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Youth, Transferability, and Sport-Based Interventions: Reopening and Rethinking the Debate on the "What" and the "How"

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Abstract: Sport and physical activity is often utilized as a tool for engagement within interventions designed to support wider social and personal change for marginalized young people. The implicit discourse that underpins such interventions is the assumed transference of skills, qualities, and attributes acquired and developed through sport to broader societal contexts. However, there is a scarcity of studies that have critically examined this relationship. By way of correction, the purpose of this article is to examine the concept of transferability and explore how sport-based interventions might enable marginalized young people to thrive in other life domains. More precisely, the article calls for a rethink on *what* skills, attributes, and qualities might need to be transferred from sport-based interventions, while also outlining suggestions for *how* transfer might be facilitated. As a context for this discussion, the article draws upon empirical insights derived from a study of a youth-focused, golf-based intervention delivered in the south–west of England. Specifically, the article examines how providing opportunities for its youth participants to accumulate various forms of capital (rather than specific skills or qualifications) supported transfer, in combination with a pedagogical approach that resonated with notions of critical pedagogy.

Keywords: transferability; sport-based interventions; capital; critical pedagogy; young people

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1. Introduction

Over the previous two decades, a growing body of literature has emerged that has outlined how participation in sport and physical activity can present a wide-ranging solution, at both a societal and an individual level, to address social inequalities or act as an agent for personal change [1–4]. Political support, both nationally and globally, for the intentional use of sport and physical activity for broader social utility has followed [5–7], and an emergent "sport-for-development" sector has materialized, comprising of both government agencies and non-governmental organizations [8]. The typical recipients of efforts to utilize sport and physical activity participation for wider social good are young people, especially those who have become marginalized from mainstream society [9]. However, while numerous studies of sport and physical activity-based interventions (SBIs) have, across multiple contexts, reported the undoubted potential of active participation to support the acquisition of various pro-social qualities, attributes, and skills (see [8,10,11]), one of the most common criticisms of the intentional use of sport and physical activity is the extent to which attributes that are developed within SBIs transfer to other life domains [12–15].

Given that the transfer of skills and attributes from the sport context to other aspects of life is often an implicit (and often assumed) objective of SBIs, it is perhaps surprising that the concept of transferability has received limited academic attention. Aside from a small number of notable articles (e.g., [12,13,16]), studies of transferability within sport-for-development programs are largely absent. One reason for such an absence could be that examining the dynamic between SBIs and transferability presents several challenges and constraints. Theoretically, the concept of transferability is nebulous and open to different interpretations [12]. Furthermore, there is a common misapprehension that the transference

of skills or attributes needs to be tangible, measurable, and occur directly as a result of participation in a training program or intervention [17]. Consequently, transferability is often conceptualized as some form of transaction, where the value of the skills and attributes acquired within the sport and physical activity context needs to transfer wholly into other life domains so that these skills and attributes retain their value. One implication of this transactional approach to understanding transferability is that a narrow focus is placed on the importance of certified knowledge or qualifications, which represent a tangible outcome from an SBI. While the policy rhetoric often emphasizes how such programs may support the development of particularly "life skills" or "soft skills" [16], the means to evidence this are typically anecdotal [18,19], and therefore often overlooked.

In turn, the need to explore the tangible and broader transference of skills and attributes from an SBI presents additional methodological challenges. While novel and wide-ranging analyses of SBIs have been conducted that have employed both innovative and more traditional methods to explore the correspondences between the mechanisms and inner workings of SBIs and their outcomes [4], challenges arise in demonstrating empirically how transference has occurred. Indeed, as Ekholm [12] reminds us, transference is not automatic, and measuring any positive effects is hampered by a multiplicity of contextual variables, such that transference is difficult (or potentially impossible) to attribute to some form of cause-and-effect relationship. Moreover, within SBIs, the impact upon participants is often non-linear, partial, and/or gradual, which further obfuscates the measurement of transference [11].

One final and related issue is the lack of empirical studies that have explored transferability within SBIs. As noted, the literature that has examined this relationship is scarce, and of the studies that have, there has been a tendency to either pose abstract questions (see [12]) or merely raise awareness of the transfer debate rather than offer definitive answers or empirical insight (see [13,16]). By way of correction, the purpose of this article is to (re)open debate on how this critical aspect of SBIs might be explored and rethink *what* might need to be transferred from SBIs in conjunction with the pedagogical approach (the *how*) that may best facilitate transfer.

As a context for this discussion, the article draws upon empirical insights derived from a youth-focused, golf-based intervention (*Drive Your Future* (Pseudonym used.)), delivered in the south–west of England. While golf is rarely utilized as a sporting context for programs focused on youth development or social change, the limited examples of where golf has been used within SBIs indicate how the core values associated with the sport of golf provide potentially fertile ground to develop a range of life skills, such as respect, personal responsibility, and honesty (see [20–23]). However, as with many SBIs, it is typically the pedagogical and social environment experienced by participants that has most influence on personal change than the specific impact of a sport (see [24,25]). Therefore, the article examines how the wider social environment of the program, and specifically, a pedagogical approach that resonated with notions of critical pedagogy [26], helped to provide opportunities for youth participants to acquire various forms of capital (rather than specific skills or qualifications) that supported transfer.

