearly state my positionality and the lens through which I approached this study. Charmaz (2000) emphasizes that a researcher's perspectives, values, and context inevitably inform the analysis. In this case, I am embedded in the very system I am studying as a volunteer teacher-coach in the NVSD; I could easily have been a participant myself.

I was known to all participants, whether by name, through my family name (as both of my parents were long-time teachers in NVSD), or through direct teaching and coaching experiences with me. In one instance, a participant cited my father as an influence in their decision to pursue

teaching. My background shaped my role in the study, creating interview environments that were comfortable and conversational, which in turn allowed rich data to flow. My familiarity with local incidents and many of the individuals referenced by participants also made it easier to grasp the subtext of discussions.

At the same time, this insider position presented challenges. I had to remain vigilant in stepping back, allowing themes to emerge from the data rather than imposing my own interpretations. While setting aside bias is never entirely possible in qualitative research, particularly when my lived experiences closely mirror those of participants, Charmaz's (2000) CGT framework provides space to acknowledge and integrate this insider knowledge. By doing so, my role not only shaped what was seen, asked, and interpreted, but also contributed to the depth and authenticity of the research.

1.8 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter One introduced the background and context of the study, situated in a single school district in North Vancouver, BC, Canada. It outlined the research problem of declining volunteerism, the rationale for focusing on volunteer coaches in the NVSD. It presented the research aim, objectives, and questions, definitions of key terms, as well as the scope of the study, my motivation, and my positionality statement. Chapter Two reviews the relevant literature, highlighting research on volunteer motivations, social capital theory, role theory, and the importance of youth sport participation. Chapter Three describes the methodological approach, including the use of CGT, sampling strategies, data collection procedures, interview design, analysis methods, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents the findings, organized around three key themes: Motivations for Volunteering; Changing Landscape and Emerging Challenges; and Retention and Sustainability. Finally, Chapter Five discusses the findings in relation to theory, offers practical recommendations, and concludes with limitations, directions for future research, and recommendations.

1.9 Summary

Having established the scope, purpose, and structure of the study in Chapter One, the next chapter contains a review of the relevant literature. Chapter Two outlines research on volunteer motivations, social capital theory, role theory, and the importance of youth sport participation, which provides the foundation necessary to contextualize the experiences of volunteer coaches in North Vancouver.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

This section begins by outlining the theoretical and methodological framework for the study, CGT, followed by an overview of the literature that informs and guides the research. This section demonstrates how theories such as social capital and role theory inform the study.

Volunteering has been widely studied; however, the present review narrows its focus to volunteering in sport, and more specifically, coaching. A central theme is understanding what motivates individuals to volunteer. In the literature, there are several theoretical perspectives applied to this question, including social capital theory, which is discussed in this chapter.

This review also highlights role theory. Retention challenges are particularly relevant for volunteers who face role overload, as described in role theory. In helping roles such as coaching youth sport, role strain can contribute to burnout. Research suggests that addressing sources of stress and providing adequate support can improve retention and sustain engagement in these critical positions.

Finally, to emphasize the significance of volunteer involvement in youth sport, literature is reviewed on the benefits of sport participation for youth, as well as the broader contributions of school and community sports programs to society.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) (Charmaz, 2000) provides the methodological and theoretical framework for this study, as it seeks to generate new insights grounded in the lived experiences of volunteer coaches. CGT used inductive reasoning to find themes and then develop broader theories. In this study, iterative coding, theoretical sampling and working toward data saturation are used, all of which are hallmarks of the CGT approach. A key reason CGT is well-suited to this research is that Charmaz's (2000) framework acknowledges the influence of

existing theories while still using data to build new ones. In this case, existing theories such as social capital theory, role theory, and serious leisure perspective inform the analysis but remain secondary to the insights that emerge directly from the data.

2.2 Motivation

Coaching in public secondary schools is a voluntary activity that requires many hours of service over the course of a sports season. Kim, Zhang, and Connaughton (2010a) defined motivation as the reasons, purposes, plans, and goals that make people initiate, direct, and sustain volunteer action. There are various motivations for people to volunteer. In 1984, Knoke and Prensky categorized volunteer motivations into three categories: utilitarian (learning skills; gaining knowledge), affective (relationships; social interactions), and normative (sharing; helping others). Their approach was broad and served to influence later models. Using the functional approach, Clary and Snyder (1999) studied volunteer motivations and found that people may do the same activity for different psychological reasons and that one volunteer can have multiple motivations. Clary et al.'s (1998) Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) which identifies and measures the motivations served by volunteering in general contexts by measuring values (concern for others), understanding (new learning experiences and the chance to exercise knowledge skills), social (relationships with others), career (job related benefits such as gaining experience), enhancement (satisfaction related to personal growth and self-esteem, and protective (addressing one's own problems or alleviating guilt from being more fortunate than others) dimensions. Later, Kim, Zhang, and Connaughton (2010a) developed the Modified Volunteer Functions Inventory for Sports (MVIS) scale, which streamlines Clary et al.'s (1998) VFI by specifically targeting the motivations of volunteers in youth sports settings.

Many secondary school coaches are also physical education (PE) teachers who were first attracted to the profession because they enjoy physical activity and sport (Curtner-Smith, 1999). Occupational socialization theory describes the acculturation, professional preparation, and organizational socialization of physical education teachers and addresses factors that contribute to their decisions and behaviours. Acculturation refers to the experiences that teachers had when

they were children in schools, which shaped their perspectives, beliefs, and values. By observing and participating in extracurricular sports and curricular physical education classes, teachers' (and therefore coaches') perspectives regarding PE and coaching were influenced by the experiences of sport and the coaching they received (Curtner-Smith, 2017). People such as parents, peers, teachers, and their own coaches shaped their views about physical education and coaching (Templin and Richards, 2014). Curtner-Smith et al. (2024) posit that coaching, being interested in sport, and coach role models are the elements that attract and shape the teachers who coach in secondary schools. Spending years in school, children engage in extensive observation of their PE teachers. By this, they construct theories related to what it means to be a PE teacher, and being a PE teacher often means being a coach as well (Richards, 2015). Although not mandatory, in some instances, PE teachers take on coaching duties because it is an expectation within their school communities (Konukman et al., 2010).

Motivation for teacher-coaches also comes in the form of increased exposure and time spent with student-athletes, allowing for the development of positive relationships that extend into the classroom (Turgeon et al., 2019). Camiré (2015) interviewed 25 Canadian secondary school teacher-coaches and discovered that a motivating factor for them was the personal benefits they earned from being a teacher and a coach in the same school. Coaches reported experiencing a stronger sense of professional identity, higher job satisfaction, and meaningful relationships with their student-athletes.

According to Curtner-Smith et al. (2024), one's sense of community is a motivator for volunteering. When volunteers identify with their communities, they tend to be more likely to volunteer. Richardson (2012) studied the role of coaches on inner-city adolescent African American males and found that motivations to volunteer included reciprocity and social responsibility. Those who volunteered wanted to give back to both the communities they grew up in and to their own families. Players who become volunteers often return to the sport organization they were a part of to offer their services and maintain membership in a community that was so important to them (Hoye et al., 2020).

In terms of motivation, youth sport volunteers who are not teacher-coaches are predominantly coproducers. Coproduction is the process by which service providers and service users work together. In youth sports, volunteer coaches, parents, and sport organizations jointly shape programs for young athletes. Silverberg, Backman and Backman (2000) describe coproduction motives as including the perception that a program will not be offered without their help, or their volunteering directly benefits someone they know. Youth coaches predominantly become involved in coaching because they have children on their team (Busser and Carruthers, 2010; O'Connor and Bennie, 2006).

Many people are motivated to volunteer to gain or improve their professional skills, experiences, and credentials (Kim, Zhang and Connaughton, 2010b). They may want to gain leadership experience or skills that they cannot gain in the workplace (Warner, Newland and Green, 2011). Clary et al (1998) found that volunteers with less experience are more likely to be motivated by career advancement, personal development, and personal training than more experienced volunteers. Motivations evolve over time, and volunteers may remain in their positions for different reasons than when they started (Warner, Newland, and Green, 2011).

O'Connor and Bennie (2006) looked at volunteer coaching in different countries and found that overall, fun, enjoyment, and a natural progression from one's own competitive sporting career were the most popular reasons for coaching. In North America, volunteer coaches wanted to remain involved in sport and work with young people. Similarly, in Australia, former athletes wanted to stay involved in sports and offer something back to the sporting community. For many former players, volunteering offers an avenue to remain connected to the sport they cherish (Cuskelly, Taylor, and Darcy, 2006).

2.3 Social Capital

Pierre Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as the resources individuals gain through networks and relationships. James Coleman (1988) further developed the concept, focusing on how,

through social capital, communities pass on their shared norms and expectations. Among the many advantages of youth sport participation is its role in fostering social capital, a concept that extends the benefits of sport beyond individual development to broader community connections. Subsequently, Robert Putnam (1993) emphasized that social capital strengthens democracy and community well-being. He identified sport participation as one of the ways social capital can be generated. Volunteer teacher-coaches build social capital by engaging with student-athletes in both academic and athletic contexts (Sarchet, 2021). The intentional interactions between participants, spectators, and volunteers create an environment where communal rewards exist. According to Putnam, "The more we connect with other people, generally speaking, the more we trust them, and vice versa" (Putnam 1995, p. 665).

Building social capital fosters networks that extend beyond one's immediate family, offering participants benefits such as access to economic resources (i.e. scholarships) and supportive social relationships that enable cooperation and collective action. Individuals who have developed trusting connections to other community members tend to develop positive character traits and can accomplish goals more effectively and efficiently (Jarrett, Sullivan, and Watkins, 2005). In the case of teacher-coach and student relationships, involvement in athletics fosters trust and reciprocity whereby each party acts for the benefit of the other (Ward, 2014). While student-athletes often form strong bonds with their peers, they also gain the valuable opportunity to work closely with adults, expanding their social networks beyond those of non-athlete classmates (Boekel, 2016). Social capital helps to improve people's character and health as membership in a social network develops character traits such as tolerance and empathy (Young, 2001).