2. Transferability and Sport-Based Interventions—From Skills to Capital

As noted, literature that examines the notion of transferability within the context of sport programs is limited. However, Turnnidge et al. presented a theoretical outline of the pedagogical and environmental factors within "generalized" sport programs ("Generalized" sport programs are defined as sport opportunities that are typically focused on the development of sport skills in the first instance with wider personal development an incidental benefit.) that may facilitate the transfer of skills acquired through sport to non-sport settings [13]. In short, they considered whether transferability should be systematically taught by sport program leaders in an *explicit* manner or whether youth participants could be the active producers of their own development, whereby sport programs are designed to facilitate a more *implicit* transfer of skills.

While there is merit and limitation within both approaches, Turnnidge et al. indicate that, from a pedagogical perspective, an explicit approach to transfer has benefit when participants lack awareness of the skills that they might develop through sport or the knowledge or confidence to employ these skills in wider (non-sport) domains [13], see also [16]. However, critics have suggested that the "adult-driven" nature of explicit transfer, which positions (adult) coaches/leaders of sport programs as the "gatekeepers of the learning process" [13], (p. 209), may undermine participants' ability to own, create, or actively engage with their individual transfer and limit the extent to which transfer is sustained [27].

Conversely, proponents of an implicit approach to transfer point to the unique pedagogical advantages that might occur when programs seek to cultivate participants' physical, cognitive, emotional, and social skills by establishing an environment that prioritizes personal development. For Turnnidge et al., environments that are forged on high-quality relationships between coaches and youth participants and that focus on personal achievement and a task-oriented motivational climate may provide the necessary conditions to facilitate transfer [13]. Moreover, where sport programs are able to generate meaningful experiences for young participants, the potential to extract their own lessons and transfer this learning to other contexts is enhanced [27].

In evaluating the two approaches at a more practical or resource-based level, explicit approaches may require substantial planning (not to mention training and support of program staff), all of which are resource intensive, meaning that any transfer is only as sustainable as the availability of resources to provide explicit, deliberate, and direct support for skill transfer [13,16]. Consequently, the more "participant-led" nature of implicit approaches to transferability may enable skills transfer to become embedded and provide a more sustainable method of facilitating transfer. In addition, a focus on creating an environment that incubates implicit transfer may be more appropriate within SBIs that are targeted towards young people. Furthermore, as such interventions are often administered by volunteers, an implicit approach may be more pragmatic, given the typical limitations around financial, human, and physical resources.

However, while Turnnidge et al. examine the concept of transferability as it relates to "generalized" sport programs [13], for sport-based programs that are more directly concerned with the intentional use of sport and physical activity to address a wider array of social outcomes, it would appear logical to consider if other factors may support transfer. Indeed, there is widespread agreement that sport and physical activity may enact a limited role in SBIs that aim to support wider developmental objectives, offering merely a "hook" for engagement [1,28]. One school of thought suggests that a key mechanism contained within SBIs is the effectiveness of any "plus" activities that are integrated into program design and delivery [1,10,29]. While "plus" activities may vary between SBIs, typically they comprise of personal development opportunities that are "bolted-on" to the sport aspects of a program and are more focused on providing education about broader social issues or enabling individual development and transformation [1]. In youth-based interventions, opportunities to acquire skills, attend training courses, or obtain formal, certificated qualifications are commonly included within the "plus" offer, as are formal or informal workshops, mentoring support, work experience/placements, and volunteering opportunities [3,10]. Such opportunities further emphasize the modest role of sport as simply a conduit to engagement with activities that may offer access to a wider array of skills and attributes and that may have more salience and value to young people when transferred to other social contexts.

However, often within SBIs, there is a propensity for the "plus" component of a program to comprise of a tangible activity that leads to some form of visible outcome and which provides demonstrable evidence of the positive impact of participation in the SBI on individual development. The aforementioned offer of training courses that are certified for attendance or that lead to a recognized or formal qualification is testament to this predilection. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the political and economic circumstances that necessitate organizations who deliver SBIs to evidence how

their programs have impacted on youth participants (see [30] for a fuller articulation of this challenge), such thinking clearly reinforces how the acquisition of human capital dominates debate on what qualities are most necessary to transfer from sport-based programs. In short, human capital refers to knowledge, skills, and attitudes that hold potential to benefit economic activity, such as finding employment [31], and is commonly reduced to the quantity and quality of the qualifications that an individual may possess [32,33]. While the acquisition of knowledge and skills is an important element of human capital development [34], and, moreover, the potential for SBIs to enable the acquisition of human capital has been demonstrated elsewhere (see [18,32,33,35]), crucially, skill acquisition is often limited in its scope and specific to a particular context or task. Therefore, skills (and, by extension, human capital) are not always transferrable to other contexts [13,34].