Non-school sports can provide athletes with strong coaches, access to college recruiters, travel opportunities, and challenging opponents, but they fail to provide the community engagement or connections of school-based athletics (Blanton et al., 2024). Connections made locally lead to a sense of shared local interests and more community-oriented activities such as volunteering (Stern and Fullerton, 2009). Perks (2007) found that youth sport participation was positively related to adult involvement in community activities. Several countries developed sport policies

that reference social capital, implying their belief that participation in sport fosters increased social cohesion, social connectedness, and increased community wellbeing (Hoye and Nicholson, 2009). Worldwide, sport and physical activity are promoted in policy as preventive strategies to reduce the social and economic toll of chronic diseases arising from physical inactivity (Casey, Payne, and Eime, 2012). In 2016, the United Nations established a campaign to promote sport as a vehicle for youth to develop essential life skills such as teamwork and self-esteem, ultimately leading to being productive employees and citizens. In the same year, the German Federal Ministry of the Interior claimed that people who are active in sport stabilize and foster social life in the community. As Hoye and Nicholson (2009) note, a common theme in social capital literature is that people with strong social ties tend to fare better in both personal and professional contexts, benefiting from support, information, and opportunities that arise through their networks.

2.4 Role Theory

Role Theory, coined by George Herbert Mead (1934), explains human behaviour through the metaphor of actors playing roles and is foundational in looking at behavioural expectations within varying occupations. Role theory is based on the core assumption that individuals occupy multiple roles in their daily lives (Biddle, 1986). A volunteer coach can play numerous roles at the same time, including career-related roles such as teacher and colleague, and personal roles such as spouse and parent. These roles influence both how people act and view themselves, as well as how their behaviour is interpreted by others (Anglin et al., 2022).

Teachers face a regular workday of instruction, planning, marking, reporting, serving on committees, and various school duties. In addition to their inherently busy occupation, teacher-coaches agree to extracurricular activities that require intense daily work over the course of months-long seasons (Sage, 1987). Time constraints lead to challenges when the roles of teacher and coach coincide (Mellor, Gaudreault, and Fadale, 2020). Role theory offers a useful framework for examining the challenges faced by individuals who hold multiple roles that

sometimes have conflicting expectations, pressures, and responsibilities (Richards et al., 2014). Role conflict occurs when an individual faces incompatible demands from different roles.

Helping professions, such as teaching, offer the challenges, rewards, and satisfaction of working with people, but are also professions that lead to burnout. Katz and Kahn (1978) studied the major sources of job-related stress and found that role conflict was dominant in positions where individuals worked with people. Two important roles in the secondary school sports system are those of coaches and athletic directors. Both can be considered helping professions due to the nature of contact with students, administrators, colleagues, parents, and more.

Secondary school teacher-coaches face extensive strain on their time as they tend to hold full-time jobs in addition to coaching. This results in role overload, which occurs when the demands of two or more roles exceed an individual's capacity to manage. Role overload is considered a major cause of role conflict and is a primary factor in teacher-coach turnover (Biddle and Thomas, 1966). It occurs when people take on more roles than they can fulfill based on their time, energy level, or abilities (Westmoreland, 2024). Role overload leads to burnout that Capel, Sisley and Desertrain (1987) define as "a response to chronic job-related stress for some people in the helping or service professions" (p. 106). It arises when job demands surpass an individual's capacity to cope, leaving them overwhelmed by work-related stress. In secondary schools, coaches are frequently expected to handle both coaching and a range of organizational or administrative tasks, leading to feelings of overload (Capel, Sisley and Desertrain, 1987).

Teacher-coaches experience role overload and compensate by choosing which role is more important. Sage (1987) studied the world of high school athletic coaches and found that while many coaches enjoyed and valued teaching, few preferred it to coaching. In fact, most high school coaches were once athletes themselves and originally motivated to become teachers to coach. Research in physical education suggests that the coaching role often becomes dominant because it is perceived to provide greater social support and rewards than classroom teaching. Simultaneous performance of teacher and coach roles can lead to issues with implications for

individuals' performance in one or both roles (Konukman, et al., 2010). The struggle between teaching responsibilities and coaching obligations leads teacher-coaches to prioritize one role over the other. This selection is generally based on which role they perceive as most legitimate or most related to their career expectations (Capel, Sisley, and Desertrain, 1987). More time and energy are focused on one role at the expense of the other (Westmoreland, 2024). The roles of teaching and coaching come with different skill sets and expectations. Whereas classroom teaching involves little public scrutiny, coaching is subject to regular public evaluation, as school community members attend games and assess coaches based on win–loss records, lineup choices, playing time decisions, and conduct during competition (Chellandurai and Kuga, 1996). Incompatible behaviour patterns required by the different roles leads to role conflict (Richards, Levesque-Bristol, and Templin, 2014), such as when teacher-coaches must balance the values inherent in participation with the competitive nature of sport. Teacher-coaches in a secondary school setting must balance the values of learning and inclusion while satisfying the demands of the community who often values competition and winning (Capel, Sisley, and Desertrain, 1987). They also experience intra-role conflict, which occurs when different groups have conflicting expectations for the same role. For example, a coach cannot satisfy all parents if some expect winning at any cost while others expect equal playing time for all participants (Locke and Massengale, 1978). Kwon, Pyun, and Kim (2010) suggest that teacher-coaches prioritize their coaching roles because they feel more accountability in coaching and the pressure to win, unlike in the classroom where no one is watching.

Role pressures increase when teacher-coaches are in-season, due to the number of extra hours added to the workweek. It is estimated that coaches put in 30-40 extra hours per week, which essentially doubles their workload when also faced with teaching classes throughout the week (Sage, 1987). Recently, there has been a shift from PE teachers predominantly taking on most of the school coaching roles to more volunteer teacher-coaches who teach core subjects. Core subjects like science and English come with more planning and assessment than skills-based subjects like PE (Westmoreland, 2024) thus leading to even more time constraints for those volunteers.

Teacher-coaches also face role conflict when trying to balance their work life with family (Westmoreland, 2024). Work-family conflict occurs when professional obligations interfere with family responsibilities (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985), and more coaches reported considering withdrawal from coaching due to the strain of neglecting their families than for any other reason (Sage, 1987). Coaches reported experiencing guilt over prioritizing time with their athletes at the expense of their own families. This imbalance contributed to strain within their personal relationships, including those with spouses, children, and friends (Conner and Bohan, 2018).

To alleviate role stress, Sarchet (2021) recommends mentorship programs and professional development focused on time management. Conner and Bohan (2018) emphasize the importance of community support and coping strategies in preventing burnout among teacher-coaches, advocating for teacher-coaches to seek multiple mentors across their various roles to provide resources, guidance, and practical advice. Cullen (2023) echoes this sentiment and adds that administrators play a crucial role in supporting teacher-coaches through better communication and understanding of their experiences of role conflict. Konukman et al. (2010) revealed that administrators frequently underestimated the time demands of teaching and coaching, leading to limited awareness of the role conflict experienced by teacher-coaches. Pitney, Stuart, and Parker (2008) found that when teachers perceived greater administrative support, they reported lower levels of role strain. Teacher-coaches should be prepared for role conflict during teacher education programs and supported with structural measures such as additional or strategically scheduled planning time. At both the school and system levels, greater recognition of their dual contributions, along with access to resources, is essential to sustaining their effectiveness and well-being (Cullen, 2023).

2.5 Importance of Sport Participation in Youth

Evidence supports claims that participation in youth sports is a mechanism impacting participants' physical, mental, and social health (Griffiths and Armour, 2014). Sport and physical education have been found to bring communities together, bridge cultural and ethnic divides, teach skills such as discipline and leadership, as well as demonstrate core democratic principles

such as tolerance, solidarity, cooperation, and respect (Schuttoff et al., 2018). A long-standing belief is that "sport builds character," especially in school sports (Blanton, Pierce, and Ault, 2024). Youth spend much of their time engaged in leisure activities, with sport being the most popular (Larson and Verma, 1999; Hansen and Larson, 2007). The positive outcomes of sport participation are enhanced when dedicated, well-trained teachers and coaches work alongside supportive, well-informed parents (Holt and Talbot, 2011). Blanton, Pierce and Ault's (2024) study revealed that participants found it problematic that American secondary sport coaching is unregulated, with many states allowing coaches to work without a background or education in child or adolescent development and learning theories. They believe this results in having coaches who do not recognize the larger purpose of school-based athletics, which is to promote respect, integrity, sportsmanship, and to develop leadership and life skills. There are notable differences between teacher-coaches and community coaches, and the benefits athletes derive from sport are largely determined by the coach's experiences, training, philosophies, and strategies, which shape the sporting environment (Gould and Carson, 2008; Camiré, Trudel and Forneris, 2009). Petitpas et al. (2005) found that teacher-coaches have a stronger influence on student-athletes' attitudes and behaviours because they have daily interactions with them, while community coaches are limited to interactions during practices and games.

Adult role models are pertinent in fostering positive developmental outcomes in youth (Benson et al., 2006). Vella, Oades and Crowe (2011) researched the role of the coach in facilitating youth development and found that coaches see themselves as responsible for youth's increased competence, confidence, connection, character, life skills, climate, positive affect, and positive psychological capabilities. Coaches believe they assist students in adhering to positive social norms by modeling future desirable behaviour and demonstrating the importance of citizenship and service through their own involvement (Ward, 2014). Relationships between adolescents and engaged adults outside of the family are beneficial as youth transition into adulthood (Richardson, 2012). Often, students who are academically weak develop feelings of attachment to their schools through extracurricular activities. By this, youth who participate in school activities such as sports teams are more likely to graduate due to an increased sense of belonging in the school community (Finn, 1989). Boekel et al. (2016) found that student-athletes generally

achieve higher GPAs than their non-athlete peers and report stronger perceptions of support from family, teachers, and the broader community. Furthermore, students involved in school-organized sports perceive their school environment as safer compared to their peers who do not participate in these activities. In addition to developmental outcomes, participation in organized sport is associated with positive outcomes such as post-secondary educational achievement, social competence, reduced risky behaviours, and adult community engagement (Hansen and Larson, 2007). Students who participate in sports have higher grades, higher self-esteem, and higher educational aspirations. They tend to spend more time on homework and apply to more universities (Gore and Gordon, 2001). Curtis, McTeer, and White (2003) discovered that those who participate in organized youth sport tend to earn higher annual incomes as adults than non-participants. Participation also has the potential for negative experiences, but these most often are learning opportunities that allow participants to face challenges and grow from conquering them (Hansen and Larson, 2007).