Nevertheless, the acquisition of skills for employment is often prioritized as the "plus" component of SBIs, typically because their acquisition can be tangibly measured and assessed through examinations and formal qualifications [36,37]. However, less tangible resources (or capital), such as the magnitude and quality of an individual's social network (social capital) or an ability to remain resilient in the face of adversity or optimistic about future aspirations (psychological capital), which are less easy to measure in a tangible, quantifiable way, have been shown to be equally critical in enhancing employment prospects and social mobility [11,14,37]. Research demonstrates that acquiring these wider forms of capital (such as social capital and psychological capital), which mediate beyond the simplicity of qualifications as the sole factor behind individual development and social transformation, extends the debate around transferability beyond the narrow confines of skill acquisition towards a broader consideration of capital [1,25,37].

Research pertaining to the instrumental use of sport and physical activity has observed that SBIs hold clear potential to develop social capital [3,18,38], psychological capital [14,39], and sporting capital [40,41]. However, as noted, when it comes to implementing explicit attempts to integrate opportunities for the acquisition of these forms of capital (and thus enabling the transfer of these capitals from SBIs to other contexts), the more intangible nature of social, psychological, and sporting capital presents methodological difficulties in relation to their measurement. Consequently, the explicit acquisition of these forms of capital may often be overlooked, both conceptually and practically, when designing the "plus" component of an SBI.

However, as Morgan and Parker propose [11], a useful starting point for future theoretical examinations of transferability would be to examine how SBIs enable other forms of capital to be acquired. The theoretical foundations for such thinking cohere closely with the work of Brown et al. [42], which argues that as access to education has increased, so the competition for educational credentials has similarly intensified, meaning that human capital, when viewed as an individual resource (see [31]), has less value in the employment market or to support social mobility. While space does not permit a more detailed examination of capital as an individual or collective resource (see [42] for a detailed examination of these relationships), it is sufficient to note that, for Brown et al., there is an urgent need to re-examine the relationship between human beings and human capital, which is concerned less with the acquisition of skills and credentials and more open to how other forms of capital (e.g., social and psychological) may support social mobility in young people [42]. Consequently, moving the transfer debate away from the economic orthodoxy of focusing predominantly on the acquisition of human capital [42] might present advocates of sport for development with further evidence to promote the potential of SBIs to develop more than just "skills" and broaden the array of attributes that might support individual development.

That said, fundamental questions remain surrounding the optimal pedagogical method to facilitate the acquisition and transfer of a broader array of capitals and whether this should occur via an explicit or implicit approach [13]. Research has argued how adopting the principles of critical pedagogy outlined by Paulo Freire within sport-for-development programs has proved effective [9,43,44], particularly when working with marginalized

young people. Therefore, examining how critical pedagogy might be applied as a framework to enable the acquisition of a broader array of capitals and support transfer to other domains might provide a potential theoretical solution.

3. Critical Pedagogy—An Educational Philosophy to Support Transfer?

Paulo Freire's landmark text, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, proposed a philosophy of critical pedagogy that offered a critique of "traditional" forms of education that are inclined to reproduce the prevailing assumptions and conventions of society via the dominant position of the "teacher" over the "learner" [26]. Within this text, Freire highlighted how the hierarchical nature of the traditional pedagogic relationship serves mainly to support the hegemonic production of knowledge while simultaneously dehumanizing (or oppressing) the learner by reducing the purpose of education to the simple act of depositing information from the "more knowledgeable" to the "less knowledgeable", akin to depositing money into a bank account. However, while the "banking" approach [26] has been widely adopted in educational systems across the globe, its philosophical foundations tend to favor those who are superior within society's hierarchy and subjugate those who reside lower in societal structures or that have become marginalized from mainstream society. Critiques of the "banking" approach point to its tendency to regulate human action and promote conformity with the apparently "natural" discourses of society [45]. In this way, education can become an "imposition of the [teacher's] own truth . . . [which may] serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person by another" [26] (p. 70). However, continuing this theme, Freire observes that it is the propensity for the "banking" approach to restrict the creative and imaginative capabilities of learners, limit their curiosity, and dampen their critical awareness, which is the most significant criticism of traditional approaches to education [26].

Therefore, as an alternative educational philosophy, which, in theory, has the potential to better support marginalized (or oppressed) groups, Freire presented critical pedagogy, which advanced three interconnected concepts—dialogue, critical consciousness, and praxis [26,45]. In short, the purpose of critical pedagogy is to encourage learners to problematize and look critically at their position within the social world, confront the challenges that face them, and seek personal solutions to transform their social "reality" for the better [26]. As a foundation for critical pedagogy, Freire highlighted the significance of dialogue between "teacher" and "learner" to problematize, create knowledge, and "give voice" to marginalized individuals. However, in contrast to traditional pedagogic relationships, to enable dialogue requires a horizontal relationship to develop between "teacher" and "learner", where differences in power are minimized or neutralized (rather than eliminated) [46], to allow for freedom of expression, and a pedagogy that is presented in the form of guidance, rather than instruction, to facilitate the co-production of learning [8,9].

A further benefit of a dialogic pedagogical relationship and the co-produced learning that results is that it provides a foundation for the development of a critical consciousness. According to Freire, developing a critical consciousness involves generating knowledge and understanding about power in society and how this shapes the structural conditions of people's lives [26]. To develop a critical consciousness, Freire offers the practice of "problem-posing", whereby the "teacher" creates a learning environment to promote student-generated discussion around topics derived from the "learners" own lives and experiences [47,48]. Consequently, through dialogue and problem-posing, learners are challenged to *reflect* purposefully and critically upon their lived experience and actively engage in a process that examines the impact of societal structures on different populations. Importantly, problem-posing also presents learners with a continuous and layered unveiling of societal reality [26], that enables learners to (co-)construct a new or alternative understanding of society, and which, subsequently, forms the basis for critical and intentional action [45]. This ability to connect critical and purposeful reflection with critical and intentional action is a dynamic that Freire termed praxis [26], the third conceptual component of critical pedagogy. However, as Freire argues, reflection and action must occur

simultaneously to create a transformative effect and, furthermore, can only be advanced through the acts of dialogue and critical consciousness that form the conceptual basis for critical pedagogy (see also [45]).

Clearly, the philosophy of critical pedagogy aligns strongly with the principles of implicit learning, where the construction and incubation of the learning environment is the most important factor in facilitating the transfer of knowledge [13]. Furthermore, the guiding concepts of dialogue, critical consciousness, and praxis present a theoretical set of principles that apply to the context of SBIs, and, indeed, several studies have advocated their potential to engage and develop marginalized young people through sport [9,28,43,44]. Crucially, the centrality of implicit learning contained within critical pedagogy offers potential for participants of SBIs to internalize the experience, knowledge, and capital obtained during a program [49]. In turn, this process of internalization may enable participants to place their own value on what attributes (or capital) developed within an SBI are most relevant to transfer to other domains, rather than transfer to other contexts being explicitly instructed or driven by (adult) coaches [13]. Theoretically, at least, utilizing critical pedagogy as an implicit framework may better provide young people and participants of SBIs with the ownership of what capital is important *for them to consider* when contemplating transfer to other domains.

However, it would appear that the connecting concept between all three aspects of critical pedagogy is the ability to critically reflect. Therefore, by enabling youth participants to acquire the ability to critically reflect as a precursor to developing a critical consciousness (and, by extension, the attributes for praxis), it would appear salient that supporting participants of SBIs with their ability to reflect is not only essential, but a quality that can be potentially useful if transferred from SBIs to other contexts.

4. Methods

The empirical findings featured in this article are drawn from a wider (mixed methods) study that evaluated a golf-based intervention delivered in the south–west of England (*Drive Your Future*) that aims to provide support for the development of prosocial behaviors for children and young people who have experienced adverse childhood experiences and trauma. The research findings presented here are drawn specifically from the qualitative aspect of the study, which comprised of a series of semi-structured interviews conducted on six separate occasions with intervention participants (n = 5) over a period of 27 months. The original study started with a sample of six participants. However, one participant left the program part-way through the study, and any data provided by that participant was removed and was not included within the study. Framed by interpretivist paradigmatic assumptions, interviews were deployed as a method of generating meaningful data through open-ended, interpersonal dialogue [50] with the specific intention of eliciting the subjective interpretations and personal experiences of intervention participants.

Following university ethical approval (Institutional Reference Number: EP 20/21 016), a total of 28 interviews were conducted in person between June 2021 and September 2023, with individual participants being interviewed between four and six times (due to variances in attendance of the program, not all participants were interviewed at each data collection visit.). As all participants were of statutory secondary school age (i.e., under 18 years of age) at the commencement of the research, prior parental informed consent was obtained to enable participation in the research. In addition, each young person provided their assent to be interviewed prior to the commencement of the study. The Chief Executive Officer of *Drive Your Future* acted as a gatekeeper for participant recruitment; however, interview participants were sampled purposefully from a wider selection of intervention participants, based upon their age and length of time as a participant on the program (see Table 1).

Table 1. Participant information.

Pseudonym	Age at Commencement of Research	Length of Time on *Drive Your Future* at Commencement of Research
Stuart	17	18 months
Grant	17	18 months
Elliott	17	3 years
Luke	15	3 years
Lee	15	8 months

While all interviews adopted a semi-structured approach and were tailored to build upon each successive interview, in general, discussions with the participants explored a variety of topics related to (i) their participation in the intervention; (ii) their personal development (including discussions about education, employment, and career aspirations); and (iii) the benefits that they received from participating in the intervention. All interviews were conducted on an individual basis, with one interview (the fourth in the series) utilizing a photo-elicitation method (photo-elicitation is a method that incorporates photographs or images as a prompt and guide to stimulate discussion points within qualitative interviews or to evoke reactions from the interview participants.) to stimulate participants to engage with the interview topics in a more innovative way [51,52]. In terms of duration, interviews lasted between 12 and 25 min, with a mean of 20 min.