2.6 Summary

This chapter outlined the theoretical and methodological framework for the study and then presented literature regarding volunteerism, motivation, social capital, role theory, and the benefits of youth sport. The next chapter delves into the methodology used, thus explaining the research design, data collection, and analysis methods, and ethical considerations.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research design and methodological approach used to explore the landscape of volunteer coaching in North Vancouver secondary schools. This section justifies the use of Constructivist Grounded Theory, which allows for the co-construction of knowledge between the researcher and participants. It also details sampling strategies, participant details, data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Constructivist Grounded Theory Approach

The aim of this study is to explore the conditions related to volunteer secondary school sports coaching in North Vancouver. Grounded Theory (GT) is a research methodology aimed at developing theories that explain significant issues and experiences in people's lives (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). While the original developers of GT, Glaser and Strauss (1967), saw the researcher as an objective observer, Charmaz (2000) moved it from its original positivist/post-positivist roots toward a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm. This extension of GT is termed Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) and allows for data and theory to be co-constructed by the researcher and participants. In this case, reality is not discovered but created through interaction. Additionally, while Glaser and Strauss (1967) aimed to minimize bias, Charmaz (2000) considered the researcher's perspectives, values, and context as part of the analysis. In this study, the researcher's role as a teacher-coach in the district/system being examined was pertinent to shaping what was seen, asked, and interpreted. Using CGT, the investigation into the workings of the coaching system was interpretivist and relied on expounding participants' responses rather than proving or disproving a hypothesis. CGT was a natural fit for this study as participants shared and made sense of their own experiences in the system and provided rich, detailed data that provided a viable means for generating new perspectives and theories.

3.2 Sampling Strategy

In this qualitative study, purposive and theoretical sampling methods were used to select participants. The term *participants* is used to describe interviewees, as it acknowledges their

active role in the research process and aligns with the interpretivist stance adopted by the researcher (Edwards and Holland, 2023). First, purposive sampling was used to intentionally select participants who could best inform the study based on their knowledge and experiences. In this case, former and current volunteer coaches were selected from different schools, sports, roles (teachers, community members, parents), and experience levels to obtain rich, relevant, and diverse information about working in the school sports system. Coaches who were currently volunteering, as well as coaches who had quit, were purposely selected. Second, theoretical sampling was used when theories emerged that gave rise to the need for new perspectives on certain themes. Theoretical sampling allows for an iterative process in which decisions are made during the research process and are guided by the concepts and categories that emerge from ongoing data analysis (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin and Strauss, 2015). Theoretical sampling was used to collect additional data to further explore the developing themes (Edwards and Holland, 2023). In this case, it was beneficial to interview district athletic directors and ask questions related to the data already obtained from former and current coaches. All athletic directors were also former or current coaches in the system, so their perspectives were valuable on more than one front.

3.3 Sample Size

Sample size was determined based on theoretical saturation, described by Charmaz (2014) as "the point at which gathering more data about a theoretical category reveals no new properties nor yields any further theoretical insights about the emerging grounded theory" (p. 345). Saturation is reached when new themes appear infrequently, and additional data primarily provide variations or elaborations of existing themes rather than introducing new concepts. Although the idea of saturation is helpful at the conceptual level, Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) found that it provides little practical guidance for estimated sample sizes. In this study, a total of 15 participants were interviewed. Nine participants were recruited using purposive sampling, three using theoretical sampling, and then one more participant was interviewed, who essentially verified that saturation had been reached.

3.4 Participants

Fifteen participants with years of volunteer experience in the NVSD varying from three years to 37 years. In many cases, participants had been involved in more than one sport over the years. Volunteer hours per season were estimated and different sports required different amounts of time. The sports coached by participants include football, mountain biking, basketball, rugby, soccer, track and field, wrestling, field hockey, and swimming. Estimated time commitment for each sport varies with football and mountain biking requiring the most hours, sometimes upwards of 200 hours for one season.

3.4a. Table of Participants

Participant	Teacher/Parent/ Community Coach	Volunteering in NVSD since	Number of different sports coached	Number of seasons coached	Estimated hours per season*
Eric	Teacher	1988	1	52	50-200
Shannon	Teacher	1989	3	40+	100+
Neil	Teacher	1993	5	32	90
Nick	Teacher	1994	4	31	100
Victor	Teacher	1998	6	31	40-72
Diane	Teacher	2002	1	23	200+
Kyle	Parent/Community**	2005	3	22	55
Tyler	Teacher	2008	3	22	36-180
Chris	Parent/Community**	2011	1	14	225
Amy	Parent	2016	2	8	40
Hannah	Teacher	2020	3	6	100
Emily	Teacher	2022	2	5	70-80
Adrian	Teacher	2022	2	4	50
Tom	Parent	2022	1	3	85
David	Teacher	2022	1	3	24

*Hours per season vary depending on sport
**Parent coach then stayed on as a community coach

3.5 Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative data collection method that uses a set of prepared, open-ended questions as a guide while allowing flexibility for the interviewer to explore topics

that emerge naturally during the conversation (Edwards and Holland, 2023). This approach was well-suited to explore participants' individual perspectives. Semi-structured interviews combine the consistency of structured interviews with the adaptability of unstructured interviews, enabling richer, more in-depth responses from participants. This format also supports the iterative nature of qualitative research, as questions can be adapted or expanded in response to participants' insights (Bryman, 2016; Kallio et al., 2016). Using semi-structured interviews fostered reciprocity between researcher and participant, allowing for follow-up and clarifying questions to deepen understanding. Additionally, the researcher can guide the conversation toward issues considered most relevant to the aims of the research project (Brinkmann and Leavy, 2014).

Informal texts, emails, and in-person conversations were used by the researcher to request former and current coaches and athletic directors' participation in this study. Potential participants were given a brief overview of the study's purpose and that their participation would contribute to the researcher's master's program research and to a broader understanding of the topic. Responses were overwhelmingly positive, with only one community coach reluctant to participate. Interviews were scheduled to be conducted face-to-face at locations where participants typically experienced the issues under study, allowing them to respond and behave within their natural context (Creswell, 2013). Settings included physical education offices, classrooms, a yoga studio, an outdoor area overlooking a turf field, and a gymnasium. There were two exceptions: one community coach met at a mutually convenient school library, and one teacher-coach on medical leave hosted the interview at her home. Face-to-face interviews allowed the researcher to observe gestures, body language and facial expressions, which can give away much information (Brinkmann and Leavy, 2014). Interactions involved some miscommunication, which was easily remedied, as well as moments of laughter and camaraderie (Edwards and Holland, 2020). Interviews were conducted in April through June, with one final interview conducted in August. Individual interviews made it easier for the researcher to direct the conversation as well as made participants more comfortable discussing experiences that may be personal or sensitive in nature (Brinkmann and Leavy, 2014). Prior to meeting, a Microsoft Form (Appendix A) was sent to participants to request background information. Participants provided

their full names on the form and were assured that their identities would remain confidential, with any identifying information altered or anonymized. Additional information requested included the year they began coaching, the sport(s) they coach, the number of seasons coached, and the estimated hours per season dedicated to coaching. Demographic details such as gender, school, and role (parent, community member, teacher, or physical education teacher) were also collected. Athletic directors interviewed identified their role as "teacher." Rather than collecting age or birthdate, participants were asked the year they began coaching to explore how the coaching landscape may have changed over time and to allow them to reflect on any relevant shifts. Questions regarding the number of seasons coached and hours contributed were included to highlight the substantial time commitment of volunteer coaches, which is often underestimated by the broader community. Prior to beginning the interviews, participants were provided with background information about the study (Appendix B) and an informed consent form (Appendix C) to review and sign. Each interview took approximately 20-40 minutes.

3.6 Interview Questions

The semi-structured interview guide (Appendix D) was designed by the researcher and utilizes focused, open-ended questions. In CGT, questionnaires developed by other researchers are not relied upon (Creswell, 2013) although in this case, the *National Coach Survey* (2022) was referenced as a starting point for formulating questions. The survey explored youth sport coaches' backgrounds, experiences, philosophies, behaviours, training histories and interests, with the aim of creating a better understanding of coaching in the United States of America (Anderson-Butcher and Bates, 2022). With similar goals in mind, categories of this survey were used to inform sections of the semi-structured interview guide, and some of the published results of this survey were reverse engineered to develop qualitative, open-ended questions. The categories settled on include motivation, perceived impact, culture and perceptions of coaching, challenges, and the future of coaching. Each category contains 2-4 open-ended questions. In practice, each category served as a prompt to initiate discussion, and when the conversation slowed, the next question was introduced. While interviewing participants, although the structure remained the same, questions became more refined as themes emerged (Creswell, 2013). Consistent with the flexible nature of qualitative inquiry, the interview questions for athletic

directors were adapted in real time to emphasize their supervisory perspectives and to explore in greater depth the differences between community or parent coaches (non-teachers) and teacher-coaches. Participants were guided by researcher questions but assured that there were no right or wrong answers and that any personal experiences they could share could be valuable to the study (Brinkmann and Leavy, 2014). In practice, the researcher combined a constructivist and an objectivist approach by eliciting participants' assumptions and opinions in terms of events and situations, but also by obtaining information about specific events and problems that participants would like to see resolved (Charmaz, 2014).

3.7 Data Analysis

3.7a Transcribing the Interviews

Interviews were recorded and transcribed using SpeakAPP on an Apple iPhone. SpeakAPP provides instant voice-to-text transcription with high accuracy, although a weakness is that it does not distinguish between voices. Once transcribed on the application, files were saved as Microsoft Word documents and then uploaded to Google Docs for editing. Editing consisted of reviewing the transcripts to highlight the participant and researcher in different colours. Back (2010) argues that although recording devices capture participants' words accurately, they may miss the nuances of meaning conveyed through tone or mannerisms if the researcher relies solely on the recording. In contrast, Castellan (2010) notes that recording applications can reduce errors in interpreting participants' responses by ensuring accuracy in what was said. Transcripts were reviewed within 48 hours of the interviews so the researcher could reflect on the conversations and capture key insights that might be overlooked when relying solely on the written record.