Interviews were audio-recorded using a digital Dictaphone and transcribed verbatim. All interview transcripts were reviewed by the researcher and analyzed in four stages, involving open, axial, and selective coding [53]. Consequently, transcripts were read in full to gain an overview of the data before being individually coded and indexed to capture the different aspects of participant experience. These experiences were then clustered and inductively rationalized into a number of over-arching topics, which were subsequently organized deductively into formal generic themes. This iterative aspect of the data analysis process involved first identifying broader patterns of shared meaning across the data sets and then reviewing these patterns by checking that they were representative of the overall data and cohered with the study's research questions (see also [54,55]). This reflective process enabled the construction of three themes relevant to how participants of *Drive Your Future* acquired and/or accumulated capital during the program, and how the pedagogical approach of staff offered potential to facilitate transfer. Specifically, these themes comprised: (i) the importance of accumulating capital as the basis for transfer; (ii) developing the ability to reflect in supporting a critical consciousness; and (iii) the role of critical pedagogy to support transfer.

5. Findings and Discussion

The findings presented here aim to offer tentative and modest evidence to progress the debate around how transferability might be supported by SBIs. In addition, the findings are presented to provide some early insights into how developing a range of different attributes beyond that merely provided by human capital might offer a broader foundation from which a wider array of capital may be transferred from SBIs to other contexts. The findings also intend to evidence how central to this process of transfer is a concern for enabling participants to become more reflective about society (and their place within it) through the development of a critical consciousness. While the evidence presented here is unable to discern whether the reflective and critical standpoints developed by some participants of *Drive Your Future* were an inevitable aspect of the process of their own maturing, or indeed an explicit outcome of the pedagogical approach embedded within the SBI, this section concludes with some participant reflections on how the social climate facilitated by staff aligned closely with elements of critical pedagogy, not least in promoting and prioritizing

horizontal relationships between staff and participants, problematizing and co-creating knowledge, and fostering dialogue.

5.1. Accumulating Capital as the Basis for Transfer

To provide some context for how the participants were able to transfer skills and attributes developed through the golf intervention to other aspects of their lives, all provided insight and reflection on their personal circumstances prior to joining *Drive Your Future*. Many revealed that they had experienced significant mental health challenges that had manifested from trauma they had encountered during childhood. Testimony provided by Stuart captured this most expressively during the photo-elicitation interview. Explaining his decision to select an image of a tornado to symbolize his life prior to joining the golf intervention, Stuart recalled:

> I was going through a lot of things in my head, uncertainty, worrying about a lot of things, worrying about stupid things, everything whipped up, it was a mad time . . . On a normal Saturday before golf I'd just be on my phone watching YouTube. This was a way of escaping that [and situations like] talking to people. . .

Mirroring several testimonies, Elliott provided insight into how his initial engagement with the golf intervention had started to repair his trauma and address his mental health challenges while at the same time building a foundation for the acquisition and accumulation of transferable qualities. Specifically, Elliott spoke of his lack of self-efficacy within social situations and a tendency to avoid social interaction where possible, preferring instead to play video games as a form of escapism. However, Elliott outlined how starting the golf intervention encouraged him to connect socially. He continued:

> Most of the time I would panic, I wouldn't even be able to go to a shop on my own . . . I was 'shut in', so coming here is escapism from my own escapism, which is perfect for me because my [usual form of] escapism isn't healthy.

Building self-efficacy through *Drive Your Future* was a common theme expressed throughout the interviews and contributed to wider reflections on the acquisition and accumulation of various forms of capital [14]. While developing self-efficacy in social situations was the most commonly reported benefit recounted by participants, there were several indications that the intervention had helped to support the acquisition of other elements of psychological capital [9,39], namely in developing a stronger sense of optimism and hope [56]. For example, Luke explained:

> I'm more confident as a person now, more open. I was just like in my own bubble, didn't do anything, but this [Drive your Future] has brought me more out of my shell. It's help me speak to new people . . . I see things now with a better outlook. I used to be really negative, I still sort of am, but I'm better mentally.

In terms of other forms of capital, respondents spoke of the opportunities that *Drive Your Future* offered to develop social capital, initially by creating closer bonds with others in the intervention [57,58], something that had been a challenge in their lives. Illustrating this point, Grant explained:

> I wasn't very good at meeting new people and getting on with them straightaway, but with these people I've made some good friends with them . . . At first it was a bit silent, but that was to be expected, but especially me and Luke, we get along now—he's a good mate now. To start with it was a bit jokey, but we talked more and grew in confidence and got to know each other more, we had more to talk about, and I talk to Luke outside of this [the golf intervention] as well.