3.7b Qualitative Data Analysis

Transcribed interviews were uploaded to NVivo, a software program designed to help researchers organize, analyze, and find insights in qualitative data. Thematic analysis, a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns within qualitative data (Clarke, 2017), was employed. The resulting themes served as an organizing framework for the interview data

(Clarke, 2017). When reviewing transcripts, categories of information emerged. Therefore, the initial coding stage in NVivo involved assigning labels based on these categories: Motivation; Coach's Impact on Athletes; Memorable Coaching Moments; Most Rewarding Aspects; Coaching Culture in North Vancouver; Coaches' Perceived Value; Challenges; Compensation and Incentives; Teachers vs Community Coaches; Recommendations to Sustain Coaching; Decline in Volunteer Coaching; Evolution of School Sports; Advice for Aspiring Coaches; and Leadership, Policy and Resources. Interview transcripts ranged from 1600-2400 words in length, so NVivo was beneficial to make the GT approach, which involves iterative, systematic analysis of large volumes of qualitative data much more manageable. After the initial and numerous categories were determined, the researcher worked back and forth between categories to determine themes. Codes were introduced to create a smaller number of themes that were used to illustrate major findings and better organize the data (Creswell, 2014). Themes were created from the commonality of participants' responses from the interviews and included themes such as administrative support, communication among coaches, and parental involvement. NVivo was used to organize participants' transcript excerpts and track response references to different thematic codes.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This study received ethical approval following the guidance from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) (2022). The purpose of this research was to gain an understanding of the landscape of coaching in North Vancouver secondary schools. While the study did not pose any risk of physical harm, ensuring participant anonymity and confidentiality was a central ethical consideration in the interview process (Nick, Coughlan, and Cronin, 2009). The importance of confidentiality was emphasized, and it was explained that all data would be anonymized to protect participants' identities. The informed consent process also clarified that participants could withdraw at any time if they felt uncomfortable with any aspect of the research. I, as the researcher, was transparent about my own involvement in the subject as a volunteer teacher-coach within the district (Morrow, 2005) and took care to protect participants' privacy using pseudonyms (Creswell, 2013). Participants were also informed that the findings of the study would be shared with them upon completion.

3.9 Summary

This study used a CGT approach with purposive and theoretical sampling, semi-structured interviews, and thematic analysis. The methodology allowed for in-depth data collection from participants relating to the coaching culture in North Vancouver secondary schools, including their motivations and challenges. In the next chapter, the findings derived from the interviews will be presented.

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter presents the results of the experiences and perceptions of volunteer coaching in the NVSD secondary school system. These results show emerging themes and factors derived from the qualitative data analysis that paint a picture of the landscape of the current state of volunteering, what motivates volunteers, how coaching in NVSD has changed over time, and challenges faced by volunteer coaches. Participants also offer ideas regarding what can be done to revitalize and retain volunteer coaching activity in the district.

Findings were generated from 15 purposively and theoretically sampled volunteer coaches in the NVSD, representing varying years of experience, different roles in the community (teacher, PE teacher, athletic director, parent, community member), and a range of sports coached in North Vancouver secondary schools. The shift from purposive to theoretical sampling prompted the need to interview Athletic Directors in the district who were able to provide rich answers to questions regarding volunteer demographics in their schools and the district that individual coaches may not have been able to offer. Essentially, interviewing athletic directors allowed the researcher to zoom out and see the athletic program of some schools as a whole in the district. All 15 participants coach, or coached in the NVSD, with several who also have club and/or community (non-school) sports coaching experience. This offered a basis for comparison when they were presented with the question, “In what ways do you think the role of a school coach differs from that of a community or club coach?” The 15 participants began volunteering in varying generations with the most experienced coach starting in 1988 and the newest coach starting in 2022. The more senior district coaches were able to provide insight into changes in the school district over the years.

The purposively sampled participants were asked open-ended and inductive questions such as “What initially motivated you to become a secondary school coach?” while others who were theoretically sampled answered more structured questions to follow-up with the previous round of volunteer-coach interviews. These included questions such as, “Have you seen a decrease in

teacher coaches?" and "As athletic director, do you prefer to engage community or teacher coaches?"

Most participants gave an account of their experiences that reflected both the rewards and challenges of coaching, which together shaped their motivations, perceptions of change, and decisions about continuing to volunteer. Guided by the research questions, data analysis conducted during the study found three main themes that could be further divided into several sub-themes:

1. Motivations for Volunteering
    a. Why Volunteer?
    b. Evolving Motivations
    c. Rewarding Aspects
2. Current Landscape and Emerging Challenges
    a. Paperwork
    b. Parents and Students
    c. Shift in Skill Level
    d. New Teachers
    e. Teacher-Coaches vs Community/Parent Coaches
3. Retention and Sustainability
    a. Reasons for Quitting
    b. Trust and Respect
    c. Leadership Support
    d. Communication and Collaboration
    e. Tensions Between Coaching Commitments and School Culture

Each section and subsection are discussed in the following pages of this chapter.

4.1 Motivations for Volunteering

4.1a. Why Volunteer? Reasons for volunteering to coach varied including parental involvement, positive high school experiences, a desire to connect with students and the school community and responding to need. All parent coaches initially volunteered to meet program

needs. Amy explains, “My kids are both at the school and wanted to play soccer, so I just volunteered my time…so that they would have a team.” Similarly, Kyle notes, “My daughters…needed some coaches and so I stepped up and started coaching and just never left,” continuing even after his children graduated. Chris helped revive a defunct sport program at his son’s school: “It was either try and get the program going…or send my kid to a school where he could play.” Tom also volunteered out of a sense of obligation when his daughter’s coach didn’t return.

Teacher-coaches often responded to demand while drawing on their love of sport and positive athletic experiences. Tyler began coaching because there was a need and he had relevant knowledge, and Victor concurs: “I want to say it’s because I wanted to, but I think the first team I coached was because they needed someone and they asked me.” For many, coaching extended their own sporting careers. Eric described it as “an extension of my university athletics,” while Emily noted that coaching was “a big reason why I was interested in teaching.” Neil, an accomplished runner exploring career options, was initially uninterested in teaching. However, he observed that teachers could volunteer their time to engage with students and attend events, whereas other professionals, like lawyers, rarely participated in social or extracurricular activities. Inspired by this, he began volunteer coaching at a high school, and a teacher he was working with encouraged him to consider a career in education. Neil reflects, “It was just a natural progression.” Adrian highlighted the unique rewards of sport, stating, “You don’t tend to get a lot of wins and cheers in the classroom!”

Several teacher-coaches emphasized coaching as a way to strengthen relationships and school culture. Shannon felt it “enriched my relationships with students…[and] makes a much more positive school community,” Eric saw volunteering as part of his teaching responsibility, and Hannah used coaching during COVID to connect with students and colleagues. Nick, without a father-figure after age 12, was motivated by the positive influence his own coaches had on him, wanted to give back: “The people that really filled that [fatherly] role in my life were my coaches. And I wanted to give back the way they gave to me.”

4.1b. Evolving Motivations: Several participants reflected on how their motivations shifted as their volunteer careers progressed. While Hannah's initial motivation was more personal, now it's about "making new connections and just continuing to provide really fun places for kids to learn new things." Nick's motivation evolved from hoping to be a mentor to "passing on my love for sport to kids." For Tyler, motivation transitioned from meeting a need to recognizing what he personally gained from the role: coaching "not only provided an opportunity for the kids to play the sports, but it certainly made me a better teacher, definitely made me a more popular teacher and that doesn't hurt." Kyle, whose children have graduated, continues to coach out of pure enjoyment. "I just love the program. I love the people. I love the kids. I love the energy. It's fun for me." In contrast, Eric's motivation shifted from love of the game to "helping to develop kids to become better humans and how to get them to take athletics and apply it to real life."

4.1c. Rewarding aspects: Participants overwhelmingly reported that the most rewarding aspects of coaching come from the relationships built with players and teams. When asked what makes coaching worthwhile, Diane summed up the group's sentiment simply: "The connection with the kids. 100%." Kyle echoed this, explaining, "They're kind of like my kids. And so I love them like my kids, and I hope they are successful like my kids."

The depth of these relationships was reflected in memorable moments where athletes showed appreciation for their coaches. Eric recalled his team pooling money to surprise him with a special gift, saying, "They all had their phones out and they were filming me…and they were as excited as I was about giving me the gift." Diane shared how former athletes supported her during her cancer diagnosis, creating a handmade card filled with quotes she had shared with them over the years, reminders of her lasting influence beyond sport.

Several coaches also found it especially rewarding to see athletes stay connected to sport, either by continuing at the university level or returning to coach themselves. Nick reflected, "I think the most gratifying part is when you see an athlete that you taught or coached come back and say,

hey, can I help? Can I start coaching… I think naturally there's a little bit of pride that you take knowing that you helped kind of foster that environment." Tom agreed, "It's really neat to see the athletes transition from one role to another role and give back to the sport. And maybe in a very small way, they've taken that passion and enthusiasm that I have for the game, that they now have, and they feel like they want to give back."

Wins and losses also created lasting memories and bonds. Shannon vividly recalled her underdog team winning a championship by cleverly disguising their plays, saying, "It was not sophisticated coaching, but it was effective, and it was wonderful when we emerged victorious. Lots of fun, lots of hard work, lots of buy-in by the kids." For others, the greatest satisfaction came from seeing lessons transfer from practice to competition. Amy noted the reward of "when what you've trained actually happens in a game, so that they've applied what they've learned."

Ultimately, coaching was described not only as rewarding for athletes but for teachers as well. Tyler reflected, "Coaching can be a very rewarding thing, and you get to know the kids in a different way…it certainly made me a better teacher, definitely made me a more popular teacher and that doesn't hurt."

4.2. Current Landscape and Emerging Challenges

4.2a. Paperwork: Participants described feeling overwhelmed, or at the very least frustrated, by the paperwork and financial management required of them as volunteer coaches. Nick said, "When I first started coaching, there were no obstacles put in front of us." Shannon explained, "Financial management is a really big load to put onto coaches. Paperwork, procedure, financial concerns have changed coaching. And in my opinion, that is a deterrent to coaching, absolutely." She noted that in the past, athletes paid a flat fee per sport, with schools and fundraising covering the remaining costs. Now, however, each team needs a full budget that tracks every expense and sets team fees. While athletic directors did this for some teams/schools, this practice was not across the board. Several participants said they must complete numerous

administrative tasks, including registration and budget forms, booking buses, organizing travel and substitute teachers, submitting receipts, filing injury reports, purchasing equipment and uniforms, and coordinating fundraising. Each of these tasks requires multiple signatures for invoices or reimbursements, adding further delays and complications. Coaches from one school reported that account balances are only released at set times each month, leaving them to make financial decisions without up-to-date information. At the same school, a coach struggled for six months to get a tax receipt after receiving a $10,000 donation from a community member.

4.2b. Parents and Students: Participant responses about changes in parents and student-athletes varied but generally fell into three categories: those who perceived conditions as worsening, those who believed they had improved, and those who felt they had remained the same. Player commitment is not what it used to be because they are getting pulled in so many different directions in the community (other teams, jobs, volunteer work, studying). Tyler observed that while educators now recognize that every student learns differently and faces unique challenges, this understanding can sometimes create unrealistic expectations in certain sports. For instance, in a physically demanding game like football, a student struggling with mental health who misses practices but still expects to play may put both himself and his teammates at risk if he is unfamiliar with the plays or unsure of what to do on the field. Some parents do not accept or understand this disconnect. Nick sees a change overall and expresses frustration that "Athletes now come in with a sense of entitlement and if things don't go the athlete's way, the parent whines and complains and the athlete gets what they want." Several participants noted changes in parents' attitudes. Diane said, "Earlier on, the parents and the kids were so appreciative. But the longer I was there, the more taken for granted I was, and the more parents were bickering about things rather than saying thank you and recognizing the work that's gone into making the program run." Chris says "never when we stated this would you have had parents complaining about their kids' playing time or positions, they were playing" Shannon added that "it has only been in the last few years that I have ever experienced parents feeling that they have a greater say in what is happening with the team. Even in terms of team selection than previously. And I don't think that's healthy." Neil compared today's parents to his athletic experiences in the 1980s. "The idea that a parent would confront a coach over playing time, that

just would not happen. The idea that a parent would be involved in petty little issues – it just wouldn't happen." In contrast, Eric and Amy find that parents value coaches more now because in the "olden days," there was just an expectation that teachers would coach but now people understand that we're coaching here in Canada for free. Eric says, "We don't get paid extracurricular money, and this is off the side of our desk, and we value the kids. I think parents see that and appreciate that. I think they are starting to understand that people's time is worth something and they respect that." Other participants suggested parents were the same as always. Victor says, "Parents have always been kind of squeaky," and Neil adds, "There is a small element, helicopter type parents and whatever that, that aren't. They're only interested in what's best for their kid regardless of what happens to other kids."

4.2c. Shift in Skill Level: Participants noted a significant shift in student-athletes' skill level with the prevalence of high-level club sports in the community and early specialization which comes with extensive, year-round training. Shannon reflected on this change, explaining, "Thirty-odd years ago, the same core group of students would make up the starters in all sports seasons. So, there were fewer kids playing altogether; however, those kids played multiple sports." She noted a positive side to the current situation: more students overall now have opportunities to participate in high school athletics. In contrast, Diane described informal conversations with students who choose not to try out for certain school teams because the level of competition is too high. Shannon further emphasized, "Specialization leads to higher levels of play. It's increased incredibly, which makes it harder to get coaches because coaches also must be experts in their field to continue coaching." Whereas teachers in the past could manage the level of play and tactics, some now feel unequipped to coach at the current level.

4.2d. New Teachers: According to Victor, new teachers are often advised by their teacher education program advisors to delay coaching until they have established classroom routines and feel more comfortable in their teaching roles. Advisors caution that adding coaching responsibilities too early can negatively affect their development as teachers, particularly since the role is unpaid.

There is no doubt that the time commitment required of volunteer coaches is substantial. Participants estimated that their seasonal hours ranged from approximately 40 hours (for sports such as field hockey and rugby) to well over 200 hours (for sports such as mountain biking and football). Beyond the hours, teacher-coaches face logistical challenges such as arranging class coverage for games and booking time off for tournaments.

Several participants contrasted their own perspectives with those of newer teachers. Eric explained, "I personally see our volunteering with the school in some capacity as part of my teaching responsibility." Nick echoed this, recalling, "When I first started teaching back in 2003, almost all of the teams in the school were coached by teachers. I just think it's sad that in the 22 years that I've been involved in sport, how few teachers there are that are still involved in it."

Neil attributed this decline partly to changes in hiring practices. In the past, potential hires often highlighted their willingness to coach as an asset. Today, however, many new teachers prioritize work–life balance, and some leave promptly at 3:15pm. Rather than coaching—or participating in other extracurricular initiatives—they are more likely to focus on advancing their careers through graduate studies and are less willing to devote time to unpaid commitments.

4.2e. Teacher-Coaches vs Community/Parent Coaches: With fewer teachers taking on coaching roles, community coaches now fill most of these positions. Neil estimates that when he was a student in NVSD, all his coaches were teachers. Now, approximately 60-70 percent of volunteer coaching roles are filled by community coaches. Nick concurs remembering that, "When I first started teaching back in 2003, almost all of the teams in the school were coached by teachers."

Several teacher-coaches expressed concern about the challenges of working alongside community coaches, particularly when their values do not align with school values. Eric says:

> I think it's not healthy. We have so many out-of-school coaches who are currently coaching high school athletes. And the agenda for community coaches can be extremely different than what we stand for as educators. I always call it the curse of being a teacher and coaching a sport. We talk about the concepts of fair play and rotating your lineup and giving equal play and developing kids as opposed to out-of-school coaches who might have a priority of winning and stacking resumes and such.

Emily shared similar concerns, explaining that staff coaches often emphasize "the student before the athlete," whereas community coaches tend to focus primarily on performance. She recalled an incident where community coaches swore during a game, which highlighted the divide and the differing boundaries. Adrian echoed this, noting: "I think the possibility still exists for poor examples of leadership and/or behaviour on sidelines or on benches from some coaches that come from the community and treat school sport with the goal of winning versus participation."

From an administrative perspective, teacher-coaches are seen as easier to work with and more accountable because they are also staff members. Coaches with athletic director experience suggested that, ideally, all coaches would be staff members since they are already responsible to their employer. Neil commented, "The staff coaches are better coaches, typically. They're a lot less time and energy to manage. It's often a real quick conversation; there's no drama." Teacher-coaches also pointed out that, beyond coaching, staff members can take on essential administrative duties such as budgets and uniforms, which community coaches cannot always manage.

Community coaches, however, described their own challenges. Some feel more pressure in the school system than in community sport, with one noting: "I think we're looked at as a burden a lot of time." They also felt under greater scrutiny than their teacher-coach counterparts and believed their effectiveness improved when paired with a staff member who knew the students well and could hold them accountable.

Finally, several participants raised concerns about parent-coaches in particular. While parents are often more willing to volunteer when their own children are playing, their commitment is usually short-term. David observed that it is often easier to recruit parent coaches, but their involvement tends to end once their child graduates. Neil summarized this sentiment: “The day their kid is finished, they’re out the door. They’re not going to come back.”

4.3 Retention and Sustainability

4.3a. Reasons for Quitting: When asked what factors might lead them to step away from coaching, most participants pointed to time constraints as the biggest challenge. Community coaches who continued volunteering after their own children graduated cited conflicts with jobs and family responsibilities, while teacher-coaches emphasized the stress of balancing coaching with teaching and a desire to spend more time with their families. As Tyler explained, “It’s the time and you don’t get the time back.”

In practice, however, none of the participants in this study had left coaching solely because of time pressures. Instead, four of the fifteen participants who had recently stepped away from long coaching careers in the NVSD attributed their decisions to unresolved parent conflicts and a perceived lack of administrative support.

Tyler resigned after clashing with administration when a parent insisted on equal playing time for a student who missed practices for mental health reasons. While sympathetic to the student, he argued that placing an unprepared player in a contact sport created risks for both the individual and the team. Similarly, Shannon described withdrawing because of “squeaky-wheeled parents and students” who, in her view, put undue pressure on school leadership and made coaching unnecessarily difficult.

Nick was particularly vocal, contrasting school sport with community sport: “The amount of BS that I have to deal with from a coaching standpoint from either parents, administration, or the

executive level [in schools] was far worse… Why would I take more of this on? And that was me. I walked away." Diane also stepped away after parents threatened litigation when they disagreed with their children being sanctioned for rudeness and inappropriate language.

Overall, the findings indicate that although participants frequently cited time commitments as an ongoing challenge, it was parent-related conflict and a perceived lack of administrative support that ultimately prompted some to step away from coaching.

4.3b. Trust and Respect: Coaches reported that they build trust and respect within their coaching teams but not necessarily with athletic leadership including administrators. Shannon said trust has eroded over the years. In the past, "They trusted me as an adult and as a professional to be responsible with facilities." She is referencing the difficulty she now faces to gain access after regular school hours. She continues: "There have been many ways previous leadership teams have shown support: financially, [allowing use of] facilities, making an effort to appreciate the amount of time, energy and expertise that has gone into making a program good, and being happy to show up at games and be involved in the school community." For Shannon, trust and respect has deteriorated over the years.

Adrian, however, explained that he's been given considerable freedom in running his teams, from setting practice schedules to determining expectations. In contrast, Nick expressed frustration over having to justify team selections. "I'm a coach. I'm supposed to be, for lack of a better term, the expert in that scenario and I take a look at an environment, and I think this player is better than this player so I'm going to choose that player." He added that administrators should support coaches' decisions instead of automatically deferring to complaining parents: "Come to me, ask me, I'll explain them all clearly. Come and watch a game."