In addition, data revealed how the golf intervention not only supported the development of bonding social capital but also in creating bridging opportunities [57] through new connections that both broadened networks and enabled access to education and employment [19]. Several of the participants explained that they had used the golf intervention as

a conduit to explore re-engagement with formal education or support a continuation into further and higher education. For example, Luke revealed:

> The only reason I've gone to college is because of coming here—I just wouldn't have had the confidence. I meet new people virtually every week now, and I've developed friendships, speaking to new people. I would never have done that [before the golf intervention]. I would probably have given them a bit of a dirty look and walked away. . .

Similarly, Grant explained how he had used the confidence that he had built through the golf intervention as a basis to re-evaluate his aspirations and accumulate human capital [31] via a university degree. More specifically, he outlined how, through golf, he had developed the ability to reflect, which in this case enabled him to make decisions about his future education on his own terms and delay his entry into university rather than by conceding to social norms and conventions regarding transitions to higher education [59]. Grant explained:

> I wanted to do uni (sic) for a long time, but I didn't feel like I was ready by the time I was that age. But now I think I'm ready where I'm at the point where I need a new challenge.

While participants expressed the value of accumulating different forms of capital, it was apparent that for most, this merely acted as a platform for their personal development beyond the golf intervention. Importantly, several participants indicated that their involvement in the golf intervention and the capital they had accumulated had served to support a more "positive mindset", and that this provided the early indications for the transfer of attributes developed through golf to other life domains [13]. Reflecting on his own development through the intervention, Luke explained:

> Over time, I've just realized that it's the confidence that I get from here [the golf intervention] that rubs off in my normal life. It's helping with relationships at college and work, and my parents and grandparents are really proud of me for doing the golf.

Along similar lines, Stuart provided testimony that spoke to an emerging sense of aspiration and an assurance that attributes learned and developed through the golf program could be transferred and integrated into his future personal objectives [13]. Stuart revealed:

> [Between the ages of] 11–16 I went through a period where I got extremely low [alternating] with bursting highs, up and down constantly. But now it's like that (holding his hand out level), and it [*Drive Your Future*] massively helps me, helps my ambitions, I'm not scared of what I'm capable of, not scared of my own ambition, where I used to be like 'I can't do that', 'I'm gonna fail'. . . it's not like that now.

While the above findings offer little in the way of new knowledge surrounding the potential of SBIs to develop a range of "capitals" [14], the potential for SBIs to provide a foundation for transfer is clear. These findings also reinforce how it is often the social processes in play within SBIs that are most vital to facilitate transfer [24]. However, there was also evidence to indicate how *Drive Your Future* helped to develop a wider set of attributes, such as the ability to reflect and develop a critical consciousness [9,26], and it is towards these elements that the paper now turns.

5.2. Transfer, Reflection, and Developing Critical Consciousness

While participants revealed how the various forms of capital that they had accumulated through the golf intervention had helped them in several aspects of their lives, as noted, a recurring theme, shared by all participants, was how their mindset had developed during the course of their involvement. Aligning with theoretical notions of a growth mindset [60], participants outlined how, through their participation, they had begun to believe

that their worth as an individual was malleable and that attributes could be developed and improved, which offered a further basis for transfer. For example, Lee commented on how the simple act of attendance at each session developed a sense of discipline and dedication that was built on the exertion of his own efforts [60], which, in his view, provided a platform for the transfer of qualities that were vital to future employment. He explained:

> It's the consistency of getting up on a Saturday morning and coming to golf every week, and that will help out when you get a job.

Further evidence for the development of a growth mindset was provided by Elliott, who outlined how he was better able to embrace the nonlinear trajectory of learning, along with the inevitable failures [61] that accompanied his improvement as a golfer. As Dweck asserts, the process of growth requires continual self-reflection, self-assessment, and self-acceptance of imperfections [60], a point that Elliott was able to articulate in one of the early interviews. He revealed:

> With golf it's about trying it, it won't be perfect, it's learning to live with it. [Golf] has taught me that there are certain things that I can't control that I just have to adapt and live with it . . . Like, the anxiety is still there, but to try things, you might mess up, but that's the whole point of learning . . .

Along similar lines, Stuart described how, when faced with challenges, he had used setbacks as the foundation for increased motivation and effort [60], remaining undeterred and resilient in pursuit of his future ambitions. Stuart reflected:

> It might take me a few years [to reach my ambitions], but I'm able to keep a positive mindset where setbacks are not the end of the world . . . you know that positive mindset of 'whatever happens, happens'. . .