Tom described an even more troubling dynamic: team concerns were only taken seriously if voiced by parents. "That was our secret file during the season…and it felt really awkward, I'll be

honest." He explained that when coaches raised concerns directly, little was done, but when parents called, action followed.

4.3c. Leadership Support: Participants emphasized the significant impact of Athletic Directors (ADs) on school programs, noting the role often experiences high turnover – typically every two to three years. Many take on the position to secure a teaching placement or as a stepping stone to another school. The job itself is not in high demand, given its heavy workload which includes managing athletics in addition to a teaching schedule. Coaches like Emily, who have worked in multiple schools, observed that support from ADs varies widely: "Some offer information more easily than others…such as what equipment we have access to, where things are, helping plan the season, and things like that."

Neil explained that strong administrative leadership can make a difference to ADs. In his experience, one principal lightened his teaching load by creating an athletic leadership block, which freed up time to manage the program. His current vice-principal is similarly supportive, primarily by trusting him to do his job without micromanagement: "He just basically says, 'Okay, I trust what you're doing,' and that's very supportive."

A recurring theme was conflict between parents and coaches and how administrators choose to respond. Nick criticized poor leadership as siding with parents: "When a parent doesn't see eye to eye with you, they [the administration] default to the parent as opposed to the coach who's volunteering and giving up their time." Tyler echoed this, arguing that good leadership means acting as a filter: "A supportive administrator will deal with that parent. They might bring you in on the conversation, but they will deal with that issue accordingly." Chris described being dismissed from his volunteer coaching role after a conflict with a parent, only to be reinstated later when administrators realized the situation had been misrepresented: "That's when suddenly I got support." Others, like Diane and Nick, expressed frustration that administrators often created roadblocks, such as with tournament travel, rather than helping move initiatives forward.

For some, supportive leadership simply means showing up. Shannon argued that administrators need to be present to understand the realities of coaching: “In order to be supportive, you have to actually be aware of what is happening…between players and coaches and players and parents.” Tom noted that the only time administrators attended one of his games was when there was a potential safety concern with the opposing team. This notable presence highlighted their absence from all other games.

4.3d. Collaboration and Communication: A common refrain across interviews was that clear communication and collaboration between coaches and school leadership are essential for making volunteer roles manageable. Conversely, a lack of communication often led to stress, frustration, and wasted time. Participants identified frequent challenges around scheduling facilities, tracking equipment, and coordinating within coaching teams.

Tom described arriving at practices only to find facilities double-booked, and although he regularly saw the same coaches, he was never formally introduced to them. He considered this a missed opportunity for collaboration.

Hannah expressed frustration that in her school, the Athletic Director (AD) did not oversee equipment. When items went missing, there was no record of who had borrowed them, and as a teacher-coach she became the default point of contact: “It’s actually not in my control which other team has borrowed the basketballs, or which other team have taken the volleyballs, or that one of the other coaches hasn’t returned the head shields.” Amy echoed this concern, suggesting that more structured collaboration could improve cohesion: “Within a certain discipline, if the coaches could get together with the AD and be clear about the expectations, that might just seem like it’s more of a cohesive department or sport where there’s a goal from grade 8–12.”

Some participants, however, highlighted examples of effective communication. Emily reported that coaches in her sport collaborate not only within her school but across schools: “I think we

often talk and collaborate and it's a pretty respectful community." Similarly, Neil emphasized the importance of frequent contact: "I communicated with the coaches non-stop, especially the community coaches."

*4.3e. Tensions Between Coaching Commitments and School Culture**:*** Beyond communication within sports programs, coaches expressed a desire for athletics to be more integrated and valued within the overall school culture. Teacher-coaches often reported tension with colleagues who resented their volunteer commitments. Tyler noted that some teachers perceive coaching as "belittling our standing as teachers because you're giving your time away and we are so poorly paid for the time that was already taken." Similarly, Eric described feeling unsupported when colleagues showed little flexibility around early dismissals for games or absences for tournaments: "Some colleagues don't see the value in playing sport because kids might not be doing well in their own particular courses."

Teacher-coaches acknowledged the importance of balancing academics and athletics but felt that communication gaps often intensified tensions. Adrian explained, "I've always been of the philosophy that school sport is a privilege… being a decent student that is at least in good standing with all of their teachers and courses should allow you to participate in school sports rather than school sports being the thing that dominates your schedule." Tyler also stressed that the "student" aspect of student-athlete is sometimes overlooked: "There needs to be a way to keep Billy from playing sports until he does his damn English homework."

Practical challenges also contributed to strain. Coaches highlighted the difficulty of covering classes when leaving early for games. Adrian described the effort involved in finding colleagues willing to give up prep time: "I try to find the four or five other staff members who have prep that block off so you're not asking the same person to work during their prep five or six times in a month." The alternative, booking a teacher-on-call, added financial pressure since programs are billed for coverage, costs that are often offset by increased parent contributions or additional fundraising.

4.4 Summary

This chapter outlined the themes that emerged from analyzing the 15 semi-structured interviews conducted over the course of this qualitative study. In chapter 5, I will interpret the data collected on each main theme – motivation, changing landscape and emerging challenges, and retention and sustainability -- in the context of existing literature and theory.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Motivations for Volunteering

Based on Knoke and Prensky's (1984) three categories of motivation, participants in this study primarily reflected affective and normative motivations, but not utilitarian ones. Coaches frequently emphasized the value of working with others and the relationships built through coaching, while none identified skill development or gaining knowledge as a motivating factor. This absence is noteworthy, given that in many other volunteering contexts, self-development is a significant motivator (Kim et al., 2010b; Warner et al., 2011; Clary and Snyder, 1998).

The lack of career-related benefits associated with school sport in Canada may help explain this finding. Teachers in public schools belong to a union that does not allow for any monetary reward for coaching. Participants in this study did not view coaching as a pathway to promotions, job stability, or professional advancement, suggesting either that coaching offers little utilitarian value within the teaching profession or that such outcomes were simply not important to these coaches. For example, Neil volunteered prior to becoming a teacher, but his motivation stemmed from a love of sport and a desire for involvement, rather than using coaching to gain experience and support entry into a teaching program, as one might expect.

Affective motivations were particularly strong amongst these participants, as they reported many memorable and rewarding moments that focused on relationships more than on winning seasons, prestige, or material items. The emotional rewards of building relationships, witnessing athlete growth, and sharing collective experiences sustain volunteer coaches in the NVSD.

As Clary and Snyder (1999) suggest, groups of volunteers may engage in the same activity for very different reasons. This was evident in the variety of motivations reported by participants, including a love of sport, mentoring youth as they had been mentored, fulfilling a sense of responsibility to their job and school, responding to demand, and supporting their own children's participation. For example, Kyle, Amy, Tom, and Chris began coaching as coproducers,

believing that without their involvement, their children might not have access to certain sports (Silverberg et al., 2000). Their children served as the impetus for getting involved (Busser and Carruthers, 2010; O'Connor and Bennie, 2006).

Victor and Tyler were initially motivated by demand, which does not fit neatly into existing motivation categories unless framed as a commitment to helping the broader school community. While they started out of necessity, they continued because of rewarding aspects such as developing stronger classroom relationships (Turgeon et al., 2019) and applying their sport-specific knowledge.

For Emily and Neil, the opportunity to coach was central to their career choice of teaching. Their experiences align with Curtner-Smith et al.'s (2024) findings that love of sport and the influence of role-model coaches can shape teachers who pursue secondary school coaching. Similarly, Eric and Adrian volunteered to stay connected to the sports they loved, echoing findings by Cuskelly et al. (2006). Participants clearly understand the benefits of sporting programs, based on either their own experiences participating in secondary school athletics or the positive outcomes they witness in the students they coach.

Consistent with Warner et al.'s (2011) study, volunteer motivations often evolve over time, with individuals continuing for reasons different from those that initially drew them in. For example, Kyle began coaching as a parent but stays on because of the enjoyment he finds in the role. In contrast Chris, who also started as a parent, continues to coach to sustain the program he helped build until a younger generation is ready to take over. The players Chris is mentoring as future coaches are motivated by their desire to remain connected to a community (their school sport program) that was meaningful to them, corroborating Hoye et al.'s (2020) research. The return of former athletes to coaching also aligns with social capital theory, which posits that sport participation fosters networks, trust, and shared values. These memberships not only shape character but also create lasting bonds that encourage individuals to reinvest in the community by giving back as coaches (Ward, 2014). This supports Perks' (2007) findings that youth sport

participation positively relates to adult involvement in community activities. Participants in this study described a strong sense of satisfaction when former athletes continued to participate in sport, either as players or coaches. As Neil observed, “Success is measured in grade 12 and beyond,” emphasizing that school sport is ultimately about building lifelong active living habits.

The findings of the present study suggest that if school districts wish to strengthen their pool of volunteer coaches, recruitment efforts should focus on individuals with a demonstrated love of sport and prior sport-related experiences. Both Victor and Neil reflected on district hiring practices, noting that the district is discouraged from directly asking candidates whether they are willing to coach. A possible workaround, they suggested, would be to frame questions more broadly, asking about candidates’ own athletic participation, influential mentors, or the impact of sport in their lives. Such questions may indirectly signal interest in coaching without contravening hiring policies.

In addition, the findings indicate that volunteer coaches in the NVSD are primarily motivated by altruistic and community-oriented values. Participants consistently described a desire to give back, mentor youth, and support school culture, rather than pursuing personal or career-related benefits. These qualities make them the type of educators many parents would want to mentor their children. Despite this, coaches reported that they were not always given the benefit of the doubt when conflicts arose with parents. This raises important questions about how school leadership can balance parental concerns with trust in the goodwill and professional judgement of their volunteer coaches.