Of more theoretical interest, participants revealed how the golf intervention had helped to develop their ability to reflect, with data revealing how enhancements in their reflective qualities had intersected with the emergence of a more evident sense of critical consciousness [26]. For some participants, their engagement in the golf intervention revealed a deeper appreciation of power differentials within society. To be clear, the extent to which this more critical and reflective consideration of society (and their relationship with it) was solely due to the pedagogical environment manifest in *Drive Your Future* or whether it was simply indicative of participants becoming more mature in their outlook is difficult to determine. However, it was noticeable that participants had begun to reflect not only on their own personal development but also their lived experiences and consider the impact of human interactions on different populations [26]. Revealing his own more critically reflective stance, Elliott explained:

> Like, the things you can learn [through golf] are more like life lessons. It's made me realize that I have issues that other kids have. I don't like talking down to people, I don't like people talking down to me; I like being able to see another person as an equal to myself, so if I see another kid with issues then I'm able to relate better . . . I like to be heard and hear other people out before making an opinion. That feels like I'm actually talking to someone instead of it being [talked down to] . . . when I'm heard I'll hear other people out; it's like I can take 'no' for an answer because I can give 'no' for an answer.

Other participants expanded on their growing sense of critical consciousness, demonstrating that not only had they begun to understand the impact of power on society, but they had also begun to recognize how power had shaped the structural conditions of other people's lives [26]. Grant reflected on his own critical consciousness by revealing how his experiences in the golf intervention had shaped his choice of university course and future career:

> We have a lot of people [on Drive your Future] from different areas and having different behavioural [issues]. I came in here a little bit immature and not like

> really knowing what other people are going through. But Harvey [the lead mentor] will say 'so and so is having a bad day, so be careful how we approach things', being respectful. So, I've learnt a lot about being inclusive and respectful of people's boundaries . . . you become a bit aware of these things. So, now, with my uni course, I'm quite passionate about getting jobs that help people like us. I'll have the degree and I've got the [lived] experience so I'm looking forward to it. . .

Further evidence as to how the golf intervention had begun to shape perceptions of society and provide a stimulus to influence the world around them [26] was provided by Stuart. He outlined his aspirations for a career in politics, which was evidence of his plans to engage in intentional action for transformative change [26,45]. Stuart explained:

> I'm obsessive about politics—I'm not sure what I want to do, but I enjoy politics and definitely want to do something in it. I'm part of the [city's] Youth Council and I've shown them round here [the golf club], what we do, and how it's helped . . . I've contacted all of my local MPs for job opportunities and internships for next year. So, when I finish [my A Levels] I'm going to visit them and talk about opportunities, which I'm looking forward to and doing things that make a difference. . .

Clearly, the manner in which participants were able to develop their ability to reflect and incubate a growing sense of community consciousness resonates strongly with the tenets of critical pedagogy [26]. While the extent to which any development was a direct result of the intervention is questionable, what is clear is that the educational environment created through the SBI was more important. Therefore, the paper now reflects on the educational approach adopted by program staff and how elements of critical pedagogy were manifest within this approach.

5.3. The Role of Critical Pedagogy to Support Transfer

As a final theme, data revealed how the pedagogical approach adopted and implemented by staff at *Drive Your Future* was vital to the potential for transfer. Respondents reflected extensively on the impact of staff in creating a meaningful relational environment that was conducive to engagement, learning, and, subsequently, the transfer of skills and attributes from the golf intervention to other aspects of participants' lives [13]. To this end, the sport (golf) aspect of the intervention became largely incidental to the wider individual development of participants, with data revealing that the interpersonal relationships that were established were fundamental to the inclusive environment present within the sessions [62]. Echoing several reflections, Elliott revealed:

> I think it's mainly the environment, the golf is just an add on, a therapy, but the environment is the real thing.

Participants were asked to reflect upon and describe the environment created by staff, and while this was often difficult for them to articulate coherently, some evidence emerged to provide a sense of what staff did to incubate an environment where participants could not only feel welcome but also flourish. For example, in trying to ascertain the specific elements of the environment that contributed to transfer, Lee reflected on the efforts of staff to engage each individual and establish a collective identity for all participants [63]. Describing the environment, Lee remarked:

> It's fun, entertaining, engaging, and Harvey [the lead mentor] made us try new things and socialize a bit more—get off our phones.

Similarly, Elliott spoke about the behavior of staff and how this enabled him to obtain a more secure sense of belonging to the intervention. He remarked:

> It's their energy—their good, happy energy that they give out and they're always caring. They place out rules, but they make it so that you've got something to look forward to every Saturday. It's just brings my energy up for the week ahead.

However, the data also revealed how the tenets of critical pedagogy were visible within the practice of staff and how this contributed most to the inclusive and facilitative environment that was evident. At the heart of the pedagogical approach was dialogue [26], where the onus was placed on problematizing and co-creating knowledge with participants [9] around issues derived from the participants' lived experience [43]. For example, Luke illustrated how, through dialogue with staff, he was able to not only acquire the confidence to present his "voice", but also understand the conventions around conversation and communication, a skill that he was able to transfer in situations beyond the golf intervention. Luke explained:

> I've really grown to like Harvey and Paul [the intervention mentors]; I don't know where I'd be without them to be honest. It took about a year to get used to them, but we just bounce of each other—the banter... It's just the chat and the banter. I think it's the normality of it—sitting down and having a chat, and being a weekly thing helps build things up [over time] . . . For me, chatting with someone you get an idea of how to speak normally to people and then I go into work and use some of the things that we speak about, or interpret them, in different situations.

The importance of dialogue as a central principle of *Drive Your Future* was indicative of the horizontal interpersonal relationships [26] that were developed between staff and participants. For some of the participants, encountering an educational environment where the power differential between staff and themselves was minimized [43] was something of a novel educational experience that was not only different to school but one that they relished and responded to positively. Describing the relationship between himself and Harvey, one of the intervention mentors, Grant said:

> When it comes to Harvey, being that bit more informal and getting people involved [is very effective]. I don't want to say he's casual, but he gets that balance and is really good with us... A lot of people come here [to the golf intervention] because they've had a lot of trouble in school, but it's not like that here, the relationships are more level.

An arguably deeper level of insight was provided by Stuart, who has a neurological disability. Stuart reflected on the other sport, cultural, and educational activities that he had sampled and engaged with prior to golf and how the horizontal relationships adopted by staff compared to his previous experiences. In outlining the differences, Stuart explained:

> I guess like socializing, and being more secure, and that nobody treats me differently—that is massive. I've never been at another organization that didn't treat me 100% the same. I definitely feel accepted here... I think the general environment...a welcoming environment [has helped].

While it is difficult to make concrete assertions about the extent to which critical pedagogy may support the transfer of qualities and attributes developed through the golf intervention to other contexts, participant testimony clearly articulated how an environment that foregrounded elements of critical pedagogy, such as dialogue and horizontal relationships, had been central to their personal development and a renewed outlook on their lives. Consequently, and echoing Turnnidge et al., data revealed that a pedagogical environment that promoted the necessary components of implicit transfer, such as the construction of high-quality interpersonal relationships and fostering personal achievement [13], was evident within *Drive Your Future*.

6. Conclusions

The implicit discourse that underpins the instrumental use of sport and physical activity for wider social and personal change is the assumed transference of skills, qualities, and attributes acquired and developed through sport-based interventions (SBIs) to broader societal contexts [12]. However, academic scrutiny of transferability within the context of sport for development is limited, and empirical investigations of the topic are

even more scant. Therefore, the purpose of this article was to (re)open the conceptual debate on transferability and present empirical insights into how transference might occur through SBIs. More specifically, the article sought to stimulate a critical re-engagement with fundamental design questions such as which skills, qualities, and attributes sport-based interventions should seek to develop within youth participants and how, pedagogically speaking, transfer from intervention to other contexts might be facilitated.

At the heart of the argument presented by this paper is a notion that invites a reconsideration of the idea that the acquisition of specific skills (and human capital) through SBIs is insufficient in isolation to support wider social and personal change. As noted, skills, and by extension, human capital, are often specific to a particular task and not always transferable beyond the confines of a designated context. Indeed, as Brown et al. remind us, the time-limited and shifting nature of contemporary skill requirements and the value of skills in a labor market that is subject to technological advancement and global factors require a manifest re-examination of human capital theory [42]. As such, in summary, the paper has sought to present evidence (albeit cautious) to indicate how SBIs such as *Drive Your Future* might enable youth participants to broaden their stocks of social and psychological capital, in addition to their human capital, to act as a broader resource for personal change and, potentially, social mobility.

In addition, the paper offers some tentative insights into how the tenets of critical pedagogy [26] hold potential as a guiding framework and educational philosophy to support the transfer of learning from SBIs to other aspects of youth participants' lives. While substantially more empirical research is required to support the connection between critical pedagogy and transferability within SBIs, the article provides the basis for an argument that proposes that incubating the construction of a critical consciousness within youth participants, which, in turn, enables an ability to critically reflect on society and transform an individual's connection with it, is fundamental to enabling youth participants to transfer learning from SBI to other contexts. Furthermore, there is tentative evidence to assert that SBIs may hold potential to equip young people with a broader range of "capitals" that can be "(re)invested" to support social mobility and social transformation [11].

To be clear, the purpose of this paper is not to illustrate definitively how critical pedagogy can be utilized to enable the transfer of capital from SBIs to wider contexts. Indeed, the relatively limited sample size engaged by this study is reason enough to be cautious about making definitive conclusions about the assertions made within the article. However, what is clear is that creating opportunities for transferability needs to be a key consideration in the design of SBIs targeted at marginalized youth [12] and should be paramount when determining intervention outcomes [2]. Moreover, understanding youth participants' individual aspirations and hopes is critical to understanding what capital needs to be accumulated within a SBI and, subsequently, what would be beneficial to be transferred [19]. Indeed, as Ekholm reminds us, the transference of learning from SBIs to wider contexts is not automatic [12], so understanding more about the dynamic of transfer is critical to supporting the claims that advocates of such interventions assert, and this is clearly an avenue that future academic scrutiny could explore.

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