5.2 Current Landscape and Emerging Challenges

Coaching in the NVSD has changed drastically over the years, according to Eric, Shannon, Neil, and Nick, all of whom have been involved in district athletics for more than two decades. Nick reflected, “When I first started coaching, we were supported. There were no obstacles put in front of us.” Today, however, coaches face increasing administrative demands in addition to their

on-field responsibilities. Paperwork, budgeting, and managing receipts now accompany coaching duties, deterring new coaches and frustrating experienced ones. Participants estimated that their seasonal time commitment ranged from roughly 40 hours per season for less demanding sports like soccer, to as many as 400 hours for sports such as mountain biking and football, which require extensive practice, travel, safety training, and event preparation. This aligns with Sage's (1987) finding that coaches face huge time commitments, often doubling their workload by contributing 30–40 additional hours per week. Consistent with role theory literature, teacher-coaches already experience significant role overload (Capel et al., 1987); additional administrative duties only exacerbate this unsustainable burden.

An extensive review of the literature revealed no direct connections between volunteer coaching and the evolving behaviours and expectations of parents and athletes. While parents have been identified as stressors in earlier studies (Capel et al., 1987; Locke and Massengale, 1978), there has been little research exploring how parental involvement has shifted over time or whether it now presents greater challenges. Anecdotally, however, participants described clear differences: from the authoritative coaching styles of the 1970s and 1980s, to the prevalence of participation ribbons and medals in the 2000s, and now, in 2025, to an environment characterized by increased parent and student entitlement. Parents are often seen advocating for their children in ways that may unintentionally compromise safety or negatively affect others. Tyler reflected, "I think the time has changed so much that the parent involvement is very different and the expectation for certain kids, because, you know, now everybody's a special butterfly and needs to be treated as a special butterfly." Similarly, Nick observed, "As much as the coaching landscape has changed, the athlete and parent landscape has really changed, and the athlete comes in with a sense of entitlement…if things don't go the athlete's way, the parent whines and complains and the athlete gets what they want." These perspectives highlight the need for further research into generational shifts in parental attitudes toward sport, particularly in relation to evolving skill levels and competitive demands.

Many parents' attitudes towards school sports have shifted with the prevalence and popularity of high-level club and community sports. Shannon observed that there has been a significant change

in the skill level of athletes at school. Students are coming into school sports with extensive experience and training, often participating year-round in their chosen sport. Tom noticed that parents and community members watching the games he was coaching were on edge. “I'm kind of the quiet coach, and I think I drive some parents crazy… I'm not that loud and boisterous type of coach who is just screaming all the time, and I think some parents have a real hard time with it because the club coaches that they have are just like that.” Some parents expect school sports to mirror the competitive intensity and winning focus of club sports, overlooking the fact that school athletics traditionally balance competition with broader educational values such as participation, teamwork, character development, and school community building. Teachers may be hesitant to volunteer as coaches when they lack confidence in their coaching skills or feel unprepared to meet the demands of the role. Professional development is offered to coaches but generally needs to be done on their own time, in addition to teaching and coaching. Allowing for paid professional development for teacher-coaches during school hours could benefit athletic programs and encourage teacher-coaches to be more confident in accepting coaching positions.

Although not a formal requirement, coaching was traditionally regarded as an extension of the PE teaching role. In line with Konukman et al.’s (2010) research, Shannon, one of the most senior PE teacher-coaches among the participants, explained that her initial motivation to coach stemmed from the expectation that PE teachers would lead school teams. Historically, PE teachers were often hired to coach (Westmoreland, 2024), a fit that made sense given their sport expertise and the comparatively lighter planning and assessment demands of PE compared to core subjects. Over time, however, this expectation has shifted. Today, teacher preparation programs often discourage new teachers, including PE specialists, from coaching, citing concerns about workload and burnout. While such caution may be well-intentioned, it overlooks the benefits that coaching can offer, such as meaningful personal and professional relationships. As Hannah reflected, she began coaching in her first teaching position specifically to connect with colleagues and students. By discouraging new teachers from coaching, these teacher training programs are ignoring an important part of the teaching profession; that work generally extends beyond the classroom if one wants to really impact students. If these trends continue, schools may increasingly rely on community coaches to sustain their athletic programs,

potentially shifting school sport toward the culture of competitive club athletics rather than maintaining its unique role within the educational experience.

With the prevalence of community members as school coaches, athletic directors are faced with increased challenges. Community members do not have the same access to school facilities or equipment, and essentially need help with everything, even simple tasks. The community coaches also feel the weight of this and are frustrated with not knowing what is going on, where to find things, and who to talk to. Leadership is needed in this regard. Community members are volunteering their time, and as with teacher-coaches, that time needs to be valued and respected. Simple changes such as writing out policy documents and setting meetings with other coaches, would benefit the volunteers and their programs immensely. Based on his interview, it became apparent that Tom didn't know the Athletics Department was separate from the PE Department in the school he volunteers at. This news was a light bulb moment as it dawned on him why the PE teachers were unable to help him with uniforms and schedules. Something like this could be easily remedied with a coaches' meeting, a list of school contacts, and a comprehensive list of policies and procedures for each volunteer.

In addition to logistical challenges, many community and parent coaches require further training in working with adolescents and a clearer understanding that school sport should function as an extension of the educational environment. According to Neil, some community and parent coaches value winning over building character and participation and bring the competitive nature of club sport into schools. By contrast, teacher-coaches were unanimous in their belief that sports were an extension of the school's mission. As Nick explained:

> I think teaching is the same thing. Yes, we're supposed to teach content or as a coach you're supposed to teach the rules of the sport or whatever it happens to be or laws of the sport depending on the sport. But I think more importantly it's being a good teammate, teaching someone compassion, sportsmanship, to play within the set of the rules or laws, to be a good human, just everyday values that we should be teaching.

While community coaches did not dispute this perspective, they also did not explicitly emphasize it, suggesting it was not at the forefront of their approach.

The literature warns that parent-coaches often leave once their own children graduate, creating instability in school programs (Clary et al., 1998). As Neil noted, parents typically focus on their child's immediate season rather than the broader five-year cycle of high school sport. However, contrary to previous findings, Kyle and Chris, both parent-coaches, remained long after their children had graduated, demonstrating long-term commitment. Overall, the most effective coaching teams were described as those combining at least one teacher-coach with a community coach, ensuring both familiarity with the school's structures and access to broader community expertise.

5.3 Retention and Sustainability

Participants in this study highlighted a range of issues within NVSD athletics that could be mitigated through stronger communication, collaboration, and leadership committed to supporting school sports. While several coaches noted shifts in parent and student attitudes—often describing them as increasingly entitled—many of the challenges could be alleviated with clear policies and consistent communication.

Contrary to role theory literature on teacher-coaches, this study did not find role conflict or workload overload to be the primary reasons volunteers quit. Although the conditions for overload exist, participants emphasized that the breaking point was a lack of trust, respect, and support rather than the sheer volume of work. As Diane reflected, "I think that would've made a big difference if I'd had more support within the school." Nick explains:

> I think I really think it starts from the top and I think the leadership from the top down is lacking and what's worse is I don't think the people who are in that leadership role think what they're doing is detrimental to the sport. And just teaching kids that you're always

> right, you're always a winner, you never lose, you just have to complain, and if you complain enough, you'll get what you want.

This attitude, coming from the top down, goes against teacher-coaches' values of teaching respect, responsibility, and life skills.

For teacher-coaches, role conflict often emerged when working with community coaches who were unfamiliar with school culture or codes of conduct. Kahn et al., (1964) refers to this type of role conflict as "intersender" role conflict. In the present study, intersender role conflict occurred when teacher-coaches felt bound by the values of the school system but were working together with community or parent coaches who had different expectations. This clash of values produced tension, as teacher-coaches felt caught between educational priorities and the competitive orientation of some community coaches. Role overload arose when additional administrative tasks, such as budgeting, paperwork, and managing receipts, were added to the already demanding balance of teaching and coaching. Nonetheless, most teacher-coaches described the dual role as rewarding, emphasizing the personal and professional benefits that extend beyond the sports season. Their greatest sources of frustration were entitled parents and students, alongside inadequate leadership and communication. While some cited family commitments as a potential reason to step back, findings suggest that the deeper cause of withdrawal lies in a lack of trust, respect, and institutional support.

5.4 Summary

In this chapter, the findings were discussed in relation to social capital and role theory. Additionally, participant insights guided analysis on Motivations for Volunteering; Changing Landscape and Emerging Challenges; and Retention and Sustainability. In the sixth and final chapter, I will summarize the key findings and their significance in relation to practice, policy and future research. The following chapter will also acknowledge the limitations of this study.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the culture and lived experiences of secondary school coaches in North Vancouver, focussing on the guiding research question of "What rewards and challenges shape the experiences of volunteer coaches in North Vancouver secondary schools, and how do these factors influence their decisions to continue or step away from coaching?" The following section summarizes the findings, discusses implications and recommendations for practice, outlines the study's limitations, suggests directions for future research, and summarizes the study.

6.1 Summary of Findings

This study found a school district with many passionate and dedicated volunteers who are overwhelmingly committed to sustaining athletics programs in their schools. Teacher-coaches and community/parent coaches devote countless hours of service to students in their communities, motivated primarily by a love of sport and the rewarding relationships they build. Volunteer coaches frequently spoke about the meaningful aspects of coaching, sharing stories of small victories, heartfelt expressions of gratitude, and the joy of staying connected to the sports they love.

At the same time, the landscape of coaching has shifted over the years, introducing new challenges that complicate what was once a straightforward and enjoyable experience. Increasing administrative responsibilities such as budgeting and scheduling add time-consuming tasks that many coaches find unappealing and burdensome. Parents and students now bring greater expectations and demands, which, when poorly managed, cause stress and contribute to volunteer withdrawal. Rising skill levels among student-athletes, often developed through year-round community and club sport participation, have left some volunteers feeling underprepared without additional training.

Tensions also emerged between teacher-coaches and community/parent coaches when their philosophies about school sport conflicted. Coaches expressed frustration with inconsistent leadership support, weak communication, and limited collaboration between athletic directors and other teams' coaching staff. Furthermore, teacher-coaches often experienced conflict with their academic colleagues, particularly when student participation in sports required missing class time.

Although volunteers acknowledged time pressures and administrative burdens, none of the participants interviewed cited these as reasons for leaving coaching. Instead, those who had stepped away attributed their decision to a perceived lack of trust and respect from leadership, despite, in some cases, having dedicated more than two decades of service.

6.2 Implications and Recommendations

When asked what advice they would give prospective volunteer coaches, all participants, without hesitation, encouraged others to absolutely go for it. This included coaches who quit and remained frustrated with the circumstances that led to their withdrawal. To them, the relationships built, and the rewards of coaching far outweighed the challenges. As Diane explained, "Just make sure you take time every practice, every game, every minute you have with them, to really connect with them, because that's where you get the reward— from the kids." Similarly, Nick noted, "I would never discourage it. I think it was super valuable for me. Super valuable for the students." Shannon echoed this sentiment: "It is incredibly fulfilling. It makes life at school so much better. You are more involved in the school community…The payback is enormous in terms of positive relationships and interactions." And Tyler summed it up succinctly: "Absolutely do it. 100%."

These perspectives suggest that school leaders must better understand and value the motivations of volunteer coaches, recognizing them as generous individuals who prioritize education and student development. While compensation was occasionally mentioned in the interviews, it was

minimal and almost laughable compared to the time invested. For instance, Hannah suggested teacher-coaches be given one block per season (approximately 70 minutes) to catch up on work—barely a fraction of the 40-plus hours typically spent coaching. Adrian recommended that administrators at least help arrange class coverage when teacher-coaches needed to leave for games. Ultimately, what coaches asked for most was not money, but respect, consideration, and support. Targeted training for administrators on the realities of role conflict and overload could help bridge this gap and foster stronger, more sustainable support for teacher-coaches.

As schools move toward greater reliance on community coaches, increased professional development will be essential, particularly in areas such as adolescent behaviour and the educational role of school sport. Likewise, administrators require training to better understand both the motivations of volunteer coaches and the realities of role overload within their staff. Even small changes in respect, communication, and support could make a significant difference.

A key goal should also be the recruitment and retention of long-term coaches, as program stability improves with longevity. In the NVSD, the role of the athletic director needs substantial reform. ADs are technically compensated, but the workload, often equivalent to a full-time job on top of a teaching assignment, creates severe role overload and high turnover. By the time ADs become effective, burnout frequently sets in, and many step down, leading to a cycle where new ADs must relearn the position every two to three years. Experienced teacher-coaches rarely apply for the role due to the heavy workload and minimal pay, leaving it to newer teachers seeking job security.

This AD burnout has system-wide consequences, including poor communication with coaches, increased paperwork, and frustration when tasks fall through the cracks. Making the AD role a full-time, non-teaching position would be the only recommendation requiring significant financial investment, but it could provide the stability and leadership needed to strengthen athletics across the district.

Additionally, experienced coaches are often better equipped to handle the increasing skill levels of high school athletes. To support this, more sport-specific professional development should be offered during work hours, either on designated professional development days, or with coverage provided by a substitute teacher.

6.3 Limitations

This study was limited to participants from a single school district, which may reduce the generalizability of findings to other regions. While each secondary school in North Vancouver was represented, the distribution was uneven, as many long-term coaches spent most of their careers at one site. No exclusively community coaches were interviewed; all participants were either parents or former parents of student-athletes. Additionally, interviews were conducted near the end of the school year, after most sports seasons had concluded. Participant recollections may therefore have been shaped by selective memory, either emphasizing positive or negative experiences depending on what was most salient, whereas mid-season interviews might have produced different perspectives. Including administrators as participants would have provided valuable insight, particularly since several coaches described administrative behaviours as highly influential. Frequent turnover among administrators in the NVSD further complicates the picture, as some coaches reflected on many years of changing leadership, while others spoke only to their limited experiences with one or two administrative teams. Finally, as the researcher, my own background in education and athletics may have shaped the questions asked and my interpretation of responses, despite conscious efforts at reflexivity.

6.4 Future Research

Several ideas for future research emerged from this study. Since teacher-coaches are more influenced by respect, support, and consideration than by compensation, future studies exploring how specific administrative practices, such as scheduling flexibility, could affect coach satisfaction, retention, and program quality could prove useful. Another area of potential research is the generational shifts in parental attitudes and expectations and their impact on

volunteer coaches, student-athletes, and sports programs. Additionally, expanding the current study to other districts could offer insight into whether these findings are similar elsewhere.

6.5 Summary

Through interviews with volunteer coaches, this study explored the culture and lived experiences of secondary school coaches in North Vancouver. The findings highlight an overall popular and successful athletics program that offers meaningful benefits to both student-athletes and volunteer coaches. Despite emerging challenges, these volunteers continue to sustain the program because they feel rewarded by the relationships they develop and the opportunity to stay connected to the sports they love. The data from this study suggest that the only factor likely to make a coach quit is a clear lack of trust or respect. This underscores what should be evident from the extensive volunteer hours coaches contribute—they genuinely love the role and are committed to it, despite time constraints and the absence of monetary compensation. As societal trends indicate a general decline in volunteering, with new teachers often opting out and senior teachers retiring, it is increasingly important to develop strategies for recruiting and retaining volunteers.

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Appendix A: Microsoft Form

Exploring the Landscape of Coaching in NVSD: Pre-Interview Participant Profile Survey

Please note that to protect confidentiality, all identifying information will be anonymized.

* Required

1. Your name

2. What sport(s) have you coached in the North Vancouver School District (NVSD)? *

- [ ] Badminton
- [ ] Basketball
- [ ] Field Hockey
- [ ] Football
- [ ] Golf
- [ ] Gymnastics
- [ ] Hockey
- [ ] Rugby
- [ ] Soccer
- [ ] Volleyball
- [ ] Other

3. Approximately what year was your first coaching experience in NVSD? *

4. How long have you coached in NVSD? If possible, please be specific (ie. 3 seasons of soccer; 1 season of rugby). *

5. How many hours do you devote to coaching per school sports season? (ie. basketball - 3 month season, 2 practices and 2 games per week = 96 hours) *

6. In NVSD, are you a teacher coach, a parent coach, or a community coach, or other? If you are a teacher, please indicate if you also teach Physical and Health Education. *

- [ ] Teacher coach
- [ ] PHE teacher coach
- [ ] Parent coach
- [ ] Community coach
- [ ] Student coach
- [ ] Other

7. What school(s) have you coached at? *

- [ ] Argyle
- [ ] Handsworth
- [ ] Seycove
- [ ] Sutherland
- [ ] Windsor

Appendix B: Background Information

Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Exploring the Culture of Coaching in North Vancouver Public Secondary Schools

Background Information

In BC, secondary school sports play a significant role in student life, with BC School Sports (BCSS) reporting a record-high participation rate in the 2023-24 school year. North Vancouver is one of sixty school districts in the province and has seven public secondary schools, six of which actively participate in sports leagues. The North Shore Secondary School Athletic Association organizes multiple sports throughout the academic year, with each team requiring a volunteer coach and a school-employed staff sponsor.

Despite the rich history of school sports and coaching in North Vancouver, recent trends suggest a decline in long-term coaching commitment due to increasing demands, unsustainable schedules, and challenges such as lack of appreciation and support. This study aims to explore the current state of secondary school coaching in North Vancouver from the perspective of both current and former coaches.

Why do the study?

The purpose of this study is to explore the culture of coaching in public secondary schools in the North Vancouver School District. By gathering insights from current and former coaches, as well as other stakeholders, the study aims to understand the motivations, challenges, and experiences of school coaches.

What does research participation consist of?

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to take part in a one-on-one interview to discuss your perspective and experience coaching in the North Vancouver School District.

Confidentiality and withdrawal

- Anonymity: A false name or number will be used to code all data.
- Security: All data (interview recordings, and notes) are protected by digital password and authentication processes, following data protection protocols.
- Withdrawal: You may choose to withdraw any or all data relating to you. By this, no reference will be made to you in this study or future published work.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me:

Lead researcher: Suzanne Thomas

Email:

Appendix C: Informed Consent

Exploring the Culture of Coaching in North Vancouver Public Secondary Schools

Participant Consent Form

After receiving information about the study, I confirm my willingness to participate in this research.

I, _____, consent to participate in the research led by Suzanne Thomas.

1. I have been fully informed about the research project and have discussed the study with the lead researcher.

2. I agree to the audio recording of interviews and understand that I may be quoted in the researcher's dissertation paper.

3. I understand that:

    a. I will not receive financial or other compensation for participating in this research.

    b. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time and may decline to answer specific questions.

    c. My identity will remain confidential, and no identifying information, including my place of employment (school), will be disclosed.

    d. I may request to stop the recording at any time and can withdraw from the session or the research entirely without penalty.

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Name: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Interview Questions

Exploring the Landscape of Coaching

in North Vancouver School District Secondary Schools

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Participant profile

Microsoft Teams Form

Motivation

What initially motivated you to become a secondary school coach?

If you have continued coaching, has your motivation changed?

Perceived Impact

What aspects of coaching do you find the most rewarding?

How do you believe you have impacted the athletes you've coached?

Do you think coaching has influenced students beyond sport itself?

Can you share a memorable moment that reinforced your role as a coach?

Culture & Perceptions of Coaching

A healthy culture of coaching would consist of:

- clear goals
- collaboration and communication
- recognition and incentives
- data-driven practices
- be inclusive and equitable
- provide feedback mechanisms
- leadership support
- professional development/training
- trust and respect
- adaptability

How would you describe the culture of coaching in North Vancouver Secondary Schools based on the above attributes of a healthy coaching culture?

In what ways do you think the role of a school coach differs from that of a community or club coach?

Do you feel that coaches are valued by the school community?

What makes you feel valued when coaching?

- Has being valued as a coach increased or decreased over time? If so, how?

Challenges

Have you noticed any changes in student or parent behaviour toward coaches over the years?

Have you experienced any challenges related to parent/caregiver involvement in school sports?

Can you describe a time when you felt particularly unsupported in your coaching role?

What factors, if any, have made you consider stepping away from coaching?

What kind of support (from administrators, parents, students, or the school district) would make coaching easier or more sustainable?

Future of Coaching

What do you think would encourage more teachers or community members to volunteer as coaches?

If you could change anything about the coaching system in North Vancouver schools, what would it be?

What advice would you give someone considering becoming a school coach?

What changes in leadership, policies, or resources would better support coaches in your school